

'Kodava Hero', 'Appear Only Once Before Me': the Assimilation of 'Internal Exotics' in Indian Film Songs

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Critical examination of exoticism in Indian film has frequently focused on representation of Muslims ([Arora 1995](#), [Chadha and Kavoori 2008](#), [Chakraborty 2012](#)) or, more recently, processes of western consumption, as a kind of 'cosmopolitan chic' ([Desai et al. 2005: 79](#), various articles in [Eleftheriotis and Iordanova 2006](#))¹. Less attention has perhaps been given to critiquing semi-fictional and exoticising representations of other minority groups within India, though such representations may be implicated in discussions of the integrative project of post-Independence cinema. In this paper, I examine song and dance sequences in two Kannada language films, *Muthina Haara* and *Mungaaru Male*, critiquing representations of a group frequently characterised in popular discourse as 'exotics within'² — the Kodava or Coorgs, who are autochthonous to the district of Kodagu or Coorg in the southern state of Karnataka³.

After introducing and contextualising the two films to be examined, I outline why representations in song and dance sequences matter, whilst framing discussion of exotic representation within a discourse developed in the study of exoticism in Western music. I will then make some observations on depictions of other exotics within — tribal groups, Christians and indeterminately exotic women — showing how such groups are variously depicted as assimilable, unthreatening, or dangerous. After a brief description of the Kodava as a group, with attention given to their image in popular imagination, I will show that images projected effectively and affectively through songs in the two films not only exoticise the Kodava, but also do so along gendered lines, showing differentiated paths of assimilation of the exotic to the Indian state: as Hinduised warrior on the part of the male protagonist of the first film, as a dangerous sexuality controlled by marriage to the already assimilated Kodava warrior in the second. By drawing on Western musicology's critique of depictions of otherness, I analyse how similar representations occur in these examples of Indian cinema. I am specifically interested in how musical codes interact with visual ones, embedded synoptically, to reaffirm stereotypes of the specific 'other', the Kodava, and to aid the contrasting processes of their assimilation and exoticisation. At the same time, I concur with earlier scholarship that this representation is not neutral. To this position, I add the critical assertion that the Kodava, who regard themselves as culturally and even demographically threatened, are at the same time proud of the



nationalist warrior image projected in these films but increasingly critical of what they see as misrepresentation here and elsewhere. Thus, I draw discussion of representation in popular media into the realm of contemporary identity politics at a time in which many Kodava feel their existence as a distinct culture is under threat.

The Films: *Muthina Haara* and *Mungaaru Male*

The two films discussed are the best-known and most readily available films featuring the Kodava. In context and content they are quite different, and thus offer both comparable and contrasting images of the Kodava and their relationship to mainstream India. Using the periodisation outlined by Ganti (2004: 30–2) (and which seems followed by numerous scholars), *Muthina Haara* belongs to a period characterised extrinsically to film itself: that of the crisis of the Indian state. This period, from the mid-1970s to 1991, was characterised by the decline of post-Independence optimism, the negative aftermath of several wars, and the political Emergency of the mid 1970s, as well as economic and material problems specific to the film industry. Though it exhibits neither of the most characteristic themes that emerged in that period — that of the angry young man at odds with a corrupted body politic, or a separation narrative (Ganti 2004: 32–3) — the film nevertheless juxtaposes themes of India's territorial integrity, a legacy of concern particularly following the war with China, with an ongoing national integration discourse characteristic of earlier post-Independence film-making. In addition, in the idealised rural milieu of several of its scenes, it draws elements comparable to the nativist, or neo-nativist, cinema of the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. By contrast, it adopts a more pessimistic position regarding war, in line with the mood of its own era. *Mungaaru Male* is categorically cinema of the post-1991 period of liberalisation and to some extent conforms to the trend of family entertainers characteristic of this period. As Dimitrova (2016: 6) writes, 'dominant is the theme of compliant daughters and sons willing to sacrifice their love for the sake of family honor and harmony.' This compliance with patriarchal norms illustrates the conservative outlook of many contemporary Indian films. It is linked to the deliberate presentation of a commodified Indian identity, which aims at the celebration of family values. But though the films are products of different eras, they remain, as I will show, comparable in their depiction of the Kodava as internal others. Furthermore, in both films, resolution is achieved through sacrifice: in *Muthina Haara* through Achappa's martyrdom, in *Mungaaru Male* through the Preetam's denial of his love. But though male sacrifice is common to the films, the films offer further complementarity in that they focus on male and female Kodava respectively. Thus, this paper will show that images of the Kodava remain consistent and comparable across films produced in different periods and for different audiences. These images, ones that my own experience in discussion suggests are held by the more mainstream Indian community and some of which are also held and reinforced by the Kodava themselves, are artfully expressed in musical codes.

Exoticism in Song: Diversions or Ideological Banners

In its treatment of the ubiquitous song and dance sequences in popular Indian film, scholarship has moved well beyond Manuel's (1988: 175) cursory comment that 'often ... musical interludes are little more than digressions gratuitously inserted into the plot'. Nevertheless, there is a range of opinions as to how songs operate within film reception, and thus on the nature and strength of their meaning. Gehlawat (2010: 34) critiques the idea that songs are primarily sites aiming to produce astonishment, a Brechtian device to make viewers aware of the artificiality of the cinematic whole. Such a view gives songs an importance that is both negative, a pointer to what cinema otherwise lacks, and directed away from the songs themselves. Conversely, Pandian (2011: 59) regards them as merely sites of 'attraction as independent of the audience's subjective "absorption" in the plot and in the fate of its characters'. Though this interpretation allows for the important existence of songs as sites of meaning apart from their cinematic framing, I follow Booth's (2000: 126) lead that songs express the inexpressible, provide commentary, and advance the plot, particularly through the acceleration or even conflation of time. Moreover, I maintain songs do so in a particularly potent way, simply because they are songs: powerful affective modalities that not only intensify meanings, but become independent of and outlive the films in which they are embedded. They are seductive, and this seductiveness itself is distracting: as Sundar (2008: 145–6) writes, 'the attractiveness of music, its subliminal impact, and its putative ability to transcend all manner of difference often disguise the sociopolitical implications of this wildly popular cultural form'⁴. Moreover, the potential meanings that might be drawn from songs are deeply embedded. Sarrazin (2008: 398–401) and Hogan (2003: 37–8) point out that a thorough understanding of song and dance sequences requires attention to traditional Indian aesthetic theory, particularly in the types of women that are presented, and in the relation of film songs to specific traditional song types. Though I am not sure how many consumers of popular film song are conversant with the details of arcane aesthetic theory, the creators of the songs most likely would be. In the case



of *Muthina Haara*, with its classically proficient musical director and the use of one basically classical song, this is certain. Moreover, Hogan's (2003: 37) point that ancient theory attributed to art an ethical function, 'a significant and consequential presence', is useful.

Desai et al. (2005:79) maintain that in the consumption of Bollywood 'meaning is secondary' to 'articulating imagistic and aural regimes with social practices' at the place and time of consumption. However, I believe that if pleasure is to be created and consumed it cannot be in some sort of way that excludes meaning. In other words, I take the songs and their meanings seriously even if it is held that meaning is indeed secondary to affect and to be subordinated to, rather than embedded in, subsequent consumption. To be over-serious is to my mind less risky than trivialising the power to project ideology affectively. This is all the more important in that *Muthina Haara*, though commercially unsuccessful, included a very popular soundtrack. This reminds us that Indian film songs have a very healthy life long after the film has finished its cinematic run, not only in sound track releases, but in broadcast, reiterative shows and talent quests, more casually in the memory game of *antaakshar*⁵, and most recently as ringtones⁶. They enter the realm of what DeNora (2000) calls 'music of everyday life', and though I doubt a ringtone is likely to initiate conscious appraisal of its distant ancestor, the synoptically surrounded song and dance sequence, such sounds nevertheless retain a trace of their original semiosis and the ideology they once projected more thoroughly. In the case of these two movies, as I will show, they operate in very specific ways to reinforce that ideology.

