CHAPTER IV

Self-translation Practice of Karnad

This chapter will delineate the self-translation practice of Karnad. It will identify the directionality of his self-translations. It will also discuss the different kinds of self-translations he engages in and the major features of his self-translations.

Table 4.1

Plays of Karnad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI No</th>
<th>Title of the Work First Published</th>
<th>First Published Language</th>
<th>Year First Written</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Translated to</th>
<th>Title of Publication in Translation</th>
<th>Target Text Publication</th>
<th>Period between ST and TT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ma Nishada</td>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tughlakh</td>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>1962-64</td>
<td>1964,72, 77, 84, 87, 91, 95, 99, 2000, 02, 05, 07</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Tughlaq</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hayavadana</td>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1971, 72, 78,</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Hayavadana</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Year(s)</td>
<td>Translation(s)</td>
<td>English Title</td>
<td>Year(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Anju Mallige</td>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Aug 15, 1977</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tipu Sultan Kanda Kanasu</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>The Dreams of Tipu Sultan</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bimba</td>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Broken Images</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Flowers</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Kanna da</td>
<td>Hoo</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Maduve Album</td>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Wedding Album</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 clarifies that the first play, *Yayathi*, although written in 1960, was translated only in 2008, after 47 years. Karnad’s second play *Ma Nishada* has remained untranslated till date. It was his third play, *Tughlakh*, published in Kannada in 1964, which was the first to be self-translated into English. The translation was published in
1972 as *Tughlaq*, eight years after its publication in Kannada. His fourth play, *Hittina Hunja*, published in Kannada in 1966, was published in translation in English in 2004 as *Bali: The Sacrifice*. This is the only play where Kamad has also changed the title completely in the self-translated text. This play took 38 years to appear in translation. Karnad later translated *Bali: The Sacrifice* as *Bali* into Kannada in 2007.

Karnad’s fifth play, *Hayavadana*, published in Kannada 1971, had its English translation published in 1975, barely four years after its Kannada version. From this play on, the time gap between the publication of the text in one language and its subsequent publication in another language gets reduced. The sixth play, *Anju Mallige*, published in Kannada in 1977, has not yet been published in English although Kamad has translated it to English for the theatre as *Driven Snow* (Mukherjee, “A Conversation” 50-51).

*Nagamandala* was self-translated into English in just one year. The Kannada text was published in 1989 and the English in 1990. His eighth play, *Taledanda*, was published in Kannada in 1990 and its English text appeared after a gap of three years in 1993. *Agni Mattu Male*, his ninth play, was published in Kannada in 1993. But its English rendition came in 1998 as *The Fire and the Rain*, four years after the publication of the Kannada text. Karnad wrote *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* in 1997 for BBC Radio. This is his second radio play after *Ma Nishada*. This is the first play that Kamad wrote in English, a major departure from his regular practice of writing his plays first in Kannada, But this play was published first in Kannada in 2000 as *Tipu Sultan Kanda Kana.su* and the English version appeared only in 2004.
The next play in Kannada, *Bimba*, published in 2004, was re-written and published as *Broken Images* in English in 2005. In 2006, the English version was translated back to Kannada as *Odakalu Bimba*. *Flowers* was the second play to be written in English first. It was published in 2004 and the Kannada version appeared in print in 2007. His last play to date is *Maduve Album* published in Kannada in 2006 and translated to English and published as *Wedding Album* in 2009.

Table 4.2

Karnad’s Plays from English to Kannada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Title of the Work</th>
<th>First Published Language</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Title of Publication in Kannada</th>
<th>Year of Publication in Kannada</th>
<th>Period between Translations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>The Dreams of Tippii Sultan</em></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td><em>Tipu Sultan Kanda Kanasu</em></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Broken Images</em></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td><em>Odakalu Bimba</em></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Flowers</em></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td><em>Hoo</em></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Bali: The Sacrifice</em></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td><em>Bali</em></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a writing career spanning 50 years, beginning with the publication of his first play entitled *Yayathi* in 1960, and the latest play in English, *Wedding Album* in 2009,
Kamad has written thirteen plays. Of these eleven were written in Kannada first. Six plays, namely, *Tughlakh, Hayavadana, Nagamandala, Taledanda, Agni Mattu Male*, and *Maduve Album* have been self-translated and published in English without any rewriting or revisions. Three, namely, *Yayathi, Hittina Hunja*, and *Bimba*, have been rewritten and published in English, and two plays, *Ma Nishada*, and *Anju Mallige*, have not yet been published into English. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* and *Flowers* were written first in English and later self-translated and published in Kannada.

A decade-wise analysis of his works shows that in the 1960s he wrote four plays and did no translations; in the 70s he wrote two and translated two; in the 80s he wrote one and translated none; in the 90s he wrote two and translated three, and between 2000 and 2010, he wrote four and translated six. This shows that in terms of writing, the first and the last decades of his writing career so far are the most productive with four plays each. In terms of translations, the 2000s is the most productive with six translations while the 60s and 80s are the non-productive period, for he did not self-translate any play during this period. Further, self-translations done in recent times have undergone far more changes than those done earlier. For example, there are hardly any changes made to *Tughlaqh* but *Yayathi* and *Bali: The Sacrifice* have undergone significant changes.

