CHAPTER VI

THE AUDEN - GOKAK VISION

In literature, there are many examples of great poets who were not given their due during their life span such as Keats and Shelley in England and Robert Frost in America. In Malayalam we have Idassery and Changampuzha, who wrote excellent poetry but were not recognized during their lifetime. They were criticized severely for their deviation from the traditional style of writing. But the modern poets do not wait for their country to recognize their worth during their lifetime. In fact a change of terrain affords them great satisfaction and the new environment absorbs them and offers the right climate to bloom.

In the case of Auden and Gokak this fact is found to be very true. Both had the staying power which helped them through the roughness of life situations. Both emerged victorious in their lives; especially, in their poetic careers. The end result was that Auden became an acknowledged poet of both England and America where he was happy to remain. Gokak became a great administrator as well as a renowned novelist, critic and a great poet. Naturally their struggle for survival, the struggle to keep afloat in times of absolute wreck, found expression in their verse rather than in their prose works. The Buddha, the blessed one made a fine
distinction between the soul and the self when questioned. On this, he gave this answer:

Verily, I say unto thee, the mind is spiritual, but neither is the sense perceived void of spirituality. The bodhi is eternal and it dominates all existence as the good law guiding all beings in their search for truth. It changes truth nature into mind, and there is no being that cannot be transformed into a vessel of truth.(Carus 121)

While Auden's poems are greater in number compared to Gokak's, both had common grounds of comparison as found in this comparative study.

Spiritual Aridity

The well known poem of the collection *The Shield of Achilles* of Auden with the same title pictures the world of 1950s juxtaposed with the Homeric world of war and violence. No trace of spirituality can find a place in the opening stanzas while the officials are getting ready for an execution in the modern times and Thetis, the mother of Achilles, is looking at the work on the protective shield that Hephaestos has finished. Instead of the symbol of prosperity like 'vines and olive trees', 'while flower-garlanded heifers, / libation and sacrifice / ... athletes at their games, / men and women in a dance / moving their secret limits,'(SA 37)
the mother found in great dismay the destiny of her son wrought by the gods, that of a ‘weed-choked field’ symbolic of the death that awaited her son ‘... the strong / iron-hearted man-slaying Achilles.’ The only ray of hope, if it can be called that, for the present day world is pictured as,

A ragged urchin, aimless and alone,

Loitered about that vacancy, a bird

Flew up to safety from his well-aimed stone.

That girls are raped, that two boys knife a third,

Were axioms to him, who’d never heard

Of any world where promises were kept

Or one could weep because another wept (SA 37)

The craving of the poet for those bygone days where ‘the promises were kept’ seems far distant. The only reality is the now. The desire for a world where ‘one could weep because another wept’ (17) is too much to hope for. Yet the poet remembers and retains these few grains of concern for fellow-human beings or spirituality in his mind. With great pain he draws the picture of the future generation in the ‘ragged urchin’ for whom lawlessness had become the vogue of the day. Brought up or
rather living in such conditions, the future generation represents only
spiritual aridity. Auden, who had been through two world wars,
recognizes this fact much better than anyone else. Gokak’s “A Leafless
Tree” is no different. The poet pictures the leafless tree as the symbol of
spiritual barrenness. But unlike Auden, there is no desolation here. On
the other hand, the poet is actually happy and his ‘soul bird’ fluttering
about expects nothing. For him, the bare outline of the tree projects ‘the
entire series of Euclid’s theorems: / triangle, radius, square,
circumference, / diameter, diagonal’ (CRP 164). It is an impossibility to
consider even a leafless tree as in the example of Euclid’s theorems of
mathematics; rather it is the opposite, contradicting them. Still the tree
with no colours holds much enchantment for the poet. The reason given
in the third stanza is indeed valid enough, that love can transform the
barrenness to fruitfulness: ‘The magic of love fructifying the void!’
(165). The tree, though barren, is like the veena awaiting ‘Spring / the
player.’ It is also Arjuna’s chariot without Krishna at the helm. The
hope that runs through the lines finds more meaning in the fifth and the
last stanza when the poet admonishes the boughs and branches for
awaiting the rain from the sky. The wandering clouds do not bring rain
in the modern times; the aridity is still powerful.

His advice is

You’d better stretch your roots a little more deeply.
Life is in the depths.

