CHAPTER II

GOKAK – INFINITE SPACES

Born in Dharwar, Karnataka, Vinayak Krishna Gokak was a great scholar and a visionary. Educated in India, he spent time abroad, at Oxford. Gokak worked as teacher, principal, director and Vice-Chancellor in a number of colleges, Institutions and Universities. Besides, he was also the president of the Sahitya Academy, India’s National Academy of Letters from 1983 to 1988. He won the prestigious Jnanapith Award in 1991 for his Bharat-Sindhu Rashmi, the crowning glory of his literary career. He won a Padmashri and an honorary doctorate was conferred on him.

Regionalism to Universality

Colonialism in all its glory was rampant all over the world during Gokak’s younger days. India, a British colony, was on the verge of independence. But that was a long way off for a South Indian. The privilege of sending one’s child to England for education was a prestige at a time when everything English was superior to Indians. Sent for education to England, Gokak’s time in the country posed a dilemma to his educated mind: that of alienation. But the language English was not tainted with the colonial injustices nor was English literature. It was this
argument that comforted the troubled mind of the young man. The alienation of an Indian living in England, produced tender thoughts in the mind of the poet which found expression in novels like Bharata Sindhu Rashmi and Samarasave Jeevana. These novels, written in Kannada were published before the independence of India. The conflict in Samarasave Jeevana is taken as the conflict of the writer himself. It is interesting to note that the second part of the same novel was written and published after independence. This novel of epic stature is, in a way, the writer’s autobiography. It clearly reflects the troubled mind of a true Indian, enjoying the benefits of a good education and at the same time, destined to be a true patriot India of pre-independence period had so many literary minds troubled by the same dilemma.

To fight against colonialism after being educated in England seemed a mockery. But with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru on the scene, both educated in England, the last trace of hesitation was wiped out from Gokak’s mind. Still in his twenties, Gokak’s novel was more didactic than merely a work of art. Still, the amazing fact about the novel is that its second part, added after two decades, was written in English, the title being Narahari, Prophet of New India. By this time Gokak underwent a sea change and his views about life also had changed as a result of his contact with seers like Sri. Aurobindo Ghosh and Rabindranath Tagore. Though still patriotic, he
preferred the views of Tagore and Aurobindo on freedom and remained a pacifist throughout, unlike Gandhi and Nehru, who were actively in the forefront of the Independence struggle. Gokak was not dragged into the vortex of the struggle unlike so many other, young, educated, enlightened men of the same period fighting tooth and nail to remove the colonizers from the land. Though the method of fighting was based on ahimsa and non co-operation, still it needed planning and forethought. Gokak, like Tagore was fighting more for universal brotherhood than for regionalism or nationalism. It was with a proper understanding of Tagore that he set out to follow him in the path of Spiritualism. With a deep understanding of Hinduism and of the Vedas and Upanishads, Gokak just could not stand apart as an Indian but had to try for a universal citizenship for all. He had really and truly understood the message of the Vedas and Upanishads. Along with the writers of the Middle Ages of Indian Literature Gokak believes that

Literature should illumine rather than teach and that, if teach it must, it should be through illumination rather than directly . . . . The main stream of the literary mind of India flows chiefly towards delight. The mind of Valmiki and Vyasa, of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuth, of Kamban and Kumara Vyasa, of Tagore and Premchand, is the robust mind that teaches as it imagines and illumines. (Pathways 44)
The role of the writer as an educationist is what Gokak craved for and tried to be and later became. Though a poet, the feeling that the poet, the bard, can also be a person giving enlightenment to others, was with him.