The publication dates of the plays cannot be taken as those indicating either the writing or self-translation of plays. It also does not mean that the non-publication of a text in English is non-translation. For example, *Yayathi*, was published in English only in 2007, but the play was staged in English in the early 1960s itself by Satyadev Dubey.
Although *Anju Mallige* has not been published in English, it has been translated into English as *Drive* (Mukherjee, “A Conversation” 50-51).

The order of appearance of plays in Kannada and English cannot be taken as the order in which they were originally written and translated. For example, Karnad wrote *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* in 1997 and it was broadcast on BBC radio in 1997. But its Kannada version appeared in 2000 and the English text only in 2004. Therefore, in the case of Kamad one may have to use terms like FPT (First Published Text) and SPT (Second Published Text). Kamad throws light on this phenomenon in his interview with Jayaprakash Mavinakuli.

Writer: Can plays be categorised as plays meant for reading and plays meant for performance?

Kamad: No, a play is meant for performance. That which is performed is play. What is read may be a short story or a novel. It won’t be a play. (473) [translation mine]

The above extract also suggests that Karnad engages with two media, theatre and print, with two different approaches. Although he approaches theatre with a lot of confidence, he seems to approach print with caution. Perhaps, it is linked to the basic characteristics of the respective medium; the theatre is fluid whereas the print is fixed. While improvisations are inherent to theatre, they are less common in print, especially for literary texts. In continuously improvising his printed versions, Karnad seems to destabilise the notions of fixity attached to the print medium: in trying to “disown” previous editions or through fixing copyrights in specific ways, he also destabilises the notion of fixity attached to print texts. For example, in the 1980 Preface to *Hittina*
Hunja, he requests the readers to ignore its previous edition of 1966 and consider the present one as the text proper. At the same time he does not claim Bali (2007) to be a later version of Hittina Hunja and claims copyright for only the 2007 version without mentioning the copyrights of previous editions of the play. But the normal practice in the publishing industry is to mention the copyright of the previous editions as well.

Kamad can be considered as the pioneer of post-independent self-translation activity in India. If we look at the dates, he self-translates much earlier than the other post-independent self-translators. His first self-translation, Tughlaq, was published in 1972. The next person to self-translate after him was Kamala Das in 1976. But thereafter it takes nearly a decade for other self-translators to start self-translating to English. The available literature suggests that after the last recorded self-translation by Tagore in the 1930s Kamad is the next person who self-translates from a vernacular language to English. Between Tagore’s last recorded self-translation and Kamad’s first self-translation there is a gap of more than three and a half decades.

Theatre Practice of Karnad

In order to understand the self-translation practice of Kamad better, it is useful to locate Kamad’s self-translations within his practice of theatre. In her discussion of Yayati, Dharwadker gives interesting insights into Kamad’s passage to playwrighting. According to her, Kamad wanted to write poetry in English. However, with Yayathi, he found himself writing a play rather than a poem, and in Kannada rather than English. He claims that Yayathi came out of angst when he had to go to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. He remarks, “Should I . . . return home for the sake of my family, my people and my country ... or should I rise above such parochial considerations and go where
the world drew me?” (qtd. in Vol. 1 xiv). Kamad points out that the myth of Yayati
helped him to come to terms with himself. He remarks, “[it] enabled me to articulate for
myself a set of values that I had been unable to arrive at rationally. Whether to return
home finally seemed the most minor of issues; the myth had nailed me to my past”
(xiv).

Dharwadker contends that modern Indian theatre offered Kamad “no
appropriate theatrical form for his mythical content, and consequently his chosen form
was an eclectic synthesis of the Greek tragic playwrights, Jean Anouilh, Jean-Paul
Satre, and Eugene O’Neill” (Introduction. Collected Plays Vol. I xv). She presents the
paradox in Kamad where the past “had come to . . . [his] aid with a ready-made
narrative within which . . . [he] could contain and explore . . . [his] insecurities, there
had been no dramatic structure in . . . [his] own tradition to which . . . [he] could relate
. . . [himself]” (xv). The concerns of Kamad were in that sense not his own but of the
new post-colonial nation that wanted to decolonise itself not only politically but also
culturally. The non-availability of such structures in other spheres like politics or
economy was true of theatre as well. As a result, what emerged was a postcolonial
hybrid theatre.

Of all Kamad’s plays, Yayati is the only play that has been translated into
English by a person other than Kamad. Priya Adarkar translated it in the mid-sixties.
But the play was later self-translated by Kamad and was published by Oxford
University Press. Although the play was first written in Kannada in 1960 it was self-
translated by Kamad only in 2008, after a gap of 47 years. Kamad claims, “For some
reason, I felt uncomfortable with the work and decided to treat it as part of my juvenilia” (Kamad, Preface. *Yayati* vii).

Regarding the difficulty of self-translations Karnad has rarely commented. One such rare comment is when he observes in an interview that “idioms are notoriously difficult to translate” (Mukherjee “A Conversation” 51).

In the Introduction to Karnad’s *Collected Plays* Vol. I, Dharwadker, based on her interviews with Kamad, suggests that his plays have to do a lot with personal angst brought about either by choices relating to personal life or changes in the socio-political domain which affected him (xiv). In his interview with Mukherjee and in his autobiography, *Aadaadtha* *A ay us hy a* also, Kamad illustrates this observation. He claims that *Yayathi* was a result of the angst of his going abroad for the first time (Mukherjee, “A Conversation” 30-31; Kamad, *Aadaadtha* 114-5). And his intimate relationship with a married lady in Madras and his thoughts on her husband at that time significantly shaped *Hayavadana* and *Bali: The Sacrifice* (Karnad, *Aadaadtha* 207-209). He claims that *Wedding Album* was shaped by his experiences of his elder sister’s marriage (*Aadaadtha* 177).