The rain of grace which had fallen once

is now a subterranean stream;

It will nourish you, and tomorrow

the spring rain might come down,

like Dharma, to protect and bless! (CRP 165-66)

For the leafless tree to flower and bloom nourishment comes in the form of water, the most essential thing. The hope of a rain from the sky, like showers of blessing or like Dharma, is very scanty. The life giving water is in the depths, since the 'rain of grace' which had fallen once had been absorbed and had nourished the underground water resources. Even if there is no rain, the tree can stretch its roots a little more deeply in search of this subterranean stream. For the time being, this seems to be the only solution. The hope of a spring rain will help it to survive. It is indeed like the way of life; it comes down to this arid land to protect and bless. The 'Spring rain' can be God's blessing and protection. This is stored in Man himself. In one's own Self one recognizes this truth, after a great deal of deliberation. It has become customary for people to search for God elsewhere and they fail to recognize the fact that god is in one's own self. Traces of godliness in human beings had almost disappeared
because of too much worldiness. The lack of spirituality creates aridity in 
life and also creates leafless trees on the land. Both Gokak and Auden 
lament this lack of spirituality through their poems like “The Leafless 
Tree’ of the former and “The Shield of Achilles” of the latter. Both the 
leafless tree and the ragged urchin need the rain of grace and the life of 
the depths to sustain them. In order to discover it, they need a lot of help 
from the proper sources. Naturally, Gokak’s optimism is obvious in the 
last three lines of the poem. It is not merely to cover itself with leaves 
that the tree needs water; so also, the ‘ragged urchin’ will exist one way 
or the other. But for the tree to flower and bear fruits, for the urchin to 
have human values like sympathy and kindness, spirituality becomes 
essential. Both the leafless tree and the ‘ragged urchin’ are synonyms. 
Both poets agree whole heartedly that spirituality is lacking in the modern 
world creating a loveless existence. It is this existence that creates war 
which in turn brings about great havoc in the minds and hearts of people. 
Hence both Gokak and Auden, who had personal spiritual experiences, 
crave for such spiritual experience for the world too.

Artist Supreme

“Nocturne I” and “Nocturne II” with its dialogue of the self of 
the poet with moon are both invocations as well as hope expressed. 
Auden who was never too much attracted by the countryside, may have 
had an occasion to keep awake on a moonlit night. Gokak in his “A Piece
of Stone” is more towards ‘self-sculpture.’ Both poets become highly philosophical when they add their ardent plea to the divine Artist to cover their imperfections and to make them whole. Auden’s poems are named after the musical composition suited for an evening or night. The dialogue of the heart and mind is interesting enough and more forthright.

Since the moon is the one who can peep into the life of human beings the world over without any restraint, she is indeed the fit person to mediate between the heart and the mind. Moreover the confident way in which she appears in the sky is ‘Like one who knows where she belongs’ (SA 50). The moon is also a ‘Goddess’ for Auden who is a source of dynamic energy, and the energy of creativity. Her mask ‘... hides a faceless dynamic’ (SA, 50). The poet craves for a ‘counterimage,’ a balanced image to go along with his world. In “Nocturne II” the prayer is not a selfish one. On the other hand, the poet craves for friendship, love and a lot more and his request to the Moon is as if she alone is the goddess who can grant him the boon. In Gokak’s “A Piece of Stone” he considers himself a piece of stone that the rapid stream like life had shaped. For creating a sculpture out of the stone, it was left alone on the banks of the stream. The heavenly sculptor Aditi, the god mother, is the one with the original idea. The elements sun, vayu, earth and even god Indra will have something to do with the tracing, cutting, shaping and painting of the sculpture. On earth, Gokak realizes that he will be a perfect example of
the skill of gods and 'of heaven - wizardry' (CRP, 187). This makes him 'heaven's kinsman.' The realization is that the end of 'heaven-wizardry' is the joining of one’s own self with that of the greater self to be shaped into something really worthwhile and aesthetically fulfilling. The willingness of the poet to be shaped and admired is seen throughout. He is the stone made pliant by the rapid progress of life so that the artist will be able to finish off his sculpture soon. The identity of the stone will be lost in the sculpture, thus giving it a different birth.

