



# The

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# Song



DAKINNY PRODUCTIONS and GIRELLE PRODUCTION present THE SONG with TANDU BIDHA JIMMY WANGYAL TSHERING TSHERING DORJI SONAM LHAMO DORJI WANGDI  
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY DECHEN RÖDÖR PRODUCED BY JOHANN CHAPELAN DECHEN RÖDÖR CINEMATOGRAPHY BY RANGOLI AGARWAL MUSIC BY TASHI DORJI  
EDITED BY NOEMIE AZUL LOEVE DECHEN RÖDÖR LINE PRODUCER SANGAY CHEDUP SOUND DESIGN BY MIKAËL BARRE  
PRESENTED BY DAKINNY PRODUCTIONS GIRELLE PRODUCTION FIDALGO FILM PRODUCTION FOLLOW BACK FILMS VOLOS FILMS REVOLVER SAMUH ACTARUS PRODUCTIONS  
CO-PRODUCED BY MIKAËL BARRE STEFANO CENTINI MICHAËL GAUTHIER FERNANDA RENNO MATHILDE SOLIMEO PAOLO MARIA SPINA NYEMA ZAM  
PRODUCTION DESIGN BY PEM LHAM COSTUME DESIGN BY KUNZANG WANGMO ASSOCIATE CINEMATOGRAPHER JIGMET WANGCHUK MAKE UP SHERAB LHAMO POSTER LUXI CHHIMI DORJI SALES DIVERSION



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# I, the Song

## Logline

To save her job and reputation, a school teacher travels to the south of Bhutan in search of her doppelganger, but as she becomes entangled in her lookalike's life, she realizes she might be the only one to solve her doppelganger's disappearance as well as recover a "stolen" sacred song.

**Duration:** 112 minutes

**Genre:** Drama, Mystery, Women, Journey

**Main cast:** Tandin Bidha, Jimmie Wangyal Tshering,  
Tshering Dorji, Sonam Lhamo, Dorji Wangdi

**Writer-director:** Dechen Roder

## Produced by

Dechen Roder, Dakinny Productions (Bhutan)  
Johann Chapelan, Girelle Production (France)

## Coproduced by

Fernanda Renno, Fidalgo Films (Norway)  
Stefano Centini, Volos Films (Taiwan, Italy)  
Paolo Maria Spina, Revolver (Italy)  
Mikaël Barre, Actarus Productions (France)  
Michaël Gauthier & Mathilde Solimeo, Follow Back Films (France)  
Nyema Zam, Samuh (Bhutan)

## Main crew

Cinematographer: Rangoli Agarwal  
Production designer: Pem Lham  
Costume designer: Kunzang Wangmo  
Editors: Noémie Loeve, Dechen Roder  
Sound Designer : Mikaël Barre  
Composer & music: Tashi Dorji  
Line producer: Sangay Chedup  
Associate producers: Tshering Dorji, Thinley Choden  
Associate Cinematographer: Jigmet Wangchuk

## World sales

Diversion

## Labs, workshops, markets:

Asian Project Market - Busan IFF 2018 , Goa NFDC Coproduction Market 2019,  
Arthouse Produire au Sud Kolkata 2020, Venice Gap-Financing Market 2022,  
Tokyo TIFFCOM Gap-Financing Market 2022

**Supported by** APSA Academy Film Fund, Visions Sud Est, Ciclic, SØRFOND,  
World Cinema Fund, CNC Aide aux cinémas du Monde, MiBAC, Samuh







## SYNOPSIS

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Nima, a teacher in the capital of Bhutan, is accused of being in a non-consensual pornographic video. To prove her innocence, she travels to the south of Bhutan in search of her lookalike in the video.

Once there, she is told her doppelgänger, Meto, has left Bhutan. Unconvinced, Nima digs deeper through close encounters with Meto's friends and lovers.

A visit to Meto's village confuses Nima further, as Meto's brother is convinced Meto is still in Bhutan, while her grandmother waits for Meto's return from the city, after recovering a sacred song which was "stolen" by 'city people'.