Kamad’s self-translations are motivated by different events. He self-translates *Hayavadana* in order to show the text to his friend in Madras with whom he had had an intimate relationship, as the text was shaped by their relationship (207). In his email interview to his researcher he has written about both the difficulty as well as reasons for self-translation:

Translated plays is a very tough job and unless the translators have been on stage (in English) themselves and know how English dialogue is
spoken, they make a hash of the spoken rhythm—as most Indians who translate plays into English do. If I translate myself I can control not only the words used, but also the rhythm of the sentences, the pauses, the exclamations etc.

Self-translation in Karnad is not necessarily an act of re-creation or translation, but an act of improvisation as well. The source text gets extended, and sometimes rewritten. For this, the performance of the play becomes crucial. Kamad’s Forewords and Afterwords indicate the importance of performances in the revision of his plays. For example, in his Preface to *Hittina Hunja* published in 1980 and its subsequent reprints he has acknowledged the suggestions by Dubey who did the first Hindi production of the play in 1967.

Kamad writes within three socio-political and economic conditions—post-colonial nationalism, postcolonial nation-state, and neoliberalism. While most studies would like to look at Kamad as performing his authorial and translational activities outside the dominant politics of the time, the corroborative evidence shows otherwise. His repeated references to national theatre in his interviews published in *Girish Karnad’s Plays* and speeches published in *Aagomme Eegomme* which critique the nationalist theatre that marginalised folk practices show that his dramatic and translational practices are not merely innocent creative exercises but include a strong critical dimension of creating a new politics of aesthetics in the post-Nehruvian India. In this context, Kamad’s self-translation can be seen as an attempt to address both the question of post-colonial national theatre as well as the marginalisation of folk practices.
In his essay entitled “Aadhunika Kale Mattu Samajika Parivarthane” which was originally the inaugural lecture given at the seminar on “India’s Culture in Motion” organised by Royal Tropical Institute, The Netherlands, Kamad suggests that he is critical of post-colonial nationalism and the theatre that emerged from the nationalist consciousness. He argues that the theatre that emerged from the nationalistic consciousness destroyed many local traditions (23-44). In his articles published in *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* in 1989 and later reprinted in *Aagomme Eegomme* as “Hosa Rangabhoomigagi Hudukata” he suggests that he is consciously intervening in the evolution of a new nationalist theatre (63-86). But what he does not explicitly suggest is the need for a medium which can speak both to the nation in an interventionist manner and at the same time distance itself from the uniform nationalist form of theatre which the nationalists wanted to build on the lines of *bharatanatyam*. It is this need for the medium that gives Karnad his practice of self-translation. It is perhaps this shared, yet distinct, position of remaining grounded in local traditions while writing to the nation that gives rise to self-translation.

But what began as a mediating project for Kamad did not remain the same with neoliberalisation. The medium of English became a transforming medium. The target language not only remained a target language but started reshaping the source text both in the target language as well as in the source language. English did not remain a borrower language but a source-text determining language. This aspect was enhanced by the fact that texts which were first created in English did not get transformed in Kannada. The target language Kannada did not change the texts from English significantly, as it happened with English when it was the source language. The best
example would be the translation trajectory of *Hittina Hunja*. *Hittina Hunja* got self-translated to English as *Bali: The Sacrifice*, with many changes to the source text. But Kamad, in translating *Bali: The Sacrifice* back to Kannada as *Bali*, treated the target text of *Hittina Hunja* as an improvised text. It is at this point that Karnad’s interventionist project lost its original intention and started working within the asymmetrical power relationships resulting from colonialism and neo-colonialism. English was supposed to be a medium to determine the nationalist theatre but it became an instrument through which the vernacular was now being recast in the model of English.

By the mid-80s the project of alternative national theatre that wanted to undo the power-equation between the vernacular theatres and the national culture had succeeded. Badal Sircar in West Bengal, Vijay Tendulkar in Maharashtra, and Karnad in Karnataka had emerged as the new faces of this kind of theatre which was sensitive to and critical of the politics of nationalism. Hence, it was natural that Kamad’s literary practice took a turn in search of new idioms. It is significant that the first play written in English by Karnad was *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* in which the protagonist is not averse to English as a language, and selectively wishes to borrow new ideas from Europe. This play marks Kamad’s transition of the kinds of politics he stood for. It is also worth noting that after *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* he does not return to his earlier preoccupation with the folk theatre. Although *Flowers*, which comes after *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, takes its story from the folk tradition, it does not incorporate the elements of the folk theatre either in its narrative style or theatre techniques which were visible in *Hayavadana* and in *Nagamandala*. The plays from now on shift to urban experience,
which are basically about the consequences of post-liberalisation which gave rise to the new diaspora and lead to the demolition of Babri Masjid. Both Bimba and Maduve Album mark this shift.

