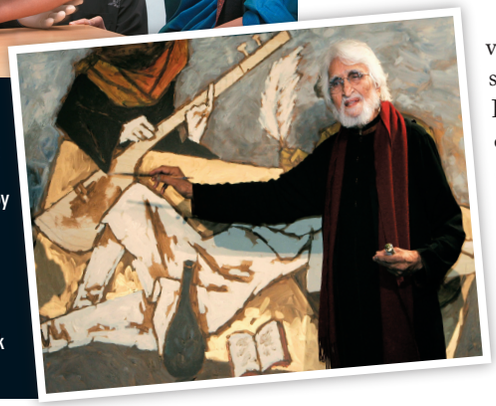
editor's letter



Above: Design team member Jitendra Rawat and I took an HIV test done by Dr Chinkholal Thangsing; right: It's M.F. Husain's fundamental right to be back home in India

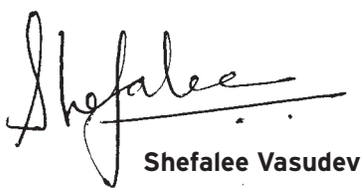
Red, seeded grapes in a glass of vodka! The sexy-looking drink, my husband's idea to break vodka's boring marriage with lime and tonic water, ended my fidelity to Saturday-evening single malts. A slightly spirited and an unlikely start to an editor's letter? But December is a time for venial confessions, as January is for resolutions. There is no reason why I must write about my sudden longing for the colour fuchsia instead of the women's reservation bill. But '*rani* pink' is a mood I am not guilty of at this moment.

As far as years go, 2007 was sweet and sour too. Indian fashion became beautiful this year just as being beautiful has become fashionable. The skincare industry, sagging with huge numbers, will soon need a face-lift. The over-hyped *Om Shanti Om* was irritainment at best; Sinbad (Single Income No Boyfriends And Desperate) girls increased all over the world according to a survey; and mouse potatoes outnumbered couch potatoes. Whereas, eco-anxiety – arising out of the obligation to be ecologically moral – has now become a diagnosable mental condition! I am unlikely to bicycle to work in my *kanjeevarams* to save car fuel, but to join the environmentally moral, I no longer wipe the grin off my face with a paper tissue.

My lesson of the year came from the zero self-consciousness of a fat 'mummy' contestant on the TV dance show *Boogie Woogie*. Her superb form and quicksilver steps, despite her 100 kg-plus frame, makes the extremely self-conscious Aishwarya Bachchan look so uninteresting. *Desperate Housewives* remains my bitchiest hour every week and 'blamestorming in office' the most innovative word of 2007.

Now some unconnected thoughts. Can't we all – ostensibly the defenders of creative and personal freedom – join hands and get M.F. Husain back to India even as we shout about Taslima Nasreen's fundamental freedoms? Should criminals who throw acid on women ever get legal mercy (p.88)? And how come condoms have become such a female word (p.112)?

"Instead of asking so many questions, why don't you take a voluntary HIV test and inspire your readers to do the same," suggested Dr Chinkholal Thangsing of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation. I did. Testing for HIV is life-saving attitude. A majority of those afflicted live on without the slightest inkling that they could be silent carriers of the deadly virus and continue to innocently infect others. It can take up to seven to 10 years for any symptoms to show, whereas the test is free, totally confidential and comes with useful before and after counselling. And if needed, adequate and immediate treatment is now available in India. As your personal contribution to World AIDS Day this month, take this test. It's a positive way to be sure you are HIV-negative.



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