

SAJIWAN PASWAN

STUTI PRAKASH



AĀJOOR आजूर

A FILM BY : AARYAN CHANDRA PRAKASH

CO-PRODUCED BY PRITHIPAL SINGH MATHARU, NUTAN KUMARI, ARPIT CHHIKARA | DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY AFTAB AKRAM
FILM EDITOR ANKUR DAS SOUND DESIGNER ABHISHEK PATIL | COLOURIST BOBBY BRAHMA | WRITTEN BY AARYAN CHANDRA PRAKASH
ASSISTANT TEAM AVINASH CHANDRA PRAKASH, HARISHANKAR KUMAR, CHANDRAKANT KUMAR, PRINCE KUMAR



Shrirampur Samvad Foundation Production

SYNOPSIS

“Aājoor” explores the life of Saloni, a resilient girl from rural Bihar, who challenges societal norms to pursue her education while managing household responsibilities after her mother's early demise. Her journey intersects with the boys' newfound obsession with social networking sites. Supported by her father, a vocalist in a Launda Dance team, Saloni faces societal scorn but remains determined to change her destiny.

IT IS MORE THAN A FEATURE FILM

"Aājoor" is a celebration of rural creativity, a challenge to societal conservatism, and an ode to the connection between children and nature. It is the first-ever feature film in the Bajjika language, showcasing the authentic essence of my village, its stories, and its people.

Creating Aājoor was a collaborative effort that united the community across caste lines, with over 500 people supporting the project through crowdfunding. The film took five years to complete, relying solely on community involvement, with no backing from traditional production houses or sales agents.

This film reflects the resilience of a young girl fighting against the constraints of societal norms while capturing the curiosity and challenges of rural life. Director's hope is that Aājoor resonates with audiences globally, sparking meaningful conversations and fostering a deeper appreciation of diverse human experiences.

OFFICIAL SELECTION

- **Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF):**

The Best Director Award Winner: National Competition on Indian Languages

- **International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK):**

Official Selection under Indian Cinema Now

- **Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFFes):**

Official Selection under Unsung Incredible India : Films from Little Known Language



Starring villagers with no acting experience, the film's core lies in 'not acting'—letting the raw, unfiltered essence of their being shine through. The director believes the beauty of the village and its people needs no embellishment, only a camera to witness it.



FILM CREW

Aaryan Chandra Prakash - Director, Writer , Executive producer

Indian director born and raised in rural Bihar, discovered his passion for storytelling at a young age. Inspired by Indian regional films, he travelled across the country to connect with diverse communities before returning to Bihar in 2018 to empower his community through cinema. Aājoor is a result of his two years of script development and the training of non-professional actors from his village. The film exemplifies his dedication to community filmmaking and cultural preservation.

Abhishek Patil - Sound Designer

Abhishek Patil is a sound designer from the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute. His work includes sound design for the indie feature film AAJOOR, which was screened at the Kolkata International Film Festival and the International Film Festival of Kerala. He was also selected as one of the "75 Creative Minds of Tomorrow" by NFDC at the 54th International Film Festival of India. His student projects have been showcased at prominent festivals, including D GRADE SE A GRADE TAK, which was selected for the MAMI Mumbai Film Festival.

Ankur - Editor

An independent filmmaker and freelance editor based in Kolkata, India, Ankur graduated with a degree in media studies in 2007 and has assisted independent filmmakers in direction and editing. Their debut feature, Khur/Lost Wounds, has been showcased at various international festivals. Ankur has edited several films, including Deep-6 by Madhujā Mukherjee, Fading Cloud by Suman Majumder, and the award-winning short Yeh Shaam Mastani by Sangeeta Agrawal. Recently, he edited Aajoor, the first Bajjika-language film, which won Best Director at KIFF'24.

FILM CREW

Avinash - Assistant

Avinash, from northern Bihar, initially dreamed of becoming an astronaut or engineer but found his true calling through travel and meaningful conversations, deepening his understanding of life. Passionate about technology and filmmaking, he worked on the film Aājoor, expanding his creative horizons. He also fosters curiosity in children by facilitating learning spaces through the Shrirampur Samvad Foundation in his village.

Shrirampur Samvad Foundation - Producer

Shrirampur Samvad Foundation is a non-profit organization based in the Sitamarhi district of Bihar, India. The foundation is committed to promoting rural development through initiatives in natural education, skill development, employment, health, and sanitation. Its mission is to foster community empowerment and holistic growth in underdeveloped areas. In addition to its core activities, Shrirampur Samvad Foundation plays an active role in cultural and community-based film projects, aiming to raise awareness and promote social engagement among rural communities.