Though Kamad’s choice of writing in Kannada and choosing his stories from myths, folklore and Puranas seemed “new” for his time, one finds that such practices are common among postcolonial nationalist literary projects not only in India but also in other postcolonial nations. If in India Dharmaveer Bharathi in Hindi, Kuvempu, Samsa, Kambar, and Lankesh in Kannada are examples of such activities, we also find Chinua Achebe, Derek Walcott and Ngugi wa Thion’o doing something similar.

While on the one hand Karnad’s choice of language seems to be radical, his practice on the other seems to be reactionary in nature. It, in a way, performs the opposite textual practice, but written textual practice all the same. Kamad writes his plays within the Aristotelian framework (Dharwadkar, Introduction. Collected Plays Vol. II xxviii). He chooses the print medium but instead of choosing European lore and myth he chooses the native Indian. But he does not challenge the colonial constructions of such textual traditions for India. However, one does not have to view this as a defeatist case. If postcolonial politics is not seen as reclaiming the imaginary past but working on the present which is a complex coming together of many histories and cultures, then Kamad’s writing and self-translation come across as an important cultural and postcolonial activity. It is clear from the choice of Kamad’s themes and stories that he is not returning to an imaginary Indian past. His experiments to incorporate the elements of folk performances in modern Indian theatre and his, engagement with violence in intentions, with sensuality and sexuality, and his nuanced treatment of
cultural shifts due to globalisation indicate that Kamad sees his task as a playwright as one of rethinking the past and the present.

The politics is not prior to the texts but is produced with the act of production of texts. Hence, the production of texts and the production of politics of particular kinds is simultaneous.

Kamad’s decision to self-translate does not come across as something outside the frame of his time. He began translating at a time when the Indian nation-state was trying to come to terms with the plural nature of its polity and its desire to contain the emerging conflicts between different linguistic communities within the nation-state through cultural processes, and translation in particular. In this context, in the absence of a common link language, and some states opposing the imposition of Hindi, and most importantly “the decision of the Nehruvian government to take the path of industry and commerce rather than follow pre-independence agrarian economy,” (Kothari 29), the link language and official administrative language of the erstwhile colony became the natural choice. Kothari argues:

The nation-state institutionalized translation and creative writing for the first time through the National Book Trust (1957) and the Sahitya Akademi (1954). Literature, along with music, dance, and theatre seemed one of the ways to bring different communities together. The push towards creating pan-Indian forms and reinforcing ‘unity-in-diversity’ fitted well with the Nehruvian vision of India. (36)

It is against this backdrop of the 1950s and the increased publication activities in the sixties that Kamad gets into writing and self-translation. This then implicates him in
the project of the nation-state. But later this practice of self-translation, however, takes a different turn where the text itself, rather than politics, becomes his primary concern. Self-translation which was a medium of negotiating the national and the local now becomes a medium of achieving textual perfection. In this process the market forces as well as the rising consciousness in Kamad about the public reception of his craft over his politics in determining the purpose of self-translation have played a key role. His concern over the reception of his texts is voiced in his email interview with this researcher. He says:

I chose to translate into English since I wanted my plays to be available to anyone anywhere in India as I meant them to be understood. If I had known Hindi I would have translated them into Hindi. But I don’t. I work with the Hindi translators closely. When someone wants to translate my play into Kashmiri or Nepali, I advise the translator to use both Hindi and English, since English cannot convey vernacular activities, ritualistic or Sanskrit words.

His shift in the translation direction from Kannada to English also happens at the height of neoliberalisation of the Indian State. The opening of the markets in the post-economic reforms of 1992 created a global market for Indian texts. While Arundati Roy who writes in English is one face of it, Kamad who self-translates represents the other. Dharwadker’s “Criticism, Critique, and Translation” strengthen this argument when she makes the following claims:

Playwrights who conceive of themselves as literary authors write with the anticipation that the original text of a play will soon enter the
multilingual economy of translation, performance, and publication. . . .

As translators of the work of other contemporary playwrights, Tendulkar and Karnad stand apart in their understanding of the importance of transregional routes in theatre, and by rendering his major plays into English, Kamad has applied that understanding to his own work. All these playwrights construct authorship and authority as activities that must extend across languages in order to sustain a national theatre movement in a multilingual society.

For both authors and audiences, the total effect of active multilingualism and circulation has thus been to create at least four distinct levels for the dissemination and reception of contemporary Indian plays - the local, the regional, the national, and the international. (15-16)

As a self-translator the advantage Kamad has is that he is able to deliver quickly to all the four levels where as a mono-lingual or a bi-lingual writer has difficulty, as she or he has to depend on good translators who are not easy to come by. Added to this is the fact that Kamad keeps the monopoly over translation to English which is the language through which other vernacular languages access his texts. Further evidence can be seen in the way the time gap between source texts and target texts that gets reduced in the last one and a half decade.

Factors Determining Karnad’s Self-translations

Various factors could be identified as determining the self-translation practice of Kamad. One, the post-colonial condition where the post-colonial subjects have to
translate for themselves, thanks to the way colonialism, through the project of modernity, erased the ways of knowing the self for the native. While this is a general phenomenon for all post-colonial subjects, it cannot be considered to be one of the primary motivations for self-translations. The absence of visible self-translation activities in India and its absence in many languages are a sufficient proof of this. The other reason that can be cited for Kamad’s self-translations into English is the rise of English as the language of governance, research, production of formal knowledge in sciences, social sciences and humanities, higher education, inter-state communication and which also helped to evolve and promote the nation identity in a multi-lingual, multi-racial, and multi-cultural state. Yet another reason is the fact that Kamad was educated in England which has given him the linguistic resources and cultural privileges to self-translate to English.

