CHAPTER I

Introduction

Girish Karnad

Girish Raghunath Kamad is a playwright, translator, actor, film, television and theatre director who has left an indelible mark in all these domains. At the national level he has been recognised as the representative face of Kannada whereas at the international level he becomes the representative face of Indian theatre. He is also an icon of the post-independent theatre in India.

Kamad was born in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency in a Konkani-speaking Saraswat Brahman family on 19 May 1938. His mother, a trained nurse, was his father’s second wife, as a result of which she and the family had to suffer social ostracisation. His father was a doctor in the Bombay Medical Service. Kamad, along with his siblings, grew up in different places in the present day Maharashtra, because of his father’s regular transfers. He had his early education in Marathi. This led him to read a lot of Marathi literature which had a deep influence on him. After his father’s retirement the family settled in Sirsi, a small town in Karwar which is in present day Karnataka. Sirsi was then a part of Bombay Presidency. Although it was predominantly a Kannada-speaking area, it had a strong presence of Marathi. Since Sirsi was a trading route many Marathi natak companies and touring Kannada troupes used to perform in that town. After the harvest there was also, Yakshagana, the folk performance of the region. Kamad acknowledges that all these had a lasting impact on him. (Mukherjee, T. 27-30).

Kamad completed his BA in Mathematics and Statistics from Karnataka University, Dharwad in 1958. From 1958 to 1960 he was in Bombay as a South Fellow
in Statistics where he was exposed to modern theatre. During these years he was exposed to Shaw, Strindberg, Anouilh, and Sartre. Kamad singles out the impact Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* directed by Ebrahim Alkazi on him. He writes, “It left a powerful impact. The experience was like a traumatic rite of passage ... the violence of the human psyche laid bare in the play, left an indelible impact” (Mukherjee T. 29).

It also exposed him to an important element of modern theatre—use of lights. He claims, “That lights could be used to manipulate story telling, with the focus and the fade out adding dimensions to the dramatic experience, was completely new knowledge for me” (29).

While pursuing his MA, he received the Rhodes Scholarship and went to Oxford. During the preparation for his departure to Oxford, he wrote *Yayathi*. Recalling the writing of *Yayathi* he observes. “During the weeks of preparation for my departure to England - which were . . . quite stressful for various reasons - I found myself writing a play. This was *Yayati*. Though I had trained myself writing in English, I found myself writing the play in Kannada” (30). The play was published by Manohara Grantha Mala based in Dharwad in 1961 while Kamad was at Oxford. All his works in Kannada have since been published by this publishing house.

At Oxford, he pursued further studies in Economics, Political Science and Philosophy from 1960 to 1963 and was the president of the Oxford Union Society from 1962 to 1963 (Karnad, *Aadaadtha* 326).

Regarding his exposure to theatre he notes, “I knew Shakespeare, for instance, but had never considered his plays stageable. I saw brilliant productions of Shakespeare. I remember watching Shaw, Brecht, Rattigan, Osborne, Wesker, Grotowski . . .
Anouilh, Beckett.” He adds, “Although my thoughts about dramaturgy had not really formed then, my stay in England convinced me that western drama had nothing much to give us” (Mukherjee, “In his Own Voice” 32).

On his return to India, Kamad became a manager at Oxford University Press, Madras where he served from 1963 until 1970. During his stint at Oxford University Press, he played a key role in getting A.K. Ramanujan’s works published in India under the Oxford banner. During this period he also associated himself with The Madras Players donning many hats including those of actor and director. He claims that this particular association enriched his sense of theatre significantly:

We . . . staged some translations by Sartre, Pirandello, Chekhov and so on, and quite diligently compared different versions before deciding on any one. I learnt how language needs to be used on stage: The rhythm, the pacing, the allowances for breath and movements, the pause, the pitching. This was excellent training and I asked myself why we couldn’t translate our own plays into English. (37)

The last sentence suggests the possible influence of at The Madras Players on Kamad’s decision to translate his own plays.

In 1970 Kamad gave up his job at OUP and moved to other pastures and worked in diverse cultural fields, playing different roles. From 1970 to 72 he was a Homi Bhabha Fellow and explored the possibilities of integrating traditional folk and modern theatres (Karnad, Aadaadtha 212). The Fellowship allowed him to travel widely across India. It also helped him visit the US and get exposed to world cinema, especially to Kurosawa, Ozu, Fellini, and Antonioni (213). He was the director of the renowned Film
and Television Institute of India (R 11). Pune from 1974 to 75. From 1976-78 he was the President of the Karnataka Nataka Academy. From 1987 to 88 he was a Visiting Professor-cum-Resident Scholar at Chicago University. From 1988 to 1993 he was the president of the Sangeet Natak Akademi. In 1994 he became a fellow of the Sangeet Natak Akademi. He was the director of The Nehru Centre, London as well as Minister of Culture in the Indian High Commission, London from 2000 to 2003.

Besides translating his works between Kannada and English, Karnad has also translated others’ works. He has translated Mahesh Elkunchwar’s Wasansi Jeernani (Tattered Clothes) and Dharmaputra (Godson) from Marathi to Kannada transliterating the titles, and Badal Sirkar’s Ebong Indrajit to English as Evam Indrajit. He has two short stories to his credit in Kannada: “Alida Mele” (“After Destruction”) and “Musalmana Banda! Musalmana Banda!” (“A Muslim Came! A Muslim Came!”).

