



Sabar Bonda

(Cactus Pears)

a
Rohan
Parashuram
Kanawade
film

press-kit

LOGLINE

Anand, a 30-something city dweller compelled to spend a 10-day mourning period for his father in the rugged countryside of western India, tenderly bonds with a local farmer who is struggling to stay unmarried. As the mourning ends, forcing his return, Anand must decide the fate of his relationship born under duress.

SYNOPSIS

Anand (30), a call-center employee in Mumbai, is forced to spend ten days at his ancestral village to mourn the loss of his father at the behest of his mother, Suman (50).

As the mourning period begins post-cremation, he faces subtle but relentless badgering from relatives to get married so that at least his mother finds the pleasure of seeing him settled. Anand finds himself stifled, as coming out to extended family could alienate his mother from the relatives when she needs them the most.

He finds solace in his childhood friend, Balya (30), as he accompanies him on his daily outings into the mountains to herd goats. Balya has been using the 'educated girls favoring city-dwellers over farmers' as a ruse to stay unmarried as he undergoes similar pressures relating to his sexuality from his family.

To escape their pressures, the two men spend time together. Hailing from different worlds but bound by childhood memories, they connect over their common struggle. As the days pass, their intimacy blooms emotionally and physically. With the mourning period ending, will their burgeoning bond survive beyond the ten days?

Sabar Bonda (Cactus Pears) explores the delicate bonds that develop under duress and the future of it.

LABS AND MARKETS



2024



2023



2022 - 2023



2021 - 2022



2021

NOTE: During its development in labs and market, the film was known by its working title, Arms of a Man.



FILM INFORMATION

Original Title	Sabar Bonda	Co-Producer	Jim Sarbh
English Title	Cactus pears	Associate Producers	Rajesh Parwatkar, Deepthi Pendurty, Parag Pradhan
Genre	Drama	Executive Producers	Ilann Girard, Kishor Vasant Sawant
Language	Marathi (with EST)	Screenplay	Rohan Parashuram Kanawade
Countries of Production	India, UK, Canada	Cinematographer	Vikas Urs
Production Year	2025	Editor	Anadi Athaley
Running Time	112 min	Sound Designers	Anirban Borthakur, Naren Chandavarkar
Aspect Ratio	1.66:1	Re-Recording Mixers	Boloy Kumar Doloi, Rahul Karpe
Format	4K, Dolby ATMOS	Production Designer	Tejashree Kapadane
Director	Rohan Parashuram Kanawade	Costume Designer	Sachin Lovalekar
Cast	Bhushaan Manoj, Suraaj Suman, Jayshri Jagtap	Colorist	Himanshu Kamble
Producers	Neeraj Churi, Mohamed Khaki, Kaushik Ray, Naren Chandavarkar, Sidharth Meer, Hareesh Reddypalli, Rohan Parashuram Kanawade	Casting	Yugandhar Deshpande
		Cactus Pears VFX	Nitin Kale

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Sabar Bonda (Cactus Pears) is my deeply personal reimagining of the grieving period I experienced in my ancestral village in 2016. Born and raised in a Mumbai slum by a chauffeur father and a homemaker mother, my parents accepted my sexuality, but my extended family in the village was unaware. During this grieving period, they began pressuring me to marry within a year, as per custom. This constant pressure overshadowed my grief, leaving me longing for an escape I couldn't find at the time.

Through this film, I explore the possibility of solace and freedom by allowing my protagonist to experience moments of connection and respite with an estranged childhood friend. These moments gradually blossom into a tender bond, making this film a journey that begins with tragedy and moves toward hope and positivity.

To ensure authenticity, I cast actors from the region where the film was shot, despite the challenges of finding local talent willing to portray queer characters due to cultural stigma. After three years of searching, Bhushaan Manoj and Suraaj Suman were selected for their backgrounds as trained theater actors and their six-year friendship, which added depth and realism to the characters' bond and intimacy. Their grounded and relatable appearances were also crucial to portraying queer individuals as ordinary people rather than idealized figures, further humanizing their story.

My personal experiences shaped *Sabar Bonda* to reflect the realities of lower-class queer life in India, challenging the misconception that queer experiences are limited to the upper class. By weaving together urban and rural experiences, the film aims to normalize queerness and celebrate its presence in all layers of society.

The characters of the parents in the film are inspired by my parents whose love and wisdom led them to accept my sexuality without any conflict. By highlighting this aspect of acceptance without sensationalizing struggle, the film offers a fresh perspective that redefines queer narratives and fosters hope.

