



## Fashioning the Social: Shakespearean Translations in the Kannada Literary Polysystem

Shashi Kumar

National Institute of Technology, Silchar, Assam, India

[Al.shashikumar@nitk.edu.in](mailto:Al.shashikumar@nitk.edu.in)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9611-8186>

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### Abstract

Shakespearean plays have been the most widely translated and adapted texts into Indian languages, including the Kannada language. This essay focuses on the translations that occurred during the period between 1847 and 1930. This essay discusses the emergence of modern theatre and translations of English plays in the Kannada literary polysystem<sup>1</sup> in particular and Indian literary tradition in general. The essay examines the transition from the traditional theatre, the emergence of the “company plays”, and transition from traditional theatre to the proscenium theatre, and the rise of plays as social criticism. It attempts to show how English textual practices have influenced Kannada theatre in multiple ways. Further, it explains how Kannada translations of Shakespeare played a significant role in local societal changes, argues that these translations brought modern thought into the Kannada literary tradition, and critically traces the trajectory of the journey of Western texts into the Kannada language through translations of English plays including Shakespeare.

**Keywords:** Shakespearean Plays, Multiple Translations, English Literature, Literary Historiography, Modern Theatre

### Introduction

Kannada is one of the Dravidian languages of South India in the state of Karnataka and the Kannada script is of the Brahmi. An understanding of the absence of the drama tradition in Kannada literature that dates to the ninth century A.D. is necessary to understand the changes that took place during the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997, p. 176) define polysystem as a heterogeneous, hierarchized conglomerate (or system) of systems that interact to bring about an ongoing dynamic process of evaluation within the polysystem as a whole.

Kannada scholars observe that there was no tradition of writing plays in Kannada and that a long-standing folk theatre existed in the oral tradition. Texts such as *Kumaravyasa Bharatha* (sixteenth century A.D.) or *Torave Ramayana* (seventeenth century A.D.) were used for folk performances. Episodes from religious texts such as the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavata*, and folk epics were performed. Meanwhile, a famous Parsi theatre company from Maharashtra visited the Royal Court of Mysore in 1881.<sup>2</sup> The then-king of Princely Mysore, Chamarajendra Wadiyar X, encouraged his court to start the Mysore Palace Company under his patronage. The Marathi theatre group, Kirloskar Nataka Mandali, the drama companies of Sangaliker, and the Tantupurastha Nataka Mandali of Dharwad were famous in the northern Karnataka region during the colonial period (Satyanath, 2004, pp. 65-70). These provided oral entertainment and also helped modernize the Kannada theatrical tradition.

The modern Kannada dramatic tradition or the production of dramatic texts in Kannada began with the free rendering and recreation of Sanskrit and English plays and fiction into the dramatic form in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. That means the new theatrical drama tradition that emerged in the Kannada language enriched itself not only from the theatre drama traditions of Sanskrit and medieval Kannada but also from Western traditions, primarily through Parsi theatre. Subsequently, Kannada theatre was exposed to Western theatre, particularly Shakespearean plays. This was also seen in several other Major Indian languages such as Bengali, Marathi, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, and others. T. S. Satyanath observes that the first Kannada play, Singararaya's *Mitravinda Govinda* (1860), is a translation of Sriharsha's Sanskrit play *Ratnavali*. The first Kannada literary translation from Sanskrit was *Shakuntala Natakavu* by Kalidasa (1870) translated by Shesha Ramachandra Churamuri. Although the evidence of Yakshagana plays, the folk plays from the coastal Karnataka region, is available from palm leaf manuscripts right from the sixteenth century A.D., contact with the West and the English education system gave a new direction to theatre and drama in Kannada at the end of the nineteenth century (Satyanath, 2004, p. 48). Chandrashekhar Kambar believes of India that

We have an entire corpus of dramatic literature in Sanskrit with a surprising variety of forms and techniques. It is a bit surprising that no Indian language other than Sanskrit has any dramatic literature. As far as Kannada is concerned, not a single dramatic work is available until the beginning of the nineteenth century except *Mitravinda Govinda* by Singararya in the eighteenth century. Several types of folk-dramas like Yakshagana, Dodddata and Sannata have been prevalent for centuries. (1986, p. 106)

The Mysore Palace Company produced translated texts of Sanskrit plays such as *Sakuntalam*, *Rathnavali* and Shakespearean plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), *Othello*

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<sup>2</sup> Parsi theatre or "Parsi Natak Mandali is a significant theatre tradition that flourished in India between 1850 and 1930s. The Parsi theatre companies were owned managed by the influential Parsi business community. These companies have extensively travelled, visited and performed in north, west and south India and Southeast Asia. The Parsi Companies blended the Marathi and the Gujarati folk traditions and songs with the proscenium style." Parsi Natak Mandali presented Indianized versions of Shakespeare's plays, by turning them into a blend of folk performances and the Western naturalistic theatre with dozens of songs. It is greatly responsible for the development of the Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, and Hindi proscenium theatre, and later the kind of Hindi cinema that we have. One of the Parsi companies, Bhalliwala Company, performed in the Mysore Palace in the 1880s. The Mysore King Chamarajendra Wadiyar was so impressed that he encouraged the beginning of the "Chamarajendra Karnataka Nataka Sabha," later called the Palace Company. The other companies performed in Mysore are the Kirloskar Sangli Companies.

