

Ministry of Information &amp; Broadcasting



## WAM!: India's Manga & Anime Boom

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Resham Talwar had always believed in the power of voice. As a visually challenged artist, she knew that her voice carried more than just words, it carried emotion, expression, and the ability to bring characters to life. She didn't let her disability define her. Instead, she carved a space for herself in the highly competitive world of voice acting. Winning the Voice Acting category at WAVES Anime & Manga Contest (WAM!) in Delhi elevated her journey, proving her artistry could break through any barrier. Resham's expertise in radio jockeying, voice-overs, and audio editing had already proven her capabilities, but WAM!! put her on a bigger stage. Her talent resonated with industry leaders, opening doors that had remained closed for far too long. It's stories like hers that highlight why WAM!! isn't just a competition, it's a movement that's shaking up the creative industry.



This dynamic initiative, organised by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in collaboration with the Media & Entertainment Association of India (MEAI), aims to harness India's growing enthusiasm for anime and manga by providing a platform for creators to showcase their talent. WAM!! encourages artists to develop localised adaptations of popular Japanese styles, catering to both Indian and global audiences, with opportunities for publishing, distribution, and industry

exposure that foster artistic expression and nurture emerging talent. The competition will feature state-level contests across 11 cities, culminating in a grand national finale at World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025 in Mumbai.



WAM! is a cornerstone of the broader WAVES 2025, an ambitious event set to unfold at the Jio World Centre in Mumbai from 1st to 4th May. WAVES aims to position India as a global powerhouse in media and entertainment, drawing inspiration from iconic gatherings like Davos and Cannes. It's a first-of-its-kind summit, uniting films, OTT platforms, gaming, comics, digital media, AI, and the burgeoning AVGC-XR (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality) sector under one roof. With India's media and entertainment industry poised for massive growth, targeting a \$50 billion market by 2029, WAVES is set to be the catalyst that propels the nation to the forefront of global storytelling.

At the heart of WAVES lies the Create in India Challenges (CIC), a series of competitions designed to unearth and nurture talent across diverse creative fields. Season 1 of CIC has already sparked a frenzy, attracting over 77,000 entries, including more than 500 participants from 35 countries. From this vast pool, over 725 top creators will converge at the grand finale during WAVES 2025, showcasing their work and vying for global recognition. The challenges celebrate India's rich tapestry of regional storytelling, reflecting the country's linguistic and cultural diversity. WAM!!, as one of the standout initiatives under CIC, zeroes in on the anime and manga domains, offering a stage for both amateurs and professionals to shine. It's a movement that not only discovers hidden gems but also bridges the gap between raw talent and industry opportunity, transforming dreams into tangible careers.

To appreciate why WAM!! matters, it's helpful to explore what manga and anime are, especially for people in India. Manga is simply a type of comic book or graphic novel that started in Japan. It's like the comics you might read, but it covers all sorts of stories, think exciting adventures, sweet love tales, spooky horrors, or magical fantasies. What makes manga special is its look: the characters often have big, lively eyes and the drawings can be super simple or packed with detail, depending on the

story. Unlike most books, you read manga from right to left, and it usually starts as short pieces in magazines before being put together into books called “tankōbon.” Anime, on the other hand, is like manga brought to life—it’s the cartoon version you watch on a screen, with movement and voices added to the same kinds of stories. There’s something for everyone: ‘shonen’ is for young boys and full of action and friendship, ‘shojo’ is for young girls and focuses on romance, ‘seinen’ is for grown-up men with deeper or darker ideas, and ‘josei’ is for adult women with everyday life or love stories that feel real.

In India, manga and anime have become incredibly popular over the last ten years, thanks to how easy they are to find and the excited fans who love them. There are around 180 million anime fans in the country, making India the second-biggest anime market in the world, just behind China. These fans are expected to play a huge part in making anime even more popular globally, driving 60% of its growth. Shows like “Naruto,” “Dragon Ball,” “One Piece,” “Attack on Titan,” and “My Hero Academia” have become huge hits, winning over massive followings across India and showing just how much people here love these stories.

The anime market in India was worth \$1,642.5 million in 2023, and it’s set to grow to \$5,036.0 million by 2032. Platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Crunchyroll, and Disney+ Hotstar have made it simple for people to watch anime, adding subtitles so Indian viewers can enjoy them. Manga is also getting easier to find, with e-commerce giants like Amazon and Flipkart selling these comic books, and some special shops popping up too. Yet, despite this boom, India faces a critical shortage of skilled talent in the anime and manga industry, a gap that WAM is determined to bridge by fostering homegrown creators.



Resham’s win is just one of many amazing stories coming out of WAM!. Take Angel Yadav, a high school student from Sunbeam Varuna in Varanasi, who stunned judges in the Manga (Student Category) at WAM Varanasi. Her artwork impressed Vaibhavi Studio in Kolkata so much that they offered her a job, showing that even young people can make a big impact in this field. Another success is Randeep Singh, a professional manga artist who entered WAM! Bhubaneswar. The judges

loved his work, calling it good enough to be printed, and while he keeps working on his own manga, he's already getting paid projects from Vaibhavi Studio. These examples show how WAM! changes lives, helping people turn their love for creating into real careers, with big names in the industry supporting them along the way.

The support for WAM! extends far beyond individual triumphs, drawing in some of the biggest names in the business. Srikanth Konatham, Director of BOB Pictures, has pledged to attend every future WAM! event, eager to scout talent ready to hit the ground running. Navin Miranda of ToonSutra is offering distribution deals in the webtoon space to winners, while Rajeswari Roy from eTV Bal Bharat is providing pitching opportunities in anime. Nilesh Patel, founder of central India's largest animation studio, has gone further, promising placements for winners and internships for finalists. This industry backing isn't just lip service, it's a lifeline, ensuring that WAM! participants don't just compete but thrive in a competitive global market.

What sets WAM! apart is its ability to democratise creativity. It's a platform where a visually challenged voice actor like Resham can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with a teenage manga artist like Angel or a seasoned professional like Randeep. As part of WAVES 2025, WAM! is more than a contest, it's a revolution, reshaping how India's creative talents are discovered, nurtured, and celebrated. With the summit on the horizon, the world will watch as India's storytellers, rooted in a legacy of folklore and now embracing modern mediums like anime and manga, take centre stage. For Resham and countless others, WAM! isn't just a win, it's the beginning of a legacy, one that promises to burn brighter with every passing year.

*Source: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting*

### **WAM!: India's Manga & Anime Boom**

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**Santosh Kumar/ Ritu Kataria/ Saurabh Kalia**

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