In “Thank You, Fog” of Auden and “In the House You’ve gifted Me (1989)” of Gokak, both poets take life leisurely. At the same time, their outlook on nature becomes almost the same; a kind of benevolence pervades their poems of the last years. Auden had written the poem “Thank You, Fog” in 1973, the year he died. As is seen in his last poems, complicated thoughts are avoided and a grateful mind expresses itself not only in this poem but also in “A Thanks Giving” written almost at the same time. The poet has returned to his homeland after years of travelling. The sheer blessedness of a pure fog is so endearing after the smog of New York. The country sides of England still remain unpolluted. The description of both outdoors and indoors exhibit familiarity. The sounds of the out door give Auden nostalgia for the time that has gone by and the indoor becomes a perfect haven from the bustle and hustle of life. The happy home atmosphere where everyone sits in a circle talking and
laughing till the fog clears and each leave for the world of ‘work and money / and minding our p’s and q’s.’ is evoked here (CP, 657) The world of violence awaiting outside does not enter into this circle of loved ones. No one can save mother earth, since the conditions of the world had gone from bad to worse, the human beings have realized their helplessness. This special interim may be the only peaceful time in the long run. At least for this, Auden is grateful. It is gratitude towards fog for creating such a forced interim which is so voluble. He considers it as a blessing. In his poem “In the House You’ve gifted Me” 1989, that is an allegorical presentation of the earth as the dwelling place or house, Gokak notices the early sunrise. A prayerful meditation takes him to the realization of the self. Again there is the blessing, pouring forth, not occasionally, as in the case of Auden in snatches, but like a river, taking its birth in oneself to flow quiet into the sea. The life of a human being flows on and joins that greater sea that is, God. Expressed in less than ten lines, Gokak has put his sedatory thoughts into words in this poem. Naturally, it must be taken to understand that the differences in the style of writing of Auden and Gokak are the differences in their individual nature. Gokak cannot keep his Indianness from his poems. Even very simple poems to complicated thought-provoking ones contain constant references to Indian scene or Indian mythology. In “The Song of Youth” Gokak presents a rhyming, war-like song calling the youth to take the
leadership to lead a war against 'caste and creed, / modern meanness; ancient greed.' Mythological weapons and creatures of ancient Hindu and European mythology are mentioned to heighten the imagery. The call to the youth is a clarion call to awake:

"Arise, O youth

in your face is valour beaming,

in your eyes the god head dreaming.

A sovereign will in your tall bearing

stands erect. There is daring

that rocks the world in your young arms,

a freedom in your steps that charms;

arise, arise;

(KBM 32)

The youth is hailed frantically as 'Messiah, Hero, Avatar / Infinity's crown, our life's star!' etc., so that the urgency is retained from the very beginning to the very end. Contrary to this poem, "To the youth stepping into Life's Temple" is all advice to seek the truth and create an awareness of the hardship that lay ahead. The seeker should not be
taken in by the utterances of the avatars who were dead and gone. So the poet's advice is to

Be ready to count the numberless stars

Crowding the one and only heaven!

Count the countless world-views

Crowding into earth's domain!

May your mind and heart dance in time

With the time of all these runes!

(CRP 6)

The search for the pearl of wisdom leads to the one that is boundless and the lustre of which will outshine all others. Advice of this type is reminiscent of a Jnani and Gokak shares the wisdom of his life experiences with the youth through this poem. Utterances of this type are never the forte of Auden. In style, he differs vastly from Gokak; yet the essence of his advice to his Godson Philip Spender amounts to the same:

To be responsible for the happiness

of the Universe is not a sinecure;
in elite lands your generation may be called to opt for a discipline
that out peers the monks, a way of obedience,
poverty and —goc grief— perhaps chastity,
yet in this world’s ill — weathered open,
a stern venture pre-figured in folk- tales
as the Quest Perilous.

(CP 626).
The discipline needed for the venture ahead is perhaps more than a western youth can envisage. As the Buddha, the blessed one says

He who struggles in the interest of self so that he himself may be great or powerful or rich or famous, will have no reward, but he who struggles for righteousness and truth, will have great reward, for even his defeat will be a victory.

(Carus 121)

Yet taking his duty as a godfather, Auden obligingly points out the right way for the young man and makes him aware of his fellow human beings and his responsibility towards them. Into the spiritual aridity created by the world wars and changing world views, Auden is putting through his
own version of spirituality through the epistle. “Quest” of folk-tales was not an easy one and those who undertook the quest fully understood the dangers that went along with it and they were disciplined and prepared for them. Aware of his incapacity to be a model of discipline, which Auden admits freely, at least he can give instructions. Whether it be proper or not with Auden, this is the closest that he can express his feelings, for his dear friend’s son. In his sixties, one finds Auden weary of the world, at the same time retaining traces of spirituality along with philosophical thoughts. Both Gokak and Auden express similar views here, since both feel a sort of anxiety for the youth of the day who had grown up amidst war terrors without learning admirable virtues or values. It is because of their concern for the future of mankind represented by the youth, that both poets write verses of such calibre.