(1605), *Hamlet* (1603), and other plays into Kannada. A. Anandarao, C. Subbarao, Basavappa Shastry, Jayarayacharya and others translated English plays for the Mysore Palace Company. The first translation from English was Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* by Chennabasappa, under the Kannada title *Nagadavarannu Nagisuva Kathe* (A Story of Laughter) published in 1871.

Vikram Singh Thakur identifies that Shakespeare has been translated and adapted in Kannada for more than 100 years. According to the Indian National Library, Kolkata, Kannada translations and adaptations of Shakespeare numbered 66 till 1964 (Thakur, 2020, p. 40). These plays were translations and adaptations. Some of the Kannada translators wrote plays directly inspired by Shakespearean plays. By 1930, 18 plays of Shakespeare had been rewritten into Kannada. These are called *rupantara*, or adaptations because they are free renderings of the original plays. According to Ramachandra Deva

The earliest literal translation of Shakespeare is that of *Macbeth* (1936) by D.V. Gundappa and all translations prior to that can be considered adaptations. If we accept this view, almost half of the Shakespearean translations in Kannada must be categorized as adaptations. (Deva, 1993)

Therefore, if we look at the Kannada translations discussed in the following sections, they are mostly *rupantara*, changing the shape in the form and content of the English plays. *Rupantara*, or rewriting, was an important way in the colonial phase where translators saw the original texts keenly and brought them into the Kannada language according to the needs of Kannada culture. In other words, the attempt was to assimilate original texts into the Kannada language. We shall consider the polysystem theory introduced by the Israeli scholar Itamar Even-Zohar in the 1970s to Translation Studies. He developed the theory to deal with the dynamics, diversity, and changes that occur in any culture. The theory highlights the complicated relationship between literary systems and translated literature. So, the purpose of using the polysystem theory in the paper is to explore whether the receptor Kannada culture lacking in certain forms, styles or genres, and whether translating English texts time and again was an attempt to fill the gap. Then, the question is raised: What was the influence of these translated texts on the receptor Kannada culture? Did these translations play a primary role and change the literary relations in Kannada to bring freshness? If the early Kannada translations play a crucial role in Kannada, does it suggest that the literary history of modern Kannada literature may be rewritten considering these early translations?

### Shakespearean plays in Kannada

Let us now discuss the significance of Shakespearean plays in Kannada and how influential they were in the Kannada theatrical and drama tradition during the colonial period. We shall consider the large number of Shakespearean plays rendered in Kannada during the period between 1847 and 1930 to demonstrate their significance for the modern Kannada dramatic tradition. The paper does not discuss all Kannada translations for logistical reasons. One of the reasons is that several of the translations are not available either. However, it considers most of the plays available in different literary archives and those that have been reprinted. It also draws on secondary sources that shed light on the scenario of Shakespearean

translation into the Kannada language during this period. The study is not limited to comparing original and Kannada counterparts. Instead, we approach translations as a means to map and structure a literary history of the translation of Shakespeare into Kannada. Accordingly, we discuss translations and para-textual materials such as prefaces, dedications, discussions of these translations on other forums, responses, and the like.

Significant to this history is A. Anandarao (n.d.-1910), who worked as an assistant commissioner in the Princely Mysore State and wrote books and translated English texts under the pseudonym of “Mysore Deshiya” (Sangali, 1999, p.156). He translated *Romeo and Juliet* as *Ramavarma Leelavati Charitre* (A. Anandarao, 1889) into Kannada. It was the first translation under the genre of drama in Kannada. He also translated *The Merchant of Venice* as *Panchali Parinayam* (A. Anandarao, 1890). As is evident from the titles of these translations, Anandarao adapted the plays into Kannada, changing the names of the characters and their environs. His translations were based on the conventions of Sanskrit dramatic literature such as no tragic ending, prose mostly accompanied by poetics, death should not be shown on stage, etc. This was his model for translating Shakespearean plays into Kannada.

