editor's letter

Above: Our *azaadi* outing; *right*: Sanjay Dutt's 'good' avatar

In our anniversary issue in June, we ran a story titled 'Men We Love'. I remember the number of internal arguments we had while finalising this list of 10 men that women supposedly love. The name of Bollywood *bhai* Sanjay Dutt, now out on interim bail, came up repeatedly but we didn't include him. Some said, oh, it's the old story of women fatally attracted to bad boys. Others questioned his inclusion on moral grounds. Then, as they say, the law took its course and the *khalnayak* got his just returns. But in the decade that he was an undertrial out of jail, the looming shadow of guilt, fear of punishment and of being defined as 'bad' transformed him into a good boy. Today his good conduct in jail and his reverence for human goodwill has become an interesting story of the villain's reinvention as a hero. If we compile that Men-We-Love list today, Dutt may just be in it.

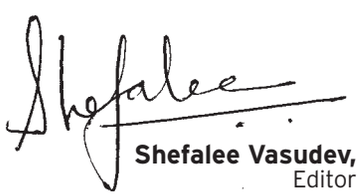
But the irony lies with the Indian justice system. The time it takes to deliver a verdict contorts personal and popular perception of good and bad. One becomes the other, dismantling the crime-and-punishment equation. It may be Munnabhai's gain but it has been the loss of hundreds of others who waited *inside* jail to be acquitted and became 'bad' in the period. How time changes life's scripts.

If you are one of those who fears time and tide, then you must read our global report, 'The Rollicking Widows of Miami' (p.104). Indulgence is such an indulgent word anyway. But this story gives it a better flourish. If you don't use it, you will lose it, they say. Well, these dames believe in that. Sex, shopping, partying, dancing, holidaying, sunning, surfing... they do it all. The seven deadly sins sound incredibly tempting as you read this story of rich, 70-plus widows revelling in unbridled freedom during life's sunset. Reading it made me a little less fearful of wobbly old age and a lot more respectful of free will.

A book I am reading these days called *The Mind and The Brain* has a chapter called 'Free Will and Free Won't'. It debates the existence of free will. Does free will exist, such that can help us turn time and tide, making the mind more powerful than the brain? If you believe it does, it may help you overcome anything and accept everything. What do you think? Do write back to me.

PS 1: On the eve of Independence Day, all of us went for an *azaadi* outing. Dressed in orange, white or green – the dress code for the day – we had *chaat pakori*, laughter and *desh-ki-haalat* gossip for lunch!

PS 2: The two Buddhas you see in my picture – one on my neck and the other on my desk – aren't pseudo photo props. I have been seriously collecting Buddhas for years and these are two of my favourite pieces. I couldn't resist showing them off!



Shefalee Vasudev,
Editor

EDITOR'S PHOTOGRAPH: MEETESH TANEJA