Exoticism and Verisimilitude

Kodava scholar Sowmya Dechamma (2012) has undertaken fruitful documentation of general ethnographic inaccuracies in filmic representation of the Kodava, and I am indebted to her critique both of this and of the more general ideological thrust that the movies project. It is similarly feasible to outline inaccuracies in music, and this will occur as a matter of course. Such activity, even if thought essential, might be short-lived. Only one song in the two films attempts to evoke Kodava music, which the Kodava themselves regard as inherently unappealing to outsiders⁷. However, to make such a critique central would be to overlook two important things. First, Biswarup Sen (2008: 88) has summarised the irrelevance of verisimilitude in Indian film music, characterising it as 'shamelessly promiscuous in its borrowings, nonchalant in the way it combines forms, unconstrained by rule or dogma, and exuberant in the multiplicity of its productions'. Second, scholarship in European musical exoticism has forcefully demonstrated that authenticity in representing or evoking the exotic is unnecessary. What is central to much exotic representation is a sonic strangeness that is merely acceptably specific and 'suggest[s] the different mores, goals, circumstances, and practices of the exotic culture' (Bellman 1998: xii). Locke (2009: 3) argues further that 'exoticism is not something that is "contained in" specific devices. Rather, it arises through an interaction between a work, in all its aspects, and the listener'. Most forcefully in opera (comparable in these respects to Indian film), plot, text, staging and costuming all contribute to the audience experience, and the understanding of the whole as exotic can proceed even in the absence of specifically exotic music⁸. This is particularly pertinent in the case of *Mungaaru Male*, where Kodava woman Nandini's ultimately intractable otherness is projected in music that makes no recourse to any exoticism or folkishness. Thus the association of the feminine and the exotic, a powerful theme in both European and Indian exoticism, is projected through what Locke (2009: 4) calls 'all of the music in its context'. It is thus less important to assess the music in these films solely according to ideas of accuracy than to assert the power of referential affect in giving locations and characters an enhanced authenticity and difference. The songs enable, perhaps even compel, the listener to feel particular things about the Kodava without recourse to any Kodava sound.

Ultimately then, my reading is contrapuntal or multi-part: I need to examine the ideological potential of the aural imaginary alone, against verisimilitude but in conjunction with images⁹, and also against the conventional stereotypes through which the Kodava appear to have been understood. A final quiet theme of how the Kodava might prefer to be understood emerges almost as a coda.

Integrating the Nation: Valorising, then Vanishing, the Exotic

In its foundational years, the Indian film industry had, as underpinnings, notions of national identity and integration. These were crudely projected, in part through recourse to mythology, in films that drew on a pan-Indian corpus of myth that, at one level, was widely known (fitting a pattern of cultural consumption wherein novelty is not necessarily a prerequisite to absorption) and at another, conformed to a vision of a unified past, the vision of history propagated in Nehru's the *Discovery of India* (see Chakravarty 1993: 18). Chakravarty characterises post-Independence cinema as a site for addressing challenges to the nation in partial resolution of dichotomies of rich-poor,



and urban-rural, where moral victories take precedence over, and are possibly inimical to, material ones¹⁰. Both of the films addressed in this paper carry this further. Moral victories are inimical also to personal ones: integration is achieved at individual cost¹¹.

Running counter to, yet feeding the integrationist project, is the very diversity of India itself. As Booth (2007: 321) notes, this heterogeneity produces a plethora of cultural and religious markers that 'are common, but also potentially problematic'. The extent of this diversity is also such that the exotic is almost unavoidable. Writing of Hindi cinema, but making a point that is easily paralleled in the study of regional cinema, Booth (2007: 321) concludes that:

I might argue, with only a degree of whimsy, that any character appearing in Hindi film who is not Hindu and does not live in a city or a village located between lower Punjab and the upper Deccan is in some sense or to some degree 'other'.

Erndl (2016: 3), basing her observations in part on the work of Pankaj Jain (2011: 357 in Erndl 2016: 3), concludes that generally depictions are positive:

This is largely due to the Indian censor board, which restricts material derogatory to religious or caste minorities, as well as to the general ethos among Indian filmmakers that promotes the Indian nationalist ideal of a pluralistic and unified society. ... Pankaj Jain, through a survey of films on Hindu-Muslim themes over the last several decades has concluded, "In their entire history, Indian films have built upon the legacy of Gandhian social harmony and Nehruvian nationalism and secularism".

Thobani (2014: 491) offers a differently nuanced summary, emphasising Erndl's last point, with regard to religious traditions: 'Most of these religious traditions — and their communities of faith — are treated as modernizable (i.e., secularizable)'¹². Though the two films examined in this paper depict the assimilation of Kodava into the modern state through the secular role of the Kodava as warrior, secularisation is not quite ascendant. Instead, Kodava are assimilated religiously through identification with Hinduism. In the case of *Muthina Haara*, this occurs within a song sequence, as will be discussed. In *Mungaaru Male*, it occurs during the depiction of an ostensibly Kodava wedding.

Secularisation aside, two approaches to dealing with the exotic in the securing of the nation are to be observed. The first is assimilation: the exotic is either rendered invisible or made in some way an acceptable or even defining part of the nation. Dechamma (2012: 8) argues that many minorities are people who are 'not defined by the normative culture of the Hindu-nation (the "isn't people")' and thus cinematic portrayals must assimilate them. Writing of Bimal Roy's *Madhumati*, Chakravarty (1993: 129–30) says that the eponymous character is the 'embodiment of tribal freedom and innocence':

Tribals as unintegrated pockets of ancient cultural vestiges have a peculiarly anomalous and marginal status in Indian society ... symbols of exploitation ... resilience of spirit and continuity with a primal past ... *assimilation is inevitable* [emphases added].

Conversely, possibly taking their lead from Bharathiraja's *Pathinaru vayathinile* (1976), Tamil and other South Indian film makers have valorised the countryside, with songs 'emanating from the hearts of the peasants. And the poetry in these folk songs reaches down to the roots of human conditions, which in these villages are knitted with ritualistic and traditional beliefs' (Bharathiraja, cited in Pandian 2011: 55). This casts Bharathiraja and others as true students of Herder, and Basu points to assemblages of internal exoticism that Said would have recognised as self-defining others:

peasant bodies, Goan fisherman, tribal figures ... the camera assumes both an urban Anthropological 'look' and a perspective that incorporates such bodies into a metropolitan, posthistorical arcade of 'ethnic' diagrams ... bodies become figurable ... at once inside and outside the cinematic city. The anthropological distancing of their forms and settings, as objects of discovery and study, is offset and inseparably recombined with a vision that redresses them as part of the city's fascinated romance with itself and its projected outside. (Basu 2010: 164)



Similarly, Booth (2007: 322) has argued that ‘even “Orientals” can be “Orientalist”’. But Dechamma (2012: 8) suggests this goes a step further: the minority can only help to define the nation if it becomes a model minority in practice, its difference a visible, exotic, yet ultimately harmless display, best appreciated in film as synoptic weddings and non-synoptic songs. She outlines an upper-caste, Hinduising agenda that has attempted to assimilate the Kodava minority to the state of Karnataka in particular, but more broadly to the nation, through valorisation of one of the enduring images of the Kodava male, that of self-sacrificing warrior. In *Muthina Haara*, the central male character, Achappa, is thus assimilated into the Indian state as a soldier, a process which is represented in a single song sequence which is discussed below. However, I argue that the treatment of the central Kodava character and female lead of *Mungaaru Male*, Nandini, exemplifies another, quite different, approach to the exotic.