Kamad has won numerous awards. The prestigious national civilian awards bestowed on him are Padmashree in 1974 and Padmabhushan in 1992. The awards given to his literary and dramatic contributions are Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1972, Karnataka Sahitya Akademi Award in 1994, Gubbi Veeranna Award by Government of Karnataka in 1997, and Kalidas Samman by the Government of Madhya Pradesh in 1999. In 1999 he was awarded the highest and most prestigious literary award in India—Bharatiya Jnanpith. Apart from these he has also won awards for specific plays. Hayavadana won the Kamaladevi Award in 1972; Taledanda won the Karnataka Nataka Academy Award in 1992, Karnataka Sahithya Academy award in 1993 and Central Sahitya Akademi award in 1993. Besides these, he has won 12 other
awards for his various achievements in cinema. In 2008 he was honoured by the International Theatre Institute of UNESCO as World Theatre Ambassador.

He has also been awarded honorary doctorates, Litterarum Doctor or Doctor of Letters by Karnatak University, Dharwad, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore, and Ravenshaw University, Bhubaneswar, and the degree of Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters by the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. The former was awarded in 1994 and the latter on May 13 this year. The films he directed, namely, Kadu, Ondanondu Kaladalli, Utsav and The Lamp in the Niche have participated in many international film festivals.

In his earlier interviews, Kamad had claimed that Kannada was the language of his expression (Rao, “Conversation”; Kamad, “Natakakara” 461). In fact, he wanted to be a poet and one in English at that. But when he began writing Yayathi, it came out in the form of a play and that too in Kannada. But, in the interview given to Mukherjee in 2005, he remarked: “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 remark underlines a major shift in his approach to language and literary creation.

In five decades since his first play in 1960, Kamad has written thirteen plays in Kannada which have been directed by leading Indian directors, namely such as Ebrahim Alkazi, B. V. Karanth, Alyque Padamsee, Prasanna, Arvind Gaur, Satyadev Dubey, Vijaya Mehta, Shyamanand Jalan, and Amal Allana, to name a few. Most of his plays have been translated into almost all the major languages of India. Although he has written thirteen plays, he has directed only one of his plays, Broken Images, with K. M. Chaithanya.
In the international arena, his plays have been broadcast on BBC radio, performed at Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, and Haymarket Theatre in Leicester and many places in the Middle East. Guthrie Theatre commissioned Nagamandala and Fire and the Rain. The Haymarket Theatre commissioned Bali: The Sacrifice. In 1997 when BBC commissioned him to write a play to mark India’s 50th year of independence, he wrote The Dreams of Tipu Sultan.

Apart from plays, he has published a prose collection in Kannada, which includes some of the important speeches he delivered and articles he wrote in journals and periodicals. He has directed seven films in Kannada and Hindi, and acted in over 57 films in Kannada, Hindi and many other Indian languages. His autobiography in Kannada, Aadaaduta Ayushya, was published in August 2011. Its English self-translation is expected to be released in 2012.

Speaking of the theatre space that Kamad carved out with Yayathi, Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker observes that “modern Indian theatre offered [him] 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 Sartre, and Eugene O’Neill” (Introduction. Collected Plays Vol. I xiv). 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,” but points out “there had been no dramatic structure in [his] own tradition to which [he] could relate [himself]” (xv). What is true of Kamad, therefore, is true of all other Indians as well. This perhaps explains why his plays got such a rousing reception, and why a market emerged to consume his plays. The concerns of Karnad were in that sense not his own,
but of the entire new postcolonial nation that wanted to decolonise itself not only politically but also culturally.

Kamad may be best described as a secular humanist. He has consistently maintained this position not only in his works but also in his social life. He has been a vocal critic of communalism. He has spoken against the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 and has been one of the most prominent voices against right wing vandalism in Karnataka in the recent past. Most recently he resigned from Goa’s Golden Jubilee Development Council protesting over the state government’s silence on the attacks on the paintings of Sanskrit scholar and artist Jose Pereira, but later withdrew it on the assurance of safety to the artist by the state chief minister (“Girish Kamad Withdraws”).

Barring Prasanna’s adaptation of *Fire and the Rain*, he has never objected to creative adaptations of his plays. Two aspects may have contributed to the shaping of such an outlook in Kamad: one, the negative position taken by the community *mutts* regarding the widow remarriage of his mother, and two, his training in liberal education, especially at Oxford.

Plays of Karnad

(1998), *Flowers* (2004), *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (2004), *Bali: The Sacrifice* (2004), *Broken Images* (2005), *Yayati* (2008), and *Wedding Album* (2009). Two of these plays have been translated back to Kannada: *Bali: The Sacrifice*, the rewritten version of *Hittina Hunja*, was translated back to Kannada as *Bali* in 2007, and *Broken Images* as *Odakalu Biinha* in 2006. All his plays in Kannada have been published by Manohara Grantha Mala, Dharwad, and all his plays in English have been published by Oxford University Press, India.