*Ramavarma Leelavati Charitre*, the first Kannada translation of *Romeo and Juliet*, turned out to be a comedy. In his strategy of translating foreign names, Anandarao used similar-sounding Kannada words. For instance, Madhura (Montague), Kapila (Capulet), Madana (Mercutio), Behari (Benovolio), Balachandra (Balthazar), and others. The ending of the target text is very interesting and funny. Since the Sanskrit tradition is to end the play with a happy ending, Anandarao changes the last act of *Romeo and Juliet*. Pujiyapada Yogishwara, or Friar Lawrence, prays to Lord Vishnu, who appears on the stage and brings Ramavarma and Leelavati to life! A Kannada critic, Shamaraya, calls this “the absurdity par excellence!” (Satyanath, 2004, p. 58-59). *Romeo and Juliet* was famous in Kannada because it was translated during the period under study five times by different Kannada translators. The Kannada version was successfully staged by theatre groups such as Chamarajendra Nataka Sabha, Rathnavali Nataka Sabha, and Rajadhani Nataka Mandali of Mysore (Havanur, 1974. p. 404). Therefore, it is one of the significant translations of Shakespeare’s play into Kannada.

Another literary figure crucial to this history, Basavappa Shastry (1843–1891), one of the popular court poets of Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar III and Maharaja Chamaraja Wodeyar IX of the Mysore Princely State, wrote plays mainly for the Chamarajendra Nataka Sabha (Drama Troupe of Chamarajendra) established in 1882. Shastry translated the most important Sanskrit texts into Kannada. He translated *Othello* into Kannada as *Surasena Charitre* (Basavappa Shastry and C. Subba Rao, 1895). The plot of the play and the characters were domesticated in the Kannada translation. Characters such as Surasena (Othello), Devadatta (Iago), Vijayadwaja (Michael Cassio), and others resembled Indian mythological characters. The Kannada translation used mixed tongues such as Sanskrit, old Kannada, and colloquial Kannada. Srinivasa Havanur observes that “the Kannada translation is incomplete, and that Shastry did not complete the translation, and that it was also inconsistent in the mixing of Sanskrit and local Kannada slangs, but his Kannada translations of Sanskrit plays are significant. However, it is surprising to note that Shastry did not know English and did not receive formal education in English, but with the help of his friend C. Subba Rao, B. A. translated *Othello* into Kannada. Shastry was commissioned by the Royal Court of Mysore to translate *Othello* and Sanskrit plays for the stage of the Palace Company, and he was known as Abhinava Kalidasa in Kannada” (Havanur, 1974, p. 428). It is observed that the Kannada version of *Othello* was not completed, but the final

translation was completed with the help of Shastry's writings on the translation. The significance of the translation can be understood by the preface written by Shastry.

The preface reveals that Shastry's translation consisted of 18 pages, and he explains that if Shakespearean plays were translated into Kannada, it would be helpful for the students of Karnataka. He also says that it would be helpful for the Kannadigas to understand English culture, their day-to-day life, and the socio-political scenario of England by translating English plays into Kannada (Shastry, p. i). R.S. Mugali one of the literary historians who wrote a history of modern Kannada literature (1975), appreciates Shastry's *Surasena Charitre* as it was the first *Hosagannada* (Modern Kannada) text in Kannada influenced by Western literature (Bharanya, 1990, p. 118). The Kannada translation by Shastry can be appreciated because of his effort in translating the play into Kannada though he was not familiar with the English language.

Kerur Vasudevacharya (1866–1921) is another significant individual in this history. He was one of the prominent translators from the northern part of Karnataka during the colonial period. He was often called the Sir Walter Scott of Kannada. He wrote full-length plays and translated texts from Sanskrit and English into Kannada. He was influenced by Parsi theatre and possessed knowledge about contemporary reformist personalities, the English dramatists like Goldsmith, Sheridan, and others while he was studying in Mumbai. He wanted to see independent plays similar to those in English and Sanskrit in modern Kannada literature (Sangali, 1999, p. 66). Therefore, he produced new dramas by blending the dramatic techniques of Sanskrit and English plays. He translated four English plays into Kannada, namely *Vasantayamini Swapna Chamatkara* (Kerur, 1929), that is, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Surathnagarada Shresthi* (1929) or *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare, and *Pativashikarana* (1928) or *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith. His incomplete translation *Ramesha mattu Lalitha* (Kerur, 1917) is of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Kerur's translation of *The Merchant of Venice* as *Surathnagarada Shresthi* was a successful rendering in Kannada. Kerur safely domesticated the characterization and plot of the source text according to Kannada culture. Kerur introduced humorous elements into his translations by using Kannada characters such as Katora Malla (Shylock), Gobbi Sangha (Launcelot Gobbo), and Mudimalla (Old Gobbo); the amusing characters portrayed in his translations entertained the Kannada audience. Seven years after his demise, his plays were staged by the Vasudeva Vinodini Sabha (Vasudeva Association of Entertainment), established in 1928 at Bagalkote of Northern Karnataka.

