

WHERE IN BRAND JAMMU?

It's time to ask tough questions to those obsessed with promoting just Kashmir in the name of J&K. The same is the case with the ongoing International Film Festival of Jammu and Kashmir Union Minister in Srinagar. It's fine to invoke old memories of Bollywood's tryst with Kashmir – Dal Lake, poplar lined roads, the Mughal Gardens, etc, but another thing to see how Indian film industry and the audiences' tastes have changed ever since things started floundering in Bollywood producers' choicest shooting locales of Kashmir. Thanks to the changed ground situation in Kashmir that the such festivals can be organized and also to the vision of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to expand the event and invite the dignitaries from neighbouring states.

Amid this, one thing is glaringly missing – Brand Jammu. With the rapid growth and changes, Jammu has also changed. The hitherto inaccessible areas are today connected through railways and wider roads. Why Jammu should not be promoted as a separate destination for filmmakers. Jammu has equally beautiful locales and cooperative and extremely talented people who need exposure to the new age cinema. Why Jammu should be just used as a sub-text in major J&K events and not promoted as a brand. The stories from Dogra land are waiting to be told to the world; its valley's hills and rivers beckon the filmmakers to be showcased in their works. To be honest, Kashmir as the ultimate destination seems to be an overhyped locale. Bollywood today is so strong that it chooses convenience over money saving. For example, for the blockbuster Dhurandhar, Aditya Dhar chose Bangkok for creating a city of Lyari while he would have made it anywhere in India. Many filmmakers prefer Eastern Europe countries for shooting on snow and give it a feel of Kashmir. Also, in an environment where films like Hanuman Ansh are breaking box office records, J&K will need more than just hosting a film festival to help local talent and locations – both in Kashmir and Jammu.

Bhopinder Singh

The debate over Jauhar in Padmaavat has exposed an uncomfortable tendency in contemporary discourse: judging the past entirely through the moral vocabulary of the present. There is nothing wrong with questioning whether a modern film can inadvertently romanticise a practice that constitutional morality rightly rejects today.

There are really two separate questions in the controversy over an actor's comments on the Jauhar sequence in Padmaavat — what Jauhar meant in its historical context, and what message a modern film depicting it may convey to a contemporary audience.

The latter is a perfectly legitimate subject for debate. But the former cannot be reconstructed entirely through the moral vocabulary of the present.

The fundamental problem with drawing a direct parallel between Jauhar and rape survivors is that it conflates two profoundly different circumstances. Rape is an act of sexual violence forcibly inflicted upon a woman. Jauhar, in the historical context in which it is remembered, was under-

stood as a collective act undertaken by women facing the imminent prospect of capture, sexual violence, enslavement and dishonour following defeat. That does not require us to endorse Jauhar today. It requires us to understand what the act meant to those who undertook it. And this distinction matters.

To say that Jauhar should not be practised today is uncontroversial. Nor should practices such as sati be romanticised or encouraged. Modern constitutional morality, individual liberty and the sanctity of life rightly reject such practices. But rejecting a historical practice in the present is different from denying the historical and cultural ideas that gave rise to it. In fact, there is a much larger principle here — one that applies to every faith and every civilisation.

The entire edifice of religious and cultural belief rests, in varying degrees, upon scriptures, epics, mythologies, oral traditions, poetry and literature. These bodies of work cannot be read as literal, contemporary instruction manuals. Their stories, symbols, metaphors and moral frameworks have been interpreted across centuries, often differently by different generations.

Hamari Anganwadi, Hamari Jimmedari

When a Community Owns Its Anganwadi



Smt. Annpurna Devi

The Bharat of 2047 will be built by children who have not yet entered school. Their journey towards a healthy, confident and capable adulthood begins much earlier, most decisively in the first 1,000 days of life. For millions of Indian children and their mothers, that journey is supported by a familiar neighbourhood institution: the Anganwadi.

Long before entering classroom, children are weighed and measured at an Anganwadi, receive a warm meal and hear rhymes outside home. It is where expectant parents receive counselling. Today, 14 lakh Anganwadi Centres serve as the first point of contact between citizen and State, reaching over 8.9 crore children, women and adolescent girls. The 25.2 lakh Anganwadi Workers and Helpers are drawn from the communities they serve. The Anganwadi has always belonged to the neighbourhood.

