Kamad’s contribution to Indian theatre has been pivotal. The significance of his contribution has been acknowledged by all Indian and non-Indian scholars on modem Indian theatre. Vasudha Dalmia considers Kamad as one of the “Big Four” along with Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar who shaped the modem Indian theatre (Dalmia 5). Kamad is the most recognised face of Indian theatre internationally. Within India he is often credited to have been responsible for the evolution of a national theatre, primarily through the self-translations of his plays. The national theatre, as many argue, has been possible primarily due to the translation of plays to and through English. And Kamad has been at the forefront of translation of plays, most importantly his own, apart from those of others.

Kamad has self-translated all his thirteen plays into English, except for his one-act play, *Ma Nishada*. Of these thirteen, two, namely, *Bali: The Sacrifice*, and *Broken Images*, have been re-translated to Kannada after their self-translation to English, the former as *Bali* and the latter as *Odakalu Bimba*.

Self-translation refers to the act of translating a source text from one source language to a target language by the author herself/himself of the source text. Although it has been a fairly wide-spread practice, self-translation practices got little critical attention because translation studies largely studied non-authorial translations. In the literary realm in Europe, the practice of self-translation was a fairly common phenomenon, involving key literary figures but their works were studied without referring to their self-translation practice.
Translation studies in India which was imported from the Euro-American academia also imported Euro-American concepts, concerns, methodologies, and frameworks. Hence, keeping in tune with the European tradition of translation studies, self-translation was either ignored or denounced. Denunciation was common to self-translation practices during the colonial period, the criticism of Tagore’s self-translations in India being a case in point. In post-independent India too, self-translation was ignored in academic disciplines and made invisible in institutional publishing practices. For example, Karnad’s works in English were not shown as self-translations of Kannada works. They were constructed and marketed by the publishing industry as original works in English, with the tacit approval of critics and the consuming academia.

The reasons for the differential treatment of self-translations in the colonial and the post-independence period could be many. One of them is that the anti-colonial nationalist sentiment could not appreciate self-translations. Hence, they were criticised as projects complicit with the colonial agenda. Secondly, self-translations were not seen positively due to lack of critical framework within translation debates which had excluded the category of self-translations from such debates. But the scene partially changed in the post-independence period. During this period, although self-translations were not seen as specific categories of translations or literary productions, the earlier accusation of being complicit in colonial project is no more put forth.

The focus of this thesis entitled Re-casting Texts Across Languages: A Study of Girish Karnad’s Practice of Self-Translation has been to investigate the self-translation practice of Karnad and through that attempt a critique of translation studies. This thesis
has tried to locate Kamad’s self-translation within the history of translation studies in general and the self-translation history in India in particular.

During the presentation of the survey of the field of translation studies in India to his supervisor, it was found that there was no significant research had been done in the area of self-translation from regional Indian languages to English and that the field was a nascent one in the academia in other parts of the world. Further research in self-translation led to Kamad’s self-translation practice about which no prior research was found. Hence, in consultation with the supervisor, the researcher decided to investigate the self-translation practice of Kamad with the purpose of contributing to theory building in the area of self-translation.

In this thesis, the researcher has considered the entire corpus of Kamad’s publications, with the primary focus on his plays. The research has yielded a few insights into self-translation in general and Karnad’s writing and self-translation practice in particular. This research has come up with the first comprehensive survey of self-translation into English in India. It has identified the first self-translation to be of Dutt’s *Sarmishtha* (1858) which was self-translated from Bengali to English as *Sermista: A Drama in Five Acts* in 1859. The general understanding was that the first self-translated work to English in India was Tagore’s *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* in 1912. Thus, this work has taken the history of self-translation in India further by about 55 years. Although the phenomenon of self-translation has been noticed in a few cases in Europe, as in the case of Beckett and Nabokov, it has not been conclusively named and studied yet. This research was able to identify the phenomenon of circular translation and also talk about the phenomenon of bi-directional translation.
Chapter I of this thesis has attempted to understand the cultural and intellectual background of Kamad and his growth as a playwright. In order to locate Kamad within the socio-cultural and intellectual traditions a brief account of his life, literary and personal achievements have been traced. The chapter has briefly discussed all the plays of Kamad along with their publication and self-translation history. In order to locate these works within the domain of translation studies a brief introduction of translation and self-translation has been given. The chapter has presented the research problem, the methodology followed to investigate the research problem, and an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter II, “Locating Translation and Self-translation: Practices, Theories, and Debates,” has dwelt on the etymology, concept and historicity of the practice of translation. It has captured the history of translation theories in Europe through the works of Steiner, and Bassnett on the history of translation from the time of the Roman Empire to the contemporary times. It has then discussed the contemporary translation theories and the post-structural turn that lead to the formation of the domain called translation studies. The chapter has also discussed two important domains, namely, feminism and post-colonialism which have reshaped the field of translation studies. Thereafter, it has discussed the Indian theory of translation, arguing that in trying to challenge the European frameworks of translation, it has not managed to carve out an original framework for pre-colonial, colonial or post-colonial translation practices in India. The chapter has critiqued translation studies from the point of view of self-translation and has made out a case for the inclusion of translation concerns coming from self-translation practices within the domain of translation studies. It has briefly
explored the history of self-translation practices. It has also distinguished self-translation from bilingualism and stressed the need to study self-translations.

Chapter III, entitled “Self-translation into English in India,” has mapped the history of self-translation into English in India. One of the important findings in this chapter has been the identification of the first self-translated text into English in India—Dutt’s *Sermista: A Drama in Five Acts*. This has taken the presumed history of the publication of literary self-translation to English in India from 1912 to 1859. The chapter has deduced from the literature available and the emergence of self-translation into English from seven Indian languages—Bengali, Kannada, Odia, Malayalam, Urdu, Assamese and Hindi. The chapter has also discussed the major self-translators in various languages in India and the critical reception of their self-translations.