This second process is marginalisation which is, at times, achieved through the conflation of the exotic and the erotic feminine. As noted, this is a recurrent theme in both European and Indian exoticism and, as Marglin (1985: 5) has pointed out, is an association that has been negatively reinforced by colonial critiques of Indian performing traditions, wherein a ‘mixture of the sinful and the sensuously beautiful is Europe’s classical recipe for the exotic’. Musically, this is characteristically expressed when the exotic is objectified in the ‘item number’, a highly sexualised song and dance routine most frequently focused on an insignificant female character, acted by a specialist ‘item girl’. Even casual observers of Indian film will know the example of ‘Mehbooba’ from *Sholay*¹³, which maps overt sexuality onto a group loosely defined as gypsy¹⁴. The exotic nature of the erotic feminine is frequently reinforced by a location that sets activity apart from mainstream Indian society.

Weidman (2012: 308), drawing on the work of Asha Kasbekar, points out that the item number makes public for the viewer an overt sexuality that, in synoptic terms, can only occur privately. Thus, in the film *Kandaswamy*, the item number ‘En Peru Meenakumari’ is performed for the villain inside his private bus¹⁵. Moreover, the genre of song used, the folk-derived *kuuththu*, and its associated raw folk vocal sound and delivery ‘... remain outside the range of possible female ideals, and accordingly may serve as a potent sonic signifier of lower-class and immoral femininity’ (Weidman 2012: 311)¹⁶. The separation from the mainstream may also be temporal: Marshall and Beaster-Jones (2012: 251) have pointed out that movies featuring the *tawa’if*, or courtesan, always potentially disruptive to respectability, are ‘frequently represented in the context of an eroticized historical past’¹⁷. The *tawa’if* returns to the religious question: *tawa’ifs* are most frequently Muslim, and item girls frequently carry Christian names. The most famous of item girls, Helen Richardson, appears for example as Lily, as Monica and as Rita. More generally, Christians frequently appear as a sort of comic exotic, relatively harmless but intemperate (according to one web poster ‘We drink, swear a fair bit, and usually in English’¹⁸).

Congruent to the rural or tribal person as exotic is the landscape itself. Mazumdar (2011: 130) has noted what she calls ‘postcard imagination’ as a feature of film from the 1960s onwards, wherein locations themselves became objects of desire. This is particularly pertinent to *Mungaaru Male* which features, Dechamma might even say advertises, the Kodava countryside in all the sensuous fecundity that its rain-drenched beauty invokes. The love duet, filmed not in Kodagu but at the Jog Falls, is a perfect example of film expressing ‘the affective lives of its protagonists through the resonant space of a corresponding landscape’ (Pandian 2011: 51). Pandian (2011: 54) has observed that the cinematic landscape itself may be taken as an ongoing process of aesthetic encounter rather than as a static frame of a given form. Kabir (2005: 84), in a study of images of Kashmir, notes that locales became exotic whilst simultaneously national. There is no doubting the nationalist sentiments evoked by Kashmir, internationally disputed territory since India’s independence, but at the same time she argues it is ‘the eroticized landscape of the mind in the social imaginary of Indians’. She cites Lutgendorf’s idea that romance complications are mapped out along a fault line between the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Himalayas (Kabir 2005: 86). In the more limited context of state integration in a Southern Indian film, this is transferred in *Mungaaru Male* to the fault line between the Deccan Plateau (Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka) and the mountains of the Western Ghats (Kodagu). Symbolically, though, there is no romantic fault line in *Muthina Haara*: Achappa dies or, in the language of military eulogy, achieves martyrdom in the contested but ultimately integrated countryside of Kashmir¹⁹.

Exotic landscapes aside, discussion of Kashmir draws attention to one final point about exoticism, and particularly female exoticism, in Indian film. In the hit, ‘Yahoo Song’ from Subodh Mukherjee’s *Junglee*, the Kashmiri Rajkumari is silent, as is Helen Richardson in ‘Mehboobah’. The seductive but silent or wordless exotic will be found later in *Mungaaru Male*. It is coincidentally a European exoticist



trope appropriately exemplified by the duplicitously seductive 'Bell Song' from Delibes' *Lakme* and is reflected in Dechamma's (2012: 7) notion of the characterisation of the Kodava as mindless bodies.

The Kodava²⁰

Though not even the largest group in the Kodagu district, many Kodava have sufficient economic, social and political power²¹ to define the district culturally, most importantly in the broader imagination. To others, Kodava are stereotypically warrior-like, disciplined, physical, sporting. Under a British policy that divided Indian groups into martial and non-martial races²², the Kodava were classed as the former, and one of the earliest Europeans to write about the Kodava in detail, Moegling (1855: 28), notes a saying that 'A Coorg's guilt is brought about through his arms'. In popular discussion, women are stereotypically considered good looking, fair and, in the views of many non-Kodava with whom I speak, slightly racy in their youth²³. Most importantly, the Kodava are frequently said to have come 'from somewhere else'²⁴. Though extraneous origin is strongly rejected by many Kodava, and the longevity of the Kodava's presence in the region would appear as great if not greater than that of any other group, many features of cultural performance demonstrate contiguity with the neighbouring state of Kerala, a relationship that is articulated textually in a song repertoire, *dudikotapa*²⁵.

Since the ascendancy of the non-indigenous Haleri rajas in the early 17th century, the Kodava have been subject to increasing Hinduising and specifically Brahmanic influence from the Deccan region and Tulunād. This influence was noted, with some alarm, in early missionary accounts (Moegling 1855, Richter 1870), and examined in great detail by M.N. Srinivas (1952) in his work on Sanskritisation. In spite of cultural resistance to these processes (Napier 2010), Dechamma (2012: 5) has pointed to an increasing representation of the Kodava as Hindu²⁶. Kodagu, after a long period of political rule from elsewhere, existed as a separate state only from 1947 till 1956, when it was absorbed into the state of Karnataka. At the moment there is a small autonomy movement, with a shifting focus on land ownership, language rights, autonomy, religious distinctiveness, and a generalised sense of Kodavaame (Kodava-ness).

Dechamma (2012: 15) insists that films, as discussed in this paper, 'need to be viewed with this history of assimilation into the Kannada fold' in mind²⁷. As Madhava Prasad (2004: 60–3) implies, there is a dual process of assimilation to be observed: a constructivist one via statehood to nation, and a civilizational one, via a Hinduising agenda that Dechamma also observes. It is processes of assimilation into state and specifically into the Hindu nation, assisted and affectively underlined by song, that I examine. Song sequences show Kodava as assimilating, disappearing into the national fold as warriors, but then re-emerging as an eroticised female exotic.