I used static frames to capture the stillness and sluggish pace of that time in the village. And although at its core it's a romance drama, it has no background score. I wanted to use layered soundscape to paint the urban and rural spaces to further enhance the tender quality of the film.

I shot this film in a small village called Kharshinde, where my mother was born and raised. We filmed several scenes near a man-made lake in the village, created decades ago due to the lack of a natural water source. When the lake was being dug, my mother, then a teenager, worked as one of the laborers. Knowing that this landscape holds a part of my mother's personal history made the experience deeply meaningful for me.

**Rohan
Parashuram
Kanawade**

Filming the sequence with Anand's grandfather on the set of *Sabar Bonda*.
January, 2024.



BIOGRAPHIES

Rohan Parashuram Kanawade

(writer & director)

Rohan Parashuram Kanawade is a self-made filmmaker raised in a Mumbai slum by a chauffeur father and homemaker mother. Transitioning from interior design to filmmaking, Rohan's short films have screened globally. His debut feature, *Sabar Bonda (Cactus Pears)*, was developed at the Venice Biennale College Cinema 2022-2023 and participated in platforms such as Film Bazaar, Venice Gap Financing Market, and Goes to Cannes. His short films include *U Ushacha (U for Usha)*, *Khidkee (Window)*, *Sundar (Beautiful)*, and *Ektya Bhinti (Lonely Walls)*.

Neeraj Churi

(producer)

Neeraj Churi champions South Asian LGBTQIA+ storytelling through Lotus Visual Productions. His feature *A Place of Our Own* won the Audience Choice Award at SXSW 2023. His projects include short *Holy Curse* (winner Best Short Film at the Oscar qualifying Tasveer Film Festival); short *Sheer Qorma* (winner Audience Choice Award at Frameline) and *Queer Parivaar* (winner IRIS Prize Best British Short) He collaborates with non-profit orgs to support underrepresented filmmakers via grants and mentorship programs. An alumnus of the New York Film Academy, he also holds degrees in information science management.

Mohamed Khaki

(producer)

Mohamed Khaki, a lifelong film enthusiast from Tanzania, has lived in Toronto since 1975, retiring after a career in finance. His passion for world cinema grew by attending TIFF annually since 1978. He is now producing independent films in India. Mohamed is past President of *Raag-Mala* Toronto, which promotes Indian classical music, and remains as its Artistic Director.

Kaushik Ray
(producer)

Kaushik Ray, a writer-director, runs Taran Tantra Telefilms Ltd, focusing on LGBTQ+ South Asian stories, intersectionality, minority rights, women's rights, and otherwise untold stories. *Sabar Bonda* is his first feature as producer, with prior credits on several award-winning shorts. His debut short as writer-director, starring Lilette Dubey, premiered at BFI Flare in 2024.

Naren Chandavarkar
(producer, sound designer)

Naren Chandavarkar is a Mumbai-based composer, sound designer, producer, and founder of Moonweave Films. As a producer, his next film *Shadowbox (Baksho Bondi)* received the CNC post-production fund in 2024 and is set to premiere in 2025. His other credits include *Second Chance* (Proxima Competition, Karlovy Vary, 2024), *And, Towards Happy Alleys* (Panorama, Berlinale, 2023), and *Balekempa* (FIPRESCI Award, IFFR, 2018). As a sound designer and composer his credits include *The Disciple* (Venice Competition, 2020), *Newton* (Forum, Berlinale, 2017), *Ship of Theseus* (TIFF, 2012) and *The Shepherdess and Seven Songs* (Encounters, Berlinale, 2020). He has been nominated for a Hollywood Music in Media Award, International Cinephile Society Award, and a Canadian Screen Award.

Sidharth Meer
(producer)

Sid is an entrepreneur and M&E veteran with over 20 years of experience in film. Known for his expertise in cinematography, VFX, digital workflows, and color grading, he has worked on acclaimed films such as the Oscar-winning *The Elephant Whisperers*, Oscar-nominated *Writing with Fire* and *All That Breathes*, and Peabody-winning *While We Watched*. As a producer, Sid's credits include *And, Towards Happy Alleys* (Berlinale 2023), *Second Chance* (Karlovy Vary 2024), and *Putul Nacher Itikatha*, *Sabar Bonda*, and *Baksho Bondi* (2025). Through Bridge PostWorks, he supports independent filmmakers, creating an ecosystem for impactful storytelling and a legacy of inspiring films.



