

editor's letter



Above: Rajkot's Pooja Chauhan who walked the streets in her undergarments to protest against dowry harassment; right: That's me as a speck outside my mecca, the Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna

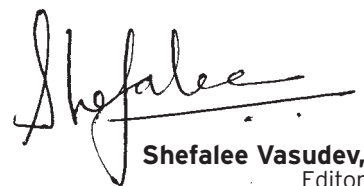


Independence Day is here. And it seems almost impertinent not to write about freedom. This time my thoughts are visceral. After about 20 years of wearing personal freedom on my sleeve, it is only recently that I realised how dangerous this weapon is. It cuts through, but it cuts into you as well. “What do you mean you want to be totally free?” I have often been asked. By my parents, close friends, significant others and my husband. What was I seeking? Irreverence? A callous disregard for others? A blatant selfishness? Or was it liberation? Liberation is a catch-all phrase. A convenient guillotine to hack through logic and argument. Defining it was never easy because I had little idea of what it actually meant. So I confused rebellion with freedom. As many of us do. After all, it is always easier to destroy than to build. I was a rebel without a cause.

But when a rebel like me gets empowered in relationships that give her commitment, care and sensitivity, what then must she make of her independence? At the Sigmund Freud Museum I visited in Vienna last month – mecca for psychology suckers like me – one strand of Freudian writing remained with me long after: ‘It’s the price you pay for a choice that determines its value in your life.’ Freedom comes for a price. The first expense it exacts is that you must blunt one edge of your sword. Sometimes both. The sword must become ornamental. The mind must be free to make reasonable choices. To make tempered decisions. All this cannot come if your freedom comes at the cost of someone else. We all heard it in school. But very few have lived by the dictum that our independence ends where someone else’s nose begins. If you have a nose for freedom, sometimes not inhaling might a better idea.

Sixty years after India inhaled freedom, there are few words left to express the blinding anger all of us at *Marie Claire* feel against female foeticide. Dr Kavary Nambisan, *Marie Claire*'s ambassador for this issue as part of our What Women Want Forum, has written a moving, special report on doctors who turned into murderers. It gives us goosebumps. We need to collectively get more outraged if we want a change. Sitting around, debating, writing and feeling bad is not going to be enough. Pooja Chauhan of Rajkot, who walked the streets in her underwear, is not only a rebel with a cause – she protested against dowry and rejection of her girl child – but she used her right to get enraged and outraged. So what if it was a bit overboard? Unless we do something drastic against the conspiratorial doctors who help abort girl foetuses and men and women who kill their own daughters, we will only be guilty bystanders.

You need to react to this from your gut. Write back and we will carry your letters on this issue to Renuka Chowdhury, Minister of State for Women and Child Development, and to Pratibha Patil, India's first woman President, who has promised to put an end to female foeticide. Let's begin by doing our bit.


Shefalee Vasudev,
Editor