

Cactus Pears

2025 | 112mins

Director: Rohan Parashuram Kanawade

Starring: Jayshri Jagtap, Bhushaan Manoj, Suraaj Suman

Cactus Pears is a semi-autobiographical feature debut from director Rohan Kanawade, concerning Anand's (Bhushaan Manoj) rekindled relationship with his childhood friend Bayla (Suraaj Suman). The action takes place over the 10 days of mourning Anand observes for his father, where he returns from his life in the city to his small Indian village.

Kanawade uses extreme close-ups and long takes, while marking the passing days by hard fades to black, while the photography 'caresses their skin with equal adoration' (Robert Daniels, 2025). Kanawade handles the whole film with sensitivity towards his protagonists and their environments, whilst also acknowledging the passing of a way of life, made all the more poignant by Vikas Urs' 'gorgeous landscape cinematography' (Variety, 2025).

Subtle performances from Manoj and Suman bring the film to life as their relationship redevelops. In particular, Manoj portrays the weight of Anand's grief, 'hunching over in every scene, his hair disheveled and his eyes weary' (Variety, 2025). Anand's mother, played charismatically by Jayshri Jagtap, knows about and is supportive of his sexuality which no-one else in the village is aware of, apart from Bayla.

Kanawade previously worked on shorts such as *U for Usha* (2019) and *Sundar* (2016) which also explored the clashes between culture and desire in contemporary rural India. *Cactus Pears* was an official selection at the Sundance Film Festival this year, going on to win the World Cinema Grand Jury prize.

Cactus Pears not only portrays the grief of death and bereavement sympathetically but also the problems of being gay in a rural Indian community. Its semi-autobiographical nature is fascinating in its very personal essence, reflective of the director's own life experiences.

'Kanawade's considered direction and spare storytelling keep the narrative refreshing. The director pulls along two threads that run parallel until they unexpectedly intertwine near the end'

- Hollywood Reporter

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

Excellent

Fair

Poor



Did You Know?

- *Cactus Pears* is the first Marathi-language film to appear at the Sundance Film Festival
- Raised in a Mumbai slum, Kanawade is a self-taught filmmaker who previously worked in interior design
- Bhushaan Manoj’s training includes the ancient martial art of Kalaripayattu which he uses to enhance his physical expressiveness during performances

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Follows a male dancer who does not fit into the societal standards of what a dancer should be.



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