Integration or Assimilation

*Muthina Haara*²⁸ tells the story of a Kodava soldier, Achappa (Vishnuvardhan), who marries a Kodava nurse, Anu (Suhasini Maniratnam). After a series of misfortunes, notably the infertility of Anu following the birth of their son, and the child's death in a Pakistani air attack, Achappa is killed by the Chinese in Kashmir and Anu goes mad. Dechamma (2012) argues that assimilation is achieved in this film by presenting the Kodava as partially exotic, then invisible through transformation to patriotic soldier and through Hinduisation. 'Kodagina Vira' (Kodava Hero) opens with three traditionally clad Kodava playing drums resembling the emblematic Kodava drum, the *dudi*. These are atypically suspended on sashes rather than being held in the left hand: the traditional manner of holding the drum allows for further tensioning of the playing skin. An exotic instrumental melody follows (Fig. 1), the flute doubled by a double-reed aerophone at a fourth below, and by a less prominent instrument of indeterminate timbre at a fifth below.

Both the instrumental timbre of double reeds and the melodic doubling at a parallel fourth and fifth, particularly when working in conjunction, are standard aural signifiers of the East²⁹. Readers versed in film or popular music cliché may recognize the parallelism as being a standard signifier of the Orient or even the Native American. It is, however, rare in South Indian folk music and I have not heard it in music played at Kodava events.

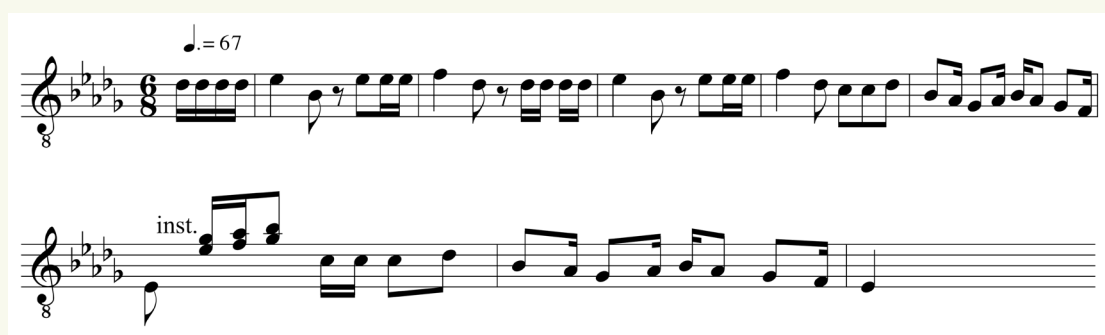
Music for public dancing evoked by this sequence is not provided by the Kodava themselves in practice, nor does it utilise the *dudi*. It is provided by Dalit musicians who play *walaga*, a genre with a far more symbiotic relationship to contemporary film music. *Walaga* does feature a double-reed aerophone but music played by the Kodava themselves does not. However, the film's ideology demands that the



Figure 1. Exotic Melody 0:45:58.



Figure 2. Opening Vocal Melody 0:46:18³⁰.



Kodava are initially a distinct group and that they occupy all the cinematic space: the *walaga* musicians are already assimilated into the Kodava. After a cadence, chorus voices enter in double time ([Fig. 2](#)) as male and female Kodava dance around Achappa.

Whereas only drums accompanied the opening instrumental melody, producing a sparse folk sound, the melody here is accompanied by drums, electric bass, and guitar chords, a more familiar soundscape. The wind instrument interjections are reharmonised in parallel thirds, a less exotic sound than the fourths of the opening. This begins the process of mediating otherness through musical codes that Booth ([2007: 325](#)) states is characteristic of such scenes. The event depicted in the opening scenes and in the text is a *Nari Mangala* (Tiger Wedding or Tiger Ceremony), a now defunct ceremony, though one that was still occasionally practised in about 1942 when the scene is ostensibly set. In this ceremony, a man or woman who had killed a tiger was honoured and, according to some sources, symbolically married to the spirit of the slain beast³¹:

Kodava warrior
 Bold and sure shot,
 Who dared to kill a tiger,
 Wave golden lamps before him.
 Perform *Puli Mangala* to him³².

The music that Kodava sang at these events was performed by four men and is slow, austere in tone, and has a melodic structure which is different from that which is heard in this film ([Fig. 3](#)).

The scene shifts to a shot of Anu and their infant son. Female voices in wordless chorus, again a popular sound in European exoticism as noted above, are offered a predominantly percussive, more natural accompaniment and the wind interjections return to the open harmonisation of the first instrumental ([Fig. 4](#)). A new melody follows ([Fig. 5](#)).



Figure 3. *Nari Mangala pat* melody as performed by C. Nanaiah, C. Monnappa, N. Ponnappa, and M.C. Somaiah (Poradu, 3 November 2008).



Figure 4. Female Chorus 0:46:47.

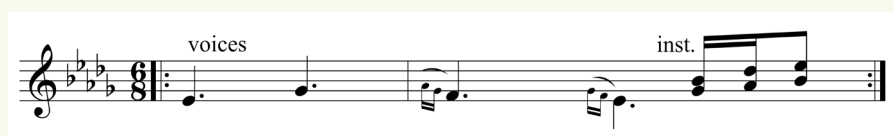
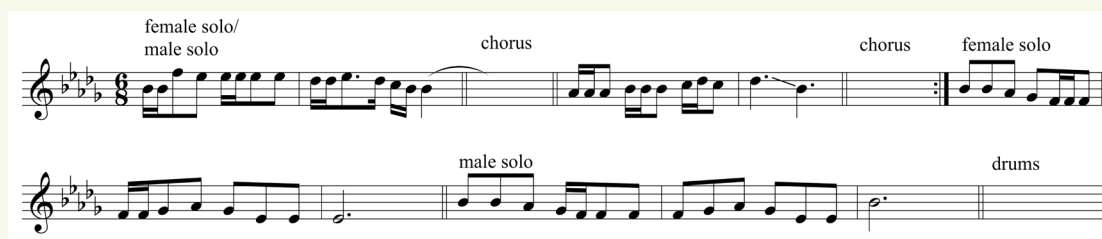


Figure 5. New Melody 0:46:47.



(Anu) I feed you with tiger's milk
Taste it and grow up Kodava child.
(Achappa) I present you ivory
Grow up as you play.
(Anu) You are the darling child of Mother Kaveri.
(Achappa) You are the darling child of Mother Kaveri.

The lead voices are those of mainstream playback voices, S.P. Balasubramaniam and K.S. Chitra, not voices emulating the folk sound that Weidman (2012: 310–11) has observed in Tamil film. Both Anu and Achappa sing and the scene is predominantly domestic. Yet simultaneously it speaks of pertinent ideologies: the Kodava as linked to but ruling over their natural environment, and the relationship of the Kodava to the river Kaveri, which will be visually reinforced later in the song.

A short (0:47:33) drum interlude follows, using a generic representation of *chenda* drumming, a style played by musicians from Kerala for many Kodava rituals. The scene appears to have been shot on one of the hill shrines, such as Kottabetta or Soma Male, which have similar natural platforms on which dancing occurs at festival times. At such festivals, the men perform a stick dance, *kolaat*, and a martially derived dance game, *pariyakol*, the women, *ummathaat*. The male activities seem fairly close to what I have seen, but the female dance is less clear. In both cases, a purely percussive, primitive accompaniment is afforded to wordless natural bodies in their pristine environment.



A further theme follows, sung forcefully in the upper register, calling on Kodava to:

Take up the sword for the sake of this country,
Kodava, O Kodava,
Take up the sword.
Here is a loaded double-barreled gun,
Kodava, O Kodava,
You are a warrior.