Folklore and folktales show the origins and natural flavour of the country. Today special attention is given to folklore studies the world over. “Ode to Gaea” of Auden and “The Song of Earth” of Gokak trace the origins of Earth through their poems. To Auden, Gaea is the Mother, at the same time she is also the Greek Goddess Gaea. The poem is written as a description of the view of the earth from the air, that is the new culture. Obviously there are restrictions; still the poet notes the landmarks of each country as they are found on the earth when seen from the air. It is not a pretty sight at all... from overhead / Much
harm is discernible / Farms unroofed and Labour-works wrecked/ In the second Assault;' (SA 57, 58) Gokak, on the other hand, acknowledges the stability of the Earth throughout the ages when he writes 'she is the only Rock of Ages, / Earth, Mother Earth.' Only in comparison with this mortal world on earth, has the immortal meaning. The depths of the sea and the breeze return finally to 'the lap of earth.' The irresistible call of Earth cannot be ignored by the soul of the immortal. Such is its association with Mother Earth. Gokak uses vedic images like air, water, metals, stones etc, in his poems to substantiate his ideas. Both poets revel in the immortality that Earth affords human beings inspite of all that this earth had to endure throughout the centuries. There is no ignoring the fact that man will continue his funny attempt to be the conqueror of this earth. The ideal that the poets, her sons, preach are but lies; that there will be a day when "tigers chum with deer" (SA 59) as Blake had hoped for, is all a sham which mother understands very well, 'And Earth, till the end, will be herself' (SA 58)

Even if my soul were to encompass in flight
the seven worlds and even if aeons passed in bliss of being
listen it would to the call of Earth
and re-enter her atmosphere. (CRP, 181)

Neither Gokak nor Auden crave for immortality; the call of the Earth is too strong for them to resist. Both believe that heaven and hell are on
this earth itself and concern for fellow human beings is the meaning of life for them. There is no abandoning the earth for them. The self begins and ends with Mother Earth. A child cannot forget its mother; the Earth Mother has nourished and provided for her nurslings by her abundance. Ignorant and foolish human beings had tried to destroy her beauty in the name of civilization and progress. Gokak and Auden lament this fact strongly through their poems. The creatures of this earth are their fellow beings. The eco-spirituality that St. Francis of Assissi lived through his life finds echoes in the poems of both Gokak and Auden. To them, attaining godhead is by serving human beings and the creatures of the earth, and not by abandoning them and travelling all alone through the path of salvation. Salvation must come with their fellow humans on this earth itself, and not apart. *The Bhagavad Gita* states clearly:

O son of Kunti, all beings, at the end of
a cycle, go back to my Prakriti (Nature);
again, at the beginning of a cycle, I send them forth.
Ruling over My Prakrit, I send forth
again and again this vast multitude of
beings, who are helplessly impelled by
Nature (8: 5-6)
The Blessed Lord reveals the secret of the cycle of birth and rebirth to Arjuna, his devotee. That which is created of this earth must return to the earth, only to appear later according to the laws of Nature.

Philosophy

Both philosophy and theology are closely connected with literature. Poets in their great wisdom become philosophical, at one time, and spiritual, at another. The life experiences of the poets are enough to spur their sensitive minds which in turn are perfected by wide reading. With Auden this is extremely true, since his progress from a mere composer of verse to a mature spiritualist is an interesting journey. The hallmark of his philosophical ideas were engendered from a reading of the works of Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Tillich, Nietzsche and Niebuhr. A rational theoretical science like philosophy was more attractive to Auden than the lives of saints. If he was still on the path of conversion it was only through philosophy. Religion and religious belief to Auden, were something personal rather than something one was born into. It is clearly a deliberate choice of a grown up man; one who had lived and experienced the worldly life in his search for the meaning of life. Definitely Auden is yet another Siddhartha, one who searches for Artha or meaning like the Siddhartha of Herman Hesse. The restless spirit wanders from place to place seeking that which is still not known to him. Possibly he is searching for Truth; and truth is definitely the Self in
oneself devoid of its worldly bondage. To Kierkegaard truth is obtained by personal commitment. We must live it in order to experience it. Only then will it be appropriated by the seeker. The same is true of the teachings of Jesus when he says “I am the Truth.” Hesse propounds this through the central character Siddhartha in the novel of the same name. The journey of the seeker is also significant. The seeker meets with different types of people and each adds to the totality of his experience. Nothing is left as insignificant. With Auden and Gokak this search had indeed been fruitful as their poems indicate. They realized quite early that it is only through love and wisdom that one will reach Truth. Their quest for Truth leads them to Brahman according to Indian philosophy; because this infinite Truth is Brahman. It is only through Brahma that one will reach atman or one’s spirituality.

