

News

After producers accept two modifications, the Kerala High Court directs CBFC to issue a censorship certificate for Suresh Gopi's film Janaki.



The first is to change the name "Janaki" to "Janaki V" or "V Janaki" in the movie's subtitle, "Janaki v State of Kerala." Secondly, the name "Janaki" should be muted in a judicial scenario.

After the film's producers agreed to make two changes in response to the CBFC's requests, the Kerala High Court on Wednesday ordered the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) to issue a censor certificate for the Malayalam film JSK: Janaki v State of Kerala, which starred Union Minister **Suresh Gopi**. A case involving M/s Cosmos Entertainments and The Regional Officer.

A rape survivor battling for justice might be called "Janaki" for no reason, according to

Justice N Nagaresh, who saw the film on July 5 at a Kochi studio. He even criticized the CBFC for stifling free expression and artistic freedom.

Speaking on behalf of CBFC today, counsel Abhinav Chandrachud told the court that while the Board had previously suggested 96 cuts to the movie "Janaki v State of Kerala," it is now only requesting two particular alterations.

The first is to update the movie's subtitle, "Janaki v State of Kerala," to reflect the character's full name, Janaki Vidhyadharan, by changing the name "Janaki" to "Janaki V" or "V Janaki."

The second is to muffle the name "Janaki" when it is being cross-examined in court.

The producers' advocate, Haris Beeran, quickly accepted the initial modification. Beeran told the court that the producers are willing to modify the name in the sub-title as well, despite his earlier resistance to the second change.

Chandrachud promised the Court that CBFC will provide censor certification in three days after the updated version of the film was submitted.

After a week, the Court posted the case for additional consideration after recording the same.

"The petitioner is instructed to send in the updated version as soon as possible. The CBFC will get additional instructions to provide the censor certificate in three more days. A week later," the court's order stated.

'Janaki', the film about a rape survivor, was originally slated for release on June 27.

After an online application was submitted on June 12 but the CBFC did not grant a certificate, the production company, M/s Cosmos Entertainments, filed a writ suit with the Court.

The petitioner noted that while the teaser trailer had previously been certified without any issues, the title and the name of the main character, "Janaki," which is also a moniker for the Hindu goddess "Sita," were causing the whole film's censor certificate to be delayed.

The petitioner claimed that CBFC's delay amounted to significant financial damages as well as a breach of their basic right to free speech, which is protected by Articles 19(1)(a) and

19(1)(g) of the Indian Constitution.

The name 'Janaki' could offend religious feelings, according to the CBFC, if it is used in a film with sexual violence and explicit content.

After the initial petition was registered, the CBFC's Revising Committee saw the movie and sent out a show-cause notice requesting that the word "Janaki" be taken out of the title, dialogue, and other parts of the script.

As a result, the filmmakers filed a second petition contesting the Revising Committee's jurisdiction to make this demand.

The CBFC expressed its reservations about the character's portrayal, not just the usage of a religious name, in a thorough affidavit submitted to the Court.

The Board claims that the character 'Janaki' is portrayed as a rape survivor who has gone through several terrible experiences, such as being asked offensive and sexually explicit questions in a trial.

"A man from one religious group helps the main character, who is named after Goddess Sita/Janaki, after she is raped in the video in question. A member of another religious group then cross-examines her and asks her terrifying questions. "This religious dichotomy in the treatment of a character with the sacred name of Goddess Sita has the potential to create divisive narratives between religious groups and exacerbate communal tensions," the affidavit said.

The CBFC contended that such a portrayal undermines the sacredness of Goddess Sita and runs the risk of causing religious and communal strife.

Next week, the Court will consider the case once more.

Along with counsel Anand B. Menon, Azhar Assees, and Nabil Khader, petitioners were represented by advocate Haris Beeran.

Abhinav Chandrachud, an advocate, represented the CBFC.