This familiar institution became the foundation of a national movement when Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched POSHAN Abhiyaan in March 2018. The 9th Rashtriya Poshan Maah begins on 9th September 2026 with the

theme "Hamari Anganwadi, Hamari Jimmedari". The responsibility of providing quality services rests firmly with Government, and that commitment is unwavering. But an Anganwadi Centre truly flourishes when the community embraces it as its own. A Viksit Bharat can be built only through Sabka Prayas. Nutrition cannot be seen only as a government service.

From Recipient to Partner

Community ownership has too often remained an appeal. This year it becomes an institution. Anganwadi Management Committees bring parents, panchayat representatives and self-help groups into the Centre to ensure every eligible child is reached. Social audits enable communities to review services, verify entitlements and formally record findings. Accountability becomes verification from within by families served.

Mothers are at the heart of this process. The SNP Menu Board displays day-wise entitlements for Hot Cooked Meals and Take-Home Rations. When a mother knows what her child is entitled to, transparency becomes an everyday habit. The community becomes an informed partner in ensuring quality.

Poshan Maah 2026 will activate committees, social audits and Menu Boards, with Tithi Bhoj, tasting sessions and recipe demonstrations.

Beyond the Menu Board

The first is the food itself. A Suposhit Bharat requires balanced meals: cereals and millets, pulses, nuts and seeds, milk and milk products, eggs, seasonal fruits and green vegetables. The Comprehensive Guidelines for the Supplementary Nutrition Programme, 2026, released in July, define Hot Cooked Meals and reinforce micronutrient norms under the National Food Security Act, 2013.

The second is early learning. What a

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child eats and learns are deeply connected. Anganwadi Workers track 34 developmental milestones in a child's first three years. The Navchetna and Aadharshila curricula carry nutrition and care into school readiness.

The third begins before the child arrives. A mother's own nutrition in pregnancy shapes her child's start in life. This Poshan Maah marks ten years of the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, reflecting the Prime Minister's conviction that no woman should have to choose between earnings and health. A decade on, 4.65 crore beneficiaries have received ₹21,511 crore directly into their accounts. Strengthened under Mission Shakti, it provides an additional benefit for a second girl child.

The Economic Survey 2025-26 makes clear that such a transfer achieves its full purpose when it travels with counselling that enables informed decisions within the household. Reviewing Rajasthan's Cash Plus model, which paired these transfers with sustained behaviour change communication, it records that the share of women spending the benefit on food rose from 30 per cent to 89 per cent, and that myths surrounding maternal nutrition receded as husbands and

families were drawn into the conversation. Partnership grows around Anganwadis because a mother's nutrition was never hers to secure alone.

Respecting the Woman at the Centre

At the centre stands the Anganwadi Worker. Community ownership cannot mean placing the entire burden of nutrition and early childhood care upon her. It must mean respecting, supporting and strengthening her. Her knowledge and trust are indispensable.

This September, I call upon every citizen to visit at least one Anganwadi Centre in their locality. Speak to the Anganwadi Worker, read the menu board and ask how you can support. Fathers, grandparents, panchayats and self-help groups all have a role.

The children being weighed at our Anganwadis this September will be in their twenties when India completes a hundred years of independence. The health and confidence they carry into that year are being shaped today. When every community takes responsibility for its Anganwadi, Bharat takes responsibility for the future of every child.

(The author is Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Government of India.)

INDIA'S NEW MUSIC STARS GO INDEPENDENT

Namrata Kohli

For decades, the route to becoming a music star in India usually ran through cinema. Singers became famous through playback, songs travelled on the back of films, and soundtracks dominated popular listening. That model is now being disrupted.

A new report on India's streaming economy suggests that artist-first music — tracks created and released outside film soundtracks — is rapidly moving into the mainstream. According to Spotify's Loud & Clear India report, half of its year-end top 10 in India in 2025 came from outside film soundtracks, while 90 per cent of tracks on its Daily Top 50 were by Indian artists. Names such as Anuv Jain, Aditya Rikhari, Kushagra and Faheem Abdullah are emblematic of a generation building audiences around the artist rather than the movie. Rikhari's independent track Sahiba, for instance, remained No. 1 on Spotify India for more than 11 consecutive weeks.

"A few years back, Indian music was dominated by film music — there were playback singers and film soundtracks," says Dhruvank Vaidya, Head of Music &



Podcast, Spotify India. "What we have seen in the last three years is phenomenal growth of artist-first music."