Kamad himself has hinted at some of the reasons for his self-translation. One is his involvement with Madras Players, an amateur theatre group in Madras/Chennai. From 1963 to 69, when Kamad was posted to Madras as an employee of Oxford University Press, he was actively involved with Madras Players as an actor, translator, and director and also in many other capacities. As part of this project he translated some of his plays from Kannada to English. Some self-translations were undertaken at the requests and insistence of others. For instance, he translated Tughlakh to English at the insistence of Alyque Padamsee (Mukherjee “A Conversation” 37).

Yet another reason for Kamad’s self-translation is that his plays lend themselves to self-translation. A clue to this can be found in B. V. Karanth who remarked that the reason for the wide-spread acceptance of Karnad’s plays is their transcultural
communicability. Karanth argues that the plays of most of the leading playwrights who are Karnad’s contemporaries are strongly regional in their appeal and sometimes their appeal is limited. To underline this point, he cites the plays of Tendulkar. He claims that, as a director he does not dare experiment with Tendulkar’s plays as some of his characters do not even travel beyond Pune (4).

It can be argued that Karnad’s self-translation is due to the nature and character of his plays which lend themselves to cultural transportation. His famous plays are based either on the themes of the Mahabharata or the Ramayana which are familiar to all directors and theatre-goers in India. Plays such as Tale-Danda, Anju Mallige, Nagamandala Bimba, and Maduve Album, although they are not based on epics, do not fail to appeal to the general theatrical sensibilities of the Indian audience. The protagonist of Tale-danda, Basavanna, is a familiar historical figure in the Indian context as he was part of the pan-Indian Bhakti movement. Ndga-mandala is culturally located in Karnataka but its features like human-animal interaction, and village punchayat system are part of the general folklore of India. So is Flowers. Even though located in Karnataka, the story of the complex relation between God and the devotee is part of the folklore in India. Bimba would also be part of a familiar story of urban lore. The setting of Maduve Album in a Saraswat Brahman community and Dharwad has larger socio-political connotations in India. It deals with national issues like the rise of the right wing, diaspora, urban and semi-urban social setting, and getting people married within their own castes. One could go to the extent of arguing that beyond the Saraswat names in the play, there is no general Saraswat specificity in the play, and the play with names changed, can be adapted to most upwardly mobile Hindu religious castes in India. Anju
Mallige, the translation of which has been done by Kamad but has not been published so far is set in the 1960s context of Karnataka and England, but can still resonate with the theatre-goers outside Karnataka, thanks to its realistic mode of narrative as well as the context of the play. In his interview to Mukherjee, Kamad remarks:

[t]he context of the play is the 1960s decade in England that witnessed the rise of fascist and national socialist elements in the English society. It is a sort of looking back at the England that I'd seen and the people I’d met. Many Indian students were coming to England and there was no community of their own yet in the foreign land. They faced problems of adjustment and assimilation. (“A Conversation” 45)

In his early writing career, Kamad was aware of the translatability of his plays. In his interview taken by Shanthinatha Desai both Karnad and Desai have grasped it.

Karnad: In one sense, plays which have been translated from one language to another and which have been welcomed in the target text languages can be considered Indian plays. Beyond this one cannot explain the idea of Indian plays - at least not for now.

Shanthinath Desai: But to get translated this way a work needs to have special qualities, right? Some of the best works due to their regional-specificity in terms of language, theme and characters when translated or performed do not become successful. Only your plays look like they have been tailor-made for Indian theatre. (471)

[translation mine]
Another reason could be awards, acceptance, and commercial rewards. It is possible that the self-translations took place, among other reasons, for the sake of awards and recognition. In his radio interview with Desai, Kamad mentions the desire of a writer to be awarded and recognised: “When a writer sends his work to a competition, the desire of getting an award for that play always exists in one form or the other” (Desai 466) [translation mine].

Yet another way of understanding Kamad would be to talk about his vision of Indian theatre articulated in the early 1970s. In his interview with Desai against the backdrop of winning the Kamala Devi Award by Bharathiya Natya Sangha, he envisages Indian theatre as emerging primarily due to the acceptance of translated plays between languages (Desai 471). Kamad’s self-translations can then be read as his attempts at contributing to such theatre. It must be noted that more than the Kannada theatre, it is the Indian theatre that Kamad has consistently tried to strengthen. Most of his public lectures published in Aagomme Eegomme have dealt with the Indian theatre.

