

## **Santosh Pathare and Ganesh Matkari Discuss the Current State of Marathi Cinema at PIFF 2025**

Renowned film critic Ganesh Matkari and Santosh Pathare, director of the Third Eye Asian Film Festival, shared their insights on the current state of Marathi cinema during a media interaction at the Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) 2025. They discussed the evolution of Marathi films, the impact of OTT platforms, and the role of film festivals in shaping the industry.

Ganesh Matkari highlighted the transformative phase Marathi cinema underwent post-2004, following the release of the film Shwaas. He noted that this period saw the emergence of new directors who experimented with diverse themes. However, post-2011, the industry witnessed a shift towards commercial considerations, with some filmmakers drawing inspiration from Hindi cinema. Today, between 100 to 150 Marathi films are released annually, creating a dilemma for audiences on which films to watch. Matkari emphasized that the weekend box office performance has become a critical metric for a film's success. If a film fails to perform within three days, it is often pulled from theaters. He attributed this trend partly to the audience's indecision, stating, "If even a few good films out of a hundred are watched consistently, the industry can improve."

Santosh Pathare expressed optimism about the future of Marathi cinema, citing the emergence of new talent. He credited platforms like PIFF for playing a crucial role in nurturing this growth. Pathare stated, "Despite the overwhelming number of films being produced, we are seeing some reassuring new faces in Marathi cinema. Festivals like PIFF are instrumental in supporting this evolution. Initiatives like PIFF, along with audience feedback, will undoubtedly create a positive impact."

PIFF 2025 showcased a diverse range of films, including socially and politically sensitive narratives that highlighted human relationships. The festival also witnessed a growing interest in experimental cinema among audiences. Pathare noted, "Festivals like PIFF provide a new identity to films that are otherwise unfamiliar to many viewers. This is the true essence of film festivals."

Discussing the interplay between OTT platforms and film festivals, Pathare remarked, "Both OTT and festivals are vital for regional cinema. Many excellent regional films gain recognition at festivals and later find a place on OTT platforms. OTT has opened doors for regional films to reach global

audiences. It is essential to keep both avenues accessible for filmmakers.”

### **PIFF as a Hub for Dialogue beyond Screenings**

PIFF is not just about film screenings; it also serves as a platform for meaningful dialogue. The festival organizes masterclasses and workshops, allowing audiences to interact directly with directors, writers, actors, and experts. This year, workshops featuring Tapan Sinha and Boman Irani, along with discussions led by Vijay Tendulkar, received an overwhelming response. These sessions delved into various aspects of filmmaking, including storytelling, screenplay writing, acting, and direction, offering audiences a chance to engage with industry veterans.

Matkari highlighted that film festivals like PIFF have evolved into centers for dialogue, discussion, and new perspectives. They provide audiences with a comprehensive and enriching experience, making them more than just a platform for film screenings. “Film festivals offer a space for audiences to interact directly with filmmakers and experts, I just witnessed Samar Nakhate addressing a bunch of students about Films in the theatre lobby,” he said.

### **Celebrated Film Critic Swapan Mullick Reflects on the Art of Storytelling in Cinema**

Renowned film critic Swapan Mullick shared his journey into film criticism, emphasizing the importance of storytelling in cinema. In an insightful conversation, Mullick reflected on his early exposure to global films through Kolkata’s film society movement and how it shaped his perspective on filmmaking.

Mullick explained that Indian newspapers traditionally lack dedicated film criticism departments, making it an additional responsibility alongside journalistic duties. His deep passion for cinema, cultivated in college, naturally led him to critique films, particularly Indian and Bengali cinema.

When asked about modern cinema, he observed a shift from strong storytelling to an overemphasis on technical spectacle – flying cars, explosions, and dazzling visuals replacing narrative depth. However, he affirmed that audiences still appreciate well-crafted stories, citing Lagaan as a modern classic that blends historical context with engaging storytelling.

Ultimately, he stressed that cinema should be an honest reflection of society

rather than a tool for propaganda or mere entertainment. “Good storytelling,” he concluded, “is what gives a film lasting value.” His words serve as a reminder to young filmmakers that while technology evolves, the heart of cinema remains in its ability to tell meaningful stories.