The characters of Kerur are quite rooted in the Kannada tradition for the natural setting of the plays. Kerur creatively used cultural meanings for the foreign text in the Kannada setting and was successful in that endeavour. He has changed the characters, names, and settings according to the Kannada people's culture. His translation of *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Pativashikarana* (1928), was also successful. In *Vasantayamini Swapna Chamatkara* (Kerur, 1929), a translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, except for the characterization, and names, the rest is retained as it is in the source text. It is one of the exquisite and astounding adaptations rendered in the early decades of the twentieth century into Kannada. Like other translations mentioned earlier, Kerur's translations were meant for stage performance. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Kannada audience, including the newly educated people, had developed a taste for the new plays. Therefore, Kerur wanted to introduce good English plays to the Kannadigas.

One Shakespearean translator, Gundo Krishna Churamuri (1840–1920), worked as a clerk at a cotton factory in Hubli, Karnataka. His important translation is *Raghavendraraao*

*Nataka* (Gundo Krishna Churamuri, 1885), which is a rendering of *Othello*. The translator informs the reader that he made a humble attempt as he felt that Kannada scholars mercilessly neglected the development of their own language. This translation is set in the city of Gadag, in the region of northern Karnataka. The characters are exactly like the next-door neighbours one might meet in their daily life with very familiar Kannada names such as Thirumalarao, and Devajipanta Mutalik. In this translation, Othello becomes Raghavendraraao, and Desdemona becomes Venkubai. The conversations are also in the regional dialect of Kannada and very mundane and quotidian, unlike the high literary, stylized, old Kannada generally deployed in historical plays. However, Churamuri retains the tragic ending of the original play to show as it to the Kannada audience. His concern was to develop the Kannada language which he discusses in his preface quoted below. The Kannada translation attracted the Kannada audience.

Ramachandra Deva, a well-known scholar of Kannada, observes that “the adaptation of *Raghavendraraao Nataka* reflects the social changes of nineteenth-century Kannada society. It depicts how the Indian family institution collapses under the pressures of modern society. According to Churamuri, modernity advanced by the colonial power developed wickedness, meanness, envy, and rivalry among people, bringing sure destruction. Ramachandra Deva appreciates the Kannada adaptation as it is an essential text which was not given its due as a good adaptation and is significant for its literary merits” (Deva, 1993, p. 16). Churamuri, in his “Preface”, explains his reason for translating *Othello* into Kannada

We have been witnessing the present condition of our Kannada language. The Kannada language is in a critical condition like a person who suffers from leprosy. But the most well-known scholars who are like expert doctors to the ailing language knowingly allow the death of the Kannada language. Therefore, though I am not a great scholar and a gifted doctor, I have done this translation without tolerating this situation. I believe that writing books or writing entertaining stories is one of the techniques to develop the Kannada language. It is for this reason that I have translated this English text. It is not an imaginary story but from one of the most significant playwrights’ play, *Othello*. I agree that this Kannada translation is not comparable with the source text. I have translated it to read and develop the Kannada language, as I have a love for the Kannada language. (Churamuri, 1885, p. 4)<sup>3</sup>

M.S. Puttanna was also a prominent early translator of Shakespearean plays into Kannada. He translated three Shakespearean plays into Kannada: *Cymbeline* as *Jayasimharaja Charitre* (Puttanna, 1881) along with M.B. Srinivasa Iyengar, *King Lear* as *Hemachandraraja Vilasa* (Puttanna, 1899) and *Hamlet* as *Hemalatha Rajakumara Charitre* (Sujatha, 1920). These three are adaptations of English plays. The first one is in the form of a story, not in the form of a play, and the endings of the other two translations were not changed, unlike those works of other Kannada translators, who had changed Shakespeare’s tragedies into comedies. Puttanna retained the last acts as they were in the source texts but adapted them to fit into Kannada cultural settings. These translations are examples of early adaptations of English plays rendered into Kannada cultural settings, and the medium employed was prose throughout the translations, and they represent Indian mythology and folklore.

Puttanna’s “Prefaces” to his translations provide clues to his reasons and concerns in

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<sup>3</sup> Translation from Kannada to English is mine.

translating *King Lear* as *Hemachandraraja Vilasa* (1899). Its preface becomes critical in understanding Puttana's work

*King Lear* is the single most outstanding achievement in the Teutonic intellect, says Professor Dowden. This is the highest praise ever bestowed in any age upon any single work. In the opinion of many scholars, [to] be called the best production by the greatest poet of the world. It is excellences like these that introduce me to afford an opportunity to the Kannada people to know [a] little of the mind and art that mighty genius. I have tried my best to keep to the original as much as possible in the form of a prose drama. With a view to make the story sound purely Hindu, all the characters are given Hindu names almost appropriate to the part played by each. (Puttanna, 1899. p. 1)

