

Chase Your Dreams, Not Fame: Boman Irani at PIFF

Pune, 16 February, 2025 : “If you want to become an excellent actor, you must have a dream, and work hard to make it a reality. But, don’t chase fame, chase what you love. Fame is a byproduct, it will come automatically,” advised Boman Irani while speaking at the “Vijay Tendulkar Memorial Lecture on Acting” at the 23rd Pune International Film Festival. PIFF Director Jabbar Patel and actor Jitendra Joshi were present at the lecture.

Irani had a wealth of advice for budding actors and writers. Talking about the hard work and perseverance needed to succeed in the industry, he said, “For me to become a director and to make a film, it took me 12 years despite being a part of the industry.”

Irani spoke at length about the importance of good writing for a film and how it can make or break it, “Every director and writer should learn to write, and every actor should learn to understand writing.” He believes that writing and acting are always interconnected. Irani shared several tips for film writers. As a writer, he said that one must define the needs and wants of a character, and to write better, he suggested that writers must always talk to the characters.

“Give your characters flaws. Don’t write them as perfect people,” Irani advised. He added. “While I don’t think a character’s back story needs too much attention, I believe they must have a wound, which gives them a purpose. Movies are not about stories, they are about human beings.

As a veteran actor himself, Irani also had several inputs for aspiring filmmakers. If you want to work in a film, pay attention to the script, he said. Irani shared that it is crucial that the actor completely embodies the character. He added that ultimately if you want to be an actor, you must work very hard. He also advised budding directors, “You have to know the real subtext of your story.”

Irani is also a producer on his recently-released film “Mehta Boys”. He shared his insights on how to manage a film’s budgets. “There is no end to it. You will always find a way over hurdles. Everything is about vision and art, never blame the budget.”

During the talk, Irani also candidly spoke about his childhood and growing up years. He shared that he was a shy child, and had a stammer. When his mother noticed that he was more confident on stage than in academics, she encouraged him to watch more movies. At one screening, he had to explain the entire movie to a blind friend of his father's. His mother's idea to do this empowered him to explore his passion for storytelling. As Irani grew up, he did a number of odd jobs before picking up acting. For 14 years, he worked in his family's wafers shop, and then also worked as a waiter at the Taj Mahal Palace. He became a photographer, and when he was 35 years old, he became an actor in commercial Hindi cinema.

Jitendra Joshi, who was in the audience at the Memorial Lecture, fondly reminisced about the Marathi movie "Ventilator", in which Irani has played the role of a doctor. Even though Irani had the option of saying his dialogues in Hindi, he insisted on speaking in Marathi, shared Joshi, commending Irani's commitment to his craft.

In an interaction with the media before the workshop, Irani said that, "I have grown up watching Govind Nihalani, Jabbar Patel, Shyama Benegal, and Vijay Tendulkar. I was inspired by them to become a theatre actor." He commended PIFF, praising the platform it has created for filmmakers and the audience to interact freely.