An important finding has been the fact that self-translations into English are rarely constructed as translations but are presented in most cases as if they were written originally in English. The chapter has also observed that while there are quite a few self-translations from the other languages in India to English such as those of Manoj Das, Kamala Das, Goswami, and Hyder, self-translations from English to the other languages in India are few and far between. Among the well-known writers the researcher has found one by Tagore, two by Karnad and one by Kamala Das which are self-translations from English to native languages. In doing so, the self-translation practice in India closely follows the general trend, namely, the flow of translation from the native languages to English. In terms of genre the researcher has found the practice of self-translation permeating all the literary genres but with its own dynamics. In terms
of the direction of self-translation the researcher has found that self-translations are mostly unidirectional, with the rare exception of Tagore and Kamad.

Much against the perception that self-translators have the freedom to modify their texts, the chapter has recorded the fact that much depends on other factors which play a crucial role in self-translation. A shift in the target audience of self-translation has been identified in this chapter. While in Tagore, the model is self-translation for the outsider, with outsider being understood as a person of another nationality, in the case of Kamad the outsider is the linguistic outsider. But such a position cannot be conclusively held as Kamad’s practice of bi-directional translation poses serious problems to such a proposition. The chapter has found self-translation to English in India to be a discontinuous tradition.

Chapter IV, entitled “The Self-translation Practice of Kamad,” discusses the self-translations of Kamad both in the light of the self-translation practices in India, and in terms of Kamad’s own self-translations. It has found that he displays two different attitudes to theatre and print respectively. He has not adhered to any fixed notion of texts that are the essential features of print medium. Further, it has to be noted that he rewrote his plays primarily for theatre the theatre. In term of his translation of titles the researcher has identified four different patterns: transliteration, translation, extension, transliteration and explanation.

Some of the factors determining self-translation are the postcolonial condition in which Kamad writes and exists, his involvement with the English amateur theatre in Madras, and requests for translation from friends. But these cannot be taken conclusively as factors determining his self-translations. However, there is another
crucial aspect to his plays which facilitates self-translation. His plays have transcultural communicability encoded in them and this contributes to the process of self-translation.

One can find two phases in Karnad’s self-translation. In the first phase he writes in Kannada and then self-translates those works to English, and in the second, besides continuing the first phase, writes in English and self-translates those writings to Kannada. However, his approach to language is less compartmentalised due to his primary engagement with the medium of theatre. His self-translation is intended for improvising his plays rather than recreating them. This is more so with his translations to English. His project of self-translation needs to be seen as feeding into the project of the Indian nation-state coming to terms with sub-nationalism through translation projects. But his circular translation projects and translation to English need to be seen as capitalisation of neo-liberal socio-economic conditions.

Kamad’s work keeps evolving across languages and across texts, with self-translation significantly aiding this evolution. His self-translation practice also aids in destabilising existing notions of text and authorship. Kamad can be considered the pioneer of post-independence self-translation practices in India. He has managed to overcome the predicament of most post-colonial writers by utilising, in the words of Simon, the “condition of trade routes” (13) through the process of self-translation. He is a rare self-translator in India, and perhaps in the world, in that he is the only established playwright who has self-translated almost all his plays. Another aspect of his self-translation is that through particular orchestration of paratextual information, such as not declaring the works to be self-translations, he presents self-translation as “new”
works. In doing so, he does not adhere to the general publication practices of translations.

Chapter V, entitled “Kamad’s Bi-directional Self-translation,” analyses the practice of self-translating across two languages. Bi-directional translation is unique to Karnad in India. The only other record available of bi-directional translation is that of Tagore. Bi-directionality in Karnad is directed towards two languages—Kannada and English. Up to a particular period in his career he writes in Kannada and then self-translates to English. But from the late 1990s he starts writing in English and self-translating to Kannada.

The chapter identifies two kinds of bi-directionalities in Karnad—one is linguistic bi-directionality and the other textual bi-directionality or circular self-translation. While all his self-translations fit into the first category, only two works fit into the second—Hittina Hunja and Bimba. Hittina Hunja, a text written in Kannada, was self-translated to English as Bali: The Sacrifice which was self-translated to Kannada as Bali.

The researcher notes that, in the case of circular self-translation Karnad significantly alters the titles of his texts, especially in the first movement of self-translation. A circular self-translation also complicates notions of originality. When bi-directional textual self-translation is examined in the context of language, it is examined that Karnad’s texts are less stable in Kannada than in English. Hence, structures get transformed in bi-directional self-translation. The other feature that gets transformed in the self-translation of his plays is characterisation. This researcher has found that Karnad’s self-translations are not just an engagement with aesthetic and structural
aspects but they take on board socio-cultural issues related to the theme of the play that have taken place since the publication of the source text. *Bali: The Sacrifice*, which is the self-translation of *Hittina Hunja*, amply demonstrates this.

Suggestions for Further Research

Self-translation is yet to become a site of significant research in India. Considering that India is a multilingual country with 22 languages listed in the eighth schedule of the Indian Constitution and more than 700 identified by linguists, there is a huge potential to make textual, linguistic, socio-linguistic, economic, and cultural inquiries into this field. There is scope for comparative studies of self-translations between two or more native languages, and self-translations to English. This research has identified more than 50 self-translators in India. Other than a few works on Tagore, and Kamala Das this researcher has not found prior research work on the other self-translators. This leaves possibilities for research on all those self-translators. A comprehensive study of all self-translations would also bring out significant insights into the practice of self-translation in India. A comparative study of the self-translation practices across countries would yield interesting insights. In short, the field of self-translation has great potential for further research.