



At IFFI 2025, Tribeny Rai's *Shape of Momos* Brings Everyday Sikkimese Lives to Centre Stage

Sikkimese Filmmaker Tribeny Rai Highlights Challenges of a 'Nascent Film Industry' in Her Home State

#IFFIWood, 28 November 2025

Shape of Momos, an evocative debut feature by Sikkimese filmmaker **Tribeny Rai**, was screened under the **Indian Panorama** section at the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) on Thursday 27th November, 2025. Following the screening, Director **Tribeny Rai**, Producer and Co-writer **Kislay**, and lead actor **Gaumaya Gurung** engaged with the media at a press conference held at the IFFI grounds.

An alumna of the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI), Kolkata, Tribeny Rai is known for her sensitive exploration of women's experiences within the cultural and geographical layers of the Eastern Himalayas. *Shape of Momos*, her debut feature, which is a story rooted in Sikkim's Cultural Landscape, continues this thematic journey.

Speaking about the making of her debut film, Tribeny described the process as both *challenging and deeply rewarding*. With the Sikkimese film industry still in its nascent stage, filmmaking in the region comes with infrastructural limitations — even professional camera setups need to be sourced from cities like Kolkata, Kathmandu or Guwahati. Despite these hurdles, *Shape of Momos* has already travelled to several international festivals, including Busan, an experience she described as "fulfilling".

Tribeny Rai shared that the film's title draws from the cultural ubiquity of *momos* in Sikkim — a food shared across occasions, from weddings to funerals. "It represents the everyday lives and emotions of the people I come from," she noted.

Independent Voices, Shared Vision

Producer and co-writer **Kislay**, also a film school graduate, praised the authenticity embedded in Tribeny's first draft, which is grounded in her personal experiences. He emphasized that films from regions like Sikkim remain underrepresented, or are presented through narrow stereotypes in mainstream Indian cinema. "Stories like these need to come to light," he said, adding that their selection at IFFI feels "deeply rewarding" — a dream nurtured since their student filmmaking days.

A Female Perspective in Nepali-language Cinema

Lead actor Gaumaya Gurung expressed her excitement at being part of a film told from a *female perspective* — something she finds rare in the Nepali film industry, despite her five years of experience. She commended the film's blend of subjective and objective approaches in portraying the protagonist's inner world.

Distribution Challenges and Community Building

The team acknowledged the challenges of distributing and marketing independent films from the region. *Shape of Momos* is slated for release in Sikkim, North Bengal, pockets of Meghalaya and Assam, and Dehradun — areas with a strong Nepali-speaking audience. Additionally, Tribeny revealed that the film will also receive a theatrical release in Italy.

She also emphasized the emerging need for a supportive network of like-minded independent filmmakers in Sikkim, to overcome obstacles in distribution and visibility.

A Milestone for Sikkim's Budding Film Culture

Tribeny Rai, who identifies as the **first woman filmmaker from Sikkim**, reflected on the slow emergence of film culture in the state. With limited access, resources, and infrastructure, filmmaking remains a challenging pursuit. Yet, she notes a growing enthusiasm among young Sikkimese film students, many of whom have resonated with the portrayal of everyday life in *Shape of Momos*.

In mainstream Hindi cinema and even in certain web series, the Northeast is often exoticized or depicted through the lens of drug-related narratives, Tribeny Rai observed and added, "I wanted to tell a story where everyday people from Sikkim take center stage — where we are the heroes of our own stories."



Watch the full Press Conference:

Press Conference of the movie Shape of Momos | #...



About IFFI

Born in 1952, the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) stands tall as South Asia's oldest and largest celebration of cinema. Jointly hosted by the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India and the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG), State Government of Goa, the festival has grown into a global cinematic powerhouse—where restored classics meet bold experiments, and legendary maestros share space with fearless first-timers. What makes IFFI truly sparkle is its electric mix—international competitions, cultural showcases, masterclasses, tributes, and the high-energy WAVES Film Bazaar, where ideas, deals and collaborations take flight. Staged against Goa's stunning coastal backdrop from November 20–28, the 56th edition promises a dazzling spectrum of languages, genres, innovations, and voices—an immersive celebration of India's creative brilliance on the world stage.

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