CHAPTER V: THE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ICONOGRAPHY.

A. Kannada mother goddesss and her films
B. The present scenario: The multifaceted identity- popular images.
C. The popular visual iconography
D. The peripheral concerns of identity
A. KANNADA MOTHER GODDESS AND HER FILMS

"Formally, Kannada language cinema of the 1940's and 1950's is akin to hindi cinema of the same period. The differences, when they arise, are largely in the area of motifs and generic convention" In a comparative ananlysis between the Kannada film and hindi film says"it is now acknowledged that historical films partly project the concerns of the present back into the past and this is true of Indian cinema as well. Kannada cinema beginning in the late 1950's was also actively engaged in constructing a Kannada nation by appealing to the past—especially empires like the one in Vijayanagar and to heroic kings and queens. The three films examined in this context are N.C. Rajan's Ranadheera Kanteerava 1960, R. Nagendra Rao's Vijayanagarada Veeraputhra 1961, and BR Panthulu's Kittur Chanarima 1961."

Ranadheera Kanteerava is a film based on the Wodeyars and their palace in the intrigue with the political nature and the conspiracy planned to execute the young king who is addicted in pleasure, being warned and accosted by his mother the Raja mathe the mother of kingdom, the yong king regrets the act and attempts to reform is poisoned by the ambitious minister. the uncle of the young king Kanteerava played by Rajkumar is installed in his place as a part of the conspiracy planned by the minister and his political lobby in the palace expecting the king to be a puppet in the hands of the minister. But the protagonist gains his power over the time defending the political lobby. The film opens with a eulogizing song on Kannada, is predominantly characterized on defining the Kannada identity through the role of Kanteerava, who has a humble friendly persona with all types of Kannada speaking characters of the films and also has two wives with the second wife from a devdasi backgrounds, representing lower caste or other caste acceptance in intercaste marriage and cultural exchange. And as the antagonist are the Tamil speaking characters of tiruchi accompanied by a Malayalam speaking character refered and portrayed as
Black magician (referring all keralians as black magicians and fortune tellers), where Kanteerava kills a wrestler in the wrestling match, after which the tamil brother of the dead wrestler follows Kanteerava for the revenge to eliminate him. The wrestlers brother then join the secret alliance of the minister lobby and attempt to undo the protagonist and end up killing the friend of Kanteerava and in the chaos misunderstands his second wife and her loyalty, leading to her suicide and kanteerava heroically killing dozens of the enemy lobby with a realization that his dead wife was innocent.

In discussion on the Kanteerava’s case noted film critic M.K. Raghavendra says “Ranadheera kanteerava sets about trying to define an inclusive Kannada identity but is still former princely mysore in its address. Evidence of its covert exclusively is its lampooning of the Kannada spoken outside mysore as a way of eulogizing the Kannada nation alongside the recognition that mysore’s hindu rulers were usually decadent and idlers. Still, there is one feature about the historical film that needs acknowledgement. Since the kings were actual individuals with their own histories, they weaken the single representation of ‘king-as-lord’- which was a way of allegorizing mysore state as an ideal monarchy. These are therefore two kinds of kings posited by Ranadheera kanteerava: the ineffectual, pleasure-loving kind, and the courageous, responsible kind. The distinction implies recognition that the loyalty of the subjects is not the only issue but also the fairness of the ruler, which could only have happened under democratic rule.”

Another important film discussed here is Vijayanagarada Veeraputra of 1961. A romantic historical plot based on assassination against the Krishnadevaraya King (played by Udaya Kumar) by antagonist Guruvaraya (played by Nagendra Rao) who is characterized as an arrogant chieftain.
The story takes a twist when guruvaraya's own son get kidnapped by a man whose son would be killed overridden by the chariot of Guruvaraya, and this man brings him up s his own son Vikrama (Played by Sudarshan) who grows up and saves krishnadevaraya's life, who later become the chieftain in his real father's place. Its is from the very same film that I have illustrated as the Kannada pride and land showcased in the song “Apara keethigalisi mereva bavya nadidu” where the character vikram in a robinhood or peter pan style attire with a long feather and cap on a horse sings this classical hit.

As per the criticism of MK Raghavendra, he says “two aspects of vijayanagarada veeraputra are immediately pertinent. On the one hand is the idea of the king being answerable to his subjects (as in Ranadheera Kanteerava), and on the other is the notion of the subject being ruled by two different sovereigns, one subservient to the other and the great monarch deserving more loyalty. If in vijayanagarada veeraputra the two objects of loyalty correspond to the greater mysore and the Indian nation repectively, it is the Indian nation that deserve more loyalty.”

“if Vijayanagarada veeraputra confirms the subordination of the Kannada nation to Indian nation, kittur channamma is a straightforward product of Indian nationalism. Kittur channamma deals with the colonial period and makes an attempt to enlist a national heroine form belgaum district (Bombay Karnataka) on behalf of the Kannada nation. The film begins with a school teacher (played by B.R. Panthulu) invoking Rani Channamma of Kittur as a heroic precursor of Gandhi. The film remains fairly true to the actual story of Rani Channamma of Kittur and explains concepts of ‘Doctrine of Lapse’. Channamma (B Saroja Devi) is the second wife of the Raja Mallasarja (Rajkumar) who is captured by Tipu Sultan but escapes—with Tipu duly appreciating his valour. As opposed to the Mallasaraja's first marriage, his wedding to Channamma
takes place after a 'romance'-once again suggesting a discourse about the knitting of territories not linked by marriage networks.

Much of actual story of Mallasaraja and Channamma involves bickering with other Indian rulers and the film does not avoid this aspect when it upholds Indian nationalism. But what it does is to present the British as the primary enemies. In fact, mallasaraja comes to grief at the hands of the peshwas but Channamma persists in seeing them as the lesser of the evils. Part of the conflict in the film comes from channamma’s step son continuing to see the Peshwas as the primary enemies. As in Ranadheera Kanteerava, there is treachery by ministers in the play of the British. Most of the evils in the film pertain to early nineteenth century, after the fall of Tipu in 1799 and the reinstatement of the wadeyas in Mysore.

"In praising the kingdom of Kittur, the film briefly pours scorn on the rulers of Mysore-as lackeys of the British. At the same time, Channamma speaks the Kannada spoken in mysore while her two ministers/advisors(who are british agents) speak the language of Belgaum (Bombay Karnataka). The film is apparently identifying a suitable icon for the Kannada nation while at the same time, through its use of different Kannada dialects, showing mysore as synonymous with Kannada-not sincerely conceding that the Kannada areas outside it are also legitimately ‘Kannada’. There is a privilege of mysore over the other Kannada-speaking areas, an aspect noticed in Rayara Sose in which the servants who speak mysore Kannada are hierarchically distinguished from those who speak other kinds of Kannada”.

The quotes why I wish to produce here as it is, is to emphasise on two important observation that I too wish to assert upon, one the nation and state representational visuals and the relationship that is exhibited and within it the priority highlightened. The intrinsic aspect that the native art never had voiced against the national perception, especially the Gandhian philosophy of united India is never attempted to
even question and both state and nation goes hand in hand. The second observation of usage of various versions of Kannada and its identity been portrayed in an antagonistic and protagonistic manner is a question hereby argued. The representation of British as in the similar context of Jansi ki Rani or representation of Tipu Sultan and invaders vasted as the common enemy is at least common in all of the films. Neverthe less the representation of Bhuvaneshwar fortunately has no conflict in representation against itself, either in abstract or in visual; she is Kannadaambe, or Sri Rajarajeshwar, Kannadathayee or Kannada kulamathee.

Janaki Nair in her essay Battles for Bangalore: Reterritorialising the City says “Kannada activists were not slow in seeking an end to Hindi domination, but also a reduced Tamil presence, demanding films in their own language. The link between linguistic and cultural dominance was most visible in the realm of cinema, since the Tamil film held its own against Hollywood and Hindi films in the city. Kannada films were a distant fourth or even fifth in this hierarchy. Controversy first broke out over Kanchi Thalaivan (1963) which portrayed the Pallava kings' triumph over the Chalukyas. The same groups, led by Vatal Nagaraj’s Kannada Chaluvaligars, which had staged their protest against the cenotaph, threatened to force the closure of theatres where Tamil films were being shown.
The film's Opening scene is itself based on the establishment on the greatness of mother Kannada, Sri Bhuvaneshwari with a dialogue between patriot warrior father and his son, asking him to take oath that every person born as kannadiga should take a pledge in the presence of mother Bhuvaneshwari, that he or she would live for Kannada, earn for Kannada and devote and serve his life for the karnataka's Bharath matha, as father advice his son, for which the son replies with the pledge, that he is kannadiga, and the boon that he possess is the Kannada blood, and that he would live and earn for Kannada. With an appreciating gesture of father, son again continues that Kannada goddesss is his mother and Bhatarth matha is my grand mother, and serving both of them is my ultimate aim and purpose of my life. The smashing classic manner of seeding the concept of goddesss Kannada as mother and her mother Bharath matha as an iconographic devotional goddesss of patriotism and her much superpowered...
image equelant or as much as any other goddessss is visually appealed in the Kannada films of early 1964 itself, here I assert the conceptual base of the goddessss existance only as an evidence to support the fact that these visualization did exist in the early 1950-1960’s itself. The idol in whose holy presence the oath is pronounced is probably in front of Bhuvaneshwari statue with the premise in a nature of worship and daily rituals. The statue of goddessss is in the similar depiction of shakthi representation with trident.

The same film also has an opening title track with background song based on Sri Bhuvaneshwari. “Kannada Thayee sri Bhuvaneshwari, Kannadada kulashakthi sri rajeshwari” composed in a mode of anthem, rooting the links from all historical kings, great thinkers and philosophers of this land, reasserting the existance and greatness of Kannada mother goddessss in the name of sri Bhuvaneshwari. The same film also has a song “haadu baa kogile...naledadu bare navile” with lyrics taking a course of pride on Kannada language and Kannada patriotism.

The film though revolving around the historical greatness of Kannada, here the iconography and the mentioning of Flag as Kannada flag in the lyrics of “Hadu baa Kogile” is the focused act of assertion, narrated in a manner connecting to the audience, as the dialogues are refered to the Kannada activits and kannadigas as the prime audience, the target audience for this film irrespective of any language or region, the viewership is addressed to Kannada speaking audience.

Such several Kannada films has contributed in the making of Kannada mother goddesss and the flag in the visual medium, which was most effective to the common audience and further towards it popular image making excercises. The following list of songs and its visuals has sufficient supportive evidence in the making of mother goddessss:


“Kaliyiruva patavannu Kannada tamakkale”
Mentioning the concept of Kannada mother.

Film: Kanteredu nodu 1951. Lyrics: G V Iyyer.
“Sharanu kaveri tayee... sirive”

Mentioning the concept of kaveri mother

Film: Annapoorne 1964. Lyrics: Udayashankar
“Kannadave tayinudiyu”

Mentioning the concept of mother and her land

Film: Post Master 1964. Lyrics: GV Iyyer
“Kannada kuladevi... Kaapadu baa tayi”

Mentioning on the concept of Kannada goddesss.

Film: Masanada Hoovu 1986. Lyrics: S R Ekkundi
“Kannada Naadina Karavali”

Mentioning on the concept of Kannada goddesss

Film: Sharapanjara 1971. Lyrics: Kanagal Prabhakara Shastri
“Kaveri... Kodagina Kaveri”

Mentioning on the concept of kaveri goddesss.

Film: chalisuva modagalu 1982. Lyrics: Udayashankar
“Jeenina holayo...Halina Maleyo”
Mentioning on the Kannada and mother


“Entha Soundarya Nodu”
Mentioning on the Kannada land and mother as the daughter of Bharath Matha

Film: Krishna Rukmini 1988. Lyrics: RS Jayagopal

“Karnataka Ithihasadalli”
Mentioned on the flag of Kannada.

Film: Bombat Huduga 1993. Lyrics: V Manohar

“Kannada Mannina...kasthuri kampina”
Mentioned the mother goddess “Bhuvaneshwar”

Film: Baghiradhi 1969. Lyrics: Anekal nanjukavi

“Omkari kalyani sringeri sririrani”
Mentioned on the Kannada goddess as sringeri queen.

Film: SriKrishnadevaraya 1970 lyrics: vijayanarasimha

“sriKannadam gelge...siriKannada balge”
Mentioned on the Kannada mother goddess and her mother Bharath matha
Film: magina kanasu 1977 lyrics: K S L Swamy
“elleliyu nine.. chelliruve jane”
Mentioned on Kannada goddess and her geography

Film: akasmika 1993 lyrics: hamsalekha
“huttidare Kannada nadal huttebeku”
Mentioned on the Kannada pride and bliss

Film: mojugara sogasugara 1995 lyrics: hamsalekha
“kannadve nammamma.. avalige kimugiamma”
Mentioned on the Kannada mother

Film: nanu nanna hendathi1985 lyrics: Shankar-ganesh
“karunada Thayee sada chinmaye”
Mentioned on the Kannada mother and her holy land

Film: bramhastra 1986 lyrics: R S Jayagopal
“Kannadammana devalaya”
Mentioned on the Kannada mother goddess and her shrine as the land of Kannada

Film: Immadi pulakeshi 1967 lyrics: G K Iyyer
“Kannadada kulathilaka parameshwari”
Mentioned on the pride of pulakeshi rajendra
Film: ondu cinema kath 1992 lyrics: Shyamasundar Kulkarni
"Kannada honnudi deviyannu"
Mentioned on the pride and praise of Kannada

Film: hrudaya pailavi 1987 lyrics: R S Jayagopal
"hrudaya tumbi haduve"
Mentioned dedicated to Kannada mother goddesss

Film: Kannada kuvara lyrics: C S Shivashankar
"esstondu chendave Thayee"
Praising the pride on Kannada mother goddesss

Film: nanda deepa 1963 lyrics: Sorat Ashwath
"kanasondu kande Kannada mathe"
The line begins meaning "saw a dream mother Kannada"

Film: Muthaide bagya 1956 lyrics: Goutham
"nammore chenda.. nammavare anda"
Praising the qualities of all regions of Kannada and her ride

Film: mana mechida madali 1963 lyrics: Kuvempu
"jai bharatha jananiya tanujathe"
The state anthem of Karnataka
Film: kannadada makkalella ondagi banni
"Kannadada makkalella ondagi banni"
Call for unification with a concision mentioning mother bhuavaneshwari

Film: vijayanagarada veeraputhra 1961 lyrics: R S Jayagopal
"apara keethigalisi mereva bavya nadidu"
Emphasizing on the pride of vijayanagara and Kannada

Film: mareyada hadu 1992 lyrics: muthaiah bagavatharu
"Bhuvaneshwari nenemanasave"
Based on the enunciation of Kannada mother goddess Thayee Bhuvaneshwari

Film: bile hendathi 1975 lyrics: vijayanarasimha
"yava thayiu padetha magaladarenu"
Based on Kannada mother goddess

Film: Chiranjeevi 1976 lyrics: Vijayanarasimha
"kannare ne nodu Kannada seeme"
On the pride of kanrantaka

With these evidence of visualization on Kannada mother goddesss, largely as Kannada amma and as Thayee Bhuvaneshwari the lyrics of all these films visually illustrated a vast picturization on the pride and praise of Kannada, the obvious sentimental approach and emotional wording such as "mother" is most commonly encountered
elementary usage in all of these poetic lyrics and its respective visualizations. The assertion on Kannada mother from the early 1964 film *Veerasankalpa* is itself an outstanding exempliary evidence to illustrate the visual existence and life of Bhuvaneshwari in the visual picture of Kannada and her mediums.

**Rajkumar ism**

"Which fame, the fame that Rajkumar achieved? I don’t know much about it. Rajkumar the actor, the language activist and cultural icon is different from this mortal, unlettered Muthuraj. Rajkumar is a creation of the public, they created him for their own needs, but this muthuraj does not understand all that. He will go to the grave as his father’s son, a simple village guy who took to acting to feed his wife and children.” - Rajkumar.

In an interview on May 2004, Rajkumar, the Kannada superstar and cultural icon, had just completed 75 years (April 24) and it was also the golden jubilee year of his film career (on May 7, 1954, his first film *Bedara Kannapa* was released), but there was complete silence across Karnataka. There was hardly any celebration for this personal and professional landmark of a man who was largely responsible for creating, through his films, the feel and extent of Kannada land in post-independent India. But as the news of rajkumar’s death spread, the defences of the dotcom land crashed. There was no logic at the hand to explain the mob fury that burn down vehicles, stoned buildings and even killed policeman on duty. Rajkumar’s fans have always offered him a frenzied adulation, but nobody thought that they would miss the solemnity and quiet dignity of death. Sugata Srinivasaraju – keeping faith with the mother tongue.
Rajkumar’s domination in the 1950’s and his iconic presence in the 1960’s and post 1970’s is an aspiring wished to watch star, as cultural critics says the beginning of the ‘super-ethical hero’ in contrast to Telgu ideological hero M.G. Ramachandranand the Telgu religious hero N.T.Rama Rao. An emblem of local values, an actor perceived as the historical patriot, as a devotee in all of the mythological films such as Bhakta Prahalada1984, Bhukailasa 1953. The concept and meaning of Rajkumar itself might require a deep hypothesizing to understand this persona.

The notion of Rajkumar and his career as an actor and as a ‘parallel text’ as critics says can be observed in the categorization of his three phases of his career. According to M.K.Raghavendra The first phase is the ‘high mimetic’ the style which has been derived from ‘company theatre’ or from the indigenous dramatic tradition and largely in the genres of the mythological and the historical (bedara kannappa, bhukailasa, ranadheera kanteerava and on the softer end of ‘high mimetic’ mode are devotionals like Sant Tukaram and Manthralaya Mahatme based on the dominant Bhakthi. the second phase has been called ‘low mimetic’ and is illustrated through films like Nandi, considered as one amongst the best films of Rajkumar, and the third phase is apparently the uncomfortable ‘lover boy’ one-film beginning with Jedara Bale.