Other Crew members :

- *Director of Photography (DOP): Aftab Akram*
- *Colourist: Bobby Brahma*
- *Co-produced by: Prithipal Singh Matharu, Nutan Kumari, Arpit Chhikara*
- *Assistant Team: Harishankar Kumar, Chandrakant Kumar, Prince Kumar*

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT “Aājoor”

- 1. Community-Centric Storytelling:** Entirely produced in rural India, Aājoor authentically portrays the life and culture of rural Bihar.
- 2. First Bajjika Language Feature Film:** The first film in Bajjika, spoken by nearly 20 million people, marking a cultural milestone.
- 3. Non-Professional Cast:** The entire cast comprises first-time actors from the village, bringing raw authenticity to the screen.
- 4. Youth-Driven Production:** The production was managed and assisted by youth under 20, showcasing their talent and creativity.
- 5. Skill Development:** Over 50 children were trained in acting and production management as part of the filmmaking process.
- 6. Five Years in the Making:** The project took over five years of effort and dedication.
- 7. Crowdfunding Initiative:** Supported by more than 500 contributors worldwide, making it a true community-driven effort.
- 8. Authentic Locations:** Entirely shot in rural Bihar, near the Indo-Nepal border, with stunning natural backdrops.
- 9. Educational Impact:** The film served as a platform for skill development and cultural education for children.
- 10. Preserving Culture:** By introducing the first Bajjika feature film, Aājoor promotes and preserves the language and culture of the region.

BEHIND THE SCENES: IN-DEPTH Q&A

- **Can you talk about a tough moment during filming and how you handled it?**

Our film was made in Bihar, a region with limited resources for filmmaking, posing significant challenges. With a tight budget, we rented equipment from far-off cities and relied heavily on nature and the local community.

A key hurdle was shooting a rain scene. Heavy rain was crucial, but it wasn't raining, and our cinematographer had to leave that day. Amid growing pressure, rain finally arrived, and we rushed to shoot despite inadequate gear, completing the scenes just in time. Working with non-professional actors also required patience, as they often grew self-conscious on camera. Guiding them to be natural was essential to capturing the film's authentic vision.

- **How did you manage your budget and resources for this film?**

I envisioned this film as a community-driven project, with a cast of villagers who had no prior acting experience. To fund it, we turned to crowdfunding, connecting with over 500 contributors, and relied on the rural community for resources. Despite initial skepticism, people stepped forward to help. When the crowdfunding fell short, we took small loans from friends and local markets. It was a collective effort that made this film possible.

- **How did you pick your cast, especially for the lead roles?**

After working across India, I returned to my village with a vision to empower the community through cinema. I spent two years observing rural children and their lives, using their real stories as inspiration for the script. Casting was challenging, especially for rural girls, as their parents were hesitant. Through meaningful conversations, we secured their participation, including in lead roles. Every cast member was new to filmmaking, making this a unique, empowering experience for all.

BEHIND THE SCENES:

IN-DEPTH Q&A

- **How did the use of non-professional actors from rural communities contribute to the authenticity of the story?**

Casting non-professional actors from rural communities ensured authenticity. Despite challenges, we trained them to live naturally on camera rather than act. Their raw innocence and experiences, like curiosity about social media and the resilience of rural girls, added genuine depth, bringing sincerity and emotional richness to the film.

- **What do you hope audiences will take away from the film?**

The film portrays the story of a young girl from rural Bihar, struggling with her education and daily life, who finds solutions to her challenges in nature. Through her journey, the film subtly highlights the importance of sustainable living. Alongside her story, it also captures the innocence of a group of boys as they explore their imaginative ideas about social networking.

The filmmakers hope that audiences will not only gain a fresh perspective on life but also develop a deeper understanding and empathy for people from a different world. The film aspires to inspire viewers to see beauty in simplicity and rethink their approach to life and community.

- **What projects are you working on next?**

My focus remains on telling stories from my own community and state, Bihar—a region in northern India that, despite its economic and social challenges, is brimming with untold stories, struggles, and beauty. Bihar, especially its women, offers a depth of narratives filled with resilience and sensitivity, making it a rich canvas for storytelling.

Currently, I am working on a story about a young rural girl who creatively navigates societal norms and quietly explores her independence. It's a tale of courage, innovation, and self-discovery in the face of deeply rooted traditions.

CAST

Sajiwan Paswan *as Sajiwan*

Stuti Chandra Prakash *as Saloni*

Dhirendra Kumar *as Dhirendra*

Shivshankar Kumar *as Suittha*

Manish Kumar *as Manish*

Lalit Kumar *as Pahadi*

Monika Kumari *as Monika*

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

- **Shooting format :** Digital
- **Aspect ratio :** 16:9
- **Audio Format :** 5.1
- **Film Name:** Aājoor
- **Language:** Bajjika
- **Duration:** 122 min

PRESS COVERAGE

The Telegraph : <https://shorturl.at/YTy6B>

The Telegraph : <https://shorturl.at/qa1Gh>

The Times of India : <https://shorturl.at/a21Ho>

The New India Express : <https://shorturl.at/7MJK7>

KIFF'S Official Website : <https://shorturl.at/Cd7eR>

IFFK'S Official Website : <https://shorturl.at/HUZwk>

Trailer link from Youtube : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTUXnKkdF_w&t=9s

CONTACT INFO



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