

# First Panel Discussion held at 55th IFFI highlights Women's Safety and Cinema

## Film industry can better support and empower women, both on-screen and behind the scenes: Panellists

#IFFIWood, 21 November 2024

The first panel discussion of the 55<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival of India (IFFI) kicked off today with a conversation on **Women's Safety and Cinema**. Moderated by renowned actor and producer Vani Tripathi Tikoo, the session brought together panellists including filmmaker Imtiaz Ali, actors Suhasini Maniratnam, Kushboo Sundar, and Bhumi Pednekar, to discuss crucial issues surrounding women's safety in the film industry, gender representation, and the role cinema plays in shaping societal values.

The panellists shared personal experiences and insights on how the film industry can better support and empower women, both on-screen and behind the scenes. They emphasized the importance of fostering a safe environment where women in cinema can work freely without concerns of harassment or exploitation.

A significant part of the discussion revolved around how film sets should respond if a perpetrator is identified. The panellists agreed that tolerance for gender injustice in the workplace is no longer acceptable. Suhasini Maniratnam shared her experience of how male actors often come to sets and suggest changes to scenes, a practice that rarely happens with women. She highlighted that women should also take charge of their scenes and start negotiating, rather than being passive participants in their representation. She further added that it's crucial for industry professionals to understand work ethics before entering the field.

Imtiaz Ali emphasized on the importance of creating a work culture where women on set can focus solely on the art, without worrying about how they will be treated. He expressed that filmmakers cannot be tolerant to gender injustice on sets.

The conversation also addressed the portrayal of women in films and how it directly influences the creation of a safe space for them. Bhumi Pednekar passionately emphasized that women's dignity and the way they are represented on screen play a vital role in creating a respectful and empowering environment.

Kushboo Sundar added that while she is focused on making entertaining films, she does so responsibly, ensuring that her work does not compromise on principles of equality and respect. The panellists collectively agreed that portraying women with dignity is not just about characters, but about setting a precedent for the industry at large.