At the section marked 'a' in Fig 6, Balasubramaniam's voice is chorused so as to sound like a large number of men calling to the Kodava.

The scene is shot at Raja's Seat in Madikeri, the capital of Kodagu district and a site associated with the Karnataka-derived Haleri rule. Thus Kodava heroism is moved out of the natural environment of dangerous beasts of prey into the wider political world.

The melody of Fig. 2 is reprised in a shoot at Talakaveri (0:48:10), the source of the Kaveri River. The text declares that:

The Kodava woman enjoys motherhood
The Kodava man wants to die in war.
Let us be born again and again in this land of Mother Kaveri.

The Kaveri, one of India's most sacred rivers, is a powerful site of identity and the Kodava insist on the uniqueness of their relationship to it³³. At the same time, it is important to Karnataka, both religiously and geo-politically: there is a longstanding dispute with the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu over water use. A song, 'Kodagina Kaveri', which asserts the importance of the river for all Karnataka, from an earlier film, *Sharapanjara*, was used as an overture in Kannada cinemas for several decades (Dechamma 2012: 15). The Brahmin priest doing puja and dancers with hands in prāṇam contribute to the Hinduising process that the film enacts (Dechamma 2012: 5).

The following female solo voice (0:48:32), using the melodic material of Fig. 5, develops the conflation of Kodava conquest of the natural environment with guarding the country. Chitra's voice alternates with first female then mixed voices, repeating the wordless fragment shown in Fig. 4. Clear of any accompaniment except drums, the Kodava woman is naturalised and simultaneously nationalised:

I get you a python for a sling.
Guard the country Kodava hero

At this point we see Kodava men holding a traditional weapon, the *odi-kathi*, and male voices sing the material of Fig. 4 for the first time:

May the Goddess Kaveri bring you laurels (repeated)

In the instrumental interlude shown in Fig 7, though synchronisation is poor, there is: an obvious contrast of strings representing outside accompanying scenes such as Achappa in battle; and guitars representing home accompanying scenes of the family and the *ain mane*, the Kodava clan house.

The music played by the guitars is a reworking of the melody first heard in association with feminine domesticity (Fig. 3 — 'I feed you with tiger's milk'). The swirling high speed agitated string playing, generally more chromatic and directional (pushing) is also characterised by the slightly un-coordinated, slightly detuned sound³⁴ of massed violins that is an Indian film music cliché, almost a musical national image. The music has no exotic element: both home life and national duty are to be assimilated. This section is also used to mark the passing of time as Anu and Achappa's son, Viraj, progresses from infancy to the age of about 4 or 5.



Figure 6. Martial Theme 0:47:48.



Figure 7. Instrumental Interlude 0:48:56.

Family farewells Ach. (in uniform). He walks away through rice field

violins

Anu and Viraj Empty rice fields Anu and Viraj in ain mane

guitar violins guitar

Ach. in battle Vir. plays with grandfather Artillery fire

violins guitar violins

(exploding shells will transform to fireworks)

The following scene (0:49:35) returns to the music of the first four measures of [Fig. 1](#): the original folk sound accompanying scenes of a further traditional Kodava festival, that of *Puthari* or *Huthari*, celebrating the rice harvest. The music then shifts to that of [Fig. 6](#) with a more orchestral accompaniment, the woodwind examples of the earlier section replaced by the high strings that characterise the national sections of [Fig. 7](#). However, the text this time is local.

This moon is born in Kodagu.
The moon of the Huthari festival.
Sheds light in the night

Then, the opening texted music 'Kodava Hero' ([Fig. 2](#)) is used to sing about Viraj, now about five years of age and dressed in the traditional Kodava *kupya*, turban and sash (0:50:05):

He is our hope like a God
With a gun like a warrior.
God has granted him to us.



The text of the opening version is reprised, sung by a chorus of male voices. Young Viraj shoots a model leopard with a toy gun (0:50:19), then is dressed in a white *kupya* and garlanded as Achappa was in the *Nari Mangala*. Using an unidentified female voice, Viraj then sings, using the martial melody of [Fig. 6](#) (0:50:33).

Mummy, my dear Mummy.
Daddy, my Daddy.
Where has he gone?

His father being absent, the reply is made, using first this melody, by Anu. She appears dressed as a Kodava man, complete with moustache and wielding a large knife but minus the traditional dagger in belt³⁵.

Son, dear son.
Dad, your Dad
Has gone to guard the country.

She textually reasserts gender roles, while in voice and attire vanishing as woman, becoming a projected, adult version of her son or a surrogate for her absent husband. Cross-dressing in Indian performance culture is common but largely male dressed as female in mimetic traditions where only men performed. A few studies of cross-dressing in film unsurprisingly come from the perspective of queer studies ([Gopinath 1997, 2000](#)), again inappropriate here, and rarely address song sequences³⁶. Here, the body of the female exotic assimilates into the body of the already assimilated male. Use of strings rather than wind interjections moves the music from the exotic to the familiar and national sound of the instrumental interlude. *Dudikottapat* and *walaga*, sonic symbols of local distinctiveness, are negated, the underlying rhythm having been transformed to a generic Central Indian *tassa* feel which had been popularised in the song, 'My Name is Lakhan', from the 1989 film, *Ram Lakhan*³⁷, but one that also resembles the *thambate*-based ensembles found across parts of rural Southern India, including the southern parts of Kodagu. The track closes with sword play between masculinised mother and the son, dressed as an adult and with drumming: we are allowed the native sound once more but have learned that it is in the service of nation. Thus, over the course of five minutes the song encapsulates the work of the film as a whole, foregrounding 'the difference of the Kodava only to push it aside in the interests of the Hindu-nation' ([Dechamma 2012: 10](#))³⁸.

Murty ([2009: 270, n.d.](#)) and Brown ([2004](#)) amongst others have noted the conflation of Hindutva, the ideology of a specifically Hindu nationalism, masculinity and the nationalism and patriotism in films after 1990. Though in 1990 it is unlikely that anyone would have specifically called Achappa a Hindutva hero, it is this very nationalism that *Muthina Haara* celebrates, drawing the Kodava into the Hindu-national fold in images that are heroic and even subtly centred on the god, Ram ([Dechamma 2012: 17](#) points out that young Viraj refers to the *Ramayana* and he plays in front of images drawn from it). Following Hogan's ([2003](#)) lead, it is obvious that the song also exists independently of the movie as a straightforward statement of *Kshatriya*, warrior *dharma* or dutiful behaviour.

That Achappa as Hindutva hero is also sexually restrained, even becoming celibate, is affirmed in a second song, 'Saroo, Saroo, Miltry Saroo' ('Sir, Sir, Military Sir' (1:19:10)). This song, which serves as the movie's item number, is set in Rajasthan, which [Dechamma \(2012: 14\)](#) suggests to be 'the other against the Kodava-Kannadiga combine'³⁹. Several plot devices, however, mollify its eroticism. By this point the son, Viraj, is dead and Anu has been infertile since his birth. Prior to the song, Anu and Achappa have seen a *nautanki* or *khyal*, a folk drama in which a king's wife resigns due to her infertility and Anu has expressed a desire that her husband take another wife in order to have more sons. The song is set up as Anu's imagination, or a dream sequence, and is followed by Jenny (Kavya), imagined as an item girl but now something of an ingénue expressing her real-life intention to get married to her own man. Thus it exists in an imagined rather than real space.

