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Finnish Flight Attendants Go Bollywood for India's Republic Day

By VIJAI SINGH



The passengers had all boarded Finnair Flight AY201 from Helsinki to New Delhi on Jan. 17, when two dozen beaming flight attendants dressed in Indian attire came dancing through the aisles to "Deewangi Deewangi" from the Bollywood mega-blockbuster "Om Shanti Om."

The well-rehearsed and choreographed routine was in commemoration of India's 63rd Republic Day, said Helena Kaartinen, the flight attendant who came up with the idea. "It was a good way to show respect," she said, and to show Finnair's Indian passengers "that we do know some things about them."

Ms. Kaartinen, who has worked for Finnair for the past 32 years, planned the dance with a former flight attendant in Mumbai, Manish Gawde, who also is a Bollywood instructor. "We thought that we Finns all would work together for the Indian passengers to show them that we really care," she said, by using Bollywood to bond.

In December, Ms. Kaartinen recruited fellow crew members, and the group rehearsed twice a week at a flight academy near Helsinki Airport. She uploaded their rehearsal videos to a Facebook group, where Mr. Gawde would view and correct them. With the permission of Finnair, their colleagues recorded and edited the routine.

They chose "Deewangi Deewangi" because the chorus ("All hot girls put your hands up and say/ Om Shanti Om/ All cool boys come on make some noise and say Om Shanti Om") was easy for Finns to understand as it was English. When the song ended, the entire cabin burst into applause.

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Finns "are very open-minded when we are friends with someone," Ms. Kaartinen said.

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