

## **Chalchitra Abhiyan Report**

### **Artreach Community Arts Project 2021**

ChalChitra Abhiyaan (CCA) began its workshop around mid-October with a new set of participants largely from Shamli district in West UP. The workshop was held primarily in our office in Kandhla township in Shamli district, but as part of the training exercises the participants were made to shoot outdoors in different parts of Kandhla township.

The age group of the participants was between 15-20 years. Also, an important breakthrough for us was that we finally had young women from Kandhla participating in the workshop as well. The names of all the participants were, Hritik Kumar, Deepak Bharti, Deepak Katiyar, Iqra Ayyub Saifi, Rashida Akhtar Siddiqui, Ashish Stonewall, Savez Chauhan, Avinash Kumar Gautam, Anas Ali, Anshul Kumar Nahara and Farman Kassar.

As part of the workshops, the participants were first taught the basics of camera, primarily by Vishal Stonewall, a senior activist and filmmaker of ChalChitra Abhiyaan. This included the basics of framing, composition, shot taking etc.

They then went on to shoot entire sequences. The next step was to introduce them to the edit machine and they were taught how to edit their sequences. Mohammad Shakib Rangrez, also a senior activist and filmmaker at CCA conducted the bulk of the editing workshops. All participants then edited their sequences.

The rough cuts of the sequences were overseen by Nakul Singh Sawhney and suggestions were given on how the edits could be improved. Based on those suggestions the participants re-edited many of their sequences.

Through the workshop students were made to watch various films, Indian and international, fiction and non-fiction.

Moreover, many of students also worked on and assisted on CCA's regular videos, both on shoot and post-production.

Also, an advanced workshop on camera and on-location sound recording was held in late October for our senior activists Vishal Stonewall and Mohammad Shakib Rangrez. The workshop was conducted by senior cameraperson Apal Singh and sound recordist and designer, Vidhaat Raman.

Since October, CCA has also conducted regular screenings at various villages in Shamli district, as also in our office and various residential areas in Kandhla. One film we widely screened during this period was the recently released feature film, Jai Bhim.

Another important activity we conducted in our office was a one-day workshop in mid-December on fake news. The workshop detailed how fake news can be identified and debunked. We also explained how all news that people receive on social media can be verified by various sources. Since UP elections were just a couple of months away, we anticipated that fake news will be spread on social media by political parties and their

supporters. We've seen in the past how such fake news has even led to riots in West UP. Several youngsters who visit our library and cultural center regularly attended the session.

In January, Nakul Singh Sawhney held another round of more advanced workshops with the same group mentioned above. (Names include- Hritik Kumar, Deepak Bharti, Deepak Katiyar, Iqra Ayyub Saifi, Rashida Akhtar Siddiqui, Ashish Stonewall, Savez Chauhan, Avinash Kumar Gautam, Anas Ali, Anshul Kumar Nahara and Farman Kassar).

Given that there are several restrictions a couple of months before elections, especially with public gatherings etc. we had to stop our screenings. However, we utilized this time to conduct advanced workshops with the new team.

In the advanced workshops the participants were made to work on short videos, this time with a narrative as well. In essence they were working on short videos with a story as well and not just making a sequence.

Eventually a lot of participants began to assist us and work on several videos of ChalChitra Abhiyaan as well. Some videos are below-

<https://youtu.be/V49bRW4kTyw>

<https://youtu.be/WyuW-J3891k>

<https://youtu.be/BufOIT9cKVE>

<https://youtu.be/9NsunFOEtNI>

<https://youtu.be/NzXMed8KLTE>

<https://youtu.be/jmqscy2cclk>

[https://youtu.be/m711NDEp\\_8k](https://youtu.be/m711NDEp_8k)

<https://youtu.be/o0bh9344BiU>

<https://youtu.be/RHvpVdcmD6s>

Along with our videos, we have also resumed our screenings after the elections-

<https://www.facebook.com/ChalChitraAbhiyaan/posts/1650614268618947>

<https://www.facebook.com/ChalChitraAbhiyaan/posts/1657142697966104>

<https://www.facebook.com/ChalChitraAbhiyaan/posts/1658541457826228>

<https://www.facebook.com/ChalChitraAbhiyaan/posts/1663500377330336>

<https://www.facebook.com/ChalChitraAbhiyaan/posts/1664242790589428>

### **Future Plans-**

Given the election results in UP, we are now confronted with difficult times. While stories of state repression and clamping down on voices that are critical of the government have become commonplace, we are also confronted with a massive economic crisis in the state. Looming unemployment and inflation have begun to severely affect the day to day lives of the people.

In these circumstances, we realize that the only way to survive is to expand. Over the last five years, we have trained several young filmmakers, who are now training younger filmmakers themselves. We have started an office, which also houses a library and a cultural

center. We have produced videos that often contributed to the local socio-political discourse. On some occasions our videos have even played a significant role in averting possibly big riots. Now, we have a dedicated team and a large army of dedicated volunteers, who organize screenings, produce short films and videos of all kinds and are participants in the training programs. Among our biggest achievements, and something that Kandhla even recognizes, is the fact that young women are working with the camera and producing short videos. This is a first, not just for Kandhla, but perhaps large parts of west UP.

The nature of our work keeps us embedded with the local community as well as local grassroots activists and grassroots movements. One recent example, is that while the rest of the mainstream media largely focused on Punjab and Haryana for the recently concluded kisan aandolan, CCA played a significant role in not just covering but also contributing to the aandolan in West UP. It is perhaps this recognition of our work locally, that has helped us tide through police and state harassment we have experienced over the last 5 years. Specially since local activists and movements stood by us through the harassment.

However, now our functioning is seriously under threat. While our team is committed to taking our work further, but nature of assault by the state is unimaginable. In such circumstances we realize that the only way to survive is to expand. While continuing with our work in Kandhla, we now want to start other units. This will happen gradually and one by one. We are seriously considering opening up a new unit in Meerut, since the Kandhla unit is also now functioning independently and doesn't need regular intervention by the founder, Nakul Singh Sawhney.

We are now certain that if similar work in training youngsters in filmmaking, screenings and video productions is not carried out elsewhere, our existing work could also come to a standstill. So, while we will continue to train new batches of filmmakers in Kandhla, we hope to soon replicate this work elsewhere as well.