Jim Sarbh
(co-producer)

Jim Sarbh is a Mumbai-based film and theatre actor, producer, and founder of Wonderful Entertainment. His performances in films like *Neerja*, *Padmaavat*, and *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, and series like *Made in Heaven*, and *Rocket Boys*, have earned him several awards and nominations, including a Filmfare Award, and an International Emmy nomination. Sarbh was a Forbes India '30 Under 30' honoree for his contributions to the Indian theatre as an actor and a director. As a producer, Sarbh has co-produced *Baksho Bondi*, which is set to premiere in 2025.

Bhushaan Manoj
(actor, character name: Anand)

Bhushaan Manoj is an actor with over a decade of experience in theatre and film. Trained in Electronics Engineering, he transitioned to acting, earning a Master's in Theatre from Pune University. Bhushaan's training includes Kalaripayattu, an ancient martial art that enhances his physical expressiveness and performance strength. Bhushaan has performed in acclaimed productions like *Macbeth*, *Anol Shalom*, and *Ashcharya Chudamani*, directed by the celebrated Sri Prasanna. A recipient of a fellowship from the Kolkata Centre for Creativity, he has explored Indian theatre practices to deepen his craft. Combining emotional depth with physical authenticity, Bhushaan's disciplined approach has established him as a unique voice in Indian cinema and theatre.

Suraaj Suman
(actor, character name: Balya)

Suraaj Suman is a versatile actor trained in both Western and traditional Indian theatre techniques. With a Master's degree in Theatre from Pune University, he has worked on diverse roles, including performances in *Macbeth*, *Kunacha Kunala Mel Nai*, and *Ashcharya Chudamani*, directed by Sri Prasanna. Suraaj's method combines physicality, emotional depth, and cultural authenticity, refined under Prasanna's guidance. Beyond acting, he has contributed to preserving Indian folk art through initiatives like Lokkala 2020. His ability to blend global techniques with Indian traditions makes him an expressive emerging talent in film and theatre.

Jayshri Jagtap

(actor, character name: Suman)

Jayshri Jagtap is a multifaceted actor, teacher, and poet who transitioned from education to theatre and acting. With an M.A. and B.Ed., she began her artistic journey with Aavishkaar Theatre Group, refining her craft under the guidance of seasoned mentors. She made her film debut in the Marathi movie *Maauli* and has since appeared in *Bandishala*, *Soyrik*, and popular Marathi web series such as *Pet Puraan* and *Kaalasutra*. On television, she is known for her roles in serials like *Sukh Mhanje Nakki Kay Asat* and *Aai Tuljabhavani*. Her theatre work includes *Dagad Aani Maati*, which was showcased at the Kolkata National Theatre Festival. Jayshri's diverse and enriching journey highlights her dedication to the performing arts, establishing her as a rising talent in Marathi cinema and beyond.

Vikas Urs

(cinematographer)

Vikas Urs is an independent cinematographer whose work focuses on deeply personal and visually unique films. His credits include *Pedro* and *Shivamma*, both premiered at Busan and earned acclaim at BFI London, Nantes, Pingyao and Fajr followed by *Alaav (Hearth and Home)* and *Body* which premiered at Nantes and IFFK 2024. His upcoming film *Tiger's Pond* is slated for major premiere this year. Vikas's work on documentaries like *Against the Tide* (Sundance) showcases his expertise in visual storytelling in the non fiction space. Experimental projects like *Wanderers Between Worlds* have been exhibited globally, including Google Arts and Culture, cementing his place as a standout cinematographer in contemporary Indian cinema.

Anadi Athaley

(editor)

Anadi Athaley is a National Award-winning editor and producer with a specialization in film editing from FTII. He has edited acclaimed films such as *Ralang Road* (Karlovy Vary 2017), *Borderlands* (National Award 2022), and *Mor Mann Ke Bharam* (MAMI 2017). His work spans shorts like *Holy Curse* (BFI 2024) and Netflix's *Indian Predator: Murder in a Courtroom* (as a co-editor). Known for blending precision with narrative flow, Anadi continues to shape impactful cinema, earning recognition both in India and internationally.



Sound Designer Anirban Borthakur conducting field recordings in Kharshinde village, the primary filming location for the village sequences. June, 2024.