Karnad’s first play *Yayathi* was published in 1960. In this play, he retells the story of Yayati, “the Chandravamshi king in the Mahabharatha who exchanged his decrepitude with the youth of his youngest son, Puru, in order to stave off the curse of premature old age” (Dharwadker, Introduction. *Collected Plays* Vol. I xiv). Yayati married Devayani, daughter of Shukracharya. Along with her, her childhood friend Sharmishtha, was also brought to the palace as a slave and companion to her. However, Sharmishtha and Devayani constantly quarrelled with each other. In one of his visits to Devayani’s chamber, Sharmishtha purportedly traps the king to bed with her. The King then decides to marry her and make her his queen, much against Sharmistha’s dissuasion.

Yayati’s decision to make Sharmishtha his queen upsets Devayani who complains about the humiliation to her father, Shukracharya. Enraged, he curses Yayati “that he will lose his youth and become decrepit by nightfall” (Kamad, *Yayati* 41) and leaves the kingdom with Devayani, without heeding to Sharmista’s plea to be merciful. When Poora, his youngest son, goes to meet him he gets the message that “the curse will not have its effect on . . . [Yayati] if a young man agrees to take it upon himself and
offers his youth to . . . [him] in exchange” (45), But when none in the kingdom
volunteers to take the curse on him, Pooru comes forward to take the curse on him.
Seeing Pooru in a wretched condition, his wife Chitralekha commits suicide. The
suicide sets off a series of events which make Yayati realise his hollowness and take the
curse upon himself.

Karnad wrote this play before going to England as a Rhodes Scholar and revised
it during his stay in England. The play was edited by Kirtinath Kurtkoti who later
became one of the most prolific critics in Kannada. According to Kamad the play was
written when he was emotionally torn between his ambitions in Europe and family
demands on him to come back to India. He claims that *Yayathi* came out of that angst:
“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 Dharwadker *Collected Plays* Vol 1 xiv). Kamad claims that the myth of *Yayati*
enabled him “to articulate for . . . [himself] a set of values that [he] had been unable to
arrive at rationally. Whether to return home finally seemed the most minor of issues; the
myth had nailed [him] to [his] past” (xiv). Dharwadker argues that *Yayathi* “launched
his career as a playwright, and established an approach to mythic narrative that has
Kamad claims that this play is part of his “juvenilia” and adds that he wrote it when he
“had no experience of theatre” (“Preface” *Yayati* vii). Hence, Kamad did not translate
this play until 2008.

*Ma Nishada* (1964), a one-act play, is Karnad’s second play. According to G. S.
Amur, the story is not found in *Valmiki Ramayana* but in Lakshmisha’s *Jaimini*
Bharata, a sixteenth-seventeenth century Kannada text (29). The play uses the story of a washerman of Ayodhya. The play begins with the washerman meeting Valmiki with the hope of apologising to Seeta in person. The rest of the play is about Valmiki coming to know of the plight of the washerman trying to overcome his guilt and Valmiki’s realisation that there is another person like him who suffers the guilt of having separated people. The washerman’s wife was an ardent devotee of Rama. But he could not stand Rama’s name. Although he loved her much, when she returned from her parental home after a quarrel, he refused to accept her in saying that he was not Rama to take her back. A soldier of Rama who overheard the washerman’s words reported it to Rama. Upon hearing this, Rama decided to send Seeta back to the forest. This angered the people of Ayodhya and they tried to attack the washerman. The washerman survived the attack, thanks to the intervention of his wife and a soldier who dispersed the crowd saying that Rama had taken the entire responsibility on himself. The washerman then went to the city to see Rama but was not given an audience. Bharata consoled him saying that Rama would have found some other reason to send Sita back to the forest. Ostracised, the washerman spent the next fourteen years in the forest and when he returned to his native village he found that his wife had died in the same house, unknown to anyone. Heartbroken, he wanted to apologise to Seeta and wanted her to be reunited with Rama., But Valmiki informed him of Seeta’s union with the earth. Both Valmiki and the washerman are feeling dejected and the play ends with the washerman’s rhetorical question, “Should Ramayana end this way?”

Ma Nishada is Kamad’s least known play. In his “Preface” to Yayati, Karnad remarks, “The plays I have written since then [1960]—with the exception of
Anjumallige—have all been translated into English and included in the two volumes of my Collected Plays” (vii). Contrary to Kamad’s claims, Ma Nishada has not yet been translated and not included in both the volumes of the Collected Plays. Boratti and Haritsa remark that “while performances, studies and discussions of Kamad’s plays such as Hayavadana and Tale-Danda or his early play Yayati are common, Ma Nishada has eluded such attention; nor is it alluded to by Kamad himself” (58).

Ma Nishada is Karnad’s first radio play, written for All India Radio’s Ramanavami broadcast. The play first appeared in the Deepavali special issue of Prajvani in 1964. It was later printed in Ekanka Sangraha Bhaga 2, an anthology of Kannada one-act plays compiled by Sindhuvally Ananthamurthy, and in Bimha mattu Ithara Natakagalu in 2004 (Amur 29; Mukherjee, T. “In His Own Voice” 32). This play is yet to be translated to English by Kamad.