Puttanna added songs as appropriate for the play wherever necessary, and he also mentions that it was a great experience and opportunity for him to translate Shakespeare. His other translation, *Hemalatha Rajakumara Charitre of Hamlet*, is in the form of a prose drama. For this too, he wrote a preface. According to him, rendering a great philosophical play like *Hamlet* was exciting and an attempt to do justice to the cause of Kannada literature. He writes

I ventured to avail myself of my meagre past experience in translating Shakespeare from the original. While the retention of European names to the characters would seem wrong in the opinion of some persons as unfamiliar, exotic, and jaw-breaking and may therefore be unpopular, among other reasons, the substitution of Indian names also attract criticism. Consequently, I strike a middle course by simplifying the names of characters partly by retaining the main portion and partly by curtailing the unpronounceable terminations. The non-Aryan custom of widow marriage within the prohibited degrees of relationship, which, in my translations of the other two dramas, was altered to suit Aryan ideas, has been purposely retained in this play. A few verses, which are deemed necessary to the context, have been inserted. The specimen verses that are put into the players' mouths when displaying their general proficiency in acting are omitted, as they contain a large number of classic allusions that have no direct bearing on the play. Pruning [Punning] on words, witticism, and humorous passages have been attempted to be rendered into Kannada as far as the language permits. (Puttanna, 1899, pp. 2-3)

It is evident that Puttanna tried to strike a balance between the original English and his Kannada translation in this play. On the one hand, he intended to retain the flavour of the original and, on the other, to attend to the cultural ethos of what he terms the "Aryan" ideas.

Among Shakespearean translations into Kannada, M.R. Annaji Rao's translation, *Mahimandana* (1900), is of *The Winter's Tale*. It is a prose adaptation, and the title of the English play has been modified by giving it a Kannada name. The Kannada translation revolves around a prince, Maniratha, who goes against his close friend Simhavikrama with the false accusation of an affair with his wife, Gunamani. Then the prince orders his friend's death. The prince makes a false accusation against his friend and his princess, but it is proved that the charge was false at the end of the story (Annaji Rao, 1900). The source text has been modified to fit Kannada settings, characters, and plot. Annaji Rao expresses his views on why he adapted the English play into Kannada as follows:

I translated two of Shakespeare's plays into Kannada in 1897, for which the government of Mysore has given me special encouragement. With that encouragement, I translated *The Winter's Tale* into Kannada in 1896. In this Kannada translation, the Kannadigas can grasp what is good and wrong with our contact with the Western world. We can understand the good and bad values of the West through this translation. I assume that Kannadigas would benefit by reading the Kannada translation, which has moral stories. (Annaji Rao, 1900, pp. 1-9)<sup>4</sup>

Kannada translator Harnahalli Anantaraya has also translated Shakespeare's *Macbeth* into Kannada, as *Dweshabhandara* (1926). He writes in his preface that

Shakespeare is one of the greatest playwrights the world has ever seen and *Macbeth* is one of his best tragedies. The language used by Shakespeare is not easily understandable by laypeople because of the excess use of old English in his works. Because of the use of complex phrases and words, it becomes difficult to understand the essence of his works. Many people enjoy reading Shakespeare for his exuberant play of words and picturesqueness. Though his works are extensively translated into other world languages, they have not been translated into Kannada. To fill this gap, I have taken up the task of translating *Macbeth* into Kannada. I have translated it, retaining a few words from the original text into Kannada. This translation intends to make the Kannada readers familiar with English literature and culture. The Western world possesses a rich heritage in religious, social, or political reform. Through translation, I intend to showcase these ideas, and as a result, I hope that this new approach will broaden the horizons of the Kannada readers. (Anantaraya, 1926)

The survey so far proves that the Kannada translations done by the different Kannada translators were all primarily adaptations and written for theatre performances by different emerging itinerant and professional theatre groups. We shall here discuss two other important translations, by M.L. Srikantesha Gowda, one of the earliest pioneers of translating texts from English into Kannada. These translations are *Prataparudra Deva* (Gowda, 1895) from *Macbeth* and *Pramilarjuniyam* (Gowda, 1895) from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, both of which were meant for the Kannada stage. The Graduates Trading Association (GTA) published these two popular translations. The GTA Press was a famous printing press and publishing house during the period under study at the Princely Mysore State, and most of the early translations from English into Kannada were published by this press. Srikantesha Gowda established his own theatre company called Srikanteshwara Nataka Sabha (Drama Troupe of Srikanteshwara) to enact many plays during his time. He wanted to communicate with ordinary people, which was the sole purpose of establishing his theatre.