One of the ways of engaging with the issue is to make distinctions in Kamad’s intentions to write in Kannada and self-translate them to English. Karnad writes in Kannada for specific reasons. In the discussion of his plays with Prasanna and U. R. Ananthamurthy, he gives them a reason for writing his plays in Kannada instead of English. He remarks, “. . . you can write anything in English. In my opinion we have to face the problem in Kannada” (Karnad, Prasanna, Ananthamurthy 454). This also suggests why he re-translates a play into Kannada, especially if it has taken a different shape in translation. In his autobiography he writes:
... it was a year since I came to Oxford. The second year had commenced. Although the cultural life of England had stimulated me in many ways, the intensity of the response to *Yayathi* was unexpected. In one year, having experienced the feeling of being an outsider in many ways, I had lost the innocence of thinking that there was an easy acceptance of and success to talent here. I asked myself whether I could get the genuine response of Kannada critics from the English intellectuals too. ‘When there are people who get stimulated, angry, shout or praise in Kannada, why should I try to be rooted in an alien language?’ I said. Thanks to the publication of *Yayathi* I realised that my thoughts of leaving India and settling abroad are not only useless but also self-defeating. (128-9) [translation mine]

There is a choice of source and target language in the case of Karnad. When it comes to self-translations, one notices that although Kamad knows many languages, he self-translates only between English and Kannada. He has reportedly not written or translated in Konkani, his mother tongue, yet. In his interview with Mukherjee he claims that he knew Marathi well and grew up reading Marathi (“A Conversation” 27-8). It was also the first language he was exposed to beyond his mother tongue. Speaking about the languages of his childhood he says: “We spent our childhood in different parts of Maharashtra and had our early education in Marathi. We spoke Konkani, our mother tongue, and Marathi with equal fluency. Later on, when I was older I read a lot of Marathi literature which influenced me deeply” (27-8). His proficiency in Marathi is demonstrated by his translations of Elkunchwar’s plays, *Wasanani Jeernani* and
Dharmaputra, into Kannada. It was later as a growing boy that he learnt Kannada and still later English. But he writes in the languages which he learnt “later”—Kannada and English as against the languages of his childhood and mother tongue. This is an important aspect of Karnad’s self-translations which needs to be noted, for both the source and target languages of his writing and self-translation practice are neither his mother tongue nor the languages of his early childhood. This is rare among self-translators. In the case of other self-translators their mother tongue is as one of the languages involved in translation. For instance, Kamala Das and Paniker self-translate from Malayalam, their mother tongue, to English. This is true in the case of Tagore, Goswami and other self-translators.

In not writing in his mother tongue, Konkani, Kamad becomes part of a long tradition of writers in Kannada-speaking regions who had Konkani as their mother tongue. For instance, writers like Gulwadi Ramananda Rao, and Manjeshwar Govind Pai chose to make Kannada, and not Konkani, their major language of literary as well as academic writing. This gesture of not making Konkani a language of literary and academic expression is also due to the political economy of the language Konkani did not have state patronage. Against this backdrop, it would have been a Herculean task for Karnad to attain name and fame had he written in Konkani.

In the case of Kamad’s self-translation within Kannada and English, there are two phases, one, starting from Tughlakh up to Agni Mattu Male, and the other beginning with The Dreams of Tipu Sultan up to Bali: The Sacrifice, hi the first phase he wrote in Kannada and translated his plays into English. But there are two exceptions to this pattern, for Yayathi and Ma Nishada, were not translated in this phase. In the
second, Kamad does two kinds of translations. One, he writes in English and translates it to English, e.g. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*; two, he rewrites Kannada works in English with significant modifications to the structure and language and then re-translates them to Kannada, e.g. *Broken Images* and *Bali: The Sacrifice*.

The texts that Kamad chooses to translate and the translation periods between plays lead to interesting interrogations. Dharwadker categorises Kamad’s plays based on their thematic engagement. One, ancient myths which include *Yayati, Hittina Hunja, Agni Mattu Male*: two, pre-modern and modern history including *Tughlaq, Tale-Danda, and The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*; three, timeless but recognisably traditional world of folktales including *Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala, and Flowers'; and four, carefully chosen contemporary life, namely, *Anjumallige, and Broken Images*. In terms of translation, from the first category, *Yayathi*, although his first play, got translated into English only in 2008. *Hittina Hunja* has been rewritten in English as *Bali: The Sacrifice*, and *Agni Mattu Male* has been translated into English. From the second category, *Tughlaq* and *Tale-Danda* have been translated to English. But unlike all his previous plays *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* was first written in English and then translated to Kannada. In the third category, both *Hayavadana, and Naga-Mandala* have been translated to English. Curiously enough, *Flowers* is a deeply grounded Kannada cultural text. Yet, Kamad chose to write to write it in English first and then translate to Kannada. In the fourth and last category, *Anjumallige*, which is one of Kamad’s earliest texts, has been self-translated but has not been published yet. In the case of *Broken Images* the earliest version of the play, *Bimba*, was written in Kannada. It was rewritten in English with modifications and the modified version was translated.
back into Kannada as Odakalu Bimba. No other play of Kamad, other than Hitna Hunja, has seen such a self-translation trajectory.

Regarding the language of writing there has been a shift in his approach. In his discussion with Anathamurthy and Prasanna in the early 1990s recalling his initial writing phase he has remarked that he felt condemned to Kannada:

Until I wrote Yayathi, I never thought I would write in Kannada. I had a desire that I would write in English, will become an international poet. (Laugh). Until I went to England I thought I would not return. But there, in the nation of Eliot and Auden when I started writing, Kannada came to me. Suddenly, I realised that I am condemned to my language. There is no release from this . . . . (Kamad, Prasanna, Ananthamurthy 461)

[translation mine]

But in the interview given to Mukherjee in 2005 he has confessed a shift in that stand: “I am no longer conscious of the language I’m using when I write. I write in Kannada and English simultaneously sometimes” (“A Conversation” 51). This shows that there has been a marked shift in his approach to his language.