In my opinion I wish to argue upon the acceptance of Rajkumar in the following three means. One he represented the brahminical class as the elite or classical mysore Kannada speaking actor with roles of mythological characters with values from religious texts and delivered dialogues in characters as the savior of hindu religious kingdom. This clearly outlines the support and image that he has created form the brahminical and dominant hindu population, irrespective of the non brahminical caste he belonged to. The second reason is his roles such as kaviratna kalidasa which treated as a social inspiration for all those non bramanical caste to achieve education and
prosper like kalidasa, which directly was in reality a hope and example for non bramanical castes, as he himself was one of them. His education was less than schooling and had no further education other than theatre learning, this was one of the crucial reason for many to easily connect to the experience and being inspired from Rajkumar. The third reason is mainly for the representation of social reformer characters her played such as basavanna, Kempegowda who are the most repected and leaders of two very important castes namely the lingiath and wokaligas. This is one of the most predominant reason why Rajkumar turned to be the most favourite star and a social leader and a cultural icon for Kannada and karnataka, and his simplicity and humbleness and his extensive leadership fot he Gokak agitation made him the chosen beloved son of Kannada, kannadiga and Karnataka, besides being a charismatic actor, an actor who always preferred to be an actor not a star!

In a significant interview with Rajkumar by Sugata Srinivasaraju, Rajkumar said “which fame, the fame that Rajkumar achieved? I don’t know much about it. Rajkumar the actor, the language activist and cultural icon is different from this mortal, unlettered Muthuraj. Rajkumar is a creation of the public, they created him for their own needs, but this muthuraj does not understand all that. He will go to the grave as his father’s son, a simple village guy who took to acting to feed his wife and children.” In the similar context Sugata quotes, Writer and film personality M Bhaktavatsala put it across succinctly: “Rajkumar was never comfortable playing God like N T Rama Rao who was literally worshiped as Lord Krishna, nor was he a political animal like MGR, he was always a great devotee. IT was his role like Bhakta Kumbara, Bedara Kannappa, Bhakta Kanankadasa, Santa Tukaram that brought him closer to the people” Ramkumar Himslef seemed to confirm it: “I have always been a viewer, in the sense that I have never kept the focus on myself. I see god in my admirers.” In the discussion on Rajkumar sugatha further says in his work keeping faith with the mother tongue “It was amazing then as to how a google-search for Rajkumar was dominated by the
veerappan kidnap episode, as if he never existed before the Veerappan episode. Like the times modern, the internet too ignores history. In fact, by the time the incident happened in August 2000, Rajkumar had acted in 205 Kannada films, amounting to nearly 25 percent of films produced by the Kannada film industry in its entire history.

However, many people in the industry saw the Veerappan kidnap episode as the turning point for the hero’s fall from the pedestal. “The incident exposed the mortality of a star. How could people accept their hero pleading for release from a villain, many of whom he had tackled single-handedly on the screen?” asked a producer.

But there were disagreement to this argument. The Veerappan incident was probably the last straw, but the decline had started as early as the mid-70’s, when different groups like Dalits, farmers, backward classes had started asserting their identities and idea of a single hero unifying the entire culture or the idea of centralized leadership had begun to wane. That is also partially the reason as to why we do not see any tall leader post-devraj Urs, in the political arena of Karnataka, some scholars argued.

When asked on the status of Kannada Rajkumar replies “Kannada’s present crisis is like my knee-pain, I keeps reminding you that you are reaching the end”. After the Gokak movement Rajkumar gained a significant public support, and to test his fan club was tempted to test his popularity at the polls, but Rajkumar preferred saintly self-banishment from public life and at a later stage even clarified that he had nothing to do with the fan club. This was in complete contrast to what happened in the neighbouring Andra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. His rejection on the Rajkumar fan club is itself probably one of the rarest bold acts of an actor who believed in being an actor not a star, or having fan club, however his devoted fans, the unconditional fans Abhimanis where lakhs in number.

The most interesting aspect to be noticed here is that the dialogues of the patriotic characters and historic hero kings and warriors are delivering dialogues that seems to be the message for the pro Kannada pride and unification, and the frequent reminding usage of “Bhuvaneshwari” has been most effective tool for the emotional reminder for
all kannadiga of their responsibility as the son of Kannada mother goddess bhuveshwar. For example in the film SriKrishnadevaraya of 1970, in a scene where Srikrishnadevaraya character played by Rajkumar encounters the sultan of bijapur narrated as the enemy, in the battle field wherein the army soldiers of Srikrishnadevaraya attempts to flee fearing the defeat, in this situation srikrishnadevaraja approach the running soldiers on his horse and reminds them of their duty, oath and responsibility they owe to Lord visupaksha and Kannada mother Thayee bhuvaneswari in a prestigious ennunicative inspiring charisma, usually seen in most historical war based films, and the soldiers runs back to the battle field cheering with enthusiasm and bravery winning over the Bijapur. Such various context are available in the film Srikrishnadevaraya itself, and so is it in all other films especially all those films where Rajkumar has played the protoganist role.

The film also asserts on the most controversial questioning on the language used by srikrishnadevaraya and the hampi empire during historic times, thus in the film is the assertion on the language several times, in the film, a scene when Srikrishnadevaraya is declared as king as when he enters to throne he is welcomed with an anouncation “swathi sri bhuvanadeeshawara, samastha rajadi raja, veerabhujabhala pratapa, Kannada raja ramaramamo, Karnataka ratnasimhasanadeeshwara, sri virupksa pada padmaradaka , sri sri sri Krishna deva sarvabouma, para, para, bahupara... sri sri sri krishnadevarayarige jay.” mentioning that he is the king of Kannada and the land of Kannada, and in the same film is the dialogues emphasizing on the Kannada land and Kannada pride! The territorialism and the reassertion of the land acquired and declared under the empire is once resited in the sets and presence of Tirumala tirupathi venkateshwara temple, these dialogues are not the dialogues of the king of vijayanagara empire but the interpretation of the Kannada host Rajkumar, or srikrishnadevaraya as the host of Karnataka, and the point to be remembered is that during the srikrishnadevaraya period the state called Karnataka was baseless. But the
language and land assertion, linguistic and territorial dominance and assertion is the prime moto of such films in its cultural, socio-political through visual context.

The visual below is the scene where Srikrishnadevaraya taking the oath of acquiring and reunifying the lost territory of Vijayanagara Empire and broading the boarders.

Figure 54 The scene from SriKrishnadevaraya of 1970, in the background is the map of Bharath, (map of pre independent India)
In a scene where Kannada vijaya stamba (meaning the pillar of victorious Kannada), is on the process of establishment and the pillar falls, before it fall on to the ground Immadi Pulikeshi the chalukyan king alone hold the pillar on his back while with a dialoge to the surrounding public

"Nanna Thayee kaushika Kannada, nanna tande mukuteshwara Kannada, nanna bhashe Kannada, nanna dharma Kannada...nanna thayee koduge...jaya jaya chalukya chakreshwara...Kannada kulakke keerthi tanniyappa"

Meaning I am son of Kannada, my language is Kannada, my duty is Kannada, and I am dedicated and blessed by Kannada, join me in lifting the victorious pillar of Kannada.
Jai Karnataka mathe, sri rajarajeshwari, Kannadada kula Thayee, and so forth, the synonyms for Kannada mother goddess used and reused, asserting the concept of motherhood in these films the need for identity has been the highest priority, the chalukya empire and the territory of the kingdom, marking the presence and language of Kannada in the south India, is to reaffirm the need for the unification of Kannada speaking demography.

The point that I wish to argue upon these audio video expression of visuals on Thayee bhuavaneshwari or Kannada Thayee is that the necessity of these goddesses in the public domain in the social context and cultural context is highly affirmative and significant not only on the political context but on the cause or making of identity in its own subtle or strong expression. The resulting behaviour pattern in the public is the second level of iconography making and its dilution to the public domains. The filtered visuals from the mediums such as films are the favourite choice of the viewers and later in public domain too, here in this context the film viewers select the visualised form of goddesses of films, as they consider it to be a proclaimed or declared forms once appeared in films such as of Rajkumar, and is considered as the final or the ultimate order if in case stars such as Rajkumar smashes dialogue on the goddesses. These visuals are in the third level interpreted with the technological influence and presentations and later released as posters or calendars as the popular phase of visualization which turns to be the most influenced or seen or registered amongst the public, as these prints are easily procurable, economically priced and available in all the road sides, which are seen and purchased by all, later flashed for a considerable period of time in their respective drawing room or on the walls of shops or in the pooja room (room dedicated for spiritual worship). These are most popular in the public domain such as Barbar shop walls, telephone booth walls, travel agency walls, public premises, government buses, autorickshaw interiors etc.
role of Kannada films and Rajkumar has played a vital role in the cultural, social and political space for The Kannada and Karnataka. The icon Rajkumar as the beloved son of Kannada mother goddess has a different historic path. In discussion on the Bangalore city Janaki Nair in her work “Battles for Bangalore: Reterritorialising the City”, says “The image of the city as a refuge for the hard working son-of-the-soil (Kempegowda) was soon Deployed in one of the early Rajkumar films Mayor Muthanna. Cast out of his village because he was falsely implicated in a temple theft, Muthanna (Rajkumar) arrives in the bewildering city of Bangalore, and falls asleep at the foot of Kempegowda’s statue. Not surprisingly, his first encounter in the city is with the state’s emissary, the policeman on night beat who rudely evicts him from the spot. Muthanna, appeals to Kempegowda’s bronze visage “Oh Kempegowda! You built this city for people to survive and live in, but if there is no space for an orphan like me to lie down, what kind of city is this?” Of course, Muthanna goes on to triumph in the city of Bangalore, and eventually becomes the Mayor himself: the rural migrant finds not only a job, a home and a wife in the city, but political power by rescuing the institutions of the newly independent state from venal politicians. “The film of course reasserts the hope and faith of every common villager of Karnataka that if they too wish they can certainly change the course of faith in the competing changing cosmopolitan times of Karnataka, but the image of the iconic presentation of Kempegowda and on the making of a new icon Rajkumar is the most striking visual engagement.

In the parallel paradox, the comparative analysis though not practically applicable, some common factors such as the patriotism in theatric with real historic patriots as examples and their lives been portrayed, through which many bhagath singh, and many krishnadevaraya were reborn as Rajkumar into the local hearts. One of the example of the most influenced poems presented in films such as Sarfaroshi ki Tamanna is a poem in Urdu, written by Ram Prasad Bismil, one of the great Indian Independence leader, famously involved with Kakori Train Robbery. The poem was written as an ode to the young freedom fighters of the Indian Independence Movement. It has also been associated with the younger generation of inter-war freedom fighters such as Ashfaqullah Khan, Shaheed Bhagat Singh, and Chandrashekhar Azad. The poem was used in the 1965 Manoj Kumar movie Shaheed on the life of Bhagat Singh. It was again used (with altered lines) as the lyrics for a song in the 2002 Hindi film The Legend of Bhagat Singh. Shaheed-e-Azad Bhagat Singh (1954), Shaheed Bhagat Singh (1963), Shaheed (1965), Shaheed-E-Azam (2002), 23rd March 1931: Shaheed (2002), The Legend of Bhagat Singh (2002), Rang De Basanti (2006) most of these films used the similar version. The poem is also referenced in abridged form in Anurag Kashyap’s Gulaal 2009. The representation of the

THE VISUAL CULTURE OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA
ASSERTION OF KANNADA VISUAL IDENTITY IN CONTEXT OF GLOBALISATION
mother goddesss in the background of the map of India before independence has been one of the key elements of these films and so is the map of Karnataka and India in historic films of Kannada. Another striking visual is the consciously added scene of bhagath sigh reading the book of Lenin, when the jailer come up to Bagath singh for the execution, where bagath singh says “ek krantikari doosare krantikari ko mil raha he” one revolutionist is meeting another revolutionist. This dialoge is been scripted in all of the films base don bagath singh. Similarly as discussed earlier Shankar nag in auto raja reading the book of Lenin, is similar context where the comparison and setting of standards of intellectuality for the characters are established. These symbolic elements though has not been of a great subject of films, nevertheless has been an objective symbols of Marxism.

“My life has been dedicated to the noblest cause, that of the freedom of the country. Therefore, there is no rest or worldly desire that can lure me now....”—Shaheed Bhagat Singh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindi (Devnagri Script)</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>सरस्ने की तमन्ना अब हरारे दिल में है,</td>
<td>O country, Why does no other speaks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>देखता है जोर फिरता बाजु-ए-कालिल में है।</td>
<td>Whoever i see, is gathered quiet in your party...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>एक से करता नहीं कि दूसरा कुछ बालतीत,</td>
<td>O martyr of country, of nation, I submit myself to thee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>देखता हूँ मैं जिसे बो चुप तेरी महफिल में है।</td>
<td>For yet even the unacquainted speaks of thy courage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 56 A & B** Manoj Kumar movie 1965 *Shaheed* based on the life of Bhagat Singh with Bharath mata in the background, handcuffed.

**Figure 57** The contemporary youth version of Bharath matha in graffiti style from Rang De Basanti 2006
THE VISUAL CULTURE OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA
ASSERTION OF KANNADA VISUAL IDENTITY IN CONTEXT OF GLOBALISATION
B. THE PRESENT SCENARIO: THE MULTIFACETED IDENTITY - POPULAR IMAGES.

The Kannada nation-making movement has been in the Kannada books for the past few decades, and not to comment on or question any Kannada literature or linguistic issues; however, the nuances of the flag and the goddesses shall be of prime importance here in my argument relating to its visual approach only, and not to its concept or its existence. The state of my argument would be in the questing of firstly the loss of assertion and the strength of its identity with respect to its depiction, and secondly debating on the present state of its identity, specifying whether the identity depiction that is seen today in the public domain is true or close to the concept of Sri Bhuvaneshwari or if this is the final version of the concept of the representations. The question of whose concept and whose version would be elaborated in the further chapters with its implications.

The unquantifiable availability of Sri Bhuvaneshwari images and her continuous progressive evolution is one of the reasons for the popular cultural role of this image, the same being potentially used as a material in multi-faceted avatars of the goddess leading to its cultural role and its chaotic nature in the public domain. For instance, the Bhuvaneshwari representations are used in various local communications, especially during Kannada Rajyotsava celebrations, and in every protest or local voicing, as adjectives, prefixes, and flexibly as an assembled form, changed, and rearranged comfortably to any extent, altering the structural firm, impregnable, inviolable quality of the representation. The politics, the nature of these interpretations in excessiveness seen in every street is unquantifiable, continuous and over produced within the saturated horizons, with the assertion of visual representations in the public domain. These cultural elements become common add-ons which correlatively coexist and
contradict, resulting in the visual politics and chaos, with the cry of insecurity and the role of existence, pride and prejudice visibly noticeable.

Sumathi while discussing on the temples of Bharath Matha, quotes “Bankim proclaimed in his foundational 1874-1875 hymn to his mataram that “it is thy image we raise in every temple” across the land. In the aspiration for freedom and its inspiration from the fictional movement scripted by modern India’s loyal son whose creative thinking had politically and philosophically smashed the hierarchical empires,, this chapter explores the complex triangulations of the geo-body of the nation with the mother’s body and men’s bodies in barefoot cartographic productions. Sumathi says “In striking contrast to much popular and public art in India where women are hyper visible in incarnations raging from goddess to the vamp, it is men who are accorded prominence in patriotic pictures, thus visually endorsing a prevailing truth about nationalism as a masculinist project, fantasy, and hope.”

The Kannada Matha ‘making’ has similarities with the making of the Bharat Matha. Here the replacement of Gandhi with Dr Rajkumar well establishes the image and icon of the Kannada film industry, whose identity is been emphasized as the son of Kannada Amma. But again, surprisingly, we don’t find any feministic iconic representations despite the abundance of female stars and artistes. The iconic representation again revolves around the male purview, not necessarily anti-feministic, but again interestingly Kannada Thayee Bhuvaneshwari as a goddess is again presented by the male filial piety on display, also further discussed in the following pages, which I would be touching upon only for reasoning the evolution of identities
The Mother makers: A genuine visual activist

Through the Kannada activism and movement in Karnataka, a printer in Bangalore self-initiated a visual patriotic production of posters that took the identity of Kannada visual culture of representation to a different phase. These visuals were not mere images but the voice of an ordinary activist, who would wish to address the masses as a representative of the momentum. Cultural phase of Kannada and its identity transformation with the modern waves of liberalization, privatization and globalization led to a huge disturbance in the rapidly growing cities like Bangalore which had to cope
with changes brought about by industrialization. The shift in printing technology from offset to digital had a huge economic impact on the printing industry, with many in the business suffering a huge loss due to their inability to upgrade. Amongst all these fluctuations stood an independent printer with his shop titled ‘Raja Verma Arts’ situated in the midst of the densely populated and narrow lanes of the commercial market of Balepette, Bangalore.

Raja Verma Arts was established by late Sri Raja Verma (1918-1993) in 1960. His two sons Raja Ram and Shankar Narayan Raju run the shop till date, carrying on the legacy of their father’s specialty of printing small quantities of images of specific Hindu gods and goddesses and patriotic Thayee Bhuvaneshwari posters for supply all across Karnataka. This family initiative is what has held up the status of Kannada identity across the public sphere since the 1970s, they being the only suppliers of all the available posters and visuals of Thayee Bhuvaneshwari in the whole of Karnataka. The altruistic involvement of this family initiative in this cause and their tremendous contribution to the making of the iconography and the Kannada identity is not known to the family itself. This shop does not own a printing press, but places orders with trustworthy printing press owners. The visuals presented in this chapter are mostly from Raja Verma Arts and understanding their initiative, psychology and true patriotism as revealed in the visuals they supply, is very important from the point of view of this research.