Nevertheless, as I have pointed out, the song has a life and a power apart from its immediate framing and still operates within the paradigms of the item number. Thus, its ideology ought be examined. The intended surrogate for Anu is not Kodava, but indeterminately and increasingly exotic. At first, she is Christian by name, Jenny, and Goan by attire, then through costume changes becomes vaguely representative of three Rajasthani ethnic groups: Banjarra, then Langa, finally Sanpera. The Goan is gauche (the real-life Jenny) but the subsequent exotics become increasingly slick and seductive in their body movements as they sing of their fertility ('Who wants these golden coins in me?') and desire to be impregnated.



The song opens with a generic folk rhythm and a fairly standard North Indian semi-folk instrumentation alternating between strings, solo flute and santur. Jenny and her subsequent avatars are voiced by a different singer from Anu: Latha Hamsalekha. Weidman (2012: 309–10) and Sundar (2008) explore how changes in female voice timbres characterise different types of women. Sundar (2008: 149) demonstrates that the virtuous Lata Mangeshkar vocal paradigm ‘helped to contain the dangerous visual and aural presence of female bodies in public’ whereas item girls are differently voiced. For example, Ila Arun, offers ‘a glamorized conflation of ethnic, caste, class, and sexual othering’ (Sundar 2008: 166)⁴⁰. Though here a change of voice is used, it is slight. There is limited use of the not-sung vocalisation, which Weidman (2012: 310) says characterises the item number, as Jenny shivers after being thrown into the water, sneezes in response to Achappa giving her snuff, or throwing chillies over her face, or in response to his offer of bitter gourd. Note that these vocalisations occur in response to his behaviours, attenuating her seductiveness. The Mangeshkar paradigm is barely abandoned. Achappa has a chance to strut about with some rather phallic-looking gourds draped around his neck and to make a few debonair gestures without negating his status as a Kodava, now all-Indian, hero. The sequence is finished by Achappa drawing Jenny’s attention to a sudden shot of a breast-feeding woman which ruptures not only Anu’s dream but any suggestion that the two exotics might themselves integrate⁴¹.

Two song sequences juxtapose the good, specific and assimilating exotic and the eroticised feminine exotic. Expanding on Dechamma (2012: 9), I suggest that the songs represent two bodies: the cliché of the Kodava male as warrior assimilated into Hindu India, and the ill-defined, uncontrollable female who can only be cut off, rejected.

The Modern Marketable Exotic

Unlike *Muthina Haara*, *Mungaaru Male* (Pre-Monsoon Rains), was a huge hit and ran for at least 100 days in 37 cities and towns across Karnataka (Anon. 2007) and screened for over a year in Bangalore (Kamalapurkar 2007). Here the Kodava are subtly re-exoticised and redifferentiated. Preetam (Ganesh), a non-Kodava, is smitten by Nandini (Pooja Gandhi), a Kodava woman who is the daughter of an army officer and engaged to marry another officer. Preetam follows her to Kodagu and she eventually falls in love with him. After being berated by his mother (Sudha Belawadi), Nandini’s mother’s close friend, he breaks off the relationship allowing the wedding to proceed⁴². Differentiation involves several images: the belligerent but disciplined military manner of older Kodava males; their eccentricity; Nandini’s leaving of a sari Preetam tied to her balcony so that she might elope and abandon her Kodava fiancé should the need arise; her fiancé’s war hero status; the distorted representation of a Kodava wedding; and the idea that this is a group that cannot be penetrated.

Songs are less obviously implicated in this process, but the voicing of Nandini is telling. She is wordless, her lips unmoving in the first song sung by Priya Himesh, ‘Onde Ondu Sari’, (‘Once, only once come in front of me’ (0:11:06)), the pre-verbal, even silent, native weaving her seducing counterpoint around Preetam’s text. She vampishly vocalises on the verge of singing text. In this exchange she is not in physical proximity to Preetam but in his imagination. Frequently he and Nandini perform in the same spaces (all of which are non-naturalistic, particularly the room featuring a giant image of the heart-shaped watch which becomes the token of Preetam’s love) but not at the same time. Elsewhere, in a manner John Berger would have us notice, she flirts and displays herself not with and to Preetam but with and to us. The music in Fig. 9 is performed within a red room in which Preetam has performed immediately before. Nandini wears a white bodice and a tattered white skirt. The music in Fig. 10 is in a shot in the room featuring the watch. She wears a silver bodice and a blue mini-skirt. Preetam later occupies this space⁴³.

Later she is given thoughts — words are sung without her lips moving — in two short songs sung by Shreya Ghoshal: first when she thinks that they must not become lovers (‘Araluthiru’) and second, when the sari is tied to her balcony railing (‘Ivanu’). Finally, once she is in love with Preetam, she is allowed to sing, to the voice of Sunidhi Chauhan in the duet ‘Kunidu Kunidu Baare’⁴⁴. Again, however, in spite of her revoicing, the female exotic must be rejected⁴⁵. Thus, though Dechamma (2012) writes that she is the ‘perfect girl assimilated into the majority — both national and global’, her singing may tell us otherwise. After she has been abandoned by Preetam, who breaks off their relationship so that familial order may be maintained, she does not sing again. In her wedded silence she is assimilated into the nation, like Annapurna in *Muthina Haara*, but only through the bodies of Kodava males: her doting father who carries in his body a bullet that may bring about his martyrdom, and her war-hero husband.



Figure 8. Nandini's Sinuous Counterpoint 0:12:58.

Nandini

Preetam

Figure 9. Nandini Flirts – shot 1. 0:12:02.

Nandini

(2nd voice)

full body

face - eye contact

full body

mid-riff, face thighs

lips

full body

walks to camera

mid-riff, thighs

lips

gestures to come here

face and cleavage

full body from ground

face, cleavage

arms sweep sides of face

Figure 10. Nandini Flirts – shot 2. 0:13:32.

Nandini

male voices - whispered

female voices

'yeah, yeah . . . '

full body

face and bust

thighs and torso

full body from behind, hips wiggling

closer, leans forward

thighs and torso

face and bust

slow turn



Conclusions

Though both films deal with the same group of internal exotics, they do so in different ways and to different ends: in one case assimilating the exotic and lauding him and in the second re-exoticising and ultimately excluding her as an individual but readmitting her through marriage.

In *Muthina Haara*, Achappa is integrated with the nation through his representation as stereotyped warrior. The song sequence of 'Kodagina Vira' achieves this through reinforcement of gender roles, of the relationship of the Kodava to the land, their dominance over nature, their integration to Karnataka through their relationship to the Kaveri river, and finally their integration to the national fold through intergenerational sublimation and the ultimate sacrifice which the film then carries out in Kashmir. This serves a secondary integrative effect of reinforcing the position of Kashmir, hotly disputed territory, as a land of exoticised imagination that is integrated with the nation through sacrifice, just as the Kaveri integrates Kodagu into Karnataka.

In *Mungaaru Male*, romantic complications that featured in the exotic Kashmir films of the 1960s are transferred to a fault line between the Deccan Plateau and the Western Ghats, Kodagu being projected as a land of eroticised imagination. Nandini is brought close to the world of the Deccan through Preetam's seduction, her songs slowly bringing her to speech. But direct integration is impossible. It is only when her passion is thwarted that she can be integrated with the Indian nation through her silent marriage to Gautam, a Kodava hero, a warrior 'of whom all Kodagu is proud', just as Anu was integrated not solely through the bearing of hero-children but through vanishing into the form of her husband dressed as a warrior at the end of their song.

