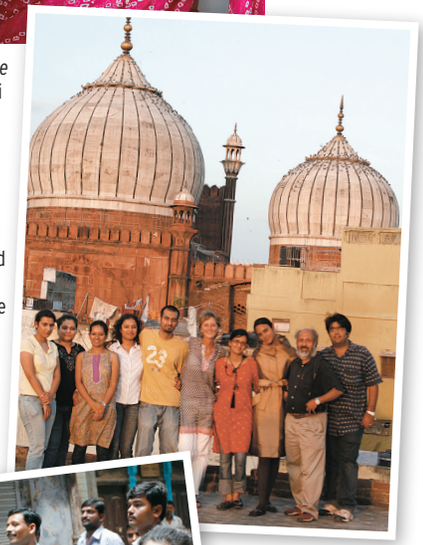
editor's letter



Right: Team *Marie Claire* at Chandni Chowk for the shoot of 'Rising in Fall'; below: Mahima Shukla (extreme right), junior fashion stylist, is amused as the hired guards watch the fashion shoot, mesmerised

All of us at *Marie Claire* went together to see *The Devil Wears Prada* – first day, first show! Over popcorn, we gossiped how the film highlighted flashes of our own lives as part of a fashion magazine (read more on page 238).

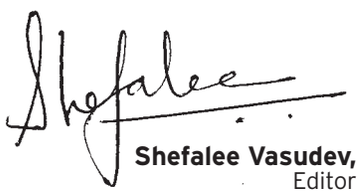
September was full of team time for us. As thoughts turned into ideas and ideas into stories, I was struck with the warrior-like energy with which the Mumbai and Delhi team brought life to ideas that sounded a bit quixotic during edit meetings. Haute couture by international designers, flown in from Paris to be shot in Chandni Chowk? A festival make-up story based on the colours in Umrao Jaan's vanity case? We must be nuts.

The urge to risk some, try some, trash some, took over the small worries. Along with Marion Dufour-Lahore, fashion and beauty editor, *Marie Claire International*, we tread the middle ground between fashion sensibility and reportage photography. Marion brought suitcases full of clothes by some of the top international designers. In the three decades of his work, this is documentary photographer Sondeep Shankar's first fashion feature!

It is festive season and to me, this mixing of genres is celebration – infusing new possibilities into static measures. That's the feeling I also got at the Wills Lifestyle India Fashion Week last month. Indian designers are no longer smug about democracy of thought. Many are beautifully battling with their former notions of free expression. I don't know about the long-drawn comparison between foreign and local designers, but I do know that local versus local is the new war in Indian fashion. Some have zoomed miles ahead of others, creating a new comparative graph – right here, right now.

In another sense, 'celebration' seems a limited word when I think about the hundreds of women who wrote back in response to the *Marie Claire* 'Freedom of Spirit' contest. The myriad interpretations of Let Me Be Me (see some on page 74) gave me goose pimples. Through the resolute voices that jump out of the letters, I notice a conflictual but convinced yearning among women to be accepted for who they are. Conflict is fine, it's the only road to clarity.

PS: My office grapewhine is that the devil here wears Nalli. I do. A sari is a great place to hide a tale.



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