Raja Verma Arts initially commissioned an artist named P.K.M. Swamy of Sivakasi, near Madurai in Tamil Nadu — popularly known as the Mecca of calendar artists and calendar wholesale dealers — who has painted a few of the Thayee Bhuvaneshwari illustrations discussed in the following pages. Gradually Ravi Verma Arts moved with the technological over-ride of Desktop publishing (DTP) and laser printing, and later, lamination.

The trends and stylization during this transition period are clearly evident in the posters presented here. The assertion of the Kannada mother goddess and her flag has
a spectacular theatrical tabloidish touch in these visuals, with irony and exaggerations. These visuals are indisputably the most valuable and influential yet not much discussed posters of the Kannada identity making.

During the post-Independence modern times Raja Verma Arts was not the only press calendar shop in Bangalore. There were also others such as Manjunatha Traders in Gigara Pette, started in the early 1980s; Praakash Calendars and Karnataka Offset Calendars, both in Cotton Pette, all of them situated within a radius of 5-8 kilometers of the commercial centre of Bangalore: Majestic region. But interestingly, none of them except Raja Verma Arts produced and distributed the pro-Kannada patriotic visuals in the form of posters and calendars. These posters from Ravi Verma Arts are even today distributed and circulated and reprinted all across Karnataka. As regards the sales of posters, the present generation of family members running Ravi Verma Arts rues that not more than 500 copies of any poster get sold. In an interview, the family lamented that not only are these posters rarely purchased, but they are also thrown away after use, showing disrespect to the goddess. “Like the Indian flag after the Independence Day (celebrations), the general public throw away our mother goddess in the street without any concern... this disturbs us a lot. And some customers who claim to be pro-Kannada activists purchase only one copy of a poster, haggling over the price, reasoning that its usability is after all is for a matter of two hours during Kannada Rajyotsava day celebrations,” said the family.

The emotional connection of this family with their mother goddess Thayee Bhuvaneshwari and her proud son and land is probably the only thing that keeps them going in attempting to spread the awareness of Kannada identity in the visual context. In the absence of any political interventions or help from any pro-Kannada activist group, the family continues to struggle to keep images of the Kannada mother in circulation, but it is a losing battle, as it is unable to compete with the changing trends of print technology in vinyl.
The various visual dimensions and politics faced by this family perhaps direct us to unexplored aspects of observations that lead us to a questioning of which mother version is the *true version*, and if *true* who declares it? And then there are the identity issues of representation and territorialism and masculinity and sub-iconography making. Ravi Verma Arts significantly contributed in the making of the mother in print, unknowingly becoming a medium, a voice, and a channel of what the public demanded and reasserted in a direct form and indirect forms and at times in disguise. A very necessary ambassador of the visual medium in print.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 59** Painted By PKM Swamy, Shiv Kasi, Tamil Nadu. Printed by Raja Verma Arts 1995.
One of the thousand representations of Bharath Matha with her lion and map in the background as usual, with the flag of RSS or Maratha in her hands. Here the mother is in a young South Indian avatar, with the tricolor sari as her attire.
Figure 61 Bharath Matha. Print: JB Khanna and Company

Figure 62 Kaveri Goddess “Kaveri Mata” Print: JB Khanna and Company
**Figure 63** Raja Verma Arts, printed during the Cauvery water Crisis 1995-96
These visuals were released during the boiling point of the Cauvery river water crisis, which sparked a serious political turmoil between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, over the perennial water-sharing dispute. The visuals here portray the temple from where river Kaveri originates, Talakaveri. The goddess in the centre of the map however, unlike in other picturisations has a lush viridian green background in the form of a map of Karnataka portraying verdant fields. Besides, the goddess is portrayed as Goddess Kaveri pouring out her sacred blessing in the form of water. There are other devotional elements such as the fruits and a lamp, which are the offerings to the goddess. The elephant, usually portrayed as the mount of Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, is presented as saluting the deity with a waving Kannada flag.

The genesis of the Kaveri water dispute lies in two controversial agreements, one signed in 1892 and another in 1924, between the then Madras Presidency and the Princely State of Mysore. Discussions brought no result but worsened the situation. The Government of India then constituted a tribunal in 1990 to look into the matter. After hearing the arguments of all the parties involved, the tribunal delivered its final verdict on February 5, 2007. In its verdict, the tribunal allocated 419 billion ft³ (12 km³) of water annually to Tamil Nadu and 270 billion ft³ (7.6 km³) to Karnataka; 30 billion ft³ (0.8 km³) of Kaveri river water to Kerala and 7 billion ft³ (0.2 km³) to Pondicherry. The dispute continues, with the four states deciding to file review petitions seeking clarifications and possible renegotiation of the order, and the matter still stays unsettled.
Figure 64 “Karnataka Kannada Rajyotsava, Siri Kannada Gelge, SiriKannada Balge” Raja Verma Arts 1998.

Here the mother is decorated more in the style of the calendar goddess and has as her background the map of Karnataka in deep blue. The suspended animation of the map is to be noted.
Figure 65 "Suvarna Karnataka Rajyotsava, Kannada Kasturi" Raja Verma Arts Nov 1, 2006 off set print.

The goddess representation here has the tantric symbol of the Srichakra and she is depicted as an avatar of modern Kananda mother. The map is bordered with the lamps and the goddess persona match the Shivkashi Shakthi representations. The goddess is seated on a throne, depicted as the thone of the temple of Karnataka.
Figure 66 Karnataka Kannada Rajyotsava “Jayahe Karnataka Mathe, Jai Bhuvaneshwari”
Raja Verma Arts Printed in the 1990s.
This is the only visual poster of the Kannada mother goddess that represents Thayi Bhuvaneshwari in the style of the Mysore traditional painting that has close similarities to the Tanjore style painting. The influence of the Mysore style is naturally evident as the hegemony of Mysore and the portrayal of Karnataka as Mysore (state) and the contributions reflected through the visual posters underlines the possessive inclination of the princely state of Mysore province. The stylization of the Mysore Bhuvaneshwari in the traditional painting method also has another significance. The goddess, though represented as Bhuvaneshwari, is fused with Goddess Sharada of Shringeri. In the previous chapter, evidence from Kannada Mahimna Stotra was illustrated in the argument on making of the mother goddess and culturally unifying her persona with religious sentiments and political intentions.

Here the same Sringeri Sharada, situated in south Karnataka, geographically close to Mysore, is asserted as the Bhuvaneshwari. The foreground of the picture has the tantric elementary form of worship, the Srichakra with other elements of worship. The mother goddess here also bears a flag imprinted with the Karnataka map, with a Kannada quote “SiriKannadam Gelge”, meaning “victorious Kannada”. The poster was printed to commemorate November 1, 2006, the year when Karnataka celebrated its 50th year of formation. This celebration was fully funded by the government, with the glorious 50 years of Karnataka being feted in all ways, ranging from clips on Doordarshan on the glorious history of Karnataka to the present post modern Karnataka. During the Rajyotsava of 2006, further plans and enhanced budget for the linguistic study and development of Kannada were declared.

The patriotic poster-making process of Raja Verma Arts was based on a superficial understanding of the Kannada movement. Thus, what they saw was what they got illustrated and released as prints. The present managers Raja Ram and Shankar
Narayan Raju say: “What we saw in the news and heard in words is what we felt should be portrayed.”

But who handed over this task to this humble family and vested in it the responsibility to portray the unification ideals and patriotism through the mediums of posters to the public? The hypothetical question on the genuineness and qualitative approval here doesn’t matter on the confronts of the intuitive visual expression by this simple family that presented an aura of Kannada nationalism. This research also has thus encountered the non-political contributions of a dedicated family through their limited means of expression, and realized its worship and unconditional patriotic approach towards Kannada nationalism. The inner visual conflicts over the semiotics and the representational visual elements and icons is evident, but these are not to be expected from local printers who print what they see and what people expect.
Figure 67 “Jai Kannada Thayee, Jai Bhuvaneshwari” “Suvarna Karnataka Rajyotsava, Kannada kasthuri” Suvarna Karnataka Rajyotsava, marked the 50 years of the formation of the state of Karnataka on Nov 1, 2006., Raja Verma Arts printed in Nov 1, 2006.
**Figure 68** Jaya he Karnataka Mathe, Karnataka Kannada Rajyotsava, Raja Verma Arts, offset print 1985.
C. THE POPULAR VISUAL ICONOGRAPHY

The Kannada nation-making movement has been the most highlighted issue during the past few decades, which, however, I would only be touching upon through the respective reasoning for the evolution of the identities and not to comment on or question any Kannada literature or linguistic issues. The nuances of the flag and the goddesses shall be of priority importance here in my argument relating to their visual approach only, not to their concept or existence. The state of my argument would be in the questing of, firstly the loss of assertion and the strength of the identity with respect to its depiction, and secondly debating on the present state of the identity, specifying whether the identity depiction that is seen today in the public domain is true or close to the (original) concept of Sri Bhuvaneshwari, or if this is the final version of the concept of the representations. The question of whose concept and whose version would be elaborated further below, with its implications.

The unquantifiable availability of Sri Bhuvaneshwari's images and her continuous progressive evolution is one of the reasons for the popular cultural role of this icon. The image is potentially used as a material in multifaceted avatars of the goddess, leading to the cultural role and its chaotic nature in the public domain. For instance Bhuvaneshwari representations are used in various local communications, especially during the celebration of Kannada Rajyotsava, and in all protests or local voicings, as adjectives, prefixes, flexibly as an assembled form, changed, and rearranged comfortably to any extent, altering the structurally firm, impregnable, inviolable quality of the representation. The politics and the nature of these interpretations in excessiveness seen in every street are unquantifiable continuous and over produced within the saturated horizons, with the reminder on assertion of visual representations in the public domain. These cultural elements become common add-
ons which correlative coexist and contradict, resulting in visual politics and chaos with the cry of insecurity, and with the role of existence, pride and prejudice visibly noticeable.

Bankim proclaimed in his foundational 1874-1875 hymn to his mataram that “it is thy image we raise in every temple” across the land. In the aspiration for freedom and its inspiration from the fictional movement scripted by modern India’s loyal son, whose creative thinking had politically and philosophically smashed the hierarchical empires, this chapter explores the complex triangulations of the geo-body of the nation with the mother’s body and men’s bodies in barefoot cartographic productions.

As in the case of Bharat Matha the similarities have been found even in the making of the Kannada Matha making. Here, the replacement of Gandhi is with Dr Rajkumar, the well established image and icon of the Kannada film industry, who has been portrayed as the son of Kannada Amma. But again, surprisingly, we don’t find any feminist iconic representations despite the abundance of female stars and artistes. The iconic representation again revolves around the male masculinity though not necessarily anti-feministic. But again, interestingly Kannada Thayl Bhuvaneshwari as a goddess is again presented against a background of male filial piety on display, also further discussed in the following pages.

“March to Independence” the theatric tabloid depicts the enunciation of the dominant male characters in the spaces and positions as a national statement.

Though the ideologies of the specified leaders here, for instance Subhash Chandra Bose or Balgangadhar Tilak, and their differences with the contrasting ideological Gandhian thinking are visually reflected as a unified effort, at the same time an allegory. The thematic brilliance being borrowed from the concepts of the early depictions of Krishna and Arjuna of the Mahabharata, a very well-known visual
representation in India is what is emotionally linked to. The most striking factor again being the masculine representation, which has also followed in through the local influence, and here in the case of Kannada Mathe, we see Kannada matinee idol Dr Raj Kumar doing the honours.

The difference obviously being on the aspect of time and the space, here the enunciation of the characters, very sensitively and strategically plays a role. Here the persona and public image of Rajkumar add thrust to the acceptance of the iconography among the most subtle and remote heterogeneous population.

Figure 69 Brij Lal, March to Independence: Raahе Aazaadi. Printed by Sudarshan Studio, circa 1947. (courtesy of Urvashi Butalia, New Delhi). Image courtesy: Sumathi Ramaswamy, The goddess and the Nation
In fact, if there is any single object that rivals the mapped form of India in parallel with mother Bhuvaneshwari, it is the flag of the Kannada nation with which she is associated, thereby setting her apart from other goddesses as a deity of a distinctive 'country'. The flag is one of the signature elements that make the most prominent difference from the rest of the Hindu goddesses. In this light, the attempts of Kannada Amma's artists to supplement the outline map of Karnataka in the many ways that I have documented in this study stand out, by following the trend of setting out influential factors from the nation's leaders and their representations.

The momentum of this metamorphosis of the popular image-making of the Kannada Matha is still on its unlicensed production: from the political banners to the street autorickshaw stands, the countless forms of Bhuvaneshwari and her loyal sons figure as frequent reminders to the general public. The assertion of the visual identity of a nation which won its linguistic Free State status after a long struggle, resulting in a land called Karnataka, is this Bhuvaneshwari the icon that this nation has been visualizing for long? Or is this the multi-faceted multi-avatar version of the catalytic configured version of Bhuvaneshwari that can be so easily commercially flexibilized to suit individual needs? Though "the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled", here the relation is neither settled nor unsettled, it is on a midway path of a dichotomy.

The popular culture of India, specifically in Bangalore, is hereby in a quest to know the icon, through various eyes and various hosts, masculine yet very sensitive to political or other social motifs, ultimately for a contemporary identity of representation.
Figure 70 "Jayahe Karnataka Mathe", Raja Verma Arts. Print 1997
Sumathi Ramaswamy in her work *The Goddess And The Nation* says, "like the majority of the mechanically reproduced goddesses of Indian modernity, Bharat Mata is generally modestly clothed with barely a sense that she might have swelling breasts, one of the requirements of the Hindu iconographic tradition for the divine female. Every now and then she is presented as forlorn or destitute, but more commonly she appears clad in lush coloured silks and draperies. Once in a while she appears in the grab of a classical heroine in a fitted bodice and draped garments — a pan-Indian style that became visible from the late nineteenth century in Ravi Varma’s canvases of female bodies, and in the calendar art that commercialized his many innovations. However, in a vast number of images, as befitted her dominant persona as a homely matron, mother India is shown demurely clad in a sari in the national style increasingly associated with the respectable middle-class, upper-caste Hindu woman.”

Representations beyond the state of form and figure are visible in these images, wherein the specifications of caste, culture, class and styles have been worked up to the highest visibility in the representations. Though not similar, but on the same lines, we do find Bharat Matha’s avatars more or less in close sync with the versions of mother Bhuvaneshwari.

The pictorial contextualization of mother Bhuvaneshwari with the colour palette of chrome yellow and crimson red, usually referred to as golden yellow and vermillion, is here taking a very prominent status of a public image. Consider the image showing Bharat Matha in a chariot driven by her proud son Mahatma Gandhi, with Nehru as the flag bearer and Subhash Chandra Bose as a guarding soldier, and the heavenly league of all senior patriots of the freedom struggle blessing body of democracy with the tricolour flying over parliament. This thematic the present leaders from the heavens. Here the background monochrome fort represents the set created with the image representation of the leaders trickily placed in the respective angles with the human appearance of the anthropomorphic form of Bharath Matha in the chariot-throne,
clearly establishes a concrete structure of the status, role and placement of the context in the most dramatic manner close to those of the “used to” representations of gods in the Indian context. Here the scene is evidently close to the popular images of the ‘Krishna Arjuna’ painting of ISKCON artists, probably by Ramadasa Abhirama Dasa and his wife Dhriti Dasi.

Figure 71 Krishna and Arjuna from the Mahabharata battle field. (From the Krishna Gallery, www.krishnagallery.com, copyrights The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International.)
Figure 72 “Karnataka Ratna Dr Rajkumar” Raja Verma Arts, 1992
With these enunciations I wish to argue that the structure of the visual establishment of the Kannada Mother Bhuvaneshwari is the foremost iconography that South India has ever seen, probably the most visually experimented medium as a greater tool for unification, to unite geographic regions of Kannada land. The process also encountered a lot of catharsis, but eventually structured a visual language to present an identity to the unification movement, and still remains the ruling popular art of the Kannada streets.

![Image of Jayachamaraja Wodeyar Bahadur poster](image.jpg)

**Figure 73** Jayachamaraja Wodeyar Bahadur (July 18, 1919- September 23, 1974) poster released after 1974.
The exhibit here was printed after the death of the king, marking the loss of the king to the land, and illustrates the function of applauding the Mysore Wodeyars, the kings of Mysore, whom the unification leaders had to bank upon to gain statehood for Karnataka. The image here, though, is a cluttered collage of the Mysore Palace in the background with cine icon Rajkumar as the mahout of the elephant carrying the portrait of Wodeyar. Typically such scenes are a part of procession held during the annual event on November 1, celebrated as the Kannada Rajyotsava day. The posters here spread in the public domain are a frequent message to the crowd on the stand that the nation owes a debt to these personalities in time-specific circumstances.

The gratitude to the king and his contributions and support is expressed in the poster depicting the king in a heroic placement, with Rajkumar as the host and representative of the Kannada nation. The line of poster-making in the context of Kannada unification hereby reveals a whole new perception and probably an outlook on the various untold and hereto only visualised facts. The visual language that these posters communicate is the visual interpretation of the time-space and the continuum of the geography.
Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar Bahadur (July 18, 1919-September 23, 1974) poster released after 1974. The poster dominated by the colours of the Kannada flag with the Mysore Palace in the bottom.
Figure 75 “Jai Karnataka Mathe, Karnataka Ratna, Dr. Rajkumar”, Raja Verma Arts,
Laser print 2006-7

The visual culture of contemporary India
assertion of Kannada visual identity in context of globalisation
Richard Davis, in his book *Picturising The Nation* says: "In modern times a state has an interest in persuading its subjects that together they constitute a national community, and that the state acts as an agent of the interests of that community. As long as 1867, Walter Bagehot observed this work of national persuasion in his study of the English state. Every constitution, he writes, must first 'win the confidence of mankind' and then 'employ that homage in the work of government'. Accordingly, Bagehot distinguishes 'dignified' and 'efficient' activities of the state. Its dignified activities are 'those which excite and preserve the reverence of the population' towards the state, while its efficient ones are 'those by which it, in fact, work and rules'. He goes on to characterise the dignified dimension of the state activity with a series of terms: theatrical, sensory, mystical, occult, transcendent, visual, brilliant to the eye. Clearly, this is the realm of public pageantry, state ceremonial, and official iconography. The Indian state naturally enjoys resources to create, disseminate and enforce a particular iconic vision of itself. From humble objects of everyday transaction like visually saturated rupee notes, common repetitive items like tricolour flags and lion-capital emblems, civic statues of Gandhi and other heroes of the struggle for independence, up through lavish official celebrations, like the Republic Day parade in New Delhi, the state controls a great range of ways to exercise its 'dignified' activities through visual means."