Mungaaru Male was a huge success. It helped sell Kodagu. Dechamma (2012) points to correlation between this and the ongoing development of tourism and absentee land ownership in Kodagu (even though much of the film was not shot in Kodagu, but in Sakleshpur, a hill station further north, and at the Jog Falls). Thus, though Nandini's exoticism is not completely overcome in this film, the exoticism of the land itself is opened to tourism and to absentee landlordism. Kodagu itself becomes the seductive female that can, like Kashmir, be conquered.

The autonomy movement in Kodagu has amongst its aims a halt to the increasing outside ownership of land. But in this movement, in aspiring to a general sense of Kodava culture, ideals of preservation of image and concern for representation begin to emerge.

In 2008, a smallish controversy arose when Club Mahindra, a tourism club, began to offer a mock Kodava wedding for visiting couples to undertake, and Indian Railways began to use an imitation *kupya* as a waiter's outfit. Protests over the former led to its abolition, but there is ongoing contention over non-Kodava (or even Kodava women) wearing the *kupya* for weddings⁴⁶. It would seem that the 'disarming innocence' of earlier exotic representations (Kabir 2005: 85) is no more, if it ever really was.

ENDNOTES

1. Eleftheriotis and Iordanova (2006: 79) point to important distinctions between a long history of foreign consumption in places as far afield as Nigeria, Russia and Indonesia; a similarly long history of diaspora consumption; and recent non-diaspora Western consumption.
2. This phrase is taken from Bellman (1998: x) though I do not know if it originates with him.
3. *Muthina Haara* ('The Pearl Necklace'), 1990, directed by Rajendra Singh Babu, musical direction by Hamsalekha. *Mungaaru Male* ('Pre-Monsoon Rains'), 2006, directed by Yogesh Bhatt, musical direction by Mano Murthy. In neither film are the director or any of the principal actors Kodava. There is some use of the Kodava language, Kodava Takk, in the songs of *Muthina Haara*.
4. Eleftheriotis and Iordanova (2006: 81) point out that songs, which 'transcended ... linguistic and cultural barriers' were central to the appeal of Indian cinema to non-Indian audiences. The writers themselves assert that Indian producers were 'unaware or indifferent' to the responses of non-Indian audiences (Eleftheriotis and Iordanova 2006: 81). Thus, if all songs are heard as exotic by non-Indians then it is not authorial intent, but if some songs are decidedly and deliberately more exotic than others, such exoticism must be intended specifically for Indian consumption.



5. A game in which participants are in turn challenged to commence a verse of a film song using the last syllable of the previous participant's verse. This game predominantly occurs with Hindi language songs rather than the songs under discussion here. It is cited as a further instance of the extra-filmic durability of songs.
6. Similarly, Srinivas (2009: 5) points out that film posters, in addition to their role in advertising the film (a role shared with the pre-release of sound tracks), serve to 'transport them [viewers] back to their viewing experience', and that 'looking at the posters, one can almost hear the music'.
7. See Napier (2010).
8. Locke (2009: 11) offers the example of Handel's *Tamerlano* in which the tyrant is depicted 'with little or no recourse to stylistic devices or mannerisms intended to resemble those of actual Eastern literary or musical traditions'.
9. This is less critical in the case of *Mungaaru Male* because the film was a hit and its visuals are more enduring than almost any earlier Kannada language film. The absence of any overt Kodava element in the music might reinforce the visual exoticism of the song sequences which affectively project Kodagu as a place of natural and fecund beauty even though the love duet is filmed at a site that is not in Kodagu.
10. As Chakravarty (1993: 99) puts it, nationhood is experienced 'viscerally' in film, an experience magnified in song sequences. For example, against a range of challenges to notions of nationhood in film (such as identification with central character versus objective observation, dramatic conflict versus collective nation building, diversity versus integration of local and global) the makers of *Shri 420* (1955) pitch not only the plot trajectory, but the film's most famous, and enduring song. 'Mera joota hai Japani' ('My shoes are Japanese') deals with Indian nationhood versus internationalism, but in its images of Indian countryside builds a nostalgia that, in turn, reinforces the urban milieu as the dangerous space in this film.
11. In addition, *Muthina Haara* demonstrates further fluidity of relationship in its nationalism, as much as the movie can be associated with the Kannada language-centered Gokak movement of the 1980s and the dispute with the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu over the resource of the Kaveri River (Dakshina Murthy 2006: 1835). This should not however be overplayed. Though the films are specifically Kannada language films neither the relationship between the Kodava and the state of Karnataka, or between the latter and India as a whole, is other than obliquely referred to in either film under discussion.
12. Thobani is specifically concerned with the non-secularising nature of Muslims as depicted in more recent films, something which is beyond the scope of this paper.
13. For a detailed tracing of the transformation of female sexual desire and desirability in item numbers see Nijhawan (2009) and Weidman (2012).
14. The loose description, 'gypsy', allows observers variously, though in individual instances more precisely, to identify the group as the observers wish. In an ironic touch the song is a famous plagiarising of a Cretan popular song about the jingling of coins in the pocket of a pimp. It may also be noted that this number is danced by probably the most famous of item girls, Helen Richardson, who is of mixed Anglo-Indian and Burmese descent.
15. Similarly, in *Sholay*, 'Mehbooba' is sung in a bandits' encampment. In *Dil Se*, a film about tribal terrorists from North East India, 'Chaiya, Chaiya', the sensual duet between a woman of the same background as the ultimately deadly female exotic lead and the mainstream hero, is sung atop a train, the roof of which is packed with tribal people.
16. As with Helen Richardson, the number is danced by an actress who is part foreign, Mumaith Khan.
17. The fact that courtesans as well as practitioners of mujra, an associated dance, are frequently Muslim successfully fuses three exotic images. However, to some extent the power of this tripartite distancing may be reduced by association of courtesan song in films with musical classicism: thus it is legitimate for Lata Mangeshkar, whose voice is usually not associated with voicing problematic women, to voice the courtesan in such films.
18. All the romances noted by Jain (2009) in his survey of the representations of Christians in Indian films feature a Hindu man and a Christian woman. This not only feminises the lead exotic, but is a union that is far less threatening to social cohesion and to the majority than its converse.
19. There may be some confusion regarding the setting of these final scenes. The Sino-Indian War was fought on two fronts, the better-known one in Arunachal Pradesh, the other in Kashmir. However, though the movie represents this front as Kashmir, the part of Kashmir in which the war was fought has a very different landscape from that shown in the film.
20. My knowledge of the Kodava began with a casual visit to the district in 2006. I followed this with extended periods of fieldwork in 2008 and 2016, and shorter visits in 2014 and 2015.



