

Voices of Tomorrow, struggles of today!

Marathi filmmakers explore their stories of making independent films featured in International Marathi Competition of 24th PIFF

Pune, January 20, 2026:

A blend of debutants and veteran filmmakers came together today to reveal the creative struggles and inspirations behind this year's most talked-about Marathi films.

The interactive session titled 'Voices of Tomorrow: conversations with today's Marathi Competition' took place at the Pune International Film Festival (PIFF), where PIFF Deputy Director Vishal Shinde engaged in a dialogue with the directors of films selected for the prestigious Marathi Competition section. The panel included Ramesh More (Aadishesh), Mohit Takalkar (To, Ti Ani Fuji), Jijivisha Kale (Tighee), Ravindra Manik Jadhav (Jeev), Santosh Davkhar (Gondhal), Manoj Naiksatham (Gaman), and Sameer Tiwari (Bapya).

Jijivisha Kale, director of Tighee, reflected on her decade-long transition to the director's chair. "My journey began 12 years ago as an assistant on the film Vazandar. Today, I present my own film," Kale said.

She emphasized the importance of collaboration over solitary passion. "No matter how intense your passion is, your story cannot move forward without the right people. In that regard, I have been fortunate to find good people constantly, which brought me here." Kale also touched upon the personal nature of her work. "Being the only child of my parents, I often felt a sense of loneliness. I have expressed that same sentiment through my film. The women I have observed throughout my life are the ones visible in my cinema."

Mohit Takalkar, known for his theatre work, discussed his transition to film with To, Ti Ani Fuji. "Although I have been doing theatre for a long time, the thought of making a film was always churning in my mind," Takalkar said.

"I grew up in the city. While I had access to stories, the urban chaos brings its own set of nagging questions. These are the themes that emerge in my work. Relationships undergo specific changes in city life, and that is what I have tried to portray."

Ravindra Manik Jadhav, a school teacher from Dhule and director of Jeev, shared an inspiring story of resourcefulness. "I work as a teacher, but the desire to film was always there. I started in 2013 by shooting documentaries like Shalabahya and Nirodh on a simple Handicam, knowing nothing about film technique."

Jadhav's breakthrough came when his low-budget documentary Thaal Bhanksar won a ₹2 lakh prize, fueling his ambition. "In 2018, someone shared a school memory regarding Nagpanchami, which sparked the story for Jeev. My wife stood by me financially, and that is how the film was completed," he said.

For Manoj Naiksatham, director of Gaman, filmmaking was a high-stakes gamble. "I used to be a wedding photographer. Watching video shoots sparked my interest," Satam recalled. "I had a story that I initially published as a novel in 2015. That gave me hope, and it eventually evolved into this film."

He candidly admitted to the financial strain. "I had no money. I staked everything I had. I saw two options- go mad or dive in deep. I decided to dive. The characters emerged from the Konkan region, and the film was made."

Sameer Tewari, the director of Bapya, shared his unique perspective as a native of Uttar Pradesh making Marathi cinema. "I am from UP, but my wife is Marathi, and I was determined to make a film in Marathi," Tewari said. "I spent four years searching for a producer. Finally, my wife raised the

funds. Actor Girish Kulkarni helped me, and the social realities I have observed came to the fore in the film."

Veteran filmmaker Ramesh More (Adishesh) spoke about his roots and the philosophical underpinnings of his work. "I grew up in the slums of Mumbai and never formally learned film technique; I learned by doing," More stated.

He highlighted the struggle of finding backing for artistic cinema. "I spent three and a half years looking for producers. Many didn't understand the difference between a 'project' and a 'film.' Finally, a professor stepped in to produce it." Speaking on his film's theme, he added, "The experiences of the COVID pandemic brought out the 'Shesh' (residue) within us. That, combined with reading A.H. Salunkhe's book Balivansh, helped shape the characters."

Santosh Davkhar, director of Gondhal, described his journey as entirely self-driven. "I have no film background. I saw my first movie in the 10th standard. When OTT platforms were rejecting Marathi films, I was determined to showcase my work."

Davkhar educated himself by reading Robert McKee's seminal book on screenwriting. "The subject was the 'Gondhal' folk art. I invited Gondhali performers, listened to their music, took a bank loan, and made the movie," he concluded.