As Nima begins to unravel the fragments of Meto's life, she becomes entangled in a web of uncertainty. But, as her anger towards Meto transforms into concern, she realizes she is the only one who can solve Meto's disappearance and 'recover' the stolen song.

I, THE SONG is a film about exploitation, music, identity, love, and a culture balanced precariously on the threshold of a reckless digital age.









## AUTHOR - DIRECTOR - PRODUCER | Dechen Roder

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Dechen Roder is one of the few female filmmakers from the kingdom of Bhutan. She started off making small documentaries and videos, through her production company - Dakinny Productions, incepted in 2009. In 2015 she wrote and directed LO SUM CHOE SUM (3 Year 3 Month Retreat), which competed in the Berlinale Shorts and other festivals around world.

The same year she began production of her debut feature film- HONEYGIVER AMONG THE DOGS (recipient of the ACF 2016 post production award and the HANIFF 2014 project market award) which premiered in Busan International Film Festival 2017, had its European premiere in Berlinale 2017 and won three awards at the Fribourg International Film Festival 2017. It was also the first film from Bhutan to be nominated for an Asia Pacific Screen Award 2017 in the Cultural Diversity category.

I, THE SONG is her second feature film. She is also the organizer and founder of the film festival- Beskop Tshechu.









## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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I initially wanted to make two films. The first one was inspired by a local newspaper article where a remote community in Bhutan claimed that the capital city had "stolen" a sacred song of theirs, performing it on TV, over the radio, on stage, and essentially for entertainment. The community felt that this song was sung out of context, and thus "desecrated" and would upset their local female guardian deity. They claimed they wanted the song "back." I found this tragic and yet so absurd. How does anyone "bring back a song"?

Bhutan jumped into modernity in the 1960s. Before that there were no roads, no formal education. My mother walked twelve days through Bhutan to reach the border to go to school in India. In 1989 our first feature film was made, and in 1999 Internet and TV came to the country. In so many ways we skipped a few steps, took huge leaps over them. We jumped straight from a strong oral culture to a visual culture of TV, films and digital media. We didn't pause to think in between. Our oral culture today fades, facing a quiet and unpronounced death. During my mother's childhood it was the main form of storytelling, and it was dynamic, rich, and informed her and her generation about identity, their world, culture, and what is important. Today, like all over the modern world, we are confused. Is it possible to pause in this modern frenzy, to take a moment and ponder sacredness, culture, originality, meaning and what is important.

I also wanted to make a film about the experiences of two female friends- both of whom were accused of being in local "pornography"- where in both cases the video was shot without their knowledge. One friend was recorded in a video during an intimate encounter with her then lover. He later released it as a form of "revenge" porn, and it went viral through social media platforms (WeChat). With a small population of 700,000, this kind of abuse and unsolicited publicity becomes even more damaging and frightening. One doesn't even have to be famous to be famously watched. Very few people saw her for what she was- the victim.

Over the years I found a strange parallel in these stories and themes. A parallel between the "thefts" and reckless sharing of a sacred song and of private experiences, and the repercussions and trauma on the victims, who are left feeling vulnerable and as though they are losing their identity. I wanted to see if I could find an answer as to how to maintain and understand the "sacredness" of experiences, identities, culture, self, and if that is not possible, at least try to understand how we can confront and battle this frightening whirlwind of thefts and abuses and still hang on to who we are.

In our local Buddhist narratives there are many stories of subterranean spirits, living in lakes, trees or other parts of our natural world, who need to be respected, and their abodes should never be polluted or defiled. There is one story I felt particularly resonated with the film story. Long ago, there was a subterranean lake spirit, or a mermaid, who felt polluted by human's exploitation and disregard of the lake, and she decided to "move" or find a new abode. The mermaid transforms into an old woman and physically moves locations- crossing districts, and landscapes she finds a new physical home. Today, in her new home, she is well taken care of, the physical lake is kept sacred and offerings are made to her. I try to weave elements of her story into the film, and "water" and "reflections" as metaphors for the main characters, and how their identities are violated. As doppelgängers of each other, they are in flux, like water, their essence moves through space, time and meaning.

