



PREITY ZINTA

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

<https://youtu.be/d4mrO13trBY>

Preity:

Hi, good morning, everyone. It's wonderful to be here. Thank you, Jackie. And we should get on with it.

Interviewer:

Yeah. We're just going to have a pretty casual conversation about her work and a little bit about what her impact has been. So, I'll go right into my first question. You're a celebrated Bollywood actress and you're also the owner of a cricket team. So, tell me what that transition has been like going from actress to businesswoman because they're kind of two totally separate things. Tell me what that journey was like for you.

Preity:

Well, it wasn't the easiest journey, to be honest. Because you see for a woman, cricket is a very macho sport. It's a man's world out there. It was easier to fit in the world of cinema as opposed to fitting in the world of sports. But I think I'd like to rewind and go when I was a little girl, my father, he always told me that Indian girls, when they're little they're dependent on their fathers when they are married, they're dependent on their husbands. And when they are older, they're dependent on their sons. So, I do not want you to be like that. I want you to be independent. I want you to have a mind of your own. And the only way you can do that is if you are financially independent, you can work.

So, I always had that mindset that I wanted to work. And it didn't matter if, whatever your field is. Like I studied Criminal Psychology and I became an actor. So, life is very spontaneous. It's not like you make plans and you say, okay, I want to do this, but you end up doing something else. So, I didn't think when I was acting, I would ever get into the world of sport.

But one day I found an opportunity and I decided I wanted to do it. It was not the easiest, but it was a lot of fun. I worked 18 hour days. And eventually when I look back and think if it isn't tough, if there isn't a challenge for you in life, then it's not that exciting. You know, when things just fall easily into your lap, I guess you don't appreciate them. So, it's been a bit of an uphill journey, but it's been a fun journey.

Interviewer:

Well, since you mentioned spontaneity, I want us to rewind and I'd really like you to just briefly tell us how you got into acting because I think that was a really, really cool story.

Preity:

Okay. So, I was studying Criminal Psychology and my best friend's boyfriend went to audition for a movie. We were both very poor at that time, so we decided we share a cab. Whoever finishes first would pick the other person up. So, my exam got over. I took my paper and I finished. So, I went to pick him up and there was a major audition happening out there. I of course was always hungry at that time. So, since I didn't know what to do, I went to the corner and I started eating and I saw the director out there and he just looked at me and he was like, so what are you going to do for me today? And I was like, nothing. And he was like, all right. I said, no, I'm sorry. I haven't come here to audition. I've just come here to pick up my friend.

And so, basically, he just grabbed my hand and took the mic. And he said, everyone, this is a classic case of cold feet. This is what should never happen to you. And he basically just put me in the spot and asked me to audition. And I was like, I don't really know how to audition. And he was like, just do whatever you want to do. So, I just mumbled and jumbled, and I don't even know what I did. But two weeks later he asked me to do the movie and I was on my way to Munich. And I thought, instead of me sharing a room with someone, if I do this film, I can have my own room when I study further.

So, it was as simple as that, I just signed on to that film. And I became an actor and the film never happened, but he did this big interview as to how I would be this big star and other people came to sign me on. And I just learned everything on set and I was extremely lucky. I worked with good directors. My first film did very well. My second film did exceptionally well. So, I just became an actor by accident.

Interviewer:

And once you went on to become an actor, you've really been kind of praised for it, changing the expectations of what a Hindi heroin can be in film. Can you tell us a little bit about how that process was for you and just, yeah, just give us some tips and inspiration on how that process was for you? Changing expectations of what women are like on film.

Preity:

Well, I think, I don't think I would try to intellectualize anything and I thought about it so seriously. I was just doing things that suited me. I was never the hot chick. I was never the sex symbol. I was actually very tomboyish. And so, for me, I found it really difficult to be the damsel in distress all the time. I would rather be the person who fought the distress, right? So, instead of focusing on roles that, well I never really got those really pretty, pretty roles anyway. But I wanted to do roles that were more women of substance that, you know, no human being is one dimensional, no woman is one dimensional, but it's very easy to cast a woman as the object of desire or somebody who's like help me, please.

And Indian Cinema went through this whole the 50s, the 60s were very rich for roles for women. But then the 70s and the 80s became completely male-centered where the hero was saving the woman. And she was always, you know, she didn't really have a brain to think for herself. She was always being rescued. So, it just started very simply as me not wanting to be rescued, A.

And I also wanted to do roles that showed what was happening in society at that point. And my first film was about a teenage pregnancy and unwed mother. And we are a country of now I think 1.25, or I don't know, billion people, and yet it was difficult for us to discuss sex.

So, that film was a way of going out there and saying, okay, you know, there are so many issues, it was an issue-based film. So, there are so many things that you want to talk about and you can do it through a film medium as opposed to just being the glamor woman out there. So, it started off actually very simple. And then I was really lucky. I got some really good roles and of course, I had to work hard at them, but I was also lucky that I never really got the, just stand there and look pretty role. So, I was lucky.

