

# editor's letter



**Two women.** Both 28 years old. One on the Oprah Winfrey show. The other in a press conference at Indian Women's Press Corps in New Delhi. The former, a self-confessed plastic-surgery addict who had 26 reconstructive surgeries to change every feature of her face. The latter, Haseena Hussain, who had to have 27 reconstructive surgeries after she was brutally burnt in an acid attack by a former employer-turned-stalker. I am stumped by the double irony. One pays millions to become more beautiful. The other – whose name means beautiful – has no money to get back the face that melted away from her. I could not decide which was the more compelling story. We pursued both.

Till a couple of years back, I used to shrug at cosmetic makeovers and shop shelves overflowing with luscious creams and glistening gels. I couldn't quite comprehend the force of participative energy that the beauty market has given Indian women. But my time at *Marie Claire* has given me reason to understand the *en masse* connect women feel with the idea of looking better and the reasons they flock towards the tools available to do so. I have begun to believe that the beauty industry has

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transformative and therapeutic possibilities. Of course, questions remain. Where does this desire to look better come from? Is it even achievable? Will a new hair colour, an anti-wrinkle cream or a breast-enhancing surgery defy the quirks of life every time they corner us? What about those disfigured like Haseena? Or those for whom *shringar* has never been anything more than *sindoor* and the crimson blush of submission before their 'man' at the cost of their own wishes?

Many such questions, the accounts of aesthetic medicine's new junkies and Haseena's helplessness opened out to become the big themes of our March issue. One series of stories – collectively titled 'The Future of Beauty' with Carol Gracias, the dusky, unconventionally fabulous-looking model, as our cover girl – debates the new ideals of prettiness. The other is the start of a relief fund for Haseena Hussain to help her pay for the many plastic surgeries she still needs to look 'herself'. This is *Marie Claire India's* first initiative in walking the talk. The point we are trying to make in our stories is guarding against obsession of any kind. It is about hitting the point of peace between the two extremes of prettiness and disfigurement. Know yourself, look yourself and spare a thought for Haseena.

It has given me and my team reason to celebrate International Women's Day that falls this month.

  
Shefalee Vasudev,  
Editor