



# From personal journeys to social realities: Young filmmakers are expanding the canvas of documentary cinema at MIFF

**Mumbai, 18 June 2026**

If there was one clear takeaway from the panel discussion titled "Are Young Filmmakers Redefining Documentaries?" at the Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF), it was this: the future of documentary filmmaking is in safe hands.

Bringing together acclaimed filmmaker Prabal Khaund, writer-filmmaker Preety Sharma, emerging filmmaker Samapti Das, and veteran filmmaker-academician Prof. Himansu Sekhar Khatua, the discussion highlighted how a new generation of storytellers is reshaping the documentary landscape with fresh perspectives, technological innovation, and a deep commitment to social realities. The session was moderated by Shri Pankaj Saxena, Artistic Director, Film Festivals, NFDC.



Prof. Himansu Sekhar Khatua said that today's young filmmakers enjoy unprecedented access to filmmaking tools and platforms. "They develop an idea and immediately begin creating. Unlike previous generations, they are not entirely dependent on film festivals for visibility. Digital platforms

have opened new avenues for reaching audiences," he said and added that the growing influence of AI and emerging technologies on documentary storytelling will only bring quality and versatility into filmmaking.

The veteran filmmaker, who currently heads the Biju Patnaik Film & Television Institute of Odisha, expressed confidence in the younger generation's commitment to meaningful storytelling. "Young filmmakers are highly introspective about their own lives and the society around them. They are deeply committed to social concerns. I believe the future of documentary filmmaking is extremely bright and will grow tremendously in the coming years," he said.



Young filmmaker Samapti Das, whose two films were screened at MIFF, called for greater awareness about documentary filmmaking among youth. She said that many aspiring filmmakers remain unaware of the opportunities the medium offers. "Documentaries are not just an alternative to commercial cinema; they can take filmmakers to remarkable heights," she said. At the same time, Das underlined the rigorous nature of documentary production and called upon producers to place greater trust in emerging talent.

Independent filmmaker and writer Preety Sharma highlighted the dedication that goes into making documentaries, often under challenging circumstances. "Many filmmakers spend years creating a documentary despite limited resources, funding constraints and lack of manpower. The effort is tremendous. The biggest challenge is ensuring these films reach audiences," she said, advocating for more formal exhibition and distribution platforms beyond YouTube.

Drawing from his experiences documenting indigenous communities in Northeast India, National Award-winning filmmaker Prabal Khaund spoke about the patience, cultural sensitivity and perseverance required in documentary filmmaking. Recounting the challenges of filming tribal traditions and rituals, he said that technological advancements should be embraced to make the work of documentary filmmakers easier and more impactful.



Pointing out the shift in audience perception, Moderator Pankaj Saxena said that there was a time when documentaries were often associated with boredom. "Today, young filmmakers are telling stories rooted in personal experiences, human struggles and social change. Their passion and authenticity are transforming the medium," he said.

The discussion also explored emerging formats such as hybrid documentaries and docu-fiction. What emerged throughout the conversation was a shared belief that contemporary documentary filmmakers are moving beyond conventional reportage to engage deeply with human emotions, personal journeys and lived experiences. This emotional authenticity, coupled with technological innovation and social commitment, is helping documentaries connect with wider audiences than ever before.

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**PIB Team MIFF | Mahesh Kumar/Riyas Babu/Darshana Rane**

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