Interviewer:

That's awesome. And do you also feel like, because you were given those roles and because for the past couple of years, you know, you've been pretty vocal about like violence against women and gender biases? Can you tell me a little bit about what it was that kind of like gave you that voice and allowed you to be so vocal about issues like that, which are often shied away from?

Preity:

Well, I don't think it's particularly me. But I think in general, if you try to go out of the prescribed role for you in life, people usually question it. Of course, in countries that are not very developed, a woman is typically looked at a homemaker. It's very different for people to look at you and say, okay, you can also do a job. I mean, it's different of course, in America, in different other countries. But there are lots of other countries that are not so developed. And for them, it's easier to look at a woman and say, okay, you know, she is in the home, she should be married, she should have kids. And that's her role in life. Anything beyond that, when you try to step out, you get questioned.

For example, me being in cricket, it doesn't matter if I work 18 hour days. It doesn't matter if I've been in the business for like 9 or 10 years. I still, when I go out there, I still, a lot of questions I have to deal with are, oh, your hair looks really great today. That's a really nice dress. What about your makeup? So, sometimes it's little exasperating, because you're like, after all these years, you still want to ask me those questions. And it's not me in particular, I think every woman goes through that.

But it's changing. And you know, I was the first woman in cricket in India, and now there are so many more women being involved. And I feel great about that. I also think that you always have to do what you want to do. You should not limit, you should not put boundaries around you and say, hey, this is not the role I want to do. It's like because it doesn't suit me. It's okay to be a square in a hole or, you know, whatever the terminology is, sorry.

Interviewer:

Square in a round hole.

Preity:

In a round hole or whatever it is, sorry. But it's okay. It's okay. As long as you can follow your heart, it's okay. You know, it's okay if people criticize you as long as you know what you want to do. And people

come, come around eventually. It might not be the easiest thing to do it in the beginning, but people do come around.

Interviewer:

And you've also been pretty vocal about human trafficking, specifically amongst girls. What do you believe if anything, there could be done to improve that and to bring awareness to that and help that issue?

Preity:

Well, you know, I would like to rewind and go to a time when, very early in my life, I saw my maid. I had this maid who was really sweet and awesome. But she used to be the one who used to work. And her husband was an alcoholic and he wouldn't work. But every time she got her pay, he would come and beat her and take the money so that he could go drink. And we tried to go to the cops and we tried to help her out. And the first thing everybody told us is, hey, don't get involved. It's none of your business. It's something personal between them, don't get involved.

So, that was something that really kind of shook me up to where I felt none of us really want to get involved, unless it directly involves us, you know unless something happens to us. And then we feel really victimized and we feel why isn't anybody else trying to get involved.

So, I think when I got famous, I felt I had a voice and it was important to use this voice and to be involved. And I was, I saw some kids and I saw some people who were rescued from human trafficking and it really broke my heart because usually, you think, okay, you know, they were like 8-year-old girls, 10-year-old boys, and they didn't have a voice. Nobody cared. Nobody really, it never really mattered to them to see what's going to happen.

So, it started off with that. And I think it doesn't matter if you can, it matters if you can make a difference to one person, you know, as long as you can make a difference. So, it started with that. And you know, after that, it was just there.

Interviewer:

And what would be your last message that you would want to give to our audience and young girls around the world about empowerment and self-worth?

Preity:

Well, I think my message to all the girls out there is there was this quote I read once and I loved it. It says, 'Don't tell me the sky is the limit when you have footprints on the moon.' So, I don't think women and girls should limit themselves to anything. I think they should be brave enough to follow their dreams. It's okay to make mistakes. It's okay to fall. What's important is not how hard you fall, but how you get up after you fall.

So, go out there, follow your dreams, unless you go and give it a shot you'll never know where you land up. And I think once you decide you want to follow a certain path, even though there might be problems in the beginning and people might say, no, this is not the right thing for you to do. But if they see you're determined, they will support you. And I think that's it. You just go follow your dreams and be who you want to be. Especially now, it's 2016, you know.

Interviewer:

Now of all times is the perfect time.

Preity:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Yeah, I agree. And one last thing that I would like to ask you is aside from being an actress, a celebrated actress, and a cricket team owner, what else do you see yourself doing in the future?

Preity:

Oh, there's so many things I want to do. I always say, 'Too many things, too little time.' But what I wanted to do when I was a little kid and what I studied for was I wanted to be a detective and a forensic scientist. So, I don't know if I can do that. But I think I do also want to, besides all the various ambitions I have, I also want to be a mother. I want to have a family. And that's a very important part of my life too.

But there's no set rule that this is what I want to do. Whatever inspires me, because if I look back into my life, whenever I made a plan, it never really worked out because life is spontaneous. Because I was studying to be something else, I became an actor. And then from acting, I jumped to cricket. So, I don't know what's going, I mean, I do know I want to have a family. But besides that, I don't know what's going to inspire me or what's going to suddenly affect me and where it'll take me, as long as I think you just are. As I said, you follow your heart, you're in a good place.

Download our FREE eBooks: <https://www.englishspeecheschannel.com/free-english-ebooks>