Gowda's *Pramilarjuniyam* is an adaptation of Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The English play begins with the marriage of Hippolyta and Theseus, but in the Kannada translation, Gowda transforms it into the marriage of Pramile and Arjuna. In the source text, the events are set in the Kingdom of Theseus in Athens. But the drama in the translated text happens in the Kingdom of Pramile, recalling the mythological heroine, Pramile. The Kannada translation is a mixture of mythology and folktale, and the characters represent people of different castes of Kannada society, including, Madivala Machaiah

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<sup>4</sup> Translation is mine.



(Nick Bottom), Vajara Mayachari (Francis Flute), Darji Santuram Vittoba (Robin Starveling), Kunta Shetty (Tom Snout) and others (Gowda, 1895). The ordinary Kannada reader can understand the Kannada prose form and the spoken Kannada language used in the translation. Gowda's story revolves around Indian mythology, while the source text blended British mythology and folk tales representing the Elizabethan era and is a culturally important play in the English academic literature world. Ramachandra Deva, D.A. Shankar, C.N. Ramachandran, and other Kannada critics have appreciated this Kannada translation "as it creatively represents Indian mythology" (Huliyar, 2016, p. 176). Therefore, it is an important adaptation of the English play in Kannada.

Gowda's other important translation is *Prataparudra Deva* of *Macbeth*. The setting of the translation and the characterization have been modified according to Kannada society. The characters have been Kannadized, and include Vijayadwaja (King Duncan), Prataparudra Deva (Malcolm), Pratapa Simha (Donalbain), Veerasena (Macbeth), Surasena (Banquo), and Chandravalli (Lady Macbeth). The beginning and end of the translation consist of Kannada-Sanskrit hymns used in the Indian dramatic tradition. Some scenes are unchanged in the Kannada translation and have not been modified according to Hindu culture. For instance, when the King of Odra, Vijayadwaja (Duncan), comes to the court of Veerasena (Macbeth), Veerasena's wife Chandravalli (Lady Macbeth) receives him, which is the same story in the original *Macbeth*. However, in Hindu tradition, women are not allowed to receive the king. In other scenes of the translation, the kings and other people sit and have drinks, which is the same in the source text but against Hindu culture (Gowda, 1895). The Hindu culture does not allow women to sit with men and have drinks.

*Prataparudra Deva* has been rendered into Kannada by using the *ragale*, a literary form similar to the blank verse used by Shakespeare. H. K. Ranganath, an important historian of Kannada theatre, observes that "Gowda was the first to translate Shakespeare, and he replaced the characters by using Kannada local names and employed simple Kannada. His *Prataparudra Deva* is a well-known Kannada translation repeatedly staged by the Rathnavali theatrical company of Varadachar, one of the prominent actors and producers of theatrical dramas in Kannada." Masti Venkatesh Iyengar observes that "through Gowda's Kannada translation, we come across our village people, and that he wonderfully creates their spoken Kannada language. People reading it would enjoy listening to their language, and this creativity is not present in all people." Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar believes that "Srikantesha Gowda's translation is genuine and blends Indian and folklore values" (Tharakeshwar, 2002, p. 200), which suggests that the Kannada translation was popular. In this context, what Walter Benjamin says about translation becomes relevant:

Particularly when translating from a language very remote from his own, he must go back to the primal elements of language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image, and tongue converge. He must expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign language. (Benjamin, 2004, p. 82)

Similarly, Gowda, too does it for his two translations that employ Indian mythology, folktale, and modern Kannada. What Kannada translators have done during the colonial period by rendering the English source texts is similar to what André Lefevere explains about the "translator's task" when he writes

The translator's task is precisely to render the source text, the original author's interpretation of a given theme expressed in a number of variations, accessible to readers not familiar with these variations, by replacing the original author's variation with their equivalent in a different language, time, place and tradition.

Particularly emphasis must be given to the fact that the translator has to replace all the variations contained in the source text by their equivalent. (Gentzler, 2010, p. 95)

According to the prefaces written by the Kannada translators, we observe that three models of translation strategies were used to render Shakespearean plays into Kannada during the period. One is *Rupantara* (Changing the Form), the second one is *Anuvada* (Translation), which means a literal translation, and the third one is *Bhashantara* (Changing the Language), which means retaining all the cultural elements of the source of Shakespeare's plays. Out of the three translation strategies, *rupantara* played a prominent role in translating English plays into Kannada, which meant changing both the content and the form. On the one hand, it is to bring in a new model of playwriting to Kannada, and, on the other hand, the Kannada translators' concern was to develop Kannada as the other Indian languages with the help of English. These translations have minimized the strangeness of the English plays for the Kannada target audiences. In other words, the translators brought Shakespeare closer to the Kannada readers. In this context, it is appropriate to recall what Lawrence Venuti explains about adaptation

Adaptation is used in those cases where the type of situation being referred to by the S.L. message is unknown in the T.L. culture. In such cases, translators have to create a new situation that can be considered as being equivalent. Adaptation can, therefore, be described as a special kind of equivalence, a situational equivalence. (Venuti, 2004, p. 135)

