

## Women's Day special: Women talk about desire and other difficult dialogues

The Indian Express.

March 5, 2017

This Women's Day, five women from their 20s to 60s tell us about their idea of love and desire, and, a look at sexism in popular culture and everyday life.



A separate peace: Mithu Sen.

**Mithu Sen, 45, artist**

*'The wait for true love never reaches its climax'*

Love is actually like death — the other side of our life that is unknown, unreachable, sublime, and for which we spend all our life waiting. If you really think about it, you could call both love and death romantic.

But then, the idea of being loved is dreamy, in ways that death can never be. It brings with it promises of fulfillment — at its most prosaic, the sublime state of orgasm; at its imaginative best, it can be the gateway to a parallel creative universe. I've found for myself this parallel universe where age is no bar and where I constantly find myself being sexually, romantically, mentally and emotionally aroused. In this state, anything is possible. The idea of sex moves from being merely a corporeal act to a creative impulse. If you can stand outside of yourself and explore your body, its desires and fetishes objectively, then you are not bound by standard notions of bodily pleasure. My idea of sexual fulfillment has always been about being mentally creative and it finds expression in different ways in my art.

As a woman, it has always been a taboo to talk about my desires or fetishes. And so, they twisted and turned and sought ways of alternate expressions. How would you label the desire to be a different person? Or, the desire to acquire a different body? Can all desires be called sexual? How much of our inner selves can we expose without fear or shame? As an artist, I find my desires moving beyond the confinements of the world we live in and exposing themselves through the images I create. While I understand the freedom I have as an artist, it's still difficult to articulate my inner feelings in person. The wait for "true" love never reaches its climax.

Perhaps, we overvalue conversations around love. Perhaps, love is overrated. For, it's really all about loving the life we create while we wait for the love we crave — whether those cravings ever get realised is not as important as the knowledge that you have enough love to give.

At my age, I feel love should be more about what we want for ourselves than about anyone else. For that to happen, for women to prioritise themselves, we need to value ourselves and our bodies more. If we are at peace with ourselves, we will be confident about our right to our desires. It's fine to choose our lovers, just as it is fine to believe that sex is not a momentary act, but a state of perpetual joy with an ability to transform.

The universe that I've created is inside this world only. It's a world with my imaginary lover, where we incessantly unfinish each other. It's a world of possibilities and all of us are capable of creating our own means of loving ourselves more.

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