Here I would emphasise the role of Rajkumar as stated above with reference to civic statues and heroes, not in direct lines of comparison but in a role similar to that of Gandhi as the host and leader to the making of Bharat Matha — here in Kannada, the host as Rajkumar in the making of the icon mother goddess Bhuvaneshwari. The contextual differences are wide and broad, but though the approach in the case of Gandhi was on the path to mahatma and as the beloved son of Bharat Matha, in the context of Karnataka, the Kannada goddess choses Rajkumar as her beloved son who plays special host for a long term of time. Similarly the roles and characters played by Rajkumar had to do with theatric heroes, loaded with words of patriotism and with a sense of pride and prestige associated with the land and the mother goddess. His on-screen performances were in fact never considered as performances, but rather as a live expression and an emotional appeal to identity, and an aggressive influential outbreak of sentimental provocation to demand respect for the land and the goddess.
Figure 76  "Natasarvabhouma karnataka ratna Dr. Rajkumar Laser print  2006-7
Figure 76 “Natasarvabhouma Dadasaheb Phalke padmabhooshan, Karnataka Ratna Dr. Rajkumar” Raja Verma Arts, Laser print- 2006-7
Figure 77 “Kannada Kala Kanteerava Dr Rajkumar”, Raja Verma Arts
offset print, 2006-07
Richard Davis, in his work *Picturing The Nation* discusses territorial-ity: “The theatre of Nehru’s flag hoisting at the Red Fort provides a good point of departure. First, the choice of location was important, as Jim Masselos points out, much of the spatial activity of the crowd in Delhi and other cities on the occasion of independence marked a ‘change in the idea of territoriality’. Crowds pushed into previously prohibited areas, in effect claiming all Indian space as their own. Within this general reappropriation of formerly colonized space, the choice of the Red Fort for a celebratory raising of the flag conveyed a more pointed message.” Here in the poster, Rajkumar, as the host king of Kannada against the background of the Bangalore Palace is again reasserting the territoriality of the space which is restricted to the public, but been represented as a national symbolic structure, with the Kannada flag and a map of the state in the flag colours. The visual seals the signature of Kannada identity on the territory more like Nehru hoisting the national flag at the Red Fort.

*Figure 78* "Karnataka Kannada Rajyotsava”, Raja Verma Arts, 1990-2005
"Questions of nation, nationhood, national identity," says Richard Davis "and participation in the national community have served as recurrent topics of Indian public discourse over the past century and a half. These issues have persistently been addressed and debated in visual as well as verbal forms. As new technologies — the printing press, camera, lithography, film, television and the internet — provide new media by which images may be inserted, even more prolifically and intimately, into the public and domestic spheres of India, the debates will continue."

The images here represent not only the subject of nation, nationhood and national identity but also are a visual domination of the fight for representation and the transformation to a new dimension of thinking on language, demography, state, nation, culture and unification, and to protest against the merging and dissolution of
identity and against ‘outsiders’ dwelling in this territory, demanding complete support and independent identity and rights.

Richard Davis then says: “As the tableaux at the start of this introduction suggest, no single group or agency can exercise a monopoly in a situation where imagery arises from so many different locations within Indian society, reflects and articulates different ideologies and agendas, and addresses such varied audiences. Churning this milk-ocean of imagery cannot yield the ambrosia of scholarly finality. However, in the spirit of the many other unexpected things that emerged when the gods and demons churned, from wishing-granting cow to worlds-destroying poison, I would like to outline four types of representations, drawing on the four tableaux above, and touching on examples and insights in the essays to follow. My aim here is not to present a typology of clear-cut categories or iconographic unities, but to sketch a provisional orientation that leads into the essays of the volume.”

Likewise, in the case of this study I present the theme here as being focused on the visual cultural aspects. The notes here do not give mere volume-based stories on the history of the hosts and stars of the goddess, but how these stars and heroes became the brand ambassadors of the icon created in the virtual space, to further reach out to the common public with less of jargon and more of impact.

These visuals were more of a public virus, or rather, the bomb that destroyed the sense of ignorance of the state of Kannada and its strength, and constructed the idea of unification through the chosen heroes of the time that followed.
Figure 79 “Suvarna Karnataka Rajyotsava” Raja Verma Arts, 2006
Figure 80 “Jai Bhuvaneshwari” Raja Verma Arts, 1995
Figure 81. “Suvarna Karnataka Rajyotsava” Raja Verma Arts, 2006,
We find the territory representation as a prominent feature of Kannada nationalism and its identity in the background, with the Vidhana Soudha, the State Assembly building, as the pride factor. With the establishment of a new spatial order, a symbolic declaration of the space that had been once seen only as an Assembly was now reinforced as the national identity and of territorial monumental value. The primary national icon in all these event posters outlines the flag and the colour. In the years of the struggle for the freedom for the nation, as leaders and supporters of the Kannada unification movement along with the national freedom movement progressively came to imagine the state as an autonomous nation within the confines of what they considered an illegitimate British overlordship. When the flag of the Indian National Congress became a key visual marker of that autonomous nationhood, learning from this observation Kannada unification leaders realized the need for the flag for the Kannada nation. The flag, since then, became the subject of representation which was later unleashed on the public sphere or the public domain to be carried forth. Even with the repetitive representation, the quest for assertion seems to become more interestingly strong, with more visual engagement and variety of positive entertainment.

Before I discuss the topic of fans, a clarification on how I use the term ‘fan’: the Kannada word for fan, abhimaani (meaning admirer), is used synonymously with its English equivalent fan outside the context of cinema, does not have the negative connotation of the word ‘fan’ and is often prefixed with veera (literally heroic, but used ironically) to connote fanaticism, even while referring to fans of film stars. There are hundreds and thousands of fans of Rajkumar who support, or are related to, several social groups. These groups were the main advertisers of the public sphere who spread and promoted these new ideas of nationalism and ensured the they reached the grass-root levels.
Ajay Sinha, in his essay “Against Allegory: Binode Bihari Mukherejee’s Medieval Saints At Shantiniketan” disputes Frederick Jameson’s often cited proposal that all Third World texts, literary or visual, be read as allegories of the nation. Certainly, many of the popular visuals in India portray concerns and problems more than nationhood. In fact, the large chromolithographic calendars, posters and prints were utilized for domestic use, mostly religious, depicting a wide versions of Hindu deities, expressing the concerns of the individual or the respective group devotees more than national issues, but in contrast we also find visuals addressing national concerns too. Examples for both views can be noticed in Cristopher Pinney’s Photos Of Gods.

Richard Davis adds: “This imagery is produced and distributed in what Sandria Freitag, drawing on works of Jurgen Habermas, the Frankfurt school, and a long lineage of others, calls the ‘public sphere’ or ‘public arenas’. The development of a public sphere in India, she argues, rests in part upon global developments, most notably the dramatically increased scale of consumption made possible by India’s participation in an international market and new global technologies of production through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet these she insists, are always inflected through local concerns and local practices, including specific Indian ways of viewing.” Here, the Kannada local market is obviously influenced by the public sphere and the public arena, and has definitely contributed largely to the visual cultural space in the making of the Kannada flag and goddess.
Figure 82 “Karnataka Kannada Thayee Kaveri” Raja Verma Arts, 2007-08.
Figure 83 “Karnataka Kannada Rajyotsava, Karnataka Ratna Dr. Rajkumar, Jai Karnataka Mathe” Raja Verma Arts
Figure 84 Kannada Kala Kanteerva, November 15, 2000. (During the period when Dr Rajkumar was released)

Figure 85 Most prominent roles payed by Rajkumar from Kannada films
**Figure 86** Interpretations on the Kidnap of Rajkumar by BKS Varma 1999-2000

**Figure 87** “Ajaramara” Interpretations on Rajkumar by BKS Varma 1999-2000
Figure 88 Dr Rajkumar representing as the host of Kannada and Karnataka, Raja Verma Arts 1990s.
Figure 89 “Karnataka Ratna Dr. Rajkumar” Raja Verma Arts, Print: 1996
Rajkumarism has been discussed in the earlier chapter. Here I wish to point to a few observations that would strengthen my argument regarding the popular visual culture of the iconography and the making of sub-iconographies, such as Rajkumar the proud son of the Kannada mother goddess, and after his reign, the parallel introduction of the next proud sons in line, Vishnuvardhan and Ambareesh. The focus is on the making of the iconography, and not on the life and career of these actors and their films, though their films and their lives have influenced the nationalistic movement of Kannada and related activities to a large extent.

Rajkumar was the chosen volunteer for the Kannada lingual movement, and his role in making the Gokak agitation and Kannada movement a success, had a great impact over the visuals portraying him, as well as his film roles. Even otherwise, he was always a widely accepted hero, a star who only hordes of fans and admirers — not the ‘hired’ fans as in the case of some, but the genuine abhimanigalu, the true fans. Here the term ‘true fans’ is not mentioned to provoke controversy, but to critically distinguish the difference between paid fans and real, loyal fans. I hereby use the term “true fans” to mean abhimanigalu. These factors, which made Rajkumar a successful icon of the Kannada movement were also the prime reason for honing his image as the loyal patriot and son of the Kannada Mother Goddess.

The visuals here however show Dr Rajkumar in various multifaceted versions, that wouldn’t even have been dreamt of in the editing studios of his films units. These visuals have three varied purposes. One, the role of igniting and reasserting the Kannada patriotic sensibilities in the public domain, and acting as an excellent catalyst to the spreading of these sensibilities, leading to the emergence of successful loyal activists — for instance, Raja Verma Arts Itself. The second purpose is to establish a role model and a character for the common man to follow, a leading inspiration who
the masses can love and at the same time be proud of. The third and the most crucial influencing factor in these visual archives is that political priorities have unknowingly intruded into them and been unintentionally transmitted through printers such as Raja Verma Arts.

In the previous illustration Dr Rajkumar has been portrayed wearing a peta, the traditional turban, a mark of honour in Mysorean culture. By asserting the claim over the host as a presentation of Mysore, intentionally or unintentionally, these visuals are, in a deeper sense, a tribute, appreciation and glorification of the Mysorean classification, and in the same breath, a discrimination against and desertion of other sectors, such as non-Mysoreans.

Figure 91 "Dr Rajkumar, Apoorva Sangam Shankar Nag" Raja Verma Arts, 1997.
Figure 91 Raja Verma Arts: Print: 1990, “Shankar Nag” Raja Verma Arts, 1990’S

Figure 92, “Shankar Nag” Raja Verma Arts, Raja Verma Arts, 1990s
Shankar Nag, the leader of working class

Shankar Nag was arguably one of the finest directors and actors of the Indian film industry, and his outstanding evergreen works such as Malgudi Days, based on celebrated novelist R.K. Narayan's short stories is regarded as a work of artistic brilliance. He did not limit himself to Kannada films, but worked in other language films as well. For example, his film 22 June 1897, which won a National award, was in Marathi. His career flowed in two parallel streams: he worked in popular films, and with the money they raked in, made intelligent films with artistic sensibilities. Thus his work was a rare confluence of an elite working culture and a non-elite commercial career, one of the rarest combinations experimented with in this country.

Shankar Nag's entry into the working class consciousness is probably due to his highly accepted roles in Kannada films such as Auto Raja 1982 in which he played an autorickshaw driver. This character was an extraordinarily spirited inspiration for auto drivers all over Karnataka. The film went down so well with them that soon, every auto sported pictures of Shankar Nag in the back, front, interior, and even on the wind shields. Auto drivers began to take pride in their profession and saw themselves as the accepted heroes of society! The portraits not only proclaimed their admiration of Shankar Nag, but also induced in them the belief that they too were "like Auto Raja" the protagonist of the film.
In the film *Auto Raja*, two very interesting aspects are emphasised. One, the protagonist, an autorikshaw driver named Auto Raja, always seen reading a newspaper or magazines. In a particular scene he asserts rather forcefully that he is a BSc I class graduate, fluent in English to the point of sporting a classic ascent, and whose favourite book happens to be *Lenin, Life And Work*. His auto, incidentally bears the punchline “Jai Karnataka Mathe” (hail Mother Karnataka), indicating his patriotism and his status as an activist of the Kannada movement.

The second aspect is the classification of the elite versus lower working classes such as autodrivers. Here the mode of argument turns the unconventional way: bottom-up, rather than a top-down hierarchial positioning of values and morals.
The auto driver is pitted against a stereotyped antagonist: a liquor guzzling, partying, rich womaniser who sports western attire. This serves to highlight the contrast between the English-speaking Kannada working-class patriot and the English-speaking useless rich. These contrasts were very conciously scripted, to boost the spirits of working class Kannadigas, with the message that the humble work they do is as important as that of the business class, and that they too can aspire for higher education even as they continue to do their low-profile work. The only requirements are self-respect, moral values, and an interest in acquiring knowledge.

The story revolving around the character of Auto Raja socially influenced the working classes, especially autorickshaw drivers, giving them a sense of prominent heroism, adding to the popular visual cultural making of iconography, with stickers of Shankar Nag dominating the mobile public sphere of Bengaluru and Karnataka, notwithstanding the fact that the community hardly knew Shankar Nag as a director, but only as an actor. Autorickshaw stands all across the state proudly flaunting the portrait of Shankar Nag illustrates the composition of a post-modern symbol. That this symbol is featured alongside pictures of the mother goddess of Kannada and Rajkumar, exemplifies the making of sub-iconography, and the making of the ‘second son’ (of Kannada), in the lineage of visual history in the making of the Kannada identity.

The working class sector in Bengaluru today has a vast majority of immigrants from other states. With resident Kannadigas busy chasing white-collar jobs and high pay scales thanks to rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of the city, construction workers, labourers, helpers, etc are mostly from Bihar and other states, who have come here in search of work. However, auto drivers have generally been locals, and their need for an icon was satisfied by the character of Auto Raja. Thus, the Shankar Nag-Auto Raja stickers and pictures became a compulsory part of every autorickshaw.
Reciprocally, the states exercise their own surveillance over representations of the nation. Within the colonial state, this could require veiled imagery, as in the seemingly innocuous lithograph of a woman with a caged parrot discussed in the Christopher Pinney essay *The Body And The Bomb: Technologies Of Modernity In Colonial India*. Verbal commentary, Pinney observes, was required to unlock the insurrectionist message. But surveillance did not end with independence. Kajari Jain in her essay *The Efficacious Image: Picture And Power In Indian Mass Culture*, cites one telling anecdote involving Nargis, the Hindi film actress most famous for her titular role in *Mother India* of 1957, a classic cinematic depiction of the long-suffering, heroic female facing economic and familial disaster, which was widely viewed, as its title intended, in allegorical terms. After Nargis retired from films, the government of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi appointed her to the Rajya Sabha in 1980. In her first official speech as a Member of Parliament, Nargis attacked the celebrated filmmaker Satyajit Ray for focusing on Indian poverty in his films. In her speech and in a subsequent interview, Nargis charged that Ray failed to provide "a correct image of India", which led foreigners to think that modern India had no cars or schools. When the interviewer asked her what defined "modern India" Nargis replied in one word, "Dams." In *Picturing The Nation: Iconographies Of Modern India*, Richard Davis points out that the representation of mother in the context of post-modern India is the presentation and representation of mother who turns to an icon, Nargis was elected to the Rajya Sabha not in the light of her character role and her brilliant performance, but deferring to the illusion that exists in the Indian audience that the simple man, when he appears on screen, is no more an actor but a transmigrated form of an *avatar*. It is this tendency that leads to the creation of the iconic status in the eyes of the Indian audience, as illustrated by the case of southern film stars MGR (M.G. Ramachandran), and NTR (N.T. Rama Rao) who went on to become extremely successful politicians, even becoming Chief Ministers of their respective states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. This was also true of Nitish Bharadwaj, who played Lord Krishna in B.R. Chopra's extremely
successful teleserial *Mahabharath*, who was wooed by political parties to stand for elections, as they were certain that he would win because of the role he had played. But the scenario was different in the case of Kannada visual culture. Dr Rajkumar acquired stardom and gained the devotion of fans with the patriotic roles he played, which are considered to be the best in his repertoire. However, he strictly resisted the pressure to leap into the political arena, preferring instead, to stay on in the charming role of being the official host of Kannada patriotism and the humble servant of Kannada goddess Bhuvaneswari, waving the flag of Kannada in posters dotting the streets. This is probably the main reason why he is celebrated as the loyal son of Kannada.

I have used the description “devoted fans” very consciously, to distinguish them from the generally understood meaning of the term “fan”, which means “an ardent follower and admirer”. One as discussed earlier, the local term for fan, *abhimaani* (meaning admirer), is used synonymously with its English equivalent, yet the two are subtly different. As S. V. Srinivas’s *Fans And Stars* points out various complexities, I wish to argue that fans today are not fans in the real sense, with fans associations mushrooming more for commercial, competitive and other intentions related to existence and survival. Thus the word “devoted fans” is more relevant to the context of the times of such icons as Dr Rajkumar and MGR, who had genuine fans. These icons never faced the need to depend on fans associations to run ‘house-full’ shows of their films, and neither did they need to pay fans for such ‘services’. It is observed fact that stars of those days earned their stardom through audience preferences and audience choice, which made them icons, and did not have to be ‘marketed’ like the stars of today.