The philosophical attempt to understand Truth should consider the world process, its natural order and its purposefulness. The wheel of time is also the birth and death cycles. Dr. Radhakrishnan in his Recovery of Faith says

In all forms of Indian thought, time is symbolised by birth and death. The world is represented by the wheel of time, of births and deaths. The question for philosophy is whether this all devouring time, this samsara is all or whether there is anything else beyond time. Is this world, this perpetual
procession of events, self-maintaining, self-sustaining, self-established or is there a beyond, underlying it, standing behind it, inspiring it, holding it together? (77)

The answer to the questions posed is the same answer that Gokak gives through his poem “Space - Time Continuum.” As Dr. Radhakrishnan says “The cosmic process is not an unintelligible chaos.” (77) The philosopher’s words are supported by the theories of Stephen W. Hawking, the eminent physicist and the most brilliant scientific mind since Einstein according to the media. After discussing the different aspects of time, Hawking writes about the origin and fate of the universe putting forth the various possibilities.

Science seems to have uncovered a set of laws that, within the limits set by the uncertainty principle, tell us how the universe will develop with time, if we know its state at any one time. These laws may have originally been decreed by God, but it appears that he has since left the universe to evolve according to them and does not now intervene in it [. . .] The whole history of science has been the gradual realization that events do not happen in an arbitrary manner, but that they reflect a certain underlying order, which may or may not be divinely inspired.

(Hawking 129)
While the philosopher and the scientist agree on the topic, the poet Gokak has definite answers for the underlying order of things. According to physicists

Space-time may be a continuum, or it may be discrete, in that it consists of indivisible cells in some manner. In its interaction with matter, space-time acts in a fundamental way as a perfect mirror providing a complete and completely reversed image for each particle in the universe. It may also be true that space-time itself is either a passive container for the physical world or is itself the seat of all physical phenomena by and through its own intrinsic geometry.

(Riemann10-11)

Siva the dancer, lover - God “danced his sun-moon dance,” with Parvathy watching on. The “dance gained an ever-varying tempo” and its swiftness obscured the dancer. Gokak explains this dance in the third stanza of the poem:

It was as though ever-revolving cameras

Focussed on and filmed

An ever-changing scene.

It was as though creation-

The myriad fragments of Reality-
Were being fashioned and refashioned

Every successive second.

The illusion of stability

That ever-revolving earth creates

Was shattered and dissolved

In an unending flux

(GT 242)

The dance of Siva is taken to be the cosmic dance of the cycles of life and death, ebb and flow. Many philosophers had come to this conclusion including Sri Ananda Coomarasamy who gives an aesthetically valid explanation for the dance of Siva.

According to Ananda Coomaraswamy the dance of Siva is the dancing universe. The endless flow of energy passing through creates many forms only to melt and recreate into the others. The particles of space need the will of Siva to move.

In the night of Brahman, Nature is inert, and cannot dance till Shiva wills it: He rises from his rapture, and dancing sends through inert matter pulsing waves of awakening sound, and lo! Matter also dances, appearing as a glory round about Him. Dancing, He sustains its manifold phenomena. In the fullness
of time, still dancing, He destroys all forms and names by fire
and gives new rest. This is poetry, but none the less science.

(Tao. 270)

The tenth and twelfth century Indian artists had represented the dancing Siva with four arms, dancing on the body and a demon. The explanation of the dance goes like this: the damaru, or the drum in the upper right hand symbolizes the primeval sound of creation, and the left hand with the flame or fire represents consummation or the element of destruction. With creation on one hand, and destruction on the other, a balance is achieved. The dwarf or the demon on whose body the God dances represents somebody who doesn't want to grow -- Ignorance personified that must be conquered. The second right hand is raised in abhaya mudra which symbolizes the meaning 'Have no fear. I have conquered evil.' It also assures protection and peace along with maintenance. The second left hand points down to the uplifted foot which represents the release from the spell of maya. The dancer's calm and detached face is balanced between the two poles of creation and destruction. Behind him the circle of flames symbolizes the wind. What connects everything is wind, prana or energy, the cosmic wind. God is the beginning and the end of everything. Like the sub atomic world of the physicist, the phenomenal world of the Eastern mystic is a world of samsara-of continuous birth and death.
In meditation space-experience is converted into simultaneous co-existence, side by side existence of things which do not remain static but become a continuum where space and time are united.

(Tao 205)