Anirban Borthakur

(*sound designer*)

Anirban Borthakur, a sound designer with over a decade of experience in creating the unique sonic signature for various films, documentaries and web series. With a meticulous ear for detail and a commitment to authenticity, he continues to leave an indelible mark on the audio landscape of cinematic storytelling. He has been awarded with Indian Recording Academy Awards for *Tumhari Sulu* (2018), earned Runner-up for best sound design for *The Disciple* (Venice 2020) by International Cinephile Society, USA and also won the Dhawani Award by Wimptsea 2023 for the series *Rocket Boys*. His recent sound design work includes *Second Chance* (Karlovy Vary 2024) and the documentary *And, Towards Happy Alleys* (Berlinale 2023).

Boloy Kumar Doloi

(*sound re-recording mixer*)

Boloy Kumar Doloi is a sound re recording mixer and designer with over 17 years of experience, contributing to over 200 feature films across multiple languages, including English and Hindi. Known for his expertise in Dolby Atmos technology, he has worked with renowned filmmakers such as Majid Majidi, Mira Nair, S.S. Rajamouli, and Vishal Bharadwaj to name a few solidifying his reputation as a skilled and versatile professional. His accolades include the IIFA 2023 Technical Award for Best Sound Mixing for *Monica, O My Darling, 2022*, the Festival Prize for Best Sound for *Deep Inside, 2021*, and nominations for the Satellite Award and HFCS Award for Best Sound for *RRR, 2023*. Boloy Kumar Doloi's dedication to sound design and mixing has made him a celebrated figure in Indian and International cinema.

Himanshu Kamble

(*colorist*)

Himanshu Kamble is a colorist with a unique perspective shaped by his background in fashion and music. At Bridge PostWorks, Himanshu started by grading dailies for the BBC series *A Suitable Boy* and soon advanced to final color grading for projects on Netflix, Amazon, MUBI, Zee5, and others. His notable credits include films such as *Sad Letters of an Imaginary Woman* (2024, Dir. Nidhi Saxena), *The Fable* (2024, Dir. Raam Reddy), *Gyaarag Gyaarah* (2024, Dir. Umesh Bist), *The Scavenger of Dreams* (2024, Dir. Suman Ghosh), *Tarla* (2023, Dir. Piyush Gupta), and *Kathal* (2023, Dir. Yashowardhan Mishra). He has also worked on *Kuttey* (Netflix, 2023), *Sadabahr* (2022, Dir. Suyash Kamat), and *Patal - Tee* (2022, Dir. Mukund Narayan).

Sachin Lovalekar
(costume designer)

Sachin Lovalekar has been a prominent costume designer in the Marathi and Hindi film industries for over 20 years, with more than 75 films and web series to his credit. His notable works include *Court* and *The Disciple* (Dir. Chaitanya Tamhane), *Tumbbad* (Dir. Rahi Barve), *Newton* (Dir. Amit Masurkar), and *The Fable* (Dir. Raam Reddy). Lovalekar has received several prestigious accolades, including the National Film Award for Best Costume Designer in 2016 for the Marathi film *Cycle*. He also won a Filmfare Award for Best Costume Design for *Sam Bahadur* and a Marathi Filmfare Award for *Me Vasant Rao*. His expertise and creativity have made him a key contributor to Indian cinema.

Tejashree Kapadane
(production designer)

Tejashree Kapadane is a production designer with seven years of experience in set design for Marathi films, Hindi advertisements, and international projects. A graduate of NDMVP College of Architecture, she brings technical expertise and creative vision to her work. Her credits include Marathi films, web series, and a thesis film for NYFA. Known for her attention to detail, Tejashree's designs enhance the storytelling of every project she undertakes.

Yugandhar Deshpande
(casting director)

Yugandhar Deshpande is a casting director and writer whose debut as a casting director, *The Disciple* (2020, Dir. Chaitanya Tamhane), was critically acclaimed and premiered at the 77th Venice Film Festival. His work includes *Three of Us* (2022, Dir. Avinash Arun), streaming on Netflix, and the Marathi web series *Lampaan* (Dir. Nipun Dharmadhikari) and *Manvaat Murders*, both Sony Liv originals. He has also cast several TV commercials and short films, including *Next, Please!* (written and produced by Chaitanya Tamhane) and *Under the Waters* (Dir. Ambica Pandit, MuBi). Currently, he is casting for Udit Bhargava's feature *Kohinoor* and the Marathi film *Dashawtar*. His expertise in identifying talent makes him a valued collaborator in the industry.



Neeraj Churi (Producer)
Lotus Visual Productions
+44 753 0909523
vision@lotusve.com

Denise Sinelov (USA PR)
Required Viewing
denise@requiredviewing.net

Neha Kaul (India PR)
Shania Pereira
shaniapereira99@gmail.com