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# Fashion Foreplay

**Of all the couture and bodies that represent the idea of creativity and perfection, modern fashion has a come a long way. But the survival in this high life of fashion has got its price to pay, for its glory has thrown light on its dark spots too**

**G**abrielle ‘Coco’ Chanel’s store launch (supposedly the first boutique of female clothing) in France sparked a revolution of sorts. Ever since, the industry has created a world of its own. It’s been long seen that when it comes to fashion or clothing, we only speak of the designs. But over the years, it has grown along with its needs to pierce the masses through the help of effective surreal advertising and creative concepts. It goes without saying that this gave rise to another fanatically sought after profession - modelling.

One of the major highlights of this emerging era was the provocative ad of a young twenty-something model Brooke Shields (now a famous actress) in 1980, showing off her waist wearing a CK Jeans. This bold advertisement in USA started the trend which made people take a different perspective of fashion. Back in India, it was in 90s when Madhu Sapre and Milind Soman posed nude for a shoe ad. This was a sure sign that screamed out the commercial interest of fashion and emerging forms of modelling and advertising that invariably became the undivided part of fashion.

This growing trend has led to a steep competition in the field of modelling. Over years the pressure to spot the best ‘bod’ had increased. With more and more opportunities from wider options, it became a natural necessity to be in attention all the time. Soon it was no more about the thin, toned body! Worldwide the craze for ‘size zero’ became the ultimate.

With high promising careers and big dreams, many have fallen prey to this trend, eventually harming their health. This obsession of wannabe models even caused a serious concern and in 2006 during the Madrid Fashion Week where models below 18 BMI (body mass index) were banned and models with a height of 5...inches, had to adhere to a minimum weight of 52 kgs.

Designers being the integral part of the industry not only have to cope with the pressures of timely production of their creations but also maintain their presence throughout to handle activities. “It is the obvious aspect of our work. Though at times it is easier for the models to take a break but the designers have comparatively broader commitments and that makes it impossible for them to always be flexible about it”, says Vishaka Kullarwar, 23, a

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fashion designer. With back to back photo shoots and ads, it’s a demanding task to maintain a balanced lifestyle. Drastic work schedules and changing locations bring about a disorientation that hasn’t proven healthy for good body functioning. Moreover, it results in less time for personal care. Surgeries, tummy tucks, lipo-suction, botox and various other surgical and medical methods are resorted to achieve the ‘perfect’ body due to lack of time. While there always have been rumours of models opting for such surgeries to survive longer in the industry, it still remains a matter of secrecy within the industry.

It’s rather unfair to expect a glamorous world of this kind and stay away from partying. Flamboyant culture of this kind is likely to get many strayed to a rather unhealthy path. Reasons may vary but a result of this is alcoholism, drug abuse and other disorders (physical and mental) which take a toll on lifestyle

and career choices eventually. “Many a times models have to party for the heck of it or for networking. Especially during fashion weeks, the after-show parties run really late. All this eventually disrupts the natural health balance. There are times when models opt for detoxification treatments while taking a break from the partying scene,” says Maradona Rebello, 22, a model.

In a competent profession such as this, what works is the ‘show effect’. Arguing on the basis of shelf life, it certainly demands a long term potential in a short period of time, which in turns reflects in different ways – be it lifestyle, health or career graph. The result of this is evident from models being dropped by hot labels and fashion brands. One of the famous fashion houses Burberry recently dropped their model Rosie, reason being a photo published in July of her holding a drug pipe. Though in India, such incidents have not been a matter of issue, the struggle to maintain a brand in one’s own right is not a cake walk.

Many have made their mark in this profession that is almost a Mecca for those who are blessed with a body and an attitude to carry a brand and its identity. Nationally or internationally, with the growing globalisation phenomenon, the opportunities are only subjected to growth. But with growth comes greater competition and higher stakes. Even though this may be the same in every industry, what makes this one more challenging and attractive is the willingness of people for accepting it for what it is, flamboyant lifestyle or sheer love for fashion itself. On one hand, the draw backs can easily make one weak on knees, while on the other, with a little more immunity towards its dark side, the world of fashion has the best of shades to light up a fire and achieve great glory.

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