Tughlakh (1964) is perhaps the most famous play of Kamad. It captures the rise and decline of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, a king in the Mogul dynasty, who came to power by killing his father. Kamad presents him as a visionary and strategist who failed despite his commitment to welfare state. In the first part of the play, he presents Tughlaq as a caring, intelligent and skilful administrator who is able to silence the dissident voices within his kingdom through clever manoeuvres and staves off the attempt on his life by the merchants of Delhi under the leadership of Shihab-Ud-Din, But as he handles one problem after another and his intelligence looks unsurpassable, his idealism becomes bereft of compassion. With his decision to shift the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, his downfall begins. His innovative monetary system fails as people misuse it. The, uprising against him becomes intense, its culmination being his
step-mother hiring assassins to kill him. One person who understands the psyche of Tughlaq and the limitations of his idealism and intelligence, and misuses it throughout the play to the core is Aziz. The final moment of the play is Aziz meeting Tughlaq where he talks about how he exploited him, holding a mirror to Tughlaq. *Tughlaq* is Kamad’s first self-translated play. As against *Yayathi* it was well-received both in Kannada as well as in English and other Indian languages. Many critics have read this play as representative of the disillusionment with Nehruvian socialism. Kamad too has accepted such a reading (Mukherjee, T. “In His Own Voice” 36).

*Hittina Hunja* (1966) takes its story from Jain mythology. In *Hittina Hunja*, The Queen, listening to The Mahout’s song, leaves the palace at night and has sexual union with him despite his ugly appearance. The King follows her and finds out what she has done. He is in two minds: whether to kill her or not. In the meantime, when the Queen Mother asks him why he was out at night, he lies to her and talks about a dream he had. She interprets it as a bad omen and expresses her desire to sacrifice a hundred goats. When the King, a Jain convert, refuses, she threatens to commit suicide. Finally, they decide to sacrifice a cock made of dough. When The King is about to sacrifice the dough cock, it crows. The play ends with The Queen killing herself with the sword used to sacrifice the dough cock.

Perhaps, no play of Kamad has undergone as many changes as *Hittina Hunja*. Kamad rewrote this play in 1980, the first play to have been rewritten after its initial publication. He rewrote it in English making significant changes as *Bali: The Sacrifice* in 2002. The English version then got translated back to Kannada, under the title *Bali*, in 2004. Speaking about the play Kamad claimed,
It is a discussion play that interrogates the notion of “violence” and is based on a thirteenth century Kannada epic, “Yashodhara Charite”, which refers to various other texts dating back to the ninth century. It deals with the idea that violence is pervasive, lying just beneath the surface of our everyday behaviour and is often masked by a conscious effort. (Mukherjee, T. “In His Own Voice” 49)

Hayavadana (1971) is claimed to be Kamad’s most creative play. This play is also listed in Oxford Dictionary of Plays edited by Michael Patterson among the 1000 most significant plays of world theatre (xxvii). Hayavadana is based on Thomas Mann’s The Transposed Heads which in turn is based on the sixth story of Shivadasa’s Vethala Panchavimshathi (Amur 51). The main story revolves round three characters—Padmini, and two bosom friends, Devadatta and Kapila, and their triangular relationship. The play engages with one of the important philosophical questions of mind-body duality. The play opens with Kapila finding Devadatta in love with Padmini. But Kapila goes on Devadatta’s behalf to propose to Padmini. She accepts the proposal and they get married. Kapila’s closeness to Padmini infuriates Devadatta. One day when Padmini and Devadatta undertake a pilgrimage, Kapila joins them and his behaviour makes Devadatta boil within. Devadatta sends Padmini and Kapila to Rudra’s temple and sacrifices himself at the nearby Kali temple, to keep his word of sacrificing himself if he got Padmini as his wife. When the two return and do not find Devadatta, Kapila goes in search of him. He finds Devadatta beheaded in the Kali temple. Unable to bear the possible accusation of killing his bosom friend, he too sacrifices himself. When Padmini finds both in this condition, she tries to kill herself. But Kali appears and gives
her the boon of life. Padmini fixes the heads of Kapila and Devadatta back in place to bring them back to life, but in her hurry transposes their heads. On coming alive, Devadatta finds that his body has the physical abilities and skills of Kapila, which is like having the best of both the worlds. But soon the question of belonging—Whose wife Padmini would be?—crops up.

The play at this point explores the possibilities of the mind and the body having their own mutually exclusive consciousnesses. Later in the play Padmini becomes bored with Devadatta as he gives up on maintaining his physique. In the meantime, Padmini gives birth to a child. On their second pilgrimage, Padmini and Devadatta encounter Kapila. Devadatta invites him for a dual and they kill each other. Padmini also kills herself leaving the son with the forest dwellers with instructions regarding his upbringing. There is yet another story woven with the main story, which is of a horse with a man’s voice longing for completeness. The play ends with him becoming a complete horse. Many Indian scholars acknowledge Hayavadana to be a landmark play in the history of post-independent India. Perhaps “for the first time in the history of Indian theatre an urban playwright had consciously used folk techniques and folk philosophy to speak to a contemporary audience” (Mukherjee, T. 40).

Anju Mallige (1977), the fourth play of Kamad, is located in 1960 in a British University, a setting that Kamad is familiar with. Like Hayavadana, this play deals with the triangular love affair of—Satish, Yamini and Julia. The play ends with Yamini not succeeding in her attempts at getting back her former love—Satish, and Satish marrying Julia. According to Mukherjee, “It represents the new generation of Indians living abroad and grappling with issues of adjustment and assimilation in a foreign culture. It
is a gripping play with a rather Freudian orientation” (“In His Own Voice” 50).

Regarding the context of the writing of the play Kamad observers:

The context of the play is 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 Fd 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 ... It also represents my efforts toward exploring repressed desires and motivations of the human mind. (50-51)

Like *Ma Nishada, Anjumallige* received lukewarm response both in terms of theatrical performance as well as critical engagement. This is the only full-fledged play of Kamad that has remained so far unpublished in translation.