In fact, in these early Kannada translations, a process of cultural comparison had taken place inadvertently. In this context, Hans J. Vermeer explains that

Translating means comparing cultures. Translators interpret source-culture phenomena in the light of their own culture-specific knowledge of that culture, from either the inside or the outside, depending on whether the translation is from or into the translator's native language and culture. (Nord, 1997, p. 34)

The above discussion shows the crucial intention of translating English plays into Kannada during the colonial period. The question is: What role did these early translations play in the Kannada literary polysystem<sup>5</sup>, and how they may be part of the literary histories of modern Kannada literature? For this purpose, we shall consider all the early translations of Shakespearean plays in the earlier discussions and place them in the Kannada literary polysystem. The paper shall consider the polysystem translation theory to argue that the translations of early Shakespearean plays form an essential part of the Kannada literary canon.

When we look at Shakespearean plays in Kannada translations between 1847 and 1930 from books and bibliographies, it turns out that the number of Shakespearean plays translated is 18, and the total number of times translations were attempted of the same plays is 50. These translations remind us of their role during the colonial period. They inaugurated a new genre of dramatic texts and theatre tradition in Kannada. K.D. Kurtukoti, one of the eminent scholars of Kannada theatre, observes in his book *The Tradition of Kannada Theatre* (1986)

The history of Kannada literature dates back to the 9th century A.D., but strangely enough this ancient literature did not have drama. Some of the major

poets like Pampa, Ranna, Raghavanka are powerfully dramatic, but none of them attempted drama in spite of their acquaintance with Sanskrit drama. This fact is all the more puzzling when we examine it in the light of many references to dramatic performances in poetry. Theatre in Karnataka has been alive for centuries but no writer has even mentioned the name of a single dramatic text. Karnataka had a rich theatrical tradition, both folk and classical, in its mode of expression, but this theatre did not follow a script. (Kurtukoti, 1986, p. i).

Therefore, many translations were of Shakespearean plays and Sanskrit plays into Kannada during this period. These translations in the dynamics of the Kannada literary field fulfilled an essential role of writing independent plays in Kannada, which we discussed while analysing the earlier translations. In this context, Even-Zohar's views are significant

Translated literature is not only a major channel through which fashionable repertoire is brought home, but also a source of reshuffling and supplying alternatives. Thus, whereas richer or stronger literatures may have the option to adopt novelties from some periphery within their indigenous borders, weak literatures in such situations often depend on import alone (Venuti, 2004, p. 201)

The polysystem theory also emphasizes the question of why some texts get translated and what is their role in the target literary system. According to this theory, the socio-literary conditions of the receptor culture are the deciding factors in the choice of text to be translated. If the receptor language lacks certain specific forms or genres, then it is likely to fill up that space through translations from other languages (Zohar, 1990, p. 73-78). Further, Even-Zohar explains

Translated literature simply fulfils the need of a young literature to put into use its newly renovated for as many literary types as possible in order to make it serviceable as a literary language and useful for its emerging public. Since a young literature cannot immediately create texts in all types known to its producers, it benefits from the experience of other literatures, and translated literature becomes in this way one of its most important systems. (Zohar, 1990, p. 201)

Traditional drama as a genre existed in ancient Indian literature and mythological plays written in Sanskrit. The Western dramatic tradition inspired new kinds of social and historical dramas. The primary purpose of translating dramatic texts from the West was to evolve new writing methods in Indian languages, including Kannada. The purpose of translating dramatic texts was to find and establish a new model of writing to present Indian mythology, history, and social issues in a new way. At this juncture, Kannada translators mixed the Western form with Indian content and created modern drama following the Western plays. In this regard, it should be noted that the earliest translations of Shakespeare came from theatre lovers rather than academics. They were truly a cross between translation and adaptation (Moorthy Rao, 1964, p. 63). The modern drama in Kannada literature borrowed features from Western theatre and the Sanskrit and Indian folk performative traditions. Translation of these genres forms a part of the negotiation that culture engages in with other cultures. Even-Zohar observes that

In a literary "vacuum," it is easy for foreign models to infiltrate, and translated literature may consequently assume a central position. Of course, in the case of "weak" literatures or literatures which are in a constant state of impoverishment (lack of literary items existing in a neighbour or accessible foreign literature), this situation is even more overwhelming. (Zohar, 1990, p. 201)

This was precisely the case in Kannada literature during the colonial period. However, Western genres underwent significant changes, acquiring their unique features in the colonial context. Indian and Kannada translators adopted their own literary forms and Western genres while writing modern literature in Indian languages. Similarly, the traditional dramatic culture changed by translating Shakespearean plays during the colonial period in Kannada literature, since adaptations are characterized by transformations, changes, gaps, supplements, and refractions. This means that Kannada translators were not hesitant to violate Shakespearean plays. Such changes were probably required to implant the new genre of drama in Kannada.