‘Devotional viewing’ points to the question of presence, raised in this connection most directly by Kajri Jain. Medieval devotional theologies in India held that divinity, in one form or another becomes present in an icon or image in the course of worship. The
god Vishnu, many Hindus would argue, actually incarnates Himself in a consecrated icon. The image gains its power and efficacy, in this view, not from its physical appearance but from the divine presence inhabiting it. This theology of presence has consequences as well for the expectations and practices of its audience. The situation is not a unilateral relation of (human) viewer to (inert) viewed, but rather one of reciprocal looking, often referred to as *darshana*, and of interactive physical engagement. Observers have described, as one example, the devotional attitude and venerative practices of many Indian television viewers towards the hugely popular serial *Ramayan* aired between 1987-89, as discussed in the introduction of the book *Picturing The Nation*, by Richard Davis. This line of discussion of Kajri Jain’s *darshana* is similar to that of “devoted fans”, and with the respective examples of B.R. Chopra’s *Mahabharat* and Rajkumar’s *avatars* in Kannada patriotic films — whether it is the dramatic role of *Mayura* (1975) or *Gandhada Gudi* (1973) — the extension from the role of character to the role of public figure has been strongly evident.

In the same context Kajri Jain argues that this visual schema extends beyond the religious sphere of the icon, into representations that bear upon the nation: “Just as temple images bear a privileged stature as divine habitations, so too public statues of Gandhi, Ambedkar and other heroes of the nation may be seen as containing an essence of those figures.” She further says that the investment on national embodiments or national symbols like Bharat Matha and the tri-colour flag draws the public to a closer, intimate relationship or belonging in the public sphere, and subsequently as a result these installed images gaining a higher power to elicit veneration. Similarly, after the death of Dr Rajkumar there was a scramble to install his statues everywhere. Over 50 were installed in Bangalore alone. In tandem, his posters in vinyl peppered the public sphere, including traffic junctions — a sign of the concrete establishment of the identity and its dominance, not only of the icon but of all that he touched and spoke and fought for. The fans who put up these posters, made sure that the posters carried legends like “Dr Rajkumar Fan Associations” and “Dr Rajkumar Abhimanigalu”, with even the caste, community and religion mentioned in the
baseline, over layering the primary context of the icon. These were almost similar to
the cases of Mother Teresa being featured in political banners for the propaganda of
Christian converts and vote banks. It is also similar to the sudden inclusion of Tipu
Sultan in gaudy political propaganda where he is shown with a casually relaxed,
sarcastic smile, fighting a tiger — this visual imagination being a direct copy-paste from
the 'Tiger of Mysore' caption, in the form of kitsch imitation of local representations.
This localization and contextualization is crucial as it veers away from the concept of
“devoted fans”, and moves towards a visual political war that is often seen in the
public sphere, with poster versus poster and the icon rapidly transcending into a
symbol of power and pressure over the issue of existence.
Vishnuvardhan the third son of goddess Bhuvaneshwari

Figure 94 “Jai Karnataka Mathe, Sahasa Simha Vishnuvardhan” released after the film “Yajamana” Raja Verma Art, 1996.
Figure 95 "Dr Vishnurwardhan" Raja Verma Arts, 2009.

Figure 96 "Karnataka Simha" Raja Verma Arts, 2009
Figure 97 Untitled, Raja Verma Arts, 2009.

Figure 98 After the release of the film Sreemantha Raja Verma Arts, 2009.
Figure 99 "Karnataka Simha, Dr Vishnuvardhan" Raja Verma Arts, 2009

Figure 100 "Karnataka Simha, Dr Vishnuvardhan" after the release of Aptharakshaka, Raja Verma Arts. Print: 2009.
Figure 101 "Karnataka Simha, Dr Vishnuvardhan" Raja Verma Arts, 2009.

Figure 102 "Jai Karnataka Mathe" Ravi Verma Arts, 1990's
Figure 103 “Sahasa Simha Dr Vishnuvardhan” Ravi Verma Arts, 1990’s

Figure 104 A visual from the song “Kannadave Namma Amma” of the film “Mojugara sogasugara” (in the backdrop of Mysore Palace, statues of Wodeyars) 1996
Mojugara Sogasugara (1996), the 150th film of Vishnuvardhan was one of the biggest hits of the actor, and featured him in a double role. The song Kannadave Namma Amma (Kannada is our mother), was picturised in Mysore, against the backdrop of the major landmarks of the city. In typical 1990s style, the song features many dancers — usually termed as extras — in the background, all in uniform attire of yellow and red, the Kannada flag colours. There are Kannada flags everywhere, with even the dancers waving them. Even the drums featuring in the song are painted in a flashy, assertive manner which cannot be missed. The song is a visual treat, in a sense, dipped as it is, in the tints of the Kannada flag. Vishnuvardhan (singing a song asking Kannadigas to be ready to sacrifice their life for the cause of Kannadigas), wears attire to match — probably the most interesting combination ever worn by a Kannada hero — canary yellow blazer worn over a bright poster red shirt, teamed with white trousers and shoes, much like of the ones favoured by leading actor Jitendra in the Hindi films of the ’80s and ’90s. Ironically, in the double role that Vishnuvardhan plays, one is of a non-vegetarian who relishes meat. In one particular scene, he is shown he ordering several non-veg dishes (chicken and beef), especially demanding the brain portion. This was considered out-of-character, as Vishnuvardhan hailed from a Brahmin family, and was seen as representing that class. The story is of brothers separated in childhood, reuniting later in life, a very popular theme during the late ‘80s and early ’90s, as evidenced by the Hindi film Amar, Akbar, and Antony which was a runaway hit.

In the case of Mojugara Sogasugara, the script did not have any overt Kannada nationalistic intentions, and the song was added apparently only to show concern for Kannada. So, the film was not a ‘patriotic’ one in that sense, but a family entertainer. The makers seem to have avoided a full-scale patriotic theme as patriotic films were generally not commercial successes.

Vishnuvardhan has been always referred to as the Brahminical Mysorean. The ‘icon-making process’ vis-a-vis this actor has been more active after his death, especially during the BJP rule in Karnataka. At one point, huge cut-outs of Vishnuvardhan dotted
the whole of Bengaluru. Interestingly, at the World Kannada Meet held at Belgaum in 2011, cutouts and huge vinyl prints of Vishnuvardhan were prominent everywhere, portraying him as the host of Kannada identity, while there were hardly any of Rajkumar. These presentations of the represented are not just the popular icon-making of the public, but politically driven public motifs, contributing to the making of iconography in popular visual culture prominently as “Immortals in vinyl” where some are sought to be made important in a more permanent space and some just in a temporary phase. Thus, political interventions add to the cultural hegemony of caste and region. Vishnuvardhan may have portrayed the common working class lay man on screen, but he was always perceived through the lens of caste. Thus, in the public domain, he was not seen as a working class leader. One reason for this could be the establishment of his image as a “Brahmin” and thus not acceptable as a leader for the working class, which comprises mostly non-Brahmins.
"Mandya da Gandu" "Rebel Star" Ambaresh.

Figure 105 A Ambareesh as "Madikerinayaka", Raja Verma Arts, 1990s.
Figure 105 B “Rebel star Ambareesh”, Raja Verma Arts, 1990s.

Figure 105 C Untitled poster on Ambareesh, Raja Verma Arts, 1990s.
Ambareesh the rebel star of Kannada

‘Daanashuraveera Karna’ (the brave and generous Karna), ‘Rebel Star’, ‘Mandyada Gandu’ (the man of Mandya). These titles conferred on Ambareesh, as well as the roles he played in certain films revolving around patriotic themes, pictorially enhanced his image as a pro-Kannada activist and actor. However, there was a change in the representation of Ambareesh as the proud fourth son of Thayee Bhuvaneshwari, thanks to a conflict arising over political factors — such as his involvement with the Congress — leading to the loss of assertion of this image in the public domain. The restriction on the usage of images of a politically active individual contesting elections meant that major visual interpretations of Ambareesh in the socio-cultural scenario were not possible. This is the reason why there are very few posters of Ambareesh portraying him as the son of the mother goddess of Kannada.

In the visual presented above from the film Solillada Saradhara, the song starts with “E Kannada mannanu maribeda, o abhimani” (do not forget the soil of Kannada), emotionally connecting the viewers to the pride and glorious past of Kannada. Solillada Saradhara is the story of a boatman, Krishna, who ferries people across the
river Kaveri. Kaveri is portrayed as Mother Kaveri who protects and nurtures. Incidentally, many such films of the late '80s and '90s emphasise on the value of the Kaveri, in the light of the Kaveri water conflict between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The character of Krishna in *Sollillada Saradhara* as a lay man who exhibits intense patriotism for Kannada and Karnataka aims to encourage the working classes as well as the uneducated, to be Kannada activists. The protagonist Krishna is a superhero who vanquishes to antagonist groups single handedly. He sings poetically about the historical greatness of Karnataka, even though he has studied only up to the seventh standard. In the end, he is even permitted to have two wives. The polygamy angle does not seem to hassle Kannada films, as it is the norm in early films for the protagonist to have a lover and also a wife.

If Rajkumar was shown with the Mysore Palace and the Wodeyars, in the case of Ambareesh posters, it is the Vidhana Soudha, the Karnataka State Legislative Assembly building that has been visualized as his domain in public. Ironically, though the 'Mandayada Gandu' was a well-known candidate of Mandya in Mysore constituency, there are no visual symbols of Mysore in any of his posters. But his theatrical postures with the Kannada flag assert his strong sense of Kannada activism. Today, in the Kannada film industry, he remains the last known icon in the public domain as a beloved son of Bhuvaneshwari. Ironically, his foray into politics has minimized his presence in the street space.
Figure 107 Thayee Bhuvaneshwari an interpretation from BKS Verma’s version, Raja Verma Arts. 1990s
Figure 108 “Jayade Karnataka Mathe” adopted from B K S Varma painting (Sri Lakshmi), 2011 Raja Verma Arts
**Figure 109** “Suvarna Karnataka Kannada Rajyotsava” goddess adopted from BKS Varma painting, Raja Verma Arts, 2011
Figure 110 "Jayahe Karnataka Mathe” Goddess Bhuvaneshwari painted by BKS Verma, posters from Kannada Sahitya Parishath, Bengaluru.
D. THE PERIPHERAL CONCERNS OF IDENTITY

1. Statue of Goddess Bhuvaneshwari to Statue of Liberty
2. The officially unofficial flag
3. The loss of identity in 'Kannada' fonts
4. Territorialism
5. Masculinity
6. Caste and their icons
7. Political propaganda and Kannada mother goddess as the brand ambassador
8. Local versus global, elite versus popular
9. Internet and Kannada visual culture
10. The Art, Design and Film: the medium that constructed Mother Goddess
On Feb 4, 2011, on the occasion of the 77th Akhila Bharata Kannada Sahitya Sammelana in Bengaluru — incidentally being held in the capital of the state after a gap of 40 years — the then Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa who presided over the event made a grand promise to the state, during the inaugural function. He declared that a statue of goddess Bhuvaneswari would be installed in Bengaluru at a cost of Rs 25 crore. The Chief Minister said: "The statue would be as tall as the Statue of Liberty of New York, or the statue of Lord Buddha at Lumbini Park, Hyderabad. We will keep aside Rs 25 crore in the next budget for the purpose," indicating that work on the statue could begin by April 2011.

How was this to be viewed? Was the fact that a statue, with an identity of Kannada was to be installed in cosmopolitan Bangalore, the Silicon Valley of India, an assertion that Bengaluru, even decades after being made the capital of Karnataka, needed installation of an identity in the form of the mother goddess as the state deity to remind it that it still represents Karnataka, or rather, Kannada? Also regard the visual comparison to the contrasting globally known statues cited by the Chief Minister. The first, the Statue of Liberty in New York, is of a robed female figure representing Libertas, the Roman goddess of freedom, who bears a torch and a tabula ansata (a tablet evoking the law) upon which is inscribed the date of the American Declaration of Independence, The statue represents an icon of freedom and the United States as well. And the statue of the Buddha represents peace and the religion of Buddhism as a whole. The political promise was that the statue of Bhuvaneswari would have been the symbol of Bengaluru. But this promise was rejected by the public, with the people vociferously asking the Chief Minister to use the huge amount of money promised for the statue, for more pressing social needs. For over a week, the debate raged in the city, with the media questioning the need for such a huge investment, and sarcastically terming it as yet another empty political promise.
Meanwhile, the land for the statue installation was next in the line of interest; Minister for Kannada and Culture Govind M. Karjol said: "The government is looking for a strategic location in the city to attract tourists. We have grand plans of creating a beautiful garden around the statue. It will require a large piece of land. If no other option works out, the statue will have to be installed at Ulsoor Lake." The discussion veered round to other likely sites: Lalbagh, Hebbal Lake, Freedom Park, the Bangalore University campus, and so on. After a few days this topic died a natural death and was no more spoken of or discussed, as the public outcry against the proposal had the government putting the project in cold storage.

Did the rejection of the installation of the statue of mother goddess Thayee Bhuvaneshwari mean that the Bengalurian public, the children of the mother goddess had rejected their own mother, the cultural icon, the deity of Karnataka, Kannadamma? Or is it that the cosmopolitan city is focused only on commercial growth? Or is it that Bengaluru has become wiser through the lessons of the past and rejected the idol-worshipping culture? But then, the statue was not necessarily one for worship, and could have served as a symbolic representation only! Or could it be that consideration for the minorities and the non-Hindu population had resulted in the rejection of the statue? Or could it be that the rejection was solely based on the natural suspicion of corruption and the scope for a new scam (given the colossal amount of money involved)? Nevertheless there was also a murmur of voices which pointed out that it was after all, the statue of Bhuvaneshwari that the Chief Minister had proposed to install, not a statue of himself, as some politicians had done on a large scale recently.

The argument that I wish to point at is that though the Kannada and Culture Department has been hosting Kannada Rajyotsava celebrations at a temple of Goddess Bhuvaneshwari or Mookambika in Bhuvanagiri of Siddapur taluk, Uttar Kannada district, for the past five years, and at the temple of Bhuvaneshwari, belonging to 17th century of Hampi, the need to establish a statue in the cosmopolitan space of...
Bengaluru as an equivalent to the statue of Lumbini Buddha of Hussein sagar lake at Hyderabad or of the Statue of Liberty is the visually demanding need to the global positioning of the local representation.
THE OFFICIALLY UNOFFICIAL FLAG: “STATE DOES NOT HAVE AN OFFICIAL FLAG!”

The state government on Jan 9, 2012 made it clear that the yellow and red flag that is omnipresent during all celebrations related to Karnataka and Kannada is not the official flag of the state, and clarified that there is no separate flag for the state. The ubiquitous flag became a subject of interest following a question over the status and meaning of the Kannada or Karnataka flag in the Assembly. To this question, Minister for Kannada and Culture Govind M. Karjol said, “The Flag Code does not allow flags for states. Our national flag is the symbol of integrity and sovereignty of our nation. If states have their separate flags, it could diminish the importance of the national flag. Besides, there are possibilities of it leading to narrow-minded regional feelings.”

States having their own flag might affect the regional emotions of the people. Hence, the state government had not given any official status to the so-called Kannada flag, it was clarified. Press reports also stated that “the government reply came as a surprise to people who largely believed that the yellow and the red flag represented Kannada and Karnataka”. These issues were clarified after decades in the context of identity. It is a fact that these flags are installed in all the corners and at all cross roads of Karnataka, especially Bangalore. Is the question of the flag usage to be viewed from the angle of pro-Kannada nationalism or from that of the sovereignty of the nation? The flag that had been used by a small political party in post-Independence India, which had the simple concept of borrowing the features of Hindu goddesses, thus leading to the Bhuvaneshwari icon, was a functional tool for the Kannada movement. From the Gokak agitation to the Kaveri crisis, from the literary stalwarts to the local Kannada activists the flag had been used in the most unimaginable contexts. I have seen the Kannada flag being used on the backs of two-wheelers, on the front and back windshields of cars and heavy goods vehicles, especially during the Rajkumar kidnapping episode, as commuters identified as not being pro-Kannada activists, ie, all those who did not flaunt any Kannada visual elements were attacked. The visual
elements used rampantly ranged from the Kannada flag, to pictures of Thayee Bhuvaneshwari, and from Dr Rajkumar's stickers to Sahāṅkar Nag's portraits in the background of the Kannada flag.

Thus here the question I wish to raise pertains to the value of the existing symbol, irrespective of the assertion and contradiction that the flag may or may not hold any value or be a symbol of Karnataka or Kannada. The existing functional flag is a well registered concept. If this is wiped out by law, then what about its past contributions and the significant part it played in creating the Kannada identity? Secondly, the question of why it was used in the past is obvious, so, how would one replace it with a new concept that can represent the present Karnataka?

To date, more than ten thousand of these Kannada flags are fluttering on poles installed on a base tiled with images of goddess Bhuvaneshwari or Rajkumar, or Kuvempu or Kempegowda, depending on the regional demography. They are also visible in all possible and even unpredictable nooks and crannies of the public arena, such as on the corner edges of autorickshaw windshields and on the windshields of cars and public buses.

The Kannada flag is also a protective shield that non-Kannadigas use to make a statement that they are proud to be a part of Kannada activism.

This oversaturated visual plethora cannot be undone or deleted, but has impressed itself on the psyche of the public in Karnataka, especially Bangalore. Indeed, Bangalore may not have as many signages as the number of flags hoisted!
The officially unofficial Flag

Figure 111 The official website of Government of Karnataka as on Feb 18, 2012.

