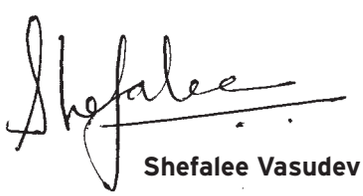
editor's letter

Wait training: Ekta Kapoor (left), Sushmita Sen; (below) Bruni, our first international cover girl

Marie Claire India's first international cover girl, Italy-born model and singer Carla Bruni, is a provocative woman dating the French President. This sensational story of love and lust in the time of the Republic brings to my letter the question I thought I will never ask: what do women want? We all know so many young, single women, each fervently seeking answers to who she is and, by its logical extension, what she wants in love, sex and marriage. Logic, alas, never works. Nor does reason. When it comes to relationships, women have become even more deeply conflicted than they ever were. The conflicts are only natural for those who have just tasted the fruits of freedom and are paying the price for it. One of them is late marriage. It remains perennially seductive and sacrosanct. Love and lust also ran. Love is mind-blowing; lust makes the world go round, say the girls. But marriage? That question upsets the apple cart.

More and more young women are becoming not-so-young waiting for the perfect marriage that does not exist. Few realise that as the years go by, they may become more financially powerful, even more emotionally stable and clear about who they want, but perhaps less interesting. Where are the men, they ask, when what they should also be asking is, where are we going? I am not arguing for the venerable institution of marriage; I am arguing for relationships that work only because we invest in intimacy, passion and commitment. To be free and equal is one thing, but to be obsessed with the perfect fit is another. Someone is a mama's boy, another is insensitive. One is too easy a conquest, another evades commitment. One didn't pay up on the first date, while the other needed a manicure. Some complain that married men pursue single girls all the time, so who should they trust? Others chase married men themselves. We want the taller, slightly more arrogant, definitely more educated, and richer men. But do they want us? Just because Indian women are emerging from a history of repression doesn't mean that all our desires and needs can be realised.

This Valentine's, as we plan our dates and pop the champagne, let's ask where our expectations are taking us. Whether you wait five years or 10, chances are that you will meet the 'same' man when you are 38 who you had rejected when you were 28. So that terribly clichéd question – what women want – is something you must answer early in life. You may never be able to answer it later.



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