But what Gokak points out is that even through this cosmic dance, Siva with his ‘forehead eye,’ the eye of the soul, recognized Parvathi, his lovely and eternal bride and Parvathi in turn ‘with the eye of the soul’ saw the dancer, ‘her primordial lover.’ This mutual recognition of lovers making them one, is the basis of all life on this earth. This is the infinite, the Ardhanarishwara or the androgyne concept, the existence of male and female in one, Siva and Sakti which forms the basis of life on earth. This endless cycle of life hour after hour, day after day, year after year evokes different conflicting in the mind of Auden. When he wrote Horae Canonicae or the canonical hours, the hours of prayer in the monastery, were like spokes of the wheel of time. The canonical hours observed by the monks and nuns are hours of prayer when the whole world is remembered. They remember the world outside sitting inside their monasteries, and praying at fixed hours. These hours of prayer number seven starting with “Prime” which must be over by 7.30 followed by “Terce,” which is recited around nine o’clock, “Sext,” recited at noon just before midday meal in winter in the monasteries, “Nones” between 2 p.m and 3 p.m. in the afternoon, “Vespers” around
4.30 that is, at sunset. In some of the European countries where the rule of the monastery prescribes eating supper before dark, "Compline," is around 6 p.m. but before 7 since the monks go to bed at seven o'clock, and "Lauds" between 5 and 6 a.m. in the morning, in order to end at dawn. The canonical hours taken here are those followed in the monasteries of Italy where the days are shorter in winter and nights longer. Hence the late rising and early sleeping hours. Auden follows the hours strictly and observes the body at these hours with a detached look. The awakening of the body to the day break is described in one breath:

Simultaneously, as soundlessly,

Spontaneously, suddenly

As, at the vacant of the dawn, the kind

Gates of the body fly open

To its world beyond, the gates of the mind,

The horn gate and the ivory gate,

Swing to, swing shut, instantaneously

Quell the nocturnal rummage

Of its rebellious fronde, ill-favored,

Ill-natured and second-rate,

Disenfranchised, widowed and orphaned

By an historical mistake:
Recalled from the shades to be a seeing being,

From absence to be on display,

Without a name or history I wake

Between my body and the day.

(SA 65)

The awakening process is a bit lengthy, so that when a person is totally awake, his mind, body and spirit awake to the surroundings. The full faculty is awake at 7.30 in the morning and the poet, Auden, feels like Adam before his sin, in his innocence, uncontaminated by the rigours of the day. This same feeling, of being the first man on earth as well as the last man on the earth is conveyed through the short novel of Allen Sillitoe namely Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner where Smith, the juvenile delinquent serving his term at borstal, gets up early in the morning to practise for long-distance running while all his companions lay asleep. Since sleep is a small death, he feels like the last man on earth with all others dead and he feels like the first man on earth getting up as he does earlier than others. The “Prime” prayers are all for the world because the monks believe that all human beings are the children of God. With “Terce” at nine o’clock Auden feels that ‘. . . we are left,/Each to his secret cult, now each of us / Prays to an image of his image of himself.’ (SA 65)
No Chthonian, that is deities of the underworld, lurks anywhere to disrupt the momentum of the day especially such a hectic day like a Friday, just before everyone leaves the offices in a hurry for the weekend ahead. The predictability of the day helps only to increase the boredom.

A working day progresses with everyone concentrating and immersed in the work they are doing. Auden finds beauty in the rapt expressions on the faces of the people totally oblivious to the surroundings, oblivious to the noon day meal that awaits them. *Sext* is the prayer before the midday meal in the monasteries. Totally immersed in work, people forget even themselves and Auden finds this quite fascinating, “How beautiful is that eye-on-the-subject look.” (65) Surely such people need monuments and in the modern age they replace the saints and martyrs and work continuously, raptly without even pausing for a break. The man of authority is more authoritative than either generals or any other great leaders. Though one may not like them Auden feels that ‘... we owe them / basilicas, divas, dictionaries, pastoral verse, / the courtesies of the city.’ (66) The day gets busier after this. “Nones” recited between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. is again occasion to remember one’s God along with prayer for the whole world as is the main purpose of the canonical hours. The heat of the noon produces lethargy yet work must go on. It is the time for siesta in countries with
hot climate. The afternoon rest is much needed for the body and mind since heat ennervates. Sounds creep into the silent siesta afternoons. The hectic work schedule that awaits the person needs a bright and refreshed mind and body. Siesta restores vitality to the body that we try to destroy by overwork. Auden had written “Vespers” in prosaic stanza form and the contrast between the Eden of sophistication and the New Jerusalem of the common man is emphasized here with a contrast between the attitudes of man born under the star Aquares that is, Auden himself and another born under Scorpio. According to Linda Goodman’s study of star signs, Aquaris people like variety and Scorpio has a sting on its tail with Pluto, ruling over. The time of sacrifice is over, and it is the sacrifice of the innocent lamb who carries the sins of the world for the redemption of man. ‘For without a cement of blood (it must be human, it must be innocent) no secular wall will safely stand.’ (80).

The contrast is between anti-types; the poet is Arcadian, more attracted by natural beauty, while ‘he’ is Utopian, one who craves for a political and social equality. This contrast continues till the end of the poem. The recognition that ‘he’ is the other half of the poet comes as realization. The ‘arcadias, Utopian, our dear old bag of a democracy’ (80) are all based on the blood of the innocent, otherwise there is no stability for the worldly institutions. The poet is reminded of the Lamb of God, Jesus, who carries the sins of the world, who laid the foundation
for Christianity with his blood. Very much conscious of this fact Auden’s philosophy finds expression here -- that for something to grow, a sacrifice is very much needed.