Self-translating Titles

A title is a paratext. According to Hoek, “the title as we understand today is actually an artificial object, an artifact of reception or of commentary, that readers, the public, critics, booksellers, bibliographers, . . . and titologists have arbitrarily separated out from the graphic and possibly iconographic mass of a ‘title page’ or the cover” (qtd. in Genette 55-56). In tune with the dominant practice of graphically and spatially distinguishing the title of the text on the book cover, the published plays of Kamad too
mention the title of the text on the front cover of the book. However, in all his Kannada texts the title of the text is more prominent than the name of the author and is striking because of its colour scheme and font size. But unlike the general practice of keeping the title on the top and the author’s name at the bottom of the title page, in all his Kannada publications his name is kept close to the title, though sometimes it is placed above the title and sometimes below it. The only exception is the most recent edition of *Yayati* where the positions are reversed—the title comes at the bottom and the name of the author at the top. This could be due to the cult status that Karnad has gained in the recent past. On the contrary, the English editions of Kamad’s plays consistently project Kamad’s name more prominently on the front cover pages. Although the titles are bigger in font size compared to the playwright’s name, the font design and colour contrast present the title more sharply than all other textual information on the page, namely, title, volume information where concerned, and the name of the publisher.

A comparison of the cover page in Kannada and English would then suggest that the Kannada text emphasises the play more than the author, while the English text projects the author. The reason could be that in Kannada literary and theatre circles, both Kamad and his works are familiar. But in English the case is not the same, for readers and theatre-goers are more familiar with Karnad than his plays. The contrast also brings to light the notion of text in operation in the case of self-translation. The understanding of the text in the case of publication of self-translation is limited to the alphabetic text and not the iconic and visual text. Such a practice distinguishes between the writer-author and the publisher-author, with self-translation considering the writer-author as someone who needs to be transported to another language or a reading
community as against the other graphical and spatial methods of representing the writer-author in the source language. The only exception here is Yayati. The rewritten version in Kannada, Yaythi, published in 2005 and the English version published in 2008 have the same photograph on the front cover page - the picture of Amrish Puri and Tarla Mehta enacting a scene from Yayati.

In Kamad’s self-translation of titles, five patterns can be identified: transliteration, translation, rewriting, extension, transliteration and explanation. He uses transliteration in Yayathi, Tughlakh, Hayavadana, Nagamandala, and Tale-Danda. He translates the titles in Agni Mattu Male, The Dreams of Tipu Sultan, Broken Images, Maduve Album, and Flowers. In the case of Hittina Hunja, he rewrites the title. When rewritten in English, the title reads as Bali: The Sacrifice. In the case of Bimba he extends the title while translating it. Bimba means image but he makes the word “image” plural and adds the adjective “broken” to it, making it Broken Images. Further, when he translates Bali: The Sacrifice to Kannada as Bali, he leaves out the sub-title for in Kannada ball means sacrifice.

When the titles are proper nouns, namely, names of persons or rituals, Kamad transliterates them—Yayati, Tughlaq, Hayavadana, and Naga-mandala. But if the titles are common nouns he translates them, as in The Fire and The Rain, Hoo, Tipu Sultan Kanda Kanasu. An exception to this is Bali: The Sacrifice. In this case he uses a common noun in Kannada for the title—Bali, but adds a translation of the title in the title itself—The Sacrifice. In the case of Maduve Album he has resorted to code-switching. The first word of the title is a Kannada word, whereas, the second part is a
transliterated English word. But that element of code-switching does not get represented in the target text *Wedding Album*.

It is worth noting that only those plays which Karnad wrote for the European audience first and those he wrote in English first have titles in English. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* was written for BBC; *Bali: The Sacrifice* was rewritten for Guthrie Theatre; *Flo wers* was written in English first. The rest of the plays written first in Kannada have titles intelligible only to the Indian audience—*Yayathi, Ma Nishada, Tughlaq, Tale-danda, Hayavadana*, and *Naga-mandala*. This in a way challenges the accusation that Karnad writes for a Western audience.

Karnad’s Plays as **Works-in-progress**

It is interesting to note that Karnad’s texts keep evolving both within a language and across languages. Most of his plays are continuously revised and it is often difficult to say which is the authentic or final version is. *Broken Images, Bali: The Sacrifice* and *Yayathi* are claimed by Karnad to have been significantly different from their source texts. At the same time, he has remarked that he has been re-working on *Anju Mallige* ever since its publication.

In his interview given to this researcher Karnad claims, “I don’t believe in a fixed text” (Email Interview). Such a claim has its relationship to and justification in theatre. In the case of Karnad it can be said that just as each performance is complete in itself, so is each play. However, just as each performance is not final and conclusive, but only one particular instance of the realisation of a text, so is the text of a play in Karnad’s case. A performance of a play changes based on the stage, the audience, and its reception; so does the text of Karnad’s plays.
Kamad’s writing practice destabilises fixed notions of work, text and authorship. A work is understood as a product of labour. In the case of writing a linguistic text, there is a labouring of ideas, words, genres, and conventions. There is still an idea of a person who is directly linked to the work. As Foucault and Barthes have demonstrated, a text on the other hand is understood as a product that is an assemblage of other works, contemporary, past, experiential, and cultural. The idea of a text downgrades the idea of labour and an individual in favour of a community, both as a concrete entity based on proximity as well as a spatio-temporally distant one. The idea of authorship is seen by scholars as post-industrial and post-capitalistic where the idea of ownership and appropriation of value becomes a dominant discourse. The idea of text runs counter to the idea of authorship. If a text is an assemblage of multiple micro-texts, then the idea of authority that is embedded in the idea of author does not arise. In Karnad, there is a constant affirmation as well as destabilisation of these concepts. In suggesting in his interviews, Forewords and Prefaces how he laboured on the play, he affirms the idea of a work. But, sometimes, in suggesting that the play got written on its own, as in the case of *Yayathi*, he undermines the idea of work. About the writing of *Yayathi*, Kamad observes in his autobiography *Aadaadtha Aayushya*:

> With the intention of reading our *ithishasas* and *pur anas* before leaving for England, I read C. Rajagopalachari’s abridged *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha* . . . .