This is why I, the Song is a hybrid film, perhaps a kind of dramatic poem. It is a thriller, a drama, a mystery, a tragedy, a cultural reflection, a ponder, a pause, a film about love, music, identity, culture, and exploitation.

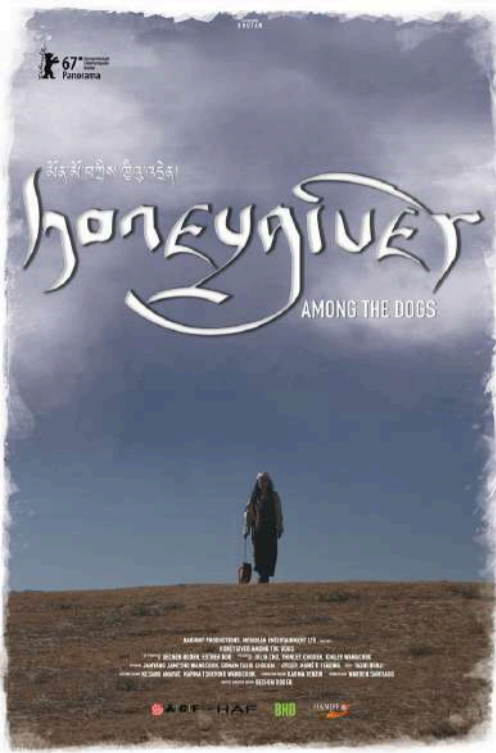






# FILMOGRAPHY OF THE DIRECTOR

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## HONEYGIVER AMONG THE DOGS

Fiction, 132 min, 2016

[Festivals/Awards/Screenings \(select\)](#) :

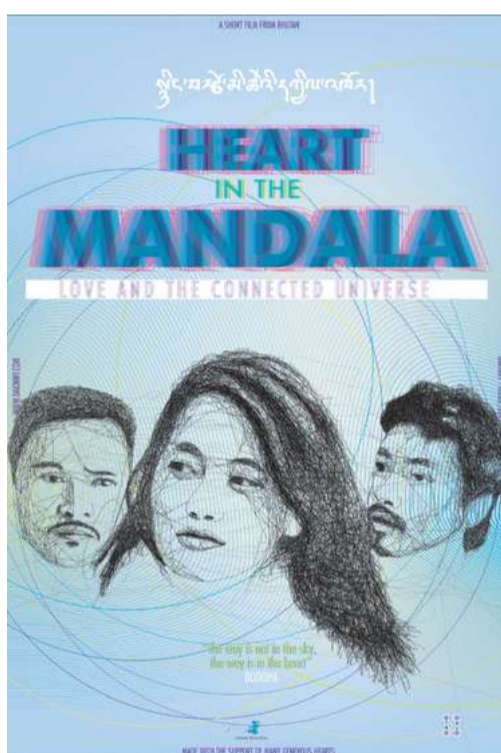
Berlinale - Panorama 2017 - Busan International Film Festival 2016 - Fribourg International Film Festival 2017 (Winner of 3 awards) - Vancouver International Film Festival 2017 - Taipei International Film Festival 2017 - Hong Kong International Film Festival 2017 - Winner of the Asian Cinema Fund for postproduction 2016 - Bhutan's first nomination for the Asia Pacific Screen Awards in the Cultural Diversity category.



## LO SUM CHOE SUM

Fiction, 20 min, 2015

[Festivals/Screenings \(select\)](#) : Berlinale shorts 2015 - Fribourg International Film Festival 2015 - Palm Springs Short Fest 2015 - Prague Shorts 2016 - Melbourne International Film Festival 2015.