In *Nagamandala* (1989), Kamad engages with folk tradition completely. Although his experiments with folk traditions began with *Hayavadana*, especially in terms of theatrical techniques, with *Nagamandala* the engagement becomes full-fledged. *Nagamandala* presents the trials and triumphs of Rani, its protagonist. Rani, who lost her mother at a young age too, is given in marriage to Appanna, who lost his parents at a young age. Appanna, who has a ‘concubine,’ locks up Rani in the house and comes home only for lunch, beating her up and abusing her whenever he is around.

Noticing her plight, Kurudavva, a visually challenged friend of Rani’s mother, gives her a root which was given to her by a mendicant, to be mixed in Appanna’s food, promising an end to all her problems. Her first attempt fails. In her second attempt she adds the paste of the root to the curry she was making. But she hears an explosion and
“The curry boils over, red as blood” (Karnad, *Collected Plays* Vol 1 265). Scared, she pours it over an anthill near the house. Naga, the King Cobra, on drinking the milk falls in love with Rani and meets her at night in the form of Appanna and eventually Rani becomes pregnant. When he learns about his wife’s pregnancy, Appanna complains to the village elders of Rani’s ‘infidelity’. On Naga’s instruction, Rani refutes the allegations in front of the village elders and undergoes a snake ordeal. With her success in the snake ordeal, her fortunes change. Appanna becomes a loving husband. She has a child and happiness of a fulfilled married life. However, Kamad give the story multiple closures.

Like *Hayavadana*, this play too has other stories woven into it—a playwright being cursed to die if he did not keep himself awake one whole night for having bored his audience through his plays, and stories gathering at night to share their stories. *Nagamadala* is a much debated play, especially by feminists. *Nagabharana* adapted the play into a Kannada film with the same title and it was the first of Kamad’s plays to be made into a film. It went on to win several awards at the state and national levels.

*Taledanda* (1990) is a historical play woven around a twelfth-century Bhakthi saint Basavanna. Basavanna was the prime minister in the court of Bijjala and was also the treasurer of the kingdom. In Basavanna and Bijjala’s absence were out of town, Bijjala’s son, Sovideva, instigated by dissidents within the court, accuses Basavanna of misusing the treasury funds. On his return, the money is counted and everything is found intact. Thereafter he tenders his resignation. At this time the town is divided over a marital issue between a *sharana*, a follower of Basavanna’s philosophy, who is a cobbler and a Brahmin girl, whose family has turned *sharanas*. Taking advantage of the
bickering among the upper castes and business communities, the dissident voices within the court manipulate Sovideva and manage to imprison Bijjala and enthrone Sovideva. Just then Basavanna leaves the kingdom after bidding adieu to Bijjala and the new administration starts exterminating all opposing figures, most importantly, the extremist followers of Basavanna and the sharanas. *Taledanda*, which was written at a time when protests against the Mandal Commission were spreading across the country and the call for the demolition of Babri Masjid was echoing across urban India, became significant after the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the consequent violence and polarisation of the society.

*Agni Mattu Male* (1994) is based on a story from the Mahabharatha. In the play, Raibhya and Bharadwaja are siblings. Both are sages and experts in the Vedas. Paravasu and Arvasu are the two sons of Raibhya. Yavakri is the son of Bharadwaja. While Paravasu is an expert in the Vedas and is performing a seven-year long fire sacrifice organised by the king to propitiate Indra, the god of rain, Arvasu, least interested in the Vedas, is instead fascinated by theatre and is a skilled performer. He wants to marry Nittilai, a tribal girl, but fails as he arrives late to the meeting called by the elders of Nittilai’s village to decide on the marriage. Nittilai is married off to a person from her own community. Due to circumstances Arvasu is forced to bear the burden of patricide committed by his brother, as a result of which he is ostracised. But his histrionics attract a touring street performer who gives him a role. Yavakri has learnt the Vedas through penance and has got a boon from Indra. But he uses his powers to provoke Raibhya, by seducing his daughter-in-law but succumbs to the Brahma Rakshasa created by Raibhya.
At the end of the play all the major characters die, except Arvasu. But pleased with Arvasu’s skilled performance Indra appears and asks him to seek a boon. When he wishes for Nittilai to be brought back to life, the people around request him to ask for rain instead. The Brahma Rakshasa pleads to be freed from his state of being a Brahma Rakshasa and the dead souls ask him to bring them to life. Since he could ask for only one boon, Arvasu seeks freedom for Brahma Rakshasa. But the request brings rain as well. *Agni mattu Male* is considered the most ambitious play of Karnad (Amur 115). This is the second play and the only other play of Kamad to have been made into a film. It was made into a Hindi film entitled *Agnivarsha: The Fire and the Rain* by Arjun Sajnani in 2002.