> I was stimulated by the story of *Yayati*. The son becoming old earlier than the father was dramatic, tragic. As I was completing the reading of the story, the question that provoked me was if the son had a
wife what would she have done in that situation? Would she have accepted this unnatural arrangement?

It is this scene that came in front of my eyes: the argument between Yayathi and Chitralekaha. I do not have to mention that in that scene the theme of Antigone and the attitude of the young female protagonists rebelling against justice came to life.

When I was thinking about it, around this climax the rest of the play began to take shape. I did not feel that I was writing a play. As the living characters were running in front of my eyes conversing, I kept putting it on paper in a stereotypical manner. I had been possessed. (113)

[translation mine]

By talking about the various sources from where he takes the material for his plays, Kamad foregrounds the idea of a text. For instance, he has referred to two other texts embedded in Yayathi: the story of Yayati in C. Rajgopalachari’s Mahabharatha and the characterisation of the women protagonists in productions of Antigone by Alkazi. In his interviews as well as his autobiography he has highlighted the various texts that have contributed to the structuring of his plays. His plays have become texts of multiple inscriptions, for he revises his texts based on various performances thus making his texts works-in-progress.

Locating Karnad, the Self-translator

Speaking of translators, Simon remarks:

Translators, as cultural and economic intermediaries, are often members of marginalized groups. Historically, they occupy socially fragile
positions, on the fringes of power. When they are, in addition, members of colonial or neocolonial societies, their work is saturated with the knowledge which comes from daily exposure to the conflictual aspects of language exchange. They are attentive to the fact that cultural traffic does not circulate freely about the globe, that its flow is regulated by the existence and condition of trade routes, the availability of willing vehicles and the needs and pleasure which cultural commerce caters to. In other words, they know that the circulation of translations is not to be equated with the logic of the gift but with the rules of commodity exchange (Frow 1996). Postcolonial contexts heighten awareness that translations are solicited and exchanged according to rules of trade and ownership, which are both commercial and ideological. (12-13)

What Simon says of translators holds good in the case of Kamad. In not being located in one particular language due to migrations across linguistic belts, and not subscribing to dominant notions of art, theatre, and nation, Karnad occupies a historically fragile position. But unlike most writers, Kamad, by being a self-translator into English, was able to manipulate the “condition of trade routes”. It is this that freed him from many of the constraints of access that most postcolonial writers and translators find themselves in.

Karnad’s self-translation is also unique because there is no other known and established playwright in contemporary India who self-translates. Almost all the prominent self-translators are novelists. The trend is not very different in Europe. Nabokov, and Nancy Huston are novelists; but Becket is an exception. And the
conditions within which Dome, Nabokov or Becket self-translated are different from those of Kamad.

In the context of genres Kamad’s self-translation practice needs to be seen falling within the genre of drama, whose traditional destination is performance, which gives rise to improvisation. This element feeds back into Kamad’s playwriting practice. He often claims, especially in the Prefaces of his revised translations, that they are revisions of the source texts. This then contributes to forever differing the ideas of authentic text, and introduces two ideas, one, text-in-the making, and two intersemioticity, i.e. the enmeshing of the text within the performative text.

Such a practice is unthinkable in the context of other genres such as short story, novel, poem, and essay. In fact, such a practice of Karnad problematises the notions of editions. He can be credited with introducing the idea of editions in the genre of play.

Within translation debates a translated text is often seen as alienated from the source text because translation is seen as a derivative activity. In self-translation, this alienation is rendered unimportant since the idea that emerges is that there are two manifestations of a text since the same author writes both the texts. In the process of self-translation, the author-ity of the writer is carried on to the purported target text. Translation is seen here as a process of alienation of both the writer from the ST and the reader from the SL writer. Kamad further differs from the dimension of alienation by not suggesting in his self-translations that they are indeed self-translations or translations, which make the readers consider the self-translations as not dependent on some other source text.
The available literature and research indicate that Kamad is perhaps the first writer to self-translate his works from Kannada to English. Within the history of vernacular to English self-translations in India, Kamad becomes important as after Tagore he is the next major writer to carry on the tradition. The review of literature done for this research suggests that he is the first major post-independent writer to self-translate.

This chapter has focused on Karnad’s self-translations. It mapped the publication history of his plays including their self-translations spread over five decades. It discussed the dramatic practice of Karnad and the various factors determining his self-translations. It proposed the possibilities of reading his self-translations as works-in-progress and established the relationship between the theatre and the self-translations of plays. The chapter ended with locating the self-translations of Karnad within the contemporary socio-economic-political situations. The following chapter studies the bi-directionality of Kamad’s self-translations.