## HEART IN THE MANDALA

Fiction, 38 min, 2012

[Festivals/Awards/Screenings](#) : Fukuoka Asian Art Museum 2013 - CineAsia Helsinki Film Festival 2014 - Bhutan Broadcasting Services (Bhutan national TV) 2014.



## ORIGINAL PHOTOCOPY OF HAPPINESS

Fiction, 20 min, 2011

[Festivals/Awards/Screenings](#) : Brussels International Film festival 2011 - Winner of the "Special Mention" at the ifva Hong Kong film awards, 2012.



## BOY OF GOOD WASTE

Written/Directed/Edited/Camera/Sound by Dechen Roder

Documentary, 18 min, 2005

[Festivals/Awards/Screenings](#) : broadcast on Bhutan Broadcasting Services (2006), screened in the Environmental Film Festival of DC, USA (2015)









## **TANDIN BIDHA -LEAD CAST (NIMA/METO)**

Tandin Bidha is one of Bhutan's most established actresses. She started acting in 2006, and has appeared in more than 45 films in Bhutan.

Winner of multiple film national awards for acting (Che Sem Che Lu 2009, Bum Bata Chen Me Rinzi 2014, Rube Ngakha Phuzhing 2018, Boed Garp Sonam Drugyel 2023), she is one of Bhutan's most established film talents.

She also directed her first feature "Glimmer of Hope" 2023 for Samuh OTT which also won a SAMUH award. I, the Song was her first experience in an independent arthouse Bhutanese film.

[https://www.instagram.com/tandinbidha\\_](https://www.instagram.com/tandinbidha_)

## **JIMMIE WANGYAL TSHERING -LEAD CAST (TANDIN)**

Jimmy Wangyal Tshering is more popularly known in Bhutan for his music studio- Atsara Entertainment, which produces many rap/hip-hop songs by youth.

He also occasionally composes, performs and produces music for commercial Bhutanese films and other projects. I, the Song was his second time acting in a film.

<https://soundcloud.com/atsaraentertainment>





## TASHI DORJI -MUSICIAN, COMPOSER

Ashville-based Bhutanese musician Tashi Dorji will compose the soundtrack for the film. His beautiful and original sounds for Honeygiver among the Dogs (directed by Dechen Roder) were essential in providing the film with its moody mystical feel. His music is mostly recorded live without any loops or effects and evoke a sense of of mystery, wondering, depth and exploration.

He has released a number of records and has toured in the USA and around the world. He produces both as a soloist and with other projects (with Tyler Damon and MANAS (w/ Thom Nguyen) on labels like Bathetic Records, Cabin Floor Esoterica, Blue Tapes, Marmara Records, Feeding Tubes, UNROCK, VDSQ, MIE, Ultra Violet Light, Family Vineyard and Astral Spirits).

Dorji presented his debut LP on Hermit Hut, the label created by Ben Chasny (Six Organs of Admittance) in 2014.

<https://tashidorji.bandcamp.com>



## RANGOLI AGARWAL -CINEMATOGRAPHER

Rangoli Agarwal is an independent cinematographer based between Mumbai and Allahabad, her hometown.

She has worked on various projects, ranging from feature films, documentaries, advertising and award-winning short films.

Her latest short film as director of photography, My Mother's Girlfriend, won the Best Short Fiction award at IDSFFK.

<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm4693466/>















# CONTACTS

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## WORLD SALES

Diversion

220/4 Soi Ladprao 42, Lane 4-1, Bangkok 10310 Thailand

[www.diversion-th.com/sales](http://www.diversion-th.com/sales)

Sales - [sales@diversion-th.com](mailto:sales@diversion-th.com)

Festivals - [festivals@diversion-th.com](mailto:festivals@diversion-th.com)

## PRODUCTION

Girelle Production (France)

Johann Chapelan: +33668122171 (whatsapp) [chapelan.johann@gmail.com](mailto:chapelan.johann@gmail.com)

[www.girelle.fr](http://www.girelle.fr)

Dakinny Productions (Bhutan)

[dakinny@gmail.com](mailto:dakinny@gmail.com)

## *I, the Song*