*Tipu Sultan Kanda Kanasu* (2000) is a radio play commissioned by BBC Radio to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of India’s independence. The play begins in the aftermath of Tipu’s death in the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War with the tracing of Tipu’s body and the British officer Colin Mackenzie trying to understand the history of Tipu from Hussain Ali Kirmani. Kirmani narrates to Mackenzie the various dreams of Tipu. The play deals with Tipu’s four dreams. All are the dreams of a ruler. But the play also attempts a sketch of his role as a husband, father, arbitrator of justice, economic transformer of the region, historical figure who challenged the British as no one else in India did, and an international relations expert and a strategist par excellence. The play ends with the words of Kirmani: “It was not Tipu’s dreams but his predictions that came true” (Kamad, *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* 239). Dharwadker calls this play “a complex rehabilitation of Tipu” (Introduction. *Collected Plays*. Vol. II xxiii). The play is based
on the diaries of Tipu where he used to write down his dreams which Karnad accessed through A.K. Ramanujan in Chicago Regenstein Library in 1987.

*Bimba* (2004) is a contemporary play and is located in Bangalore where Karnad has been residing for the past three decades. Manjula is the protagonist. A former lecturer in English, she has become a best-selling author of *The River has No Memories*, her maiden novel. The play, which is set in a television studio, begins with her introduction by the anchor and her brief speech where she champions the cause of women writers and also defends the bilingual tradition. But after the speech in a surreal situation she is not able to leave the studio, as she finds the doors locked and her alter ego starts conversing with the television screen. The rest of the play is a revelation of the life of Manjula and her relationship with Pramod Murty, her husband, and the true writer of the novel, Malini.

Manjula was born in Bangalore but grew up in Dharwad in her grandparents’ house. After completing her college studies she finds a job in Bangalore and meets Pramod and marries him and moves to a new house in Jayanagar given to her by her parents. Her younger sister Malini, though crippled, is far more intelligent, widely read and vivacious than her. After her parents’ death Malini moves in with Manjula. But during the six years that she spends in her house, she and Pramod grew close to each other. Pramod’s job which allowed him to work from home contributes to the intimacy. This infuriates Manjula but she puts up with it. After Malini’s death she discovers the novel she was typing during the final few months and dispatches it to a literary agent in her name. The novel gets accepted and becomes an instant success, bringing her fame, wealth and tours abroad.
This happens to be the only play written and directed by Kamad. It was co-directed by K, M. Chaithanya. Kamad rewrote this play into English as Broken Images and translated the English version back to Kannada as Odakalu Bimba. Although Kamad calls it a monologue it does not strictly fall in the category of a monologue.

Flowers (2005) is a monologue. It is based on a folk story from the Chitradurg region of Karnataka, which is found in a novel by TaRaSu, an eminent Kannada novelist, called Hamsageethe. The monologue begins with “a recounting of the nameless priest’s experience as he prepares to drown himself in the temple tank” (Dharwadker, Introduction. Collected Plays Vol. II xxxii). The temple priest, an ardent devotee of the linga, has a relationship with a courtesan named Ranganayaki. One day, when the village chieftain finds a strand of hair in the prasada, he demands an explanation. When the priest claims that it belongs to the god, the chieftain asks him to prove it. When the chieftain returns on the full moon day as asked by the priest, the linga had indeed grown hair. When one of the Brahmin courtiers pulled a tuft of hair to test it, it created a wound in the linga. Unable to bear the undeserved divine gesture which saved him, the play ends with the priest deciding to drown himself. Commenting on the play Kamad remarks, “I thought of it as a companion piece for Bimba. In that play a woman is unravelling the knots of her psyche; here is a man undertaking a journey within” (Mukherjee, “A Conversation” 54).

Maduve Album (2006) is Karnad’s last play so far. The play takes place in a Saraswat Brahmin community to which Kamad belongs. The play is set in Dharwad in the house of Nadkarnis. Hema, the eldest daughter of the Nadkarnis, has come from Australia leaving her son and daughter behind for the possible marriage of Vidula, her
younger sister, to Ashwin, who lives in the US. In the meantime, another proposal crops up for her brother Rohit from a relative of the Nadkamis, the Hattangadis. Mohan and Mira Hattangadi, close relatives of Nadakarais, want to get their daughter Tapasya married to Rohit. Rohit, who is in love with Isabella, a Christian girl, strongly disagrees but finally ends up agreeing to it for the sake of economic benefit involved in it. Ashwin comes down on a short visit to decide on the proposal and meets Vidula in a restaurant. He is successful in life and wants to start a mission to spread Indian culture and wisdom to the rest of the world. He makes clear his post-marriage demands where he expects Vidula to be a traditional wife, obedient and faithful to him. The meeting is more of a monologue with a long but frank list of expectations from him. With Vidula agreeing to all his demands he decides to marry her.

There are three minor stories woven into the play. One is of Radhabhai. She is the cook of the Nadkamis who has lost her daughter due to her own inability to own her up. The other story is that of Dr Nadkami’s brother, Ramdas. He was a bachelor and is dead now. It is hinted that he fathered Vidula and enters his name as the father of Vidula in the birth certificate. The third story is the flirtatious relationship between Hema and Vivan Kaikini, a thirteen-year-old boy from the neighbourhood, which continues on the sidelines of the preparations for Vidula’s marriage and her departure to the US. The play questions many contemporary social values that get circulated in the name of culture. The play is perhaps the most contemporary of all Kamad’s plays with its depiction of digital culture, its reference to the rising presence of the Indian diaspora, and its representation of Hindutva vigilante phenomenon.
Self-translations of Karnad

Kamad’s uniqueness lies not only in writing remarkable plays but also in the fact that he has self-translated most of his plays into English. He is perhaps the only writer in contemporary India who has self-translated most of his works into English. Of the thirteen plays in Kannada, eleven are also available in English either as translations, rewritings or as original writings. There is an interesting dimension to his self-translation practice. Up to *Agni Malta Male* he first wrote his plays in Kannada and then translated them to English. But beginning with *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* he has started writing his plays in English and then translates them to Kannada (Dharwadker, Introduction. *Collected Plays* Vol. II xxi).