The official website of the Government of Karnataka features what we know as the Kannada flag on the left of the map of the state, and the national tricolour on the right.
of the map. The map is internally illustrated with the image of the Vidhana Soudha, the State Assembly building. Below is a close-up shot of the Vidhana Soudha bathed in golden light at night, with the Kannada flag embossed with the state symbol fluttering in front. These representations clearly highlight the use of the Kannada flag, which, however, has been officially rejected on the grounds of national integrity and the law. Incidentally, the only state that has the privilege of having a separate flag is Jammu and Kashmir.

The state flag of Jammu and Kashmir consists of a deep red field, representing labour, charged with a plough to represent agriculture. Three stripes are found on the hoist side and represent the three geographic regions of the state, Jammu, the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh.

This research study investigated the overarching understanding on the making of the local identity, that is, the Kannada Mother Goddess and her flag as the representational iconography of Kannada hegemony, as the functional deity of the state, for the purpose of unification and her development with her parallel competitive sisters, the other 'mothers' of neighbouring states, and as the daughter of the common mother Bharat Matha. This visual history I have presented in this research leaves no doubt that that the visual iconography and its significance have extensively contributed in the state formation and unification. The argument of this research defines the popular visual culture of contemporary India, redefining the local ethos over the national ethos, and the larger localisation of nationality, in the context of globalization.

The argument I have presented and discussed in the previous chapters contributes and asserts the following key points: Firstly, the 'development' of the Mother Goddess of Kannada with her flag, and her establishment and functional responsibility in fulfilling
the role of unification and state formation. Secondly, the role and life of Thayee Bhuvaneshwari and her flag as the protective mother in times of crisis in the state, such as the Gokak agitation, the Kaveri water imbroglio, and Dr. Rajkumar's abduction, and in consistently reminding the people of the need for their loyalty to their Kannadiga roots, and for pro-Kannada activism. Thirdly, the questioning of the role of the mother goddess and the flag in the post-modern contemporary time and space, through visual statements in the public domain. Fourthly, the mother goddess affording her 'beloved sons' the opportunity to play host to Kannada culture, contributing to the popular phase. Fifthly, the iconographies being termed and cast as representational public leaders in the public domain, thereby leading to further localisation against globalisation in the contemporary context.

Let me conclude to begin by asking a question which is crucial not only for this dissertation but also for studies of other forms of such iconography and popular visual cultural studies: if iconography such as the mother goddess (and her flag) is very important, and if she is considered as the state or national deity, representing its identity, then why is it not perceived as an elite concept, though it has sprouted from elite visions? If let to visualise then why is the assertion so abstract, (abstract enough in forcing to visualise and abstract enough to term it as idol,) complicating the complexities of the concept of the symbol? The symbol that once unified the thought has now been pointed out as the reason for the contemporary crisis of identity! And finally, what is the identity of any local body (here in this case Kannada and Karnataka) of India today in the contemporary context?

During this process of investigation for my research, I encountered a few very interesting and at the same time critical, issues entangled in this subject, but which are not much discussed nor answered, at least in this context of enlightenment.

These subtle areas need a deeper exposition to justify the intensity of the subject in terms of its problem in the socio-cultural context. One such issue is territorialism, which has been mentioned in the earlier chapters in the respective areas of
discussions. The issue of territorialism being a very sensitive one has been of high significance for natural reasons in this context of state, nation and local geographical body of representation. The maps and the regional disputes that have been discussed are the references to the argument on the territorialism discussed.

The second issue is of masculinity and gender bias. The observed and presented visuals only highlight the male dominance. Ironically, while the mother goddess is feminine, she is represented only with her proud sons, thereby excluding the female, thus displaying gender-based discrimination and biased perception, intentionally or unintentionally.

The third is the popular phase of visual worship, where iconographies are born and icons produced, producing further sub-icons, but only in the accepted manner of proud sons. The subject is spread across in mainly two segments one as the Rajkumarism where Rajkumar has been presented as the proud son of the Kannada mother goddess and another is the world of autorickshaws, where a unique audience and participants are involved in making a new culture which I wish to call "autoculture" and their ‘king’ or ‘Auto Raja’, Shankar Nag.

The fourth issue is that of caste leaders such as Ambedkar, Buddha, Kuvempu, Kempegowda, Basaveshwara, and new emerging street icons such as Tipu Sultan and Mother Teresa, and their iconography. This genre is decided and dictated by caste-based propaganda with which the communities can address their grievances and justify their existence through the chosen leaders as their icons.

Finally there is the issue of political propaganda, where gods and mother goddesses become brand ambassadors in an era of vinyl and over printing and ease of producing huge cutouts and banners overnight, defining and changing the cityscapes with agendas of political and social significance.

The research ends, or rather begins, with the close contradicting interdependent and mutually influencing comparison between local and global popular visual culture.
THE LOSS OF IDENTITY IN KANNADA FONTS

Kannada font:

The Kannada font was made by Atthavara Anathacharya. The font was not named then as there were no other fonts. Calligraphy and differences in typography are still a problem, since there is no school in India which specialises in Indian typography. Indian typography was created on presses with German technology. Brindavan Wesley Press in Mysore is an example. Till the advent of computerization, the fonts were more or less well structured, since the space and method were standard in size with the press. But after computerization and the attendant freedom to experiment, the fonts and their usage became inconsistent. For instance, the curves of one alphabet differ from that of another, making them appear as if they do not belong to one family. For another instance a font size of 40 and 60 as a heading when decreased differs in the form of the supportive fonts (often with dots and other many minor issue). "We are used to these kinds of disturbances," says N.A.M Ismail, a Kannada activist, writer and journalist. Thus the status of Kannada fonts is in a very critical state, with no grammar of typography. These issues have not been considered either by the government or by the font users. "In fact, this was not considered an issue at all," says NAM Ismail.

Storage standard:

The International Unicode Standard has set codes for all languages, including Kannada. With the ASCII, American Standard for Informational Interchange, Kannada faced problems because of the limitation of 256 glyphs. Since Unicode has unlimited glyphs, today Kannada fonts have overcome the issues of storage standard to an extent, but the issues of typographical aesthetics are yet to be resolved. Issues such as Bold and Italics, proportion and size are a few of the major challenges that Kannada fonts face. Kannada, like other Indian languages has no upper case and lower case. However, there are ways of getting around the problem, with choices such as enlarging the first letter of the first word, with the rest of the letters of the word in smaller size.
However, when some Kannada fonts are decreased in size, there are issues such as with the glyphs (othu, thalekattu) and stressed secondary alphabets, ascenders and descenders.

The font prescribed by BM Sri, avoiding the ascenders and descenders was not practically applicable for modern and post-modern Kannada because the process used earlier was way too different from this font system, in terms of symbols and font face as the typewriter could not adopt these type faces. But the computer today can accommodate any font face. Regrettably, it was not technology that was based on language usage, but language that had to be adjusted to the technology.

Free downloadable packages such as Nudi and Bharaha have their own issues. Compared to the letter press fonts of the olden days, the new age fonts are far more complex. The technological evolution from letter press to rotary press was very slow. But offset changed the pre-press system, from film plate to image setters to computer-to-plate print. These technological innovations ruined the local font aesthetics in India whereas in the west innovations developed without the loss of typography sense and branched with the pace of time and needs. One of the major negatives of technological advancement and its influence in India was that technology was considered to be the only thing necessary for usage, thereby totally ignoring creative inputs and scientific thinking, blindly moving forward under the impression that skill is sufficient and intelligence is not needed! Unfortunately the situation even today remains same in certain fields. One of the best examples is that other than in heavy budgeted advertisements, one doesn’t often get to observe any usage of standard font or typography applied in public sphere, as it is all taken for granted, because the public has not been educated nor made to realize that the socio-cultural space also needs to have a disciplined medium of communication or culture.
Kannada font now needs a commercial design sense to combat the limiting factors such as paper quality and colour of fonts. (Light, normal, book, demi, bold are the five European standards of font colour. In English print, the headline is dark and sub-line news paragraphs are in grey, whereas in Kannada the difference is barely seen. Body text areas are called grey pages.)

Manohar Acharya, Poornachandra Tejaswi and K.N. Shantha Kumar are some of the intellectuals who have expressed concern over these issues. Ismail further says that a solution has not been found so far mainly because of the fact that this has never been seen as a problem! There is another factor lacking in the design sense in the printing area: No standard publication such as a newspaper or magazine uses more than two or three fonts. But some Kannada publications use as many as six to eight fonts of different families in a single published material.

Kannada contemporary cultural identity is “film posters titled as ‘machu’ ‘long’, etc, (weapons made of metal, such as axe, sickle and machete) or national ad campaigns translated into a local version, but when it comes to visual culture, only Yakshagana comes to my mind,” says NAM Ismail, adding: “All commercially successful contemporary visual identities are mediocre.”
TERRITORIALISM

The Bharat Matha map versus the map of Independent India

The arguments and the discussion in the previous chapters have provided visual evidence that makes clear the difference between the map of independent India and the map of Bharat Matha. The conflict that exists between these two different forms of representations has a major crux of argument. The map of Independent India is the map presented after the Independence of India (here the map of the present conflicting representation over some area of Jammu and Kashmir's exclusion is not referred) and the map of Bharat Matha is the old map of British colonial India, inclusive of (present day) Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. While it is acceptable to represent Bharat Matha as mentioned, in all the cases where the visuals are before Independence, presenting the same map even after Independence can only lead to two interpretations: One, reminding the viewer of the earlier India and the split India, thereby cautioning against further division. Two, emotionally referring to the geo-body of the Bharat Matha as a living deity, helping the viewer perceive how she was. This territorialism might probably lead to a serious disturbance in terms of territorial disputes in the future, though justifiable with reference to the past.

Representation of Karnataka in map of India as globe

The Kannada-Karnataka hegemony of portraying the highlighted map of Karnataka in the globe is another noticeable factor in the visuals presented. This also implies the clear exclusion of other states, with a central focus on Karnataka. The sense of brotherhood with neighbouring states is absolutely absent, despite the fact that
Kannadigas reside in neighbouring states also. A frame of composition where Kannada Matha is portrayed as the universal mother in the foreground of the earth is another striking image that seems to encompass the whole of mankind rather than a restricted geography. These elements are visualised in a casual approach, like the usage of the term ‘Bhuvaneshwari’ meaning ‘Goddess of the Earth’.

Reassertion of ownership over Kannada land

In most of the Kannada films of Rajkumar, dialogues referring to the ownership of land as the land of Kannadigas find emphasis. In the film Srikrishnadevaraya, the king is referred to and proclaimed as the lord of Kannada land. Though there have been controversies over the spoken language in the Vijayanagara empire, the assertion here reveals the purpose of such usage — which is to re-establish the territorial space and linguistic monopoly. Regions such as Hampi being close to Andhra Pradesh is one reason why these territorial assertions are common. This was also probably why the Hampi University was established in Hampi.

Representation of all shakthi peethas as Bhuvaneshwari

The strategy of coalescing dispersed Kannada speaking demography by invoking prominent goddess temple deities, is another example to illustrate the territorial construction and unification. While this effort has been fruitful in the social, cultural and political context, its failure to include the minority non-Hindu population and non-idol worshippers and atheists is clearly evident. The mental territory of Kannada and Kannada-speaking people has thus cut off the non-Hindu Kannada-speaking minority.

Flag as the territorial cautioning? Is Bengaluru a Kannada territory or not?

Janaki Nair says “A new and more belligerent face of Kannada activism soon became evident in the occupation of public spaces both in a temporary and more permanent sense. If newer Tamil dominated slum areas have been the target of rioters, older and
more established Tamil localities have been the site of symbolic occupations. Poles
sporting the Kannada flag mounted on tiled platforms that figure Kannada
Bhuvaneswari, have proliferated across the city in the years since 1982, at street
corners and in circles, as road dividers and as signs of the mobilising efforts of small
neighbourhood youth groups and Kannada sanghas. The President of the Rajkumar
Abhimanigala Sangha Sa. Ra. Govindu claims that more than 40 per cent of flag posts
that dot the city were inaugurated by him. Flags in front of major public sector units
proclaim the pride of Kannada sons-of-the-soil, leaving no doubt as to the markedly
(male) gendered politics of language. The Kannada Rajyothsava day on November 1
has become an annual occasion for young Kannadiga males to occupy street corners,
as a gesture of celebration of Karnataka unification but also in defiance of other class
and linguistic œuvres.

"Yet if red and yellow flags are particularly numerous in areas which are dominated by
Tamilians such as Ulsoor or Murphy Town, they do not symbolise linguistic dominance:
rather they serve to visually compensate for what is plainly an auditory absence. Nor
does the Kannada movement speak in one voice. Groups such as the Karnataka
Vimochana Ranga (KVR), a left wing organisation, have rallied cultural workers and
intellectuals to challenge the state's development strategies: far from restricting itself
to issues of language, KVR has organised against the Japanese township at Bidadi,
against GATT and most recently against the proposed Bangalore-Mysore corridor. Yet
though KVR narrativises Karnataka history differently and questions the dominant
paradigms of economic development, it is those who are seeking a stake within this
paradigm that have become the dominant voice of the movement, those for whom
claims for land, labour or water, are based on the exclusive identities of language.
Rajkumar's call for a Bangalore bundh (symbolic shutting down of the city) in 1984 to
compel the state to reintroduce Kannada examinations for the Class III and IV
employees proved deeply unpopular, and effectively thwarted his launch into
electoral politics. But it also established the more strident face of Kannada
nationalism in the city. The poet Chennavira Kanavi's words became the call to battle:
"Hesaraayithu Karnataka, Usiragali Kannada" ("The name is now Karnataka; let Kannada be our life"). It was a battle that marshalled census figures and data to emphasise Kannada's dominant status at the same time as it mobilised troops who would lay claim to city spaces.

Mayor Muthanna's filmic fortunes were not usually matched by other new migrants to the Bangalore of the 1960s. The sense of being a "local refugee" haunted the Kannadiga migrant, in a city, or more properly the Cantonment area, that was awash with English and, more distressing, Tamil popular culture. M. Chidanandamurthy, a Professor of Kannada literature who grew up in a small town of Shimoga, speaks in his autobiography of being humiliated at a theatre in the Cantonment area when he asked for a ticket in Kannada. The city of Bangalore and more properly the Cantonment, was alien not simply because it was a zone where Kannada was rarely heard, but one where Tamil enjoyed a dominance, although largely among the working classes. "In every public sector unit," says Ra Nam Chandrasekhar, a worker at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and activist of the Kannada Shakti Kendra, "we only saw groups of workers reading Tamil newspapers, not Kannada ones."

Underlying the anxiety about the visibility, or more correctly audibility, of Kannada, was a concern for jobs in the prestigious public sector, whose workers were the labour aristocracy, earning good wages, enjoying relatively undemanding work routines, with all the perquisites of housing and transport and subsidised canteens, much of which was enabled by the actions of strong and centralised, usually left wing, unions. Not surprisingly, the unions, as well as the ebullient workers' cultural troupes and organisations that sprang up at these units, soon became the battle ground of new Kannada entrants. Kannada sanghas, in turn, received a shot in the arm from those managements anxious to curb the growing influence of left wing unions in the public sector."
MASCULINITY

Where is Akkamahadevi? Kitturu Rani Chennamma? Where is Bellary Siddamma? Where are all the reel and real mothers?

Inspired and enlightened by the Kannada state unification movement and Kannada activism by Karnataka's most intellectual thinkers, this discussion reminding the factors and evidences discussed in the previous chapters on the role of men in becoming the beloved sons of the mother goddess of Kannada, asserts the rationally critical views on the complex triangulation of the geographic body of Karnataka with the mother's body and men's bodies in the multifaceted avatars and roles of the popular centric, public domain, 'entertained' characters. Popular posters and visuals are a study in contrast where women are hypervisible as incarnations ranging from princess to deity, with men being accorded prominence in patriotic pictures, thereby visually endorsing and acknowledging the stark reality about nationalism being accorded a masculinist perception, imagination and visualization. This perception being practised has intentionally or unintentionally intruded into the cultural public psyches and impressions, ruling out the chances of any female being considered the beloved daughter of the mother goddess.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, to paraphrase John Berger, women appear, but men act. With the exception of the monolithic figure of the Mother Goddess of Kannada, there is no other sign of the feminine. The presence of the great patriotic women leaders of Karnataka is hardly visible. Women, irrespective of their contributions whether to the national freedom movement or the Karnataka state unification movement, have always been underestimated and gone unregistered in the popular poster arts in the public domain, and as it is the men who are always portrayed as those who place life and limb at the service of the map and mother, the visibility of women has always gone unrepresented.
The men, who have become cultural icons, have always landed the crowning glory of martyrdom. Whether it is the cause for the freedom of Mother India or Mother Kannada, it is the beloved sons who have the honour of being at the service of the nation, to which they have presumably devoted themselves selflessly.

In discussion on masculinity pointing out few feminist category of analysis. As Michael Kimmel observes in nothing the coming to age of masculinity studies in the west as a scholarly field: “To engage masculinities through the prism of feminist theory or to write feminist theory using masculinities as an analytic dimension requires two temperamental postures. One must engage masculinity critically as ideology, as institutionally embedded within a field of power, as a set of practices by a group of men. And yet given the contradictory location experienced by most men, men not privileged by class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, physical abilities, one must also consider a certain forgiveness for actual embodied men as they attempt to construct lives of some coherence and integrity in a world of clashing and contradictory filaments of power and privilege.”

