

First film in a Bhil language showcased at the 24th PIFF

It was a real challenge taking a dialect to a global platform. I really wanted to show people that Gujarat has diverse dialects and culture expressed Kaushik Garasiya, director of the film Kadaknath. This film was showcased in the Festival on January 16, in the Indian Cinema category.

Kadaknath a thriller film that depicts a story from a remote village in Dahod, Gujrat. The village is gripped with the fear surrounded around the mysterious killings of five peoples in last 3 months. The villagers preferred to be guided by their own sense of justice and avoids visiting police station to seek justice.

Garasiya and his friends crowdfunded this project by putting their money into the project. They did this because they really wanted it to happen. "I was advised by the friends from film fraternity how challenging it would be to make film in Bhil language but we took the risk and I personally feel that it was worth it," Garasiya said. Garasiya highlighted the challenges of the actors and efforts they have put in to adapt to the local cultural identity.

The filmmakers are now planning to take this film to other Film Festivals as well.

Victoria revolves around women's freedom

Another much discussed independent film is Victoria. It is directed by a young Malayali filmmaker Sivaranjini J. This marks her debut feature film. This film is result of a grant commissioned by the state government of Kerala to young women filmmakers.

Victoria a film inspired by her own experience of visiting a beauty salon at her hometown where she saw an actual rooster in the salon near the washroom. Victoria is a women centric film and is shot in one location, a beauty parlor. The film brings to light a sacrificial tradition of a rooster at a festival happening at St. George Church. It's a tradition of sacrificing a rooster as an offering to the saint to protect them from future harm and ward off evil. "This was inspired by a local ritual, it is very common in my place", says Sivaranjini.

Between Life and Death, White Snail Finds Human Connection

In White Snail (2025), directed by Elsa Kremser and Levin Peter, death is not a spectacle but a presence quietly woven into everyday life. The film follows two social outsiders from vastly different worlds: Masha, a young model grappling with mental instability, and Misha, a morgue technician and painter whose daily work places him among the dead. When the film screened at the PIFF in India, lead actor Mikhail Senkov, who plays Misha, spoke about the emotional and symbolic layers that shape the film's haunting resonance.

At its core, White Snail is about connection. "They come from two completely different worlds," Senkov explains. "Masha is from the modeling industry, and Misha is an artist who works in a morgue. But despite that distance, they are trying to understand each other and through that, they begin to understand themselves." According to him, what truly draws the two characters together is not just shared trauma, but a deeper sense of recognition: seeing oneself reflected in another's fragility.

The title White Snail carries multiple meanings that unfold gradually through the film. Senkov points out how the white snail recurs at key moments which are sometimes literal and sometimes metaphorical. Rather than offering answers, White Snail asks viewers to sit with discomfort. Senkov hopes the film encourages audiences to take a personal journey, to feel rather than judge. "It's a good drama," he says simply. "It can change people from inside."

Visiting India for the first time, Senkov describes the PIFF team as deeply welcoming. "The culture

is very different and interesting,” he says with a smile. “I felt happy from the moment I arrived.” Much like White Snail itself, the encounter was about crossing boundaries and finding connection in unexpected places.

Vanya: One man’s voice can make a difference

It takes a voice of one man, one persona that can make a difference in this chaotic world. I wanted to showcase the power of a one man and inspire people to get closer to nature expressed director Badiger Devendra.

Devendra’s film Vabnya, showcases that older generation is deeply rooted in the forest, culture, and ancestral land whereas, younger generation is attracted to the city’s glamour of money, comfort, and modern life. How the tribe is shown as endangered, evacuated, and lured by the false glamour of city life, only to lose identity and peace.

By blending realism with emotional depth, the film raises critical questions about sustainable development and gives voice to communities often pushed to the margins, making Vanya a timely and thought-provoking cinematic statement on environment and humanity.

Devendra, while speaking about his experience at PIFF shared, “In 2020, I had made film titled ‘Rudri’, it was rejected at PIFF. I really felt bad, and now I feel proud and honoured to be here with my new film Vanya. I want to showcase it across the Festivals in India.”

From Devotion to Deception: Imbu tells a rural tale of trust betrayed

Tulu language film Imbu directed by National Award winning filmmaker Shivadhwaj Shetty, presents a poignant narrative on faith, innocence and the impact of digital technology on rural lives. Set in a vibrant village, film follows Balanna, a deeply religious man who performs spiritual duties for the community despite struggling with illiteracy and financial hardship. Starring Naveen D Padil, Chandrakala, Hareesh Vasu Shetty and Prashamsa Shetty, Imbu examines the clash between tradition and technology.

“I chose a religious figure as the protagonist in the movie because social damage is far deeper when it happens to people who trust a human being like God. A common man losing faith is private, but when a priest collapses under the same problem, it becomes a collective shock,” said Shetty.

He father added that real motive of Imbu is to spread awareness. “Many innocent people believe technology is a blessing without understanding its risks. When cyber fraud happens, the damage is not just financial but emotional and social. Through this film, I wanted to show how awareness, not fear, is the real protection, especially for people rooted in faith and tradition,” concluded Shetty.