The shift is economic as well as cultural. Royalties generated by Indian artists on Spotify rose 29 per cent year-on-year in 2025, according to the report. The number of artists generating more than Rs 1 crore annually grew 21 per cent, while those crossing Rs 5 crore have more than dou-

bled since 2023.

The rise of regional India

Perhaps the bigger disruption is coming from language. Telugu music royalties grew more than 120 per cent year-on-year, Marathi nearly 50 per cent, Bengali nearly 40 per cent and Malayalam over 30 per cent. Haryanvi streams increased almost seven-fold between February 2023 and February 2026.

It reflects a marketplace where artists no longer necessarily have to migrate towards Hindi to find scale. "When you stay true to your culture and art form, you sound authentic," says Vaidya. Young listeners, he adds, relate to the stories and identities of these artists, allowing musicians to build their own fandoms across languages.

And increasingly, those fans may not even be in India. More than 40 per cent of royalties earned by Indian artists on Spotify in 2025 came from listeners overseas. Of the 15 most-exported Indian tracks on the platform, 11 were independent, artist-first releases. Globally, listeners discovered an Indian artist they had never heard before 12.8 billion times during 2025, up 14 per cent year-on-year.

The numbers point towards a fundamental change in the Indian music business. Digital discovery is weakening some of the old barriers of film, geography and language. A singer-songwriter no longer necessarily needs a Bollywood soundtrack to become nationally known; nor does a Malayalam, Haryanvi or Telugu artist have to abandon a regional identity to find a global listener.

Bollywood remains formidable. But for India's next generation of musicians, it is no longer the only stage that matters.

Sifting the wheat from the chaff



We do not ordinarily insist that every episode in a religious epic must be reproduced literally in modern life merely because it appears in a sacred or revered text. We understand that there is a distinction between the literal act, the historical or mythical narrative, and the philosophical or spiritual idea that generations have derived from it. That same intellectual generosity ought to extend to history. History

The Rajput conception of honour, sacrifice and choosing death over dishonour is part of a historical ethos that communities have developed and internalised over centuries. We may dis-

agree profoundly with particular manifestations of those values today, just as modern society has rejected many practices once considered legitimate. But reducing such traditions entirely to their literal physical acts, and then judging the entire cultural imagination behind them exclusively through a contemporary lens, risks stripping history of the very context required to understand it.

Otherwise, we create an extraordinary double standard — we grant mythology the benefit of metaphor, symbolism and historical context when it belongs to our own traditions, while demanding literalism from the history

and literature of others. The actor is entirely entitled to ask whether the Padmaavat sequence, when viewed today, could inadvertently suggest to a survivor of sexual violence that death is preferable to survival.

That is a legitimate contemporary feminist question. Indeed, she has clarified that her objection was to what she believed the scene could communicate to rape survivors, rather than an assertion that the women who performed Jauhar were cowards. But that contemporary question should not become a substitute for historical understanding. A society progresses not by erasing the moral frameworks of its past, nor by pretending that yesterday's values must remain today's values, but by understanding why those values existed and then consciously evolving beyond them. This is why the debate is not really about being "woke" or "anti-woke". That framing is itself intellectually lazy. Progress is predicated on learning, questioning and evolving. But learning requires context. If history is selectively excavated merely to stitch together a presumptively progressive contemporary position, we are no longer learning from history; we are weaponising it.

There is another side to this debate

that deserves equal emphasis. The anger of the Rajput community at what it perceives as an insensitive or historically reductive characterisation is understandable. But legitimate disagreement loses its moral force when it turns into personal abuse, threats, misogyny, or allusions to a person's marriage, religion or private life. Such conduct does not defend history; it diminishes the very community invoking that history. Ethics

If there is one lesson that the Rajput historical imagination ought to carry alongside its celebrated valour and fearlessness, it is also civility, dignity, restraint and large-heartedness. One can fiercely defend one's history without becoming uncivil. One can reject a modern interpretation without threatening the person making it. One can condemn Jauhar as a practice today without pretending that the women who undertook it can be understood without reference to the world in which they lived.

And one can defend the historical meaning of Jauhar without suggesting that a woman who survives rape has somehow lost her honour or her right to live. That, perhaps, is the nuance missing from both extremes of this debate.