Sumathi Ramaswamy responds to Kimmel’s call for “forgiveness for actual embodied men” by underscoring that nationalist ideology —“masculinist though it is in conception and practice — burdens them with hardship and anxieties, along with bestowing privilege, power, and visibility. Men’s martyrdom for map and mother, subsequently offered to other male citizens as worthy of emulation, is exemplary of this net of risk and death in which some get entangled.” Images of male martyrdom, as indeed visual displays of male patriotism more generally, thus complicate the influential distinction that Laura Mulvey originally established between men as bearers of “the look” and women as its object, and thus compel us to attend to the male body as recipient of male acts of seeing and learning, of what we might call the “patriotic gaze” objectifying the female body and its usage by men.
Again, discussing feminist Eve Sedgwick’s Between Men: English Literature And Male Homo-Social Desire, Sumathi says: "Patriarchal heterosexuality can best be discussed in terms of one or another form of the traffic in women: it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men." In building on Sedgwick’s project the art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau observes in her marvellous work on images of masculinity in French neo-classicism that "in art and in life, homo-sociality does not necessarily depend on the outright elimination of feminity, but rather, on the more powerful bonds that unite men to one another and which collectively operate to secure the subordinate position of women". In other words the woman, when she appears, serves as “the conduit through which collusions and collisions between... men are conducted, thereby enabling bonds of homo-sociality to evolve between men”.

Though the visuals of Kannada activism have not been consciously negating the participation of feminine iconography, the question of male dominance is unanswered. The reason could probably be the lack of female leadership and the male dominant popular structure similar to that of the national freedom movement. But the reason why no heroines are as dominant as male icons is another question which might need an enquiry in a different direction.

And the fact that today Kannada mainstream commercial films cast mostly non-Kannadiga heroines from other states despite the availability of numerous Kannada actresses, is another strand of the argument.

Where are the images of Akka Mahadevi, the renowned inspirational woman known for her literary contribution to Kannada? Where is the fearless freedom fighter Kitturu Rani Chennamma, the queen who fought the British even before 1857, and whose role in the freedom fight is as important as that of Rani Lakshmi Bai? Where is the name
and where are the images Kannada activist and freedom fighter Bellary Siddamma who was beaten up by the police until she was bloodied all over, while speaking at the Aranya Satyagraha Movement led by S. Nijalingappa, but who still continued her speech, and was later imprisoned for 18 months? Where are all those mother characters of Kannada and Hindi films wherein mother roles are so prominently depicted? Where are the real mothers of the state and nation?

Kitturu Rani Chennamma (1778–1829) was the queen of the princely state of Kittur in Karnataka. In 1824, 33 years before the 1857 war of independence, she led an armed rebellion against the British in response to the Doctrine of Lapse. The resistance ended in her martyrdom and she is remembered today as one of the earliest Indian rulers to have fought for Independence. Along with Abbakka Rani, Keladi Chennamma and Onake Obavva she is much venerated in Karnataka as an icon of bravery and women's pride.

Akka Mahadevi was a prominent figure of the Veerashaiva Bhakti movement of the 12th century Karnataka known for her Vachanas in Kannada, a form of didactic poetry, considered her greatest contribution to Kannada Bhakti literature. She is perceived as a great inspirational woman for Kannada literature and the history of Karnataka. She is said to have accepted the god Shiva ('Chenna Mallikarjuna') as her husband, traditionally understood as the 'madhura bhava' or 'madhurya' form of devotion (similar to how centuries later Meera, a 16th century saint, considered herself married to Krishna).
CASTES AND THEIR ICONS:

The population of Karnataka comprises various religions. Among the Hindu themselves, there are many prominent castes, which have jostled for hierarchical power over the state since ages. The most important and majority castes are today wield influence over ballot boxes during elections and their leaders monopolize the respective spaces of political, cultural and social, and even religious systems.

Chief Ministers frequenting religious centres and their management headquarters is no longer a rarity, whether it be for a prayer gathering of a minority community or a religious ritual of a majority community. Religion and the caste system help support the ministry.

In Karnataka, the Vokkaligas (pronounced 'Okkaliga') are a strong majority caste. They claim to be the earliest inhabitants of the area which is now called Karnataka, and their chieftain Kempegowda is a legendary figure. People of the Vokkaliga community use various honorifics, the most popular of which is Gauda anglicized as Gowda. Titles such as Reddy, Hegde and Shetty are also popular, generally used according to the subgroup, language or dialect spoken and the geographical area they belong to. The words Vokkaliga and Gowda are almost synonymous in usage, and in colloquial language, Gowda has come to mean a Vokkaliga. However the term itself is also used by people of various other castes as an honorary title. Generally Vokkaliga is a unified term for various agricultural, and previously endogamous social groups with a martial past, found mainly in the Old Mysore Region of southern Karnataka. The Vokkaligas are primarily agriculturists. They form a politically and numerically dominant caste group and were the most populous group until the States Reorganisation Act of 1956 which enlarged the erstwhile State of Mysore by the inclusion of predominantly Canarese districts of the State of Bombay, State of Hyderabad and Coorg, following which the Lingayats became the most populous social group. Together, the two communities dominate Karnataka state politics. The Vokkaliga caste representation is easy to be found with their society, or residential...
area or their presence with the sculpture of Kempegowda or his name or visuals in the popular appeal. This demarks the territory of the caste which questions and threatens the dominant castes, thus leading to the rise of representations in street culture and in the public domain, with territorial visual symbols.

The next important caste is the Lingayats whose leader and icon is Basaveshwara also called Basavanna. Mahatma Gandhi spoke about caste with reference to Basavanna at the Belgaum session of the Indian National Congress in 1924: “It has not been possible for me to practise the precepts of Basaveshwara which he taught 800 years ago and which he also practised... Eradication of untouchability and dignity of labour were among his core precepts. One does not find even shades of casteism in him. Had he lived during our times, he would have been a saint worthy of worship.” But the irony is that even hundreds of years after Basavanna’s message on abolishing the caste system, (castes such as lingayaths projects Basavanna as their idol and cultural leader.) the iconography of Basavanna is more prominent in visual popular culture than his teachings. This bears close similarity to the usage and representation of Gandhiji in all visual domains but not applying any of his ideals or principles in real life. Here I wish to argue upon the principle of symbol or design. The form following the function is no more applicable in these cultural visual politics, in fact is what is to be observed is that form follows the projector’s function.

The next important caste of influence is the Brahmin caste. A study of history shows that Brahmins have always been a critical community in times of crises. Though the Brahmin community itself encountered several internal crises, the community has always been seen as occupying the highest administrative positions, partly because Brahmins were considered as the highest in the caste hierarchy. This dominance created a sense of insecurity among other castes.

Incidentally, Brahmin identity is often linked with BJP governance and RSS ideology, (though there are other sub castes who rejects the same). Brahmin activism has been dominant in some areas of Bangalore since the declaration of the early Mysore State...
itself, with some areas such as Malleshwaram, Rajajinagar and Basavanagudi being known as Brahmin territory. These pockets are now the hubs of BJP activism. Interestingly, the representation of Vishnuvardhan is now seen more prominently in these areas, marking a new phase of iconography. Huge cutouts of Vishnuvardhan in heroic appearances are displayed over temple compounds, and posters and stickers pasted in all public spaces, exhibiting and asserting the popular icon representing the Brahmin — not just the Brahmin but the Mysorean Brahmin.

The other major sections are the minority and backward class castes that have many icons, as linking with icons is intellectually easy and appealing for them. While Gandhiji is a prominent icon, it is interesting to note that the Karnataka backward and working class sector prefers Dr B.R. Ambedkar over the Mahatma, and it is pictures of Ambedkar which adorn their work places. For instance, a painting of Ambedkar is pasted in every cobbler’s kiosk, a painting which, interestingly, is more popular than his original photograph itself. The visual is generally bright yellow with a green background, showing the icon wearing jet black trousers, and holding a bright red book as the symbol of the Constitution. These visuals are painted in the Sivakasi style, but have a plastic appearance. Bright contrasting colours and a bright flashy blue are the favourite poster colours of these visuals. The second most popular icon among the backward classes is the Buddha, especially the sitting Buddha with half-closed eyes, raising a hand in blessing. The Buddha is known as the universal peace symbol, but here he is represents the only religion which can accommodate anyone, that which even Gandhiji preferred during his later years. But interestingly, these icons have been followed by another potential symbol, this time a political one of contemporary times: Bahujan Samaj Party founder Kanshi Ram and his acolyte, the controversial Mayawati, the ‘behenji’ or at times as ‘ma’ of the party which is seen as the only one which protects Dalit communities. Justifying her government spending Rs 685 crore on the controversial Dalit Memnorial Park, Mayawati said “In Delhi, the central government has constructed various memorials on the western bank of the Yamuna to honour people like Nehru and Gandhi, but not a single one has been built for Dalit icons like...
Bhim Rao Ambedkar and founder of BSP Kanshi Ram. The rising identity of Dalits, and their unification sought to be portrayed in a visual sculptural history with such a massive project is probably a beginning. Under the nose of the Congress-led government at the Centre, this was probably sought to be projected as a parallel government-in-making, with the territorial establishment of the Dalit Memorial Park, also known as the Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal, as a landmark and as an alternative for the Parliament building. The 33-acre park in Noida houses memorials of Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram besides statues of Mayawati herself and of 52 elephants — the elephant being the BSP symbol — each costing Rs 70 lakh. Justifying the Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal and Green Garden Project, Mayawati had said, “We always felt the need to have a memorial dedicated to the icons of the Dalit community and this is one such for the benefit of Dalits living around the national capital region, including western Uttar Pradesh. The sentiments of people from the Dalit community were badly hurt due to the central government’s attitude of ignoring the work of Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram.” This is a probability of a potential future iconography in the making. The other interesting observation here is that the title “ammma or ‘behenji’ meaning mother is not just for the BSP, but for congress, referring to Sonia Gandhi (in south Indian political language) and referring to Jallalitha of All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). This ironically is a term used as a safe refuge in visual perception, as the term amma, or Behenji being so strong is arguable a non arguable term of vast emotional responsibility and highly respected term.

The other prominent sections in Karnataka are the minority Christian and Muslim communities. They too have begun to seek more visibility in the public domain and claim territory in the public space, as is evidenced by the mushrooming of shrines such as mosques and chapels in every nook and corner of their residential areas. The most sensitive area of Bengaluru, KR Market, also known as City Market is a communally perfect example of this propensity to claim territory with mosques being situated close to a huge old temple. Similar scenes are also available in Shivajinagar area, with mosques, temples and churches all situated within a radius of 50 metres.
challenge is to understand the proclamation of intentions. Yet, what seems to be a time bomb which can go off at the slightest sign of friction can also be an example of communal harmony, very unlike the tense regions of Mumbai. The Muslim community is often represented by a mosque or a visual of the crescent moon or of the Holy Kaaba at Mecca. But a recent icon that is emerging is the image of Tipu Sultan! The fan clubs of Tipu at Srirangapatna and a few other areas are highlighting Tipu as their cultural hero. Though Tipu has not become a full-fledged icon or noted symbol so far, there is potential for this in the future.

The sword of Tipu Sultan was taken away after the British assault on Srirangapatnam on May 4, 1799, which saw the end of the 'Tiger of Mysore'. The legendary sword was back in the news quite recently when it turned out that liquor baron Vijay Mallya was its mysterious buyer at an auction in 2003, having paid Rs 1.3 crore from his personal funds for it. Mallya said he bought the majestic sword at the auction from the descendants of Major General Baird, who was presented the sword by the then British army commander Lt General Harris more than 200 years ago. However the timing of Mallya's disclosure, six months after he apparently bought it, raised eyebrows, coming as it did, a few days before elections in Karnataka. "This is not political. It is personal. This is not an election meeting. I brought it from London 15 days back," said Mallya.

Describing the sword as a "unique piece of history", he said he had bought it to restore the "rightful legacy" to Karnataka as he "is a proud Kannadiga". The proclamation over the sword of Tipu Sultan and its connection to the pride and glory of Kannada is another material proclamation of Kannada hegemony. The visual appearance of Tipu Sultan as the icon of Muslims is another debatable issue, though historians and supporters claim that that Tipu Sultan has not been given due respect. For instance, no credit is given to him for the formation of the Lal Bagh garden. Tipu was also responsible for breaking the zamindari system to benefit farmers.
The visual representation of Christians, mainly converted Christians is the usage of Mother Teresa as their cultural symbol. Though this is not as highly visible as other symbols, it is, nevertheless to be viewed as another potential iconography, in the context of the mother goddess representation. These practices, like the Kalki cult, may or may not last long. Irrespective of the peripherals, the core epicentre is still the Mother goddess Thayee Bhuvaneshwari, who still holds the pivotal place in the central composition, probably thus uniting the rest of the icons, or connecting them to the higher cause of the Kannada identity!

Figure 112 Tipu Sultan image in mobile display 2012, in contrast with a visual look alike of Maharana Pratap, C, 1944 (Courtesy : Christopher Pinney, Photos of the Gods)

Figure 111 Another visual representation of religious iconography in ‘moving’ pictures.2012
Political propaganda and Kannada mother goddess as the brand ambassador

Political leaders with icons and Mother Goddesses.

During the national freedom movement Jawaharlal Nehru was overwhelmingly portrayed as the hero and, interestingly, was visually presented with Subhas Chandra Bose, whose ideology he was against. Along with Bose, Nehru was also presented in an array of scenarios with Bhagat Singh, Tilak and several other non-Gandhian ideologists, who sacrificed their lives for freedom.

These pictorial representations raise an interesting question: why do these visuals seem to be more diplomatically theatric and generous? Is it an image-building exercise for the leader concerned, to gain the support of all political thinkers? For instance, Tilak, Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev, and Bose, all martyrs, are seen blessing Nehru from the sky. Is this intended to affirm the leadership of Nehru, glossing over the fact that these luminaries belonged to ideologies totally opposite to the Gandhian and Nehruvian hegemony?

Similarly, in the context of the local visual culture of Kannada, the intervention of iconographies penetrates through all levels and proportions. The space in which these visuals interact in the public domain has a varied purpose and interest. The representation of Thayee Bhuvaneshwari’s endorsements in the public arena, the pictorial space that brews up the most influential activism, the prime spaces and locations where the possibilities of visual territorial symbols and their establishment are critically proclaimed are evidence of this. The political propaganda here plays a vital visual politics, nothing less than a gamble of visual psychology, with icons of the mother goddess and her proud sons placed abruptly in the dead centre of the frame or in the corners, with highlighted portraits of politicians in a praying gesture, printed in...
flex and prominently displayed. Lakhs of such pictures are printed in flex and displayed across the horizon at all prime locations, leaving viewers with no option but to notice them, and thus participate in the image making. The most interesting factor lies in the composition of these political visual flex. A local party president is shown as being endorsed by the icons, and the photographs of at least 40 to 50 of the bottom rung functionaries such as the area president and his minions are placed all across the flex. The second largest portrait is of the sponsor and party representative, while the largest portrait is of the party leader of the constituency, and of course of the god or goddess who is featured in the front, and in whose name the whole political drama runs. These banners and displays are not the part of any state-level election propaganda, but mushroom during all major festivals, Kannada Rajyotsava day or on Independence Day. They are used in all permutations and combinations, all in the name of God. With God as the USP (unique selling proposition), and ESP (emotional selling proposition) at play, selling and branding in India need no star endorsement when we get to freely visualize and use as many as a million gods and goddesses in flex of any size and shape placed anywhere, unlicensed, with no need for intellectual approval or application of logical thinking.

Shyamsunder Tekwani in his essay Visual Culture in Indian Politics: The Gaudy Billboard As Political Communication says: "In a multi-party democracy such as India where over a thousand political parties, existing at the state level and at the national level, contest every election, priming is a vital tool in political campaigns. Another critical factor in this context is the largescale illiteracy that prevails among a majority of Indian voters for whom emotional connections are more likely to carry weight than policy information. In this political climate, posters of politicians as gods and goddesses on billboards make the perfect political pitch, and in the Indian context may be the most perfect medium of mass communication... M.G. Ramachandran (MGR), one of India's best known movie stars-turned-politicians, who was previously Chief Minister of the southern state of Tamil Nadu, played a carefully cultivated Robin Hood-like protector of the poor in dozens of films and built his entire political brand around his
image as a protector of the poor and the weak, and saviour of damsels in distress. The late N.T. Rama Rao (NTR), former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, another south Indian state, was closely associated, in the minds of the electorate in his state, with the role of Krishna, a Hindu God, whom NTR played often and to full houses through his film career.” These visual portrayals of politicians as the Bhaktha (devotees) of a god or goddess, or as the supporter of that deity, or even as the protector of the deity and often seen as its equal in posters are not rare. Such iconography and comparisons of political personalities to gods, is one the easiest and most effective ways to produce the most strange psychological impact that Indian audiences are susceptible to. It is not just the concept of “dharsha” (divine visual presence), and its notion that is responsible for such an image making culture in India. Fan culture and god culture have also added to this cult. The enunciation of a character as a devotee or even as a deity is based on an acceptance born out of absolute blind innocence that occurs often in the public domain, especially in the illiterate audience, which hardly questions the reasoning or the source of these cut-outs. The gap that exists between the illiterate majority and the educated minority probably serves the system well. Simple belief systems among the rural public, such as the spontaneous gesture of praying at the sight of any visuals of a god and goddess, by the rural public is one such gesture of innocence which does not understand that the visuals they are seeing are not of gods or patriots but mere politicians. In fact, while not many today may know what Bhagat Singh or Bose looked like, most people definitely know what the politicians of today look like, thanks to their images being exhibited in lakhs in the public domain.

