editor's letter

Clockwise from above: Elisa Murat, Harmeet Bajaj and Marion Dufour-Lahore at the canteen of our Paris office; My boss and I; with Tabu

"Happiness is a warm gun," wrote John Lennon. It has certainly been nice and warm this first year of *Marie Claire India*. Naturally, our first anniversary theme is bliss. Happiness cannot be pursued directly; it must be an unintended consequence of what we do. This edition packs a number of such experiences. All of them remind us not to take ourselves so seriously.

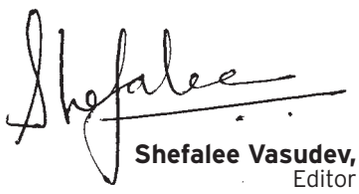
Marie Claire is spoken of as a magazine with a dual personality. It is odd for some to accept the connect between haute couture, glamour and beauty with fiery social campaigns. But let's ask: are we just one thing at any point of time? There are so many personalities inside us. Bold and vulnerable. Rebellious and submissive. Stylish and mismatched. Discreet and indiscreet. If one is dominant, the other is dormant. A magazine that gives us reason to live out all these in one package is fun; not chaos. Recall the song *Mambo number five*: *A little bit of Monica in my life. A little bit of Erica by my side. A little bit of Rita's all I need. A little bit of Tina's what I see. A little bit of Sandra in the sun. A little bit of Mary all night long. A little bit of Jessica here I am.*

When I was younger and dreamt uncensoredly, I wanted to be Oprah Winfrey with Madonna's muscles. A Bharatnatyam dancer and a psychotherapist. But the world was not sympathetic. I became a reporter – a beat hack; one thing at one point of time. Today, as a part of *Marie Claire*, all these scattered dreams seem to be fulfilled in some way. Jetting one day to Paris for a photo shoot. The next trying to interview a eunuch through a cascade of abuse. I zip out of office for a blow-dry before a fashion show and then scrub off the lipstick before meeting a prisoner in Tihar. Interesting antithesis, all in a day's work!

Marie Claire means readers. Considering the number of letters that come to our office every month. One gentleman sent us a marriage proposal for a bar dancer whose story we had featured. Some readers call me Shef (!) sharing their most personal thoughts; others call me names. As the French say, "long live the difference". It's also what keeps this letter going. But celebrities make me cry even when they are being nice. So do the cognoscenti who turn up their nose and whine, "After all, you are a fashion magazine."

Marie Claire is more. It gives us the ground to be responsive, not just responsible. We are not a charity, but a magazine with a purpose. We aim to respond to trends and issues with a sense of balance and proportion. It is crucial to remind ourselves that social campaigns sometimes run the risk of becoming superficial, just as fashion and beauty can become tyrannical. We need to walk the tightrope between the two.

Keep writing back with your *khatta-meetha* letters and your support through our campaigns. Be with *Marie Claire*. You and us are one.



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