

Sunny Pawar in the yet-to-be released *Chippa*



# Is all hunky-dory for our little wonders?

son's needs providing him with food and juice as soon as it is asked for. "He's playing the lead so he would have to put in so many hours. I want him to complete his studies but at the same time I don't want him to lose a good opportunity. It is not the money that we are interested in. We want him to gain practical knowledge of the field on sets and go on to act in Bollywood films. His passion is acting," elaborates Malviya.

Sunny Pawar, the young Dev Patel in *Lion*, who is now 10 years old, talks about his experiences shooting for *Chippa*, which was screened at the Jio MAMI festival this year. Leave had to be sought from his school in Mumbai, since the shooting was all the way in Kolkata.

"They would often play cricket on sets and Sunny also got to do his homework on set. He was treated very well. He caught up with his lessons once we were back home. Shoot times were unpredictable. Sometimes we would get half the day off, sometimes we would get two or three days off in between shooting and sometimes it was a 12-hour day. In Kolkata we were given a house to stay along with someone who was assigned to take care of our needs all the time," says Dilip Pawar, Sunny's father who accompanied him on the shoot.

"We are in touch with all the channels to praise them of the real situation, giving them the basic guidelines that must be followed. Our volunteers might even make surprise visits on sets to see what's going on," says Darshan Jarwal, Vice President, CINTAA.

"Guardians don't inform us about violations because often they are earning money out of the child. Child actors are not supposed to work for more than 9-9 hours per day and must have at least two breaks in between. Many of these kids don't want to study and love the instant stardom but when the show goes off six there are emotional and psychological fallouts. For films, the stakes are higher so there are fewer violations there. As an organisation, CINTAA can start making a lot of noise if rules are broken and inform the media as well to discipline production houses. Many times the parents are fulfilling their own aspirations through their kids," says Amit Behl, Sr. Joint Secretary, CINTAA.

"A sobering reality for the little wonders of the screen.



Kartikey Malviya

## What rights do child actors have on TV and film sets? Can organisations like the Cine and TV Artists' Association (CINTAA) ensure they are not violated? MAITHILI CHAKRAVARTHY finds out



Ruhanka Dhawan with Divyanka Tripathi on the sets of the show *Yeh Hai Mohabbatein*

When children work on sets of TV shows and films, different rules apply because children, in the end, are children. We gush and exclaim at the young actors' kid-like charms, their delightful characters, their innocence, and their antics that are specially designed to keep audiences coming back for more. But is life behind the scenes as hunky dory? What kind of rules apply to protect children from long, slavish hours of work and ill-treatment on sets to extract performance?

Child labour laws in India allow children to work in the entertainment industry provided it does not affect their education. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2006, makes edu-

cation a fundamental right for children between six and 14 years and hence says that shoots must preferably be planned during holidays. For child actors on TV shows the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) laid down guidelines in 2010-2011 which state that "their rights, needs and development must be of primary consideration". The number of hours they can shoot every day must be "age-appropriate", with younger children spending lesser time on sets. Also, a child artiste should be given only one shift per day with a break after every hour and should be directly supervised by at least one parent, or a known person and by a person with specified child-care qualifications". However, news stories on [www.dailycaller.com](http://www.dailycaller.com) have referred to child actors on TV in India who do gruelling 12-hour shifts, sometimes getting to eat dinner only by 11 pm and often skipping school to complete shooting schedules. The same report also quotes an NGO with stories about how children are "being fed coffee and sugary

drinks late at night to keep them awake" so the shoot can go on. Guidelines on the other hand distinctly state that nutritious and appropriate food and water must be given to the kids at reasonable hours.

"It needs to be remembered that, by and large, children do not join the industry of their own volition. There is always an adult involved - a parent, or caretaker - who takes the decision for them. In the absence of any monitoring mechanism, there is every likelihood of child actors being exploited..." states the NCPCR report. It further requires that child actors should not be cast in roles that may be distressing or those that involve consumption of alcohol, smoking, or depict anti-social behaviour. Nudity in children's roles is also strictly prohibited, while violence in scenes involving children should be avoided. In addition, children must not be forced to shoot if they are ill or injured.

Fourteen-year-old Kartikey Malviya, who plays the young Chandragupta Mau-

rya on Sony TV's upcoming show *Chandragupta Maurya*, says his shoots go on for 10 or 11 and sometimes even 14 hours. Before going to shoot he usually attends his "coaching class" early in the morning and even tries to study on set when there is time. His mother Nilima Malviya is all praise for the production house, saying that spot boys immediately cater to her

Kartikey Malviya plays the lead in the TV show *Kaali Kumar Bajaj Wala*

Publication	Edition	Date	Page Number	Subject
Free Press Journal	Mumbai	11-1-2018	03	Chippa and Sunny Pawar