After the stomach and mouth of “Vespers” which pertains to eating, at “Compline,” there is time to ruminate over what had happened during siesta time. The sounds interceding into the reflective mood of the poet do not deter him from his purpose. The heart tells the truth but nothing else reveals the action during siesta. The poet viewing his body as a city comes to the conclusion that

For the end, for me as for cities,
Is total absence: what comes to be
Must go back into now-being
For the sake of the equity, the rhythm
Past measure or comprehending

(SA 82)

The philosophical conclusion of going back to ‘non-being / for the sake of the equity’ has traces of the scientist in him who believes in the age old principle That which is born of this earth must go back to the earth to keep the balance of nature. Nothing can refute this principle.

“Lauds” or “Matins,” as it is called, is emphatically placed in the end even though the prayers are recited between 5.00 and 6.00 a.m. in
order to end it at dawn. More than any serious thoughts, the poem is a
display of technicality on the part of Auden. With 'In solitude, for
company' as a refrain for all seven stanzas, Auden uses the second line
of the first stanza as the beginning for the third stanza and the second
line of the second stanza, and repeating this pattern till the end 'with the
crow of cocks.' The morning calls are not properly registered inspite of
its commanding nature. Even if he is to awake, it will be in solitude.
The 'mass-bell' and the small birds singing among the leaves with the
sun shining portend a good morning. But the lethargy of the thought and
solitude make the poet responseless. The poem ends on a sleepy note
rather than a cheerful awakening of the morning. The time of the day
when one becomes more lonely, plagued by thoughts of oneself, when
the spirit is more despondent, is the time, according to most
psychiatrists, a person feels more compelled to commit suicide, the time
is the 4'0' clock in the morning. The depression felt in the mind affects
the body also and the poet does not make any effort to get up. While all
creatures sing the praise and glory of the creator, invoking his blessing,
the poet feels a stirring of life in his mind along with the small birds
when he reaches the last stanza.

Thus through the canonical hours Auden is passing through a day
in his life, in the company of his body. To him the mind and body are
like two separate entities at times and one whole at other times. The
ability to view the physical body as a separate being from the soul shows the detachment felt by the poet after years of catering to the pleasures of the body. Once you feel detached about your body, you stop concerning yourself about your body’s needs. The confusion of the world events had produced fragmentation of the soul and fear among the Auden generation. This fragmentation is reflected in their day to day life also. While examining the body in a detached manner at specific intervals, symbolized through canonical hours, Auden is putting across to his readers the same feeling of fragmentation. Gokak through the dance of Siva puts across the same idea when the myriad particles in continuous fluctuation are brought to a coherent whole by God. As in Auden’s whole body becoming the centre of myriad impressions of his body, in “Space-time Continuum” Lord Siva controls the breaking and uniting of life and time, between body and soul, Jivatma and paramatma. This transference of interest from body to soul is achieved, in the case of Auden, towards the last few years of his life. The poem ‘The Old Man’s Road’ is a recollection of the road that was traversed and the road that is to be taken. It is an old man’s road but again he feels that that road also should be left and His road should be taken. Giving way to youth, the poet sits back happy in the thought of the path chosen for him. Here the road is most definitely the way to spiritual freedom envisaged by the
poet. Hence there is no hesitation or regret to leave the road that he had
taken to the next young traveller:

    a youth in spring

        Trots by after a new excitement,
        His true self, hot on the scent.

    The old Man leaves his Road to those
    Who love it no less since it lost purpose,

    Who never ask what History is up to,
    So cannot act as if they knew.

        (HC 63)

A concern for the aimlessness of the young generation its lack of
concern for the past, is also hinted at.

Gokak, on the other hand, has much to say to the youth entering
into life's temple. The youth has much to achieve in this world. The
aimlessness of the Western youth that Auden encountered does not
appear here; on the other hand, Gokak's youth is entering life's temple
with eagerness and with a sense of purpose. When advice is given, to this
young generation it is because the poet has the assurance that it will be
taken in the right sense. The unknown future is like the ocean with a lot
of pearls hidden for the ‘prince of divers’ to win and bring back. So the
advice of the poet is to

Be the prince of divers and bring out
The light of rounded pearls hidden in the deep!