Of the thirteen plays in Kannada, eleven were originally written in Kannada and two—*Tipu Sultan Kanda Kanasu* and *Hoo*—were written in English and translated to Kannada. Two of the Kannada plays have been rewritten in English—*Hittina Hunja* and *Yayathi*. Two more have been translated back to Kannada from their rewritten versions in English—*Bali: The Sacrifice* and *Broken Images*.

In the absence of a term to name the phenomenon of writing and self-translating across two languages this researcher calls it “bi-directional translation”. The available literature on self-translation has not identified this phenomenon so far. Hence bi-directional self-translation makes Kamad a unique creative writer as well as a self-translator, switching between languages for creation and translation. Yet, this practice of Kamad has largely been ignored in the monographs on him available in Kannada by Divaspati Hegade, Krishnamurthy Chandar, and Meera Murthy as well as in the three key surveys of critical responses to Kamad edited by Tutun Mukherjee in English,
and G, S. Amur, and K, Marulasiddappa and Krishnamurthy Hanur in Kannada, In her introductions to the two volumes of Karnad’s plays in English published by Oxford University Press, Dharwadker, an eminent scholar on post-independent theatre in India, takes note of his bi-directional self-translation but glosses over it.

Another important aspect of Kamad’s self-translation is the duration between the writing of a text and its translation. There is an irregular pattern between the writing of the plays and their translation. While his first play, Yayathi, took 48 years to be translated, some of his other plays like Nagamandala and Bimha have had a gap of just a year between the source text and the target text. This opens up quite a few questions on the determining factors in the choice of the language of creation and translation, and also the factors determining the choice of texts for translation at different points.

There is yet another dimension to Karnad’s translation. Although he knows quite a few languages like Marathi and Hindi, he has neither written in these languages nor translated his plays into them. In his interview he claims that he does not know these languages enough to translate them. He says, “I know Marathi well enough to judge a translation but not to translate myself” (Email Interview). He has also not written anything in Konkani, his mother tongue nor translated any work into it.

It is also important to note that except for one play, Broken Images, Kamad has not directed his plays. Despite being a director for the celluloid and the small screen, he has not taken up his plays for production in these media. All the films he has directed are based on novels and not on short stories or plays. This also poses interesting questions regarding his relation to genres and inter-semiotic translation.
A Note on Translation Studies and Self-translation

In the European tradition, translation has traditionally been claimed to have begun with the Romans (Malmkjser 1). The two historical moments in translation practice are the Bible translations in Europe and translations during the colonial period. However, the emergence of postcolonial nation-states and the spread of neo-liberalisation have given a new dimension to this tradition. In some of the non-European traditions translations existed earlier than those in Europe. In India, translation activities have been traced back to the fourth century BCE and in the Chinese context to the ninth century BCE (Malmkjser 1-2).

Translation during the Roman period was a cultural practice where the Romans as a rising political power, “perceived themselves as a continuation of their Greek models” (Bassnett 43) through the process of translation. But with Bible translations during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, translation became complicit with political agenda as well as an agent of political processes. These roles became more political and got embedded in the imperial processes with the spread of colonialism. The political nature of translation has become more nuanced as it was used for normalising the ideas of nation in multicultural nation-states.

Roman Jakobson categorises translation as intra-lingual, i.e. those within a language, inter-lingual, i.e. those across languages, and inter-semiotic, i.e. those across media (138). Yet, it is important to note that historical accounts of translation take into account only the written and print traditions of translation, although translational activities can also be seen within oral and visual communication across languages. Even
today it is the translation practice in the print medium that dominates most debates and scholarly work in translation studies.

Within linguistics, translation, going mostly by its etymological meaning, has been understood as the transfer of text from one language to another. Translation theory is built largely on this assumption. Some of the prominent names in this school are Roman Jakobson, Eugene Nida, and J. C. Catford. In linguistics, where translation is seen as a branch of applied linguistics, the notion of translation as transfer of text or meaning still predominates.

This notion has been challenged by postcolonial studies and cultural studies which draw attention to the larger cultural politics of imperialism, nationalism, gender, and state in translation. Scholars in these two areas take recourse to poststructural reading strategies in order to make their point. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Tejaswini Niranjana, Sherry Simon, and Susie Tharu are some of the important scholars who have done path-breaking work in this area. Apart from these scholars, there are others who have tried to look at the political-economy of translations. A landmark work in this area is Rita Kothari’s *Translating India*.

