

Fashion in retrospect

The world of fashion is all about changes and innovations. However time and again it turns towards its past for inspiration. Zahra Hameed reports on the trends in vogue that have prevailed over the years only to resurface once again

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The 60s were an era of youth culture the world over. It was a period of free expression, romanticism and the celebration of life. The west received the most exposure during this time. It was a time for the revival of peace and humanity for the world community and the youth were at the forefront of the Hippie Movement.

During this period western fashion, musical and artistic influences filtrated to the east as well. Floral shirts, bold geometric prints in psychedelic colours were all the rage in those days. It was perhaps the only time when the traditional shalwar kameez was most played around with. Smocks and tunics worn with bell-bottoms or wide *ponchas*, very fitted and structured shirts were all a reminiscent of the post world war inspired garb.

All the hip youngsters and women wore short shirts, platforms or clogs supporting dead straight hair or beehives and glasses. It was a time when the media in terms of singers and actresses dictated fashion trends.

Jacqueline Kennedy was the epitome of high fashion and women all over the world including in the Subcontinent adorned twin sets, pearls, dark classes and a back-combed mane to imitate her legendary style and elegance. The 70s were a continuation of these fashion trends with innovative additions of cuts and designs and varying hemlines. Fashion icons of Pakistani cinema Zeba, Shabnam, Shamim Ara and Babra Sharif in their fitted short shirts, embroidered b dices, net dupattas, cotton ghararas, beehives, ringlets, glossy lips and shimmery eye-shadows provided fashionable images to the masses.

With industrialization kicking in and a worldwide economy boost especially in the US, a broad ready-to-wear market emerged in Pakistan. Boutique culture was initiated through pioneering fashion designers such as TJ's paving way for



Generation and Sundip. The 80s witnessed the birth of a strong fashion consumer market in terms of the middle class that was influenced and aided by advertisements and dramas on television.

Local fashions also mimicked the 'over the top' fashion trends of the west in terms of colour, volume and ostentatious accessories and hairstyles. The Kameezes were resembled western dresses and were worn with shalwars. The shalwar kameezes were transformed with shoulder puffs, puff sleeves, collars, broad piping in contrasting colors, round edged middle length hemlines. Even the shalwars took on a new shape and the dhoti shalwar, tang pajamas, and tights were in vogue. These attires were accessorize with chunky gold costume jewellery, hoop earrings and gaudy make-up.

Polka dots and bold lines in bright colours were also immensely popular. The look was completed with high stilettos, sequenced sweaters, short waist coats and supported by the very popular perms and 80's classic bob.

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It was the late 80s-early 90s that marked the birth of Pakistani high fashion. As international stock markets crashed the western fashion scene plunged into grunge. The coming of power of Benazir Bhutto represented the breaking of stereotypes. There was a widespread feeling of liberation and optimism among the people and this greatly influenced artistic expression. This led to the emergence of a number of designers such as Maheen, Rizwan Beyg and Nur Jehan Bilgarami.

Although the fashion scene was mostly based in Karachi however the limited but vital role played by the media such as publications, TV, films and fashion shows enabled it's influence to be felt in all quarters.

As the western fashion scene was no longer appealing in the early 90s, there was a revival of ethnicity and traditions. The local embroidery, tie and dye, churidars, block prints, ajrak, kalies and longer flowy kurtas were all a reminiscent of traditional dresses and fashions.

With the progression of the 90s, Pakistani fashion evolved and grew — thanks to media exposure, in particular satellite television and the opening up of communication channels via the internet. As the western fashion scene embraced minimalism, Pakistani fashion also became streamlined, simplistic and sleek.

The shalwar kameez was transformed through longer hemlines, narrow trouser like-shalwars, a-symmetrical necklines and were worn with dupattas resembling scarves. The emphasis following the international trends in make-up was natural earthy tones, minimal accessories and embellishments and the look was one that was sophisticated yet comfortable.



The millennium categorized futuristic inspirations the world over with designers creating innovative colours, textures, fabric, cuts and accessories. Metallic colours, glitter, leather, PVC, synthetics, sequences were all the rage.

The year 2000 has been all about fashion — going back to its past for inspiration. The western fashion scene has turned towards the mystic appeal of the east and colours, work mediums and accessories of the subcontinent. From Indian banarsi sari dresses, pashminas, glass bangles, mend, kundan jewelry to the vibrant colours of the east; our culture and heritage

has been incorporated within western wear and even in interiors.

At present, there has also been a revival of some elements of 80s fashions. Bright hues of pink, oranges, traditional embroideries, polka dots and floral prints are all part of the current fashion trends. Although in Pakistan minimalism is still very much in vogue, the revival of traditional craftsmanship and ethnic colours and combinations is gaining momentum in fashion circles.

The focus is on creating a style that personifies the individual who is wearing it. So whether you are someone whose wardrobe is dictated by designer wear or simply an individual who believes in her own personal flair for dressing, it really doesn't matter. The key to looking good and being in vogue is simply about finding out what flatters you and sticking to it.