21. Both Dechamma (2012: 18) and material produced by the Kodava National Council dispute the image of the Kodava as economically successful. See also The Hindu (2004). The Kodava are currently classed as an 'Other Backward Caste (III A)' by the Karnataka Government, but this is problematic (Dechamma 2012: 10). They may be described as an ethno-linguistic group, language being one of the better ways, though not entirely accurate, of ascertaining their numbers. There has been lobbying to have the Kodava classified as a tribe (The Hindu 2011). Though study fits at least one of the approaches offered by Wolf (2000–2001: 5) in his definition of 'tribe' and 'tribal music', that of popular representation, some Kodava regard this as demeaning. Effectively the Kodava act as a caste, idealising group endogamy and, within that, clan exogamy. However, they strenuously deny that there is any caste amongst the Kodava and, though they may be casually referred to as a tribe, it appears that they are almost never referred to casually as a caste.
22. See Mason (1974).
23. The Kodava themselves stress beauty and boldness (see, for example, Kelettira (2016)).
24. Cariappa and Cariappa (1981:131) list 25 theories of origin.
25. Elsewhere, I have argued that this song repertoire asserts this contiguity as one of several processes of sung resistance to a mainstreaming cultural colonialism carried to Kodagu through political domination from the Deccan Plateau.
26. Many, probably a majority, self-identify as Hindu but simultaneously as ancestor worshippers and animists. At the moment, the author is contributing, in an advisory capacity, to a volume, 'Are the Kodavas (Coorgs) Hindus?', being edited by P.T. Bopanna.
27. Kannada may be considered an adjective derived from Karnataka or may refer to the principal language of the state. Most Kodava speak both Kannada and Kodava Takk, also known as their own language, Kodagu, which in turn is spoken by a number of other communities in the district. Kodava Takk uses Kannada script. With 166,000 speakers at the 2001 census, and with many speakers not teaching it to their children as a first language, it is considered endangered (Moseley 2010).
28. The title itself may carry a powerful musical reference for traditional Kodava. It refers synoptically to a pearl necklace that is slowly created for Anu by the addition of a pearl each year. The necklace is never completed and is broken, scattering the pearls, after Achappa's death. The traditional Kodava funerary song, the Cavu Pat, features the lines 'The string of choicest pearls Round the neck of our children Is for ever burst and scattered!' (Richter 1870: 144).
29. See Scott (1998: 327) for a slightly tongue-in-cheek enumeration of these.
30. Though Fig. 2 and Figs. 4–7 have been notated in 6/8, accentuation frequently implies 12/16, and occasionally 3/4. Beaming has been used to reflect this.
31. I recorded the *Nari Mangala Pat* in 2008. The four singers ranged in age from about 60 to 75 years. For details of this ceremony, see Nadikerianda (2003: 133). A forthcoming article by the author will offer further investigation. The melody shown in Fig. 3 is the most common *dudikotpat* melody. It is so close to ubiquitous to have occasionally prompted the inaccurate comment that 'The Kodava only have one tune'.
32. The song uses 'puli', the word for tiger. However, because dangerous animals are believed to understand human speech, the Kodava use the word 'nari', literally 'jackal', instead. Verses are from the DVD release of the film. The details of the film are given in Endnote 3. The details of the DVD release are: Moser Baer DKAF0103, released 2007. Translations were as given in the film but checked by Shanti Raman.
33. The only *dudikotpat* that I have heard that has as its subject a more widespread Hindu deity or figure is sung of the Kaveri.
34. I use the word 'detuned' very cautiously. The notion of what is precise tuning varies from culture to culture, context to context, genre to genre. The importance placed on it is similarly varied.
35. The particularly extravagant type of moustache that she wears was traditionally worn by Kodava men who had performed some feat of heroism.
36. Gopinath (2000: 294) argues that, though cross-dressing is used as a queer image for diaspora consumption of Indian film, any potential homoerotic overtones are frequently nullified by recourse to comedy or proximate assertions of hero-masculinity.
37. Directed by Subash Ghai, music by Laxmikant Pyarelal. I thank the anonymous reviewer of this paper for pointing this out.
38. Booth (2007: 327) has pointed out that 'the music of music scenes can be part of the mediating process that limits the emotional impact of that otherness'. The largely familiar nature of the overall music of the song thus may be understood to reinforce the assimilative process that is represented visually.



39. Pandian (2011) discusses the manner in which landscapes frequently agree with the affect of the songs therein. Here the change from fecund Kodagu to barren Rajasthan is telling.
40. At times, item girls are not voiced at all. Sarrazin (2008: 395) points out that celluloid villains are never allowed to sing, 'prohibiting access to a crucial outlet that fully humanizes them'. Similarly, in 'Mehbooba' from Sholay Helen is voiceless, conforming to the wordless exotic trope. The male gypsy sings in her place even as he thrusts his sarod at her in simulation of intercourse. In other films, Helen's item numbers were most commonly voiced by Asha Bhosle whose voice is generally thought to lack the pristine chastity of Mangeshkar's.
41. The shock that interrupts the song appears to be Anu's or it may be internal to the song: Jenny's realisation that fertility does not lie with her. As an interesting side note, both this song and 'Mehbooba' offer forms of interruptus, the latter in the explosion that rocks the gypsy camp. It seems that, on at least two occasions, consummation with the sexualised exotic is not permitted though for very different reasons. *Dil Se* features probably the most extreme case of 'exoticus interruptus' when the exotic Meghna, a terrorist, blows herself and the hero to pieces as they finally embrace.
42. Gopinath (1997: 484) outlines a particularly Hindu nationalist discourse of the nation in film that articulates a desire for a nostalgic return to an impossible ideal: that of supposedly traditional Hindu family and kinship arrangements that are staunchly middle class and heterosexual. The denouement of this film intercuts scenes of Nandini's wedding with those of Preetam talking to his pet rabbit which has just died. That the rabbit is named Devdas, the eponymous hero of a Bengali novel and of many film adaptations who dies as a result of love outside such norms, is unlikely to be coincidental.
43. Though sexual, the song conforms to Sarrazin's (2008: 398–9) idea of the 'glimpse song' ... 'at the initial sighting of the lover', of the private variety, wherein the lover calls for darshan (sight) of the only briefly glimpsed beloved. This quasi-spiritual longing is enacted privately: darshan is longed for by the lover but afforded only to the audience and not to any synoptic character.
44. This is one of the few moments in the film that feature Kodava attire: Nandini imagines herself marrying Preetam who is dressed as a Kodava. This would be a problem because there is resistance to non-Kodava wearing the kupyra.
45. Weidman (2012: 316) has pointed out that the idea of dark Tamil hero conquering a fairer Northerner is a frequent theme. Though Nandini is not a Northerner, the Kodava are stereotyped as wealthy and fair. In addition, the actress who plays Nandini is from the north.
46. Traditionally, a woman who marries a non-Kodava is considered to become non-Kodava because she no longer belongs to any okka, a familial clan. Curiously there is no comparable objection to women wearing saris in the unusual Kodava manner: Karnataka Tourism's hotel in Madikeri even has a poster with instructions on how this is to be done.

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I examine the representation of a minority community, the Kodava, in film songs. The Kodava are frequently portrayed in popular discourse in India as 'internal exotics': the men warrior-like, the women fair, beautiful and bold. I first outline why representations in song and dance sequences matter whilst framing discussion of exotic representation within a discourse developed in the study of exoticism in Western music. I then make some observations on depictions of other Indian exotics within (tribal groups, Christians and indeterminately exotic women) showing how such groups are variously depicted as assimilable, unthreatening, or dangerous. After a brief description of the Kodava as a group, with attention given to their image in popular imagination, I show that images projected effectively and affectively through songs in the two Kannada language films, *Muthina Haara* and *Mungaaru Male*, not only exoticise the Kodava, but do so along gendered lines, showing differentiated paths of assimilation of the exotic into the Indian state: as a Hinduised warrior on the part of the male protagonist of the first film and as a dangerous sexuality best controlled by marriage to the already assimilated Kodava warrior in the second.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with previous work on Kodagau, my thanks must be given to Nanjamma and Chinappa Boverianda, Subiah Kumbera, Achaiah and Dany Mevada, and Pradeep Belliappa.

Keywords. India, minorities, song and dance, exoticism, Indian film music



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Received by the editors 14 December 2015; accepted for publication (in revised form) 2 May 2017.

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