Some works refer to Shakespeare's translations into other Indian languages. We shall briefly look at the translations of Shakespearean plays in other major Indian languages so that it becomes clear how translations of Shakespeare were significant during the colonial period. Shakespeare's plays in Bengali, where his adaptations and translations were significant between 1858 and 1885. They were primarily intended for reading purposes. In the British Museum Catalogue, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar mentions a collection of Bengali versions of Shakespeare's complete works in four volumes by Harana Chandra Rakshit. In the nineteenth century, Bengali literature received translations of Shakespeare's plays for reading and stage performance. Srinivasa Iyengar observes that there has been an impact of Shakespeare's plays on the Indian theatrical tradition (Iyengar, 1963, p. 3). One notices in Marathi that in the period between 1867 and 1913, dozens of translations took place, and these translations and adaptations influenced Marathi dramatic tradition. E.V. Ramakrishnan points out that there are 70 translations of Shakespearean plays done between 1850 and 1920 in Marathi. Just as Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam was translated into most Indian languages in the first half of the twentieth century, Shakespeare was appropriated in various forms in the second half of the nineteenth century in most Indian languages (Ramakrishnan, 2006, p. i). Similarly, more than 30 adaptations of Shakespeare's plays were translated into Tamil before the twentieth century. Sambanda Mudaliar, who adapted many of Shakespeare's plays to Tamil to suit the Tamil stage, also acted in them with his troupes. Some of the adaptations are in prose narratives and meant for common mass readers in Tamil (Subramanyam, 1964, p. 120-126). Veeresalingam Pantulu (1848-1919), often called the father of modern Telugu, was greatly influenced by English literature. He translated Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare into Telugu. He transformed the names of Shakespeare's plays and the characters and made radical changes to the plot, which became unique because it suited Indian names, characters, and settings of places as in the Kannada translations. One of the prominent names in Telugu dramatic history is Dharmavaram Krishnamacharya (1853-1912). At the turn of the twentieth century, he wrote 28 plays significantly influenced by Shakespeare (Rajamannar, 1964, p. 127-128).

These translations reveal the way that the plays were not just texts to study and perform but were becoming a part of the cultural scenario as well. The interaction and engagement among the Indian languages, including Kannada, led to exciting insights into the Indian dramatic tradition through translation. Indian writers, translators, readers, performers, and audiences were mesmerized by Shakespearean plays. We are aware of the role of colonialism in sculpting the larger-than-life figure of Shakespeare and making him a world icon. However, it is not the focus of our paper. It should be noted that there has been a continuous interaction between Indian traditional drama and Western drama that resulted in the inauguration of a new dramatic tradition in Kannada and other Indian languages. It is relevant here to mention the views expressed by E.V. Ramakrishnan on the Shakespearean translations and Indian literary history

Translations of Shakespeare finally led to the emergence of the Indian proscenium theatre. The reception of Shakespeare in Indian languages is part of an Indian literary history that is yet to be written. The way he has been translated and received in socio-cultural ethos is a significant comment on the receiving socio-cultural ethos. We need both diachronic and synchronic studies across several Indian languages to map the uncharted expanse of Indian translation traditions. (Ramakrishnan, 2011, p. xii)

Similarly, Kannada literary history has to widen the scope of its study to include translations and consider the role of translations in shaping Kannada literature between 1847 and 1930.

## Conclusion

This essay has considered multiple translations of Shakespearean plays into Kannada between 1847 and 1930, taking into account their historical and cultural background. It has explored why and how they are different in translation, how the translation strategies differ and for what purpose, and how translations done for performances and literary purposes are dissimilar. One of the other questions explored in this paper is how translations that appeared in different regions of present-day Karnataka are different, especially considering Shakespearean dramas. Another issue regarding translations this essay has explored is patronage. It is found that most of these translations were patronaged by the Princely Mysore State exclusively for theatre purposes. Where translations occurred and were published as well as how frequently, also provides us insight into the history of translations. More translations were produced in the Princely Mysore state than in other regions during the period explored because Mysore was perhaps the better-known cultural centre for literature and translations.

To sum up, the essay has argued that English textual practices in the Kannada language, primarily the translations of English plays, have influenced multiple ways of practising literary activities in the Kannada language during the modern period. Consequently, it has explained how the conventionally practised theatrical tradition in Kannada has drastically changed into the modern tradition, and it has done so by discussing the position of translated Shakespearean plays in the Kannada literary polysystem by considering Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, while providing illustrative examples of Shakespearean plays and their various Kannada translators and translations, exercises that enrich our understanding of both literary histories.

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