But all these studies have ignored an important textual practice, namely, self-translation. Although postcolonial studies had a brush with this phenomenon, it ended up treating it akin to bilingualism, as recent studies show (Grutman 17). An important indicator of the marginalisation of this practice is its absence in most readers, surveys and introductory works on translation studies. Works of prominent scholars in translation studies like Lawrence Venuti, Jeremy Munday, Edwin Gentzler, Susan Bassnett and George Steiner are no exception to this. Many scholars in Europe assume
it to be a twentieth-century post-World War phenomenon with Vladimir Nabokov and Samuel Beckett being two of the prominent faces in this domain. However, Julio Cesar Santoyo talks of a much longer tradition going as far back as Thomas More, Calvin, Du Bellay, John Donne, and Goldoni. The reception to self-translation as a site of critical inquiry is only a recent phenomenon in Europe with less than a decade and a half's critical work. This aspect is emphasised by Rita Wilson when she claims, “Self-translation is generally considered as something marginal, a sort of cultural or literary oddity, as a borderline case of both translation and literary studies” (186).

In India, the earliest instance of self-translation has been traced back to Rabindranath Tagore. In contemporary times the number of self-translators is scanty. In some of the prominent languages like Bengali, Odia, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi and Assamese, one does find a few self-translators. Thanks to its postcolonial status, there has been a dual response to self-translation in India. In the case of Tagore, the practice was condemned, especially because of the ‘free translation’ method used in the English version of *Gitanjali*, with the accusation that the translation was a dilution of the ‘original texts’ to impress the West. But in the case of self-translations by writers in the post-independent India like Karnad, Vijayan, and Hyder, there has been a general silence. In the case of lesser-known writers like Alka Saraogi there has been a condemnation of self-translation on the grounds of the self-translator’s lack of competence in the target language. Apart from Tagore the other prominent writers who have attracted some critical attention for their self-translation are Qurratulain Hyder, Kamala Das, and Manoj Das.
Against this backdrop, Kamad’s textual practice assumes a lot of significance. Although Kamad has self-translated almost all his works between Kannada and English, the phenomenon has not drawn significant critical attention by scholars in India and abroad. Kamad’s self-translation does find a mention in many works which are either on Kamad or on his works. However, barring Dharwadker and Mukherjee, hardly any scholar has noticed the fact that after a particular point in his writing career, he starts shifting the writing and self-translation language direction, thereby becoming perhaps one of the few and first bi-directional self-translators in India. Besides Dharwadker, Tharakeshwar, in his unpublished M. Phil. Dissertation, attempts to engage with questions of self-translation in the context of Kamad, but he too misses on the bi-directionality of Karnad’s self-translation.

This study hopes to break fresh ground in that it attempts to deal with the practice of self-translation in India, especially with reference to Kamad’s plays.

Research Problem

The researcher thought of self-translation while making a presentation on translation and translation studies to his research supervisor. The discussion regarding the lack of significant research work on self-translation in India led to looking at studies on Girish Kamad’s practice of self-translation. Kamad figures prominently in the English language and literature syllabi in India. The preliminary study unearthed a rich field to be researched—self-translation in India as well as the self-translation practice of Kamad. This thesis is the result of a systematic enquiry into that field.

Translation studies have generally ignored the practice of self-translation. In the Indian context too the category of self-translation has not been seriously researched.
Literature review has revealed that although Karnad’s works have been studied within the framework of theatre, mythology, and gender (Banfield; Yarrow; Khatri, and Arora; Ramachandran; Peyma) they have not been researched from the point of view of self-translation. Against this backdrop, this thesis attempts to interrogate Karnad’s self-translation practice and contribute to studies on Karnad’s work in general and self-translation theory in particular. The uniqueness of this research project is that this is perhaps the first exclusive doctoral thesis on self-translation. In particular, theorising bi-directional self-translation is an original and significant contribution to translation studies.

Methodology and Structure of the Thesis

The researcher has studied the translation and self-translation discourses in the West as well as in India. He has tried to locate Kamad’s writing and self-translation within these discourses, trying to explore the implications of the self-translation practice of Kamad for existing notions of translation, text, work and author.

Chapter I of the thesis, entitled “Introduction,” gives a broad introduction to Karnad, his plays, his writing practice and the formative influences on his works. It presents a brief survey of the fields of translation and self-translation. It then introduces the research question, establishes the need for the study and gives an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter II is entitled “Locating Translation and Self-translation: Practice, Theories, and Debates.” The purpose of this chapter is to locate self-translation within the practice and theory of translation. It discusses the etymology and origins of translation, maps the translation practices and theories in the European tradition and in
the Indian context. It also locates the position of self-translation within the translation debates in the European context.

Chapter III, called “Self-translation into English in India,” maps the practice of self-translation in India spread over a century and a half. It identifies some of the general patterns that are visible in this practice. It also analyses the general and academic treatment of self-translations across genres in major languages in India, namely, Bengali, Urdu, Kannada, Malayalam, Assamese, and Hindi. This chapter does not discuss Kamad’s self-translations since the following two chapters engage with them extensively.

Chapter IV, entitled “Self-translation Practice of Karnad,” discusses the self-translations of Karnad with reference to self-translation practices in India, and Kamad’s own self-translations. It also relates Kamad’s self-translation practice to the genre of drama within which he operates. It analyses the socio-cultural conditions of Kamad’s textual production and tries to identify reasons for his self-translation practice. It also discusses the construction of Kamad’s self-translation practice within the modes of textual representation.

Chapter V, entitled “Bi-directional Self-translation,” discusses one of the unique features of Karnad’s self-translation practice, namely, bi-directionality. It analyses—Hittina Hunja, and Broken Images which fall in the category of circular translations.

Chapter VI summarises the major arguments of the thesis and presents the key findings. It also makes a few suggestions for further research in the area of self-translation.