Shyamsunder Tekwani further says: “The current Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Jayalalitha Jayaram, M.G. Ramachandran’s (better to not use the initials probably) co-star, on and off screen, played on her relationship with MGR as well her own popularity as an actress to build her political career. At any given time in Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu, hundreds of life-size cutouts of Jayalalitha, in her various cinematic and political avatars, real and symbolic, dwarf the city. Jayalalitha’s political career has been marked by the growth of a personality cult which is manifested
through her representation in a variety of incarnations on posters and cutouts ranging from political powerhouse to goddesses. During the 1994 Christmas season, huge cutouts of Jayalalitha as the Virgin Mary were erected all over the city. In 1998, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of her political party, the AIADMK, an impressive, luridly imaginative cutout of Jayalalitha as Goddess Kali was paraded along city streets perched on a float. Portrayed as the eight-armed, blue-skinned goddess Kali, Jayalalitha stood on the prostrate form of her arch political rival, Karunanidhi, pinning him down with a trident and wearing a garland of skulls (all of which depicted Karunanidhi’s head and wore his trademark dark sunglasses).

Visual wars of visualization, such as in the case of Jayalalitha and Mayawati, in contrast to that between Sonia Gandhi and Mamata Banerjee or a Sushma Swaraj versus Ambika Soni, are growing more intense and being narrated with the tools of “motherly images”. The argument that rises here is, are the images perceived as images, or beyond the real? And if beyond the real, what process of standardization can impose a control or quality check in these processes? And with the visual communication being overwhelmingly accessible, usable and highly promotable, it is natural for it to be overused and to be termed as “kitch” that has received a strange popular cultural success and absolute acceptance with an unknown language and grammar of visual appeal.

Figure 114 Flex print: temple inauguration invitation, with Rajkumar as the endorser and host (2012).
Figure 115 A poster on public announcement by private groups, with Mother goddess Thayee Bhuvaneshwari as the central figure (2012).

Figure 116 A poster of a Kannada activist group, with Mother Bhuvaneshwari as the central figure, pasted on the base of a flag post. This post is situated in front of the Vidhana Soudha. (2012)
Figure 117 Boards at an autostand in Basavanagudi. The board on the left highlights a huge portrait of Vishnuvardhan. The top panel of the board on the right, features Rajkumar in the left corner and Shankar Nag in the right corner, flanking the legend ‘Druvathare Dr Rajkumar Auto Drivers’ Union’ (Dhruva being the auspicious North Star). The panel below features several Icons, starting with Rajkumar on the left, and then Wodeyar, Sir M. Visvesvaraya, Thayee Bhuvaneshwari, Kempegowda, and finally Kuvempu. The picture in the bottom right corner or the ‘signature corner’ is of the unknown local leader who is responsible for this “social contribution”. (2012)

Figure 118 This visual from Basavanagudi area, shows a portrait of Vishnuvardhan in flex, displayed outside a temple, in a size and space usually reserved for images of gods during festivals and processions. The presence of such images in the holy ambience of a temple, that too, decorated with garlands, highlights the demand for new icons. (2012)
Figure 119 A panoramic view of a street completely covered with flex on the eve of a temple inauguration, with portraits of local politicians and religious leaders. (2012)

Figure 120 Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani showering petals on a portrait of Kannada Mother Goddess Thayee Bhuvaneshwari in Mysore during his Bharat Rath Yatra in 2011.
Figure 121 Kannada politicians offering pooja to the Kannada Mother Goddess during Rajyotsava day celebrations. The flag is also in prominence here.

Figure 122 Innumerable heads immortalised in vinyl: A local party exhibits its flex banner prominently featuring its icon Dr B. R. Ambedkar. Other icons featured in the top row include the Buddha, Basaveshwara, rationalist E.V. Ramasamy Naicker (also known as Periyar), Tipu Sultan and Narayanaguru. The banner features pictures of 82 local leaders, the size of their pictures obviously an
indication of their relative importance. (2011).

Figure 123 Vishnuvardhan in front of a village house of Mugur in the outskirts of Mysore. 2011
Figure 124 Bharat Matha on flex surrounded by her 'sponsors', the local politicians, at Yelahanka Old Town Circle. (2012)

Figure 125 A Kannada flag pole, with flex featuring Vishnuvardhan and Sir M. Visvesvaraya at the Koramangala Circle near Forum Mall. (2012)

Figure 126 Stickers of Shankar Nag and gods on the windshield of an auto. (2012)
Figure 127 A sticker of Ambarish with the legend 'Mandyada Gandu' on the windshield of a good carrier. (2012)

Figure 128 Anna Hazare portrayed with national leaders and local politicians on a hoarding in Koramangala. (2012)

Figure 129 Shankar Nag stickers on the cabs and auto rickshaws 2012
Figure 130 Local posters in the city with kempegowda, Mother Bhuvaneshwari and local leaders. (2012)

Figure 131 A press report covering the issue of the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike chief's picture featuring on the Kannada flag. (Bangalore Mirror, Jan 16, 2009. http://www.bangaloremirror.com/article/10/20090116200901160105581001f1b01f/KRV-chief-takes-Goddess%E2%80%99s-place-on-Kannada-flag.html)
Figure 132 Rajkumar immortalised in vinyl in the public domain. (2012)

Figure 133 Stickers of cultural icons on autos. (2012) the Auto-culture
the Auto-culture

Figure 134 Mother on Wall: Pictures of the Kannada Mother Goddess and Kitturu Rani Chennamma painted by the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike on walls of a government building near Binny Mills, Magadi Road, Bangalore. (2011)
LOCAL VERSUS GLOBAL, ELITE VERSUS POPULAR

While Bangalore aims to be a cosmopolitan city and aspires to be called the Silicon Valley of India, Bengaluru struggles to retain its identity as the Kannada state capital.

On the one hand, there is the global economic growth of Bengaluru in competition with the neighbouring Hyderabad and Chennai to be the leading IT-BT capital, trying to overcome the challenges of infrastructure, connectivity, human resource and adaptability to be crowned as an attractive global destination and an investors' paradise. On the other hand, its domestic local struggle for its identity, language and control presents a parallel puzzle.

Local Kannada activist and Kannadigas protesting against the highly paid English-speaking IT-BT employees and demanding job reservations as a right for Kannadigas, and the reaction to this of a Kannadiga IT czar asserting that knowledge of English is a must, was one of the incidents that brought into focus several questions on the status of identity and representation. The acquisition of large tracts of agricultural land by private contractors for building projects is one of biggest scams on which the dust has not settled since the influence of globalization in Bangalore over the past 12 years or so. The fact that land for the international quality roadways and IT-BT tech parks was acquired at the cost of the lives of several local farmers has become a routine matter for cosmopolitan Bangalore. Environmentalists fighting a losing battle against the encroachment of lakes and the acquisition of the forest belt, farmers fleeing to neighbouring villages for a livelihood, the middle-class aspiring for the most privileged jobs of the twenty-first century, and dreaming of working in air-conditioned cubicles in fancy buildings with glass facades, landscaped gardens and gym lounges to serve the other world, has become Bangalore's reality today.

The change of name of the city from Bangalore to Bengaluru is in itself a piece of evidence to illustrate the local versus global issues, the old name being modified to the way it is pronounced locally, in order to perceive the city nostalgically as the village it
once was, rather than the British Bangalore it had become over the years. This is an attempt to strengthen the local identity in an aspiration to counter the impact of globalization and urbanization and aggressively demand rights and privileges for locals. The flying of Kannada flags on IT-BT buildings, five star hotels, shopping complexes, malls, multiplexes, branded showrooms, pubs, etc is a placatory signal to indicate their support for the local identity and its stakeholders, and a clever way of averting any attack on or reaction against them for their westernised concepts.

There are three layers to the local versus global context. This context is visibly evident firstly in the language, secondly in symbols, and thirdly in expressions and demonstrations.

The first context is of language and communication. Many buildings and showrooms bearing signboards or their names in English are the first targets of violence during troubled times, and they are thus compelled to carry their names in Kannada too. 'Writing in Kannada' also is an ironic farce at times: English words coloured red and yellow are considered sufficient sometimes, as they are seen as supporting and respecting Kannada! Sometimes the name is written in small Kannada text in a corner of the name board or panel just to assure Kannada activists that the local language is respected as much as English. Here English is viewed as 'global' and Kannada as 'local', thus giving rise to the conflict of local versus global.

The second context is of symbols. The Kannada flag and pictures of Thayee Bhuvaneshwari are used essentially as an armour of defence. The installation of flags in front of prime malls and multiplexes is a very common sight in Bengaluru. In the foreground is the flag on an elevated platform decorated with tiles bearing the pictures of the Kannada Goddess or any other goddess, who represents Thayee Bhuvaneshwari; in the background is the outlet of global chains such as McDonalds, Pizza Hut and Nike. This visual cold war of symbols that visually co-exist while
simultaneously being in conflict and contradiction is the irony of the time and space that very few cosmopolitan cities of the world share with Bangalore.

The third context is of expressions and demonstrations of the local public. Emotions are heightened during Kannada Rajyotsava celebrations, especially in the areas where there are malls, multiplexes and coffee shops, and of course, where IT-BT offices are located. All these, which are viewed as "global" symbols are soft targets. Rajyotsava processions, when they pass these symbols, slow down, and there is a heightened, spirited display of music, dance and rituals, accompanied more often than not, by strident demands for donations for the celebrations.

This constant jousting is a result of two opposite worlds that coexist in the same world of Bengaluru.
INTERNET AND KANNADA VISUAL CULTURE

OMG LOL : P. (Oh My God. Laugh Out Loud. Smiley: SMS and social networking language)

Kannada activism on the Internet:

Social networking sites, blogs and websites are a few of the techie zones where Kannada and the prominent identity of the colours of the flag have been lavished to the maximum extent to play a part in the global trends and communication. Interestingly, factors such as the identity of the owner of the site/group or blog are not verified, and neither do those joining in need to undergo any verification process. Excessive emphasis on the network, marketing the concern for saving the language, culture and identity, seems to be more of a publicity gamble. Visuals used range from pictures of film stars to videos of regional festivals. Music is also a prominent engagement. Visuals, with words and posts typed in Kannada and messages in English, is another interesting aspect of these platforms of exhibition. However, there are many blogs of serious linguists, activists and social scientists which are updated on a weekly basis, and which draw an overwhelmingly high response. With websites becoming a part and parcel of reachability and marketing exercises, every NGO and Kannada activist group, including film stars’ fans associations are on a constant hunt for members on Facebook and Twitter, with a fan registered in the account with a single click of the “like” button. With bilingualism being the trend now, languages are used in all permutations to attract audiences. For example, “Mast maja madi” (a mix of Hindi and Kannada) is the baseline of a radio station, tuned into by auto and taxi drivers, college youth and similar communities. Terminologies becoming oxymorons is no more a rare occurrence. Most of the songs and titles of Kannada films are bilingual.

“Talks and discussion, and no productive action,” rue senior linguists often. However, serious topics are also discussed and debated with serious attention in cyberspace. The hi-tech cyberspace is thus territorialised by myriad communities and linguistic activists,
as the Kannada flag and the profiles of the beloved sons of the Kannada mother are flashed all across the Web space. "Ganchali bidi, Kannada mathadi" meaning, 'quit arrogant attitude, speak Kannada' is one of the groups on Facebook for Kannadigas, with more than 2,644 members. Presented below are samples of the visual appeal of these social networking Kannada groups:

Figure 135 Kannada in social networking websites
ART, DESIGN AND FILM: THE MEDIA THAT CONSTRUCTED

THE MOTHER GODDESS

As discussed earlier, the context of art began with poetry and literature. There are five phases in the visual representations of the Kannada Mother Goddess through art: 1) the sculpture, 2) the painted form 3) the line drawing illustration, 4) the representation of the goddess in films, and 5) posters with multifaceted popular images of the goddess.

The first involves the goddess as the temple deity, in the style and form prescribed by the Shilpakala Shastra. The deity of the Virupaksha temple of Hampi, the deity of Bhuvanagiri hill, the goddess of the Mysore Chamundeshwari temple are all in this category.

For the second phase, ie, the painted form, reference is drawn from the Mysore style painting from Sritatvanidhi, referring back to the Mysore Bhuvaneshwari in a painted medium. Another painting that plays a significant role is the oil painting done by C. N. Patel from Gadag in north Karnataka.

The third phase of representation comprised the 16 illustrated line drawings of Bhuvaneshwari in Andanappa Dodametti's Kannada Mahimna Stotra. These illustrations again are inspired and influenced by the Shilpa Shastra style of Hampi, Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal temple sculptures.

The fourth phase was the representation of the Kannada Mother Goddess in films, such as the deity worshipped in the opening scene of the film Veerasankalpa (1964). The represented forms and styles in films are varied, and show the influence of various styles.
The fifth phase of representation is of the goddess in posters printed and distributed by Raja Verma Arts. These posters that spread across the public domain in the bustling streets of Bangalore gave rise to the renaissance of the Mother in the 1990s.

The style of the poster designs that circulated in the public sphere were influenced and inspired by three major sources. First, the prominent calendar style art works of Raja Ravi Varma and the calendar artists of Sivakasi. Secondly from the earlier source of the Bengal school of art and thirdly from the JJ School of art. Though company painting, and traditional Mysore and Tanjore painting styles were also available in parallel as an inspiration, their influence was not very evident in these mother goddess avatars.

As a design concern these posters were probably the first poster series that were consistently dedicated in public service to serve the nation. Initially, the poster as a simple medium of expression didn’t have much typography or text, but just a simple title and patriotic punch lines. But later, the posters were more visually driven, with the central composed goddess as the ruling deity with her beloved sons later entering the picture. If the principles of an effective design are to Keep it Simple, Stupid and Form Must Follow Function, then these posters meet the requirements. Bright flashing poster reds with contrasting lemon yellow were the colour palettes used. Their reachability to the target audience and their influence among the public underline the commercial success of these poster designs.

Were the images in the public domain of the Mother Goddess 'kitsch'?

Let us consider the view of Clement Greenberg’s, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", first published in the journal Partisan Review. In this Marxist-influenced essay, Greenberg claimed that true avant-garde art is a product of the Enlightenment's revolution of
critical thinking, and as such resists and recoils from the degradation of culture in both mainstream capitalist and communist society, while acknowledging the paradox that, at the same time, the artist, dependent on the market or the state, remains inexorably attached "by an umbilical cord of gold". Kitsch, on the other hand, was the product of industrialization and the urbanization of the working class, a filler made for the consumption of the working class: a populace hungry for culture, but without the resources and education to enjoy cutting edge avant-garde culture. Greenberg writes,

"Kitsch, using for raw material the debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture, welcomes and cultivates this insensitivity. It is the source of its profits. Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times. Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money — not even their time."

I wish to thus hereby argue that the works, such as the Mother Goddess and her visuals cannot be termed as kitsch, but belong to a different category. Here, the visuals of the Mother Goddess were not commercial hits, nor were the prints widely sold. They were only transferred, like the images of any other goddess in a common man’s home. The images did not operate by any formulas; in fact there was no intellectual thinking in the case of the posters at least, and what was at play was purely a patriotic, emotional, intuitive activism. The images may or may not have a specific style, but their essence was more or less the same. This I wish to perceive as a cultural development, a social expression with a genuine cause, not a commercial interest but more of a social need, expressed in a medium more popularly accepted in the public sphere, thus to be termed as ‘innocent expression’ of popular culture, like the Ganesh Chaturti celebrations, folk cults, etc. One of the primary reasons for the innocence, I wish to argue, is based on the unplanned, varied contribution from all sectors of the public. For instance, the poster contributions from Raja Verma Arts are an activist.
initiative; picturing of the goddess in Kannada films were not similar to other forms of film goddess, the goddess of *Mahimna Stotra* and the Bhuvaneshwari painting of Andanappa Doddameti were neither of them a product of any state conference. Thus the expression of goddess cannot be termed as a craft or commercial production but an intuitive activist reaction to a social need. The manner in which the form is delivered is subject to the influence of contemporary styles of visualization. As discussed earlier, several influences — of the Bengal school, the JJ School, a blend of Raja Ravi Varma and calendar art style of Sivakasi and in rare cases, the Mysore style — are all seen in the posters of the Mother Goddess.

Ravi Varma, in 1894 installed a lithographic press near Bombay and began producing and distributing prints of his popular painting in all major cities. Ravi Varma's work still seems to be the primary source of inspiration for many artists such as B.K.S. Varma. In an interview he said: “Raja Ravi Varma is still the inspiration and aspiring legend for me,” referring to his version of Thayee Bhuvaneshwari.

S. R. Tekwani, in his work *Visual Campaigning Culture In Indian Politics* says: “Raja Ravi Varma, regarded widely as the pioneer of lithographic prints in India, was another great influence in the development of popular Indian visual art forms. Ravi Varma’s paintings of gods and goddesses, known to have been influenced by the drawings of Hindu gods and goddesses by Maj. Edward Moore, spawned generations of poster painters and artists alike who reproduced his paintings of gods and goddesses, gradually adding other more recent, if less artistic, conventions from Indian popular culture, mainly cinema, into the form of visual representation one sees today on every street in India.”

Representation of the Kannada landscape — evoking the landscape as the grand Karnataka — in films as a territorial possession and describing the nature and wealth of the state through magnificent landscapes in songs were other modes of claiming the land of Karnataka for Kannadigas or fostering Kannada pride and patriotism.
Figure 136 ‘Patriotic’ Kannada boards in Sahakarnagar, Bengaluru. The board at left features the ‘sons of Kannada’, Rajkumar, Shankar Nag and Vishnuvardhan. At right is another board featuring Thayee Bhuvaneshwari, with Subhas Chandra Bose in the top right hand corner. (2010)

Figure 137 Images of Thayee Bhuvaneshwari on flower-bedecked floats being taken out in procession during Kannada Rajyotsava celebrations in Karnataka. (2011)
Figure 138 Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani showering petals on a portrait of Kannada Mother Goddess Thayee Bhuvaneshwari in Mysore during his Bharat Rath Yatra in 2011.

Figure 139 An image of Thayee Bhuvaneshwari being taken out in a procession in a chariot in Basavangudi, a prominent area of Bengaluru. (2011)
Figure 140 Thayee Bhuvaneshwari, Shilpakala Academy, Govt. of Karnataka. (2011)