May these awaken in you
An intense longing to string them together

And present the pearl necklace to the mother

(CRP 5)

By diving into the depths of the sea, a good diver can bring forth
precious pearls to mother earth. With definite interpretations, this can be
read as the youth piercing the depths of ignorance and coming up with
pearls of wisdom which he will use as adornment or for the welfare of
earth or the beings on earth. For the seeker, there is definite aim and
because he feels one with the beings on earth, he brings forth the pearls
after diving into the depths of the ocean of ignorance. Isha Upanishad
has an explanation for this feeling of oneness. “But he who sees
everywhere the self in all existences and all existences in the self,
shrinks not thereafter from aught.” (21:6)

The youth entering life’s temple does so with this awareness so that
his existence becomes meaningful. He is able to recognize the fact that
all is one and One is in All. Hence the desire to alleviate the sufferings of mankind born out of ignorance. Choosing anyone of the manifold paths, he will be able to do much. When the concern for one’s fellow human beings enters one’s mind, the spirituality of a human being finds meaning. Gokak, through this poem, enumerates the aforesaid principle.

Ariel

Shakespeare’s character Ariel of *The Tempest* has been a source of so much theories and criticisms. But all agree on one point, that is, Ariel represents intelligence as well as goodness. When Auden wrote “Invocation to Ariel” as the first poem of the series of poems in “The Sea and the Mirror” along with “Stephano’s Song,” “Trinculo’s Song,” “Alonso to Ferdinand,” “Song of the Master and Boatswain,” “Miranda’s Song,” and “Caliban to the Audience” which is a prose-poem, he meant Ariel to be his inspiring force. But when Gokak wrote ‘To Ariel in Bondage” he had different ideas. Ariel, once free of his bondage, has chosen well, according to the poet. Even when he did his master’s orders he was throwing himself into a whirlpool to keep himself calm and cool. There was no place for dreams in that whirlpool of activity. But once the master decided that it is time to set him free, Ariel can indeed dream and with a wife he can still dream on. Ariel with his brightness makes fiery creatures gentle because he had learnt a valuable lesson that “bondage more than liberty / tempers souls like ours that be.”
Moreover, the poet speaks of Ariel as the instrument to dispel evil from this world. His request is

In daily life from root to stem;
Help to build the holy fane
In every street and every lane.
No colony of friends is needed
If evil from the world were weeded.

(CRP 30)

If the philosopher Shakespeare had created a Prospero and an Ariel, something of that philosophy had rubbed off Ariel, the ethereal creature. As Gokak presents it, Ariel is someone to be looked up to and admired for enduring the long years of bondage without any protest. It had also enhanced his mature and well balanced behaviour. He is also a totally different creature enticing his victims:

A thousand fancies came and hummed
Into your ears and them you drummed
Into your friends - Utopian schemes
And reams of paper for your dreams.

(CRP 29)

Auden’s invocation also is none other than a plea to soothe the troubled mind, the unfeeling world had left for the poet. Both poets had the common feeling that Ariel with his brightness would be able to dispel
the gloom that is pervading the earth. He stands for both Auden and Gokak, as the symbol of spirituality in this "... sour / and shifless water" that is the world. With his 'brilliance' that mingles 'air and fire' and exuberance, he is very much in demand to soothe the troubled hearts. With epic-like beginning, Auden invokes Ariel instead of the Muses to sing and smoothen the path for him. The song should be sung

O brilliantly, lightly,
Of separation,
Of bodies and death,
Unanxious one, sing
To man, meaning me,
As now, meaning always,
In love or out,
Whatever that mean,
Trembling he takes
The silent passage
Into discomfort.

(SP 80)

Anxiety, the root cause of all troubles, could be one of the reasons for the discomfort of life. For the same reasons Auden hails Ariel as the 'Un anxious one.' Here mankind is personalised into 'me' or the Self. Naturally the murky conscience of the world smothers the poet to such
an extent that the wish for Ariel comes as a ray of hope and as a breath of fresh air.

It is seen that both poets with the same theme have similar thoughts, essentially spiritual, which they arrive at by philosophically arranged thoughts. Similar thoughts were expressed by Tagore also in his poem “Heaven of Freedom.” Once free from the bondage of fear and the ensuing class wars, that which awaits man is heaven on this earth. Though not invoking Ariel by name, Tagore also must have had the same idea when he wrote the poem.

Conclusion

Both Auden and Gokak consider their poems as their very personal expressions of thought. Auden’s poems are indeed personal outpourings like Gokak’s. The world events, personal experiences, friendship and a host of other feelings also become the themes of their poems, only to end in philosophical thoughts and from there to spirituality. The gradual progress of spirituality in their life gains momentum towards the end of their life. Their poems reveal the fact that they are poets who took life seriously enough and the progress of their poetic and philosophical vision had enhanced their spirituality.