In many of his writings we come across such points of view. In the essay *The Fulfilment of Poetry* he elaborates,

> The fulfilment of poetry is not the fulfilment of the poet. The poet has his own dusting as an individual. He earns, as Bhamaha says, the love of the people and fame, which Shelley has called 'love disguised.' He also becomes well-versed in the fine arts and in a well-proportioned cultivation of the four values of life, Wealth, Desire, Duty and Illumination. Poetry proceeds from his genius and leads him to Delight [...]. Poetry also enables the poet to earn money, increase his knowledge of the world and remove misfortunes looming large on his path. It speaks to him like his *kantha*, his well beloved. *(Integral View 206)*

Defining the various roles and duties of the poet, Gokak still believes that the poet is the torch bearer or the path maker of humanity. Travelling through various realms, poetry reaches the 'sahrudaya' or the cultured reader. The poet as such has various roles to play and it is his duty to revive his fellow human beings to life from the lethargy of their mundane daily life. For Gokak, "In the march of humanity towards a
higher and nobler life, poetry is the torch held high, the leading light and
guide on the tangled path of life.” (Integral View, 207).

Among the Indian writers writing in English, very few are
acknowledged as versatile writers both in English and their regional
language. The few that have come up foremost had effectively combined
the cherished memories of their region both in their native regional
language and also in English, thus producing an entirely colourful
scenario for an English reader. Kamala Das alias Madhavikutty and
Dr. Ayyappa Panikker in Malayalam, A.K. Ramanujan in Tamil, Gokak
in Kannada are some eminent writers who had enriched both Indian
Writing in English and their regional language with their contributions.
It is to be noted that both Kamala Das and Gokak use the genres of
novel, prose and poetry alike with a consummate skill that makes the
readers sit back and wonder. With Gokak, it is an intimate love of
languages that has made him the innovator of Kannada poetry.

His inspiration was the leading modern English poets and his visit
to England enhanced the attraction to modern poetry. With great
enthusiasm he tried to introduce the qualities of modern poetry in
Kannada and found that it was a great success. He was the pioneer of
Navya Kavya or Modern School of Poetry in Kannada. Navodaya which
came later, had much contribution from Gokak. With a remarkable flair
for writing, Gokak’s mastery over Kannada, his mother tongue, and
English was almost equal as his writings reveal. The journey to England by sea was a time for much reflection and *Samudra Geetegalu* was the result. Translations from this Kannada collection show that Gokak really understood the depth and vastness of the mighty ocean that is humanity.

Gokak, the man and Gokak the writer, poet, are not different in any manner. Rather, his works reveal an integrated man to the readers. Like his Narahari, the poet and seer, Gokak himself tried his best to be an example of the integrated man, the seer and visionary. This was achieved by an exploration of the mysteries of the universe. He starts with an exploration of the Vedas in an effort to find a unifying factor for different religions.

Tolerance is another trait of the Indian mind. Vedic gods were thirty three in number. They dropped out one by one till Hindu India was left only with Vishnu, Siva and Brahma. Brahma was gradually eliminated and only Vishnu and Siva remained for the Arya-Dravidian Indian people. Rama and Krishna were, of course there as Avatars. Even Buddha was taken up as an avatar, when his religion and teachings had almost disappeared from India. Other religions came in and Indian society became complex and rich with diverse faiths. But the unifying forces were there, speaking of Ram and Rahim and of Krishna and Christ in the same breath. (*Pathways*, 45)
In a country where the motto is Unity in Diversity, Gokak found various possibilities for unity. India of the post colonial days was not a peaceful country. Different factions fought for dominance, threatening to undermine the unity of India. The iron will power and effort of the political leaders who were with Mahatma Gandhi, brought about a kind of truce to the partitioned India. The effort of the writers of the time was to inspire the people of India to forget religious differences and to see the other Indians as fellow human beings and not as enemies to be killed. The division of India into different states based on language, was more for the convenience of ruling and for strengthening unity. Under a common leader like Mahatma Gandhi, this unity became a reality. Though Indians paid a high price for unity, that is, the assassination of Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, the integrity of the nation remained intact. The efforts of the visionaries like Sri Aurobindo and Tagore helped to bring about an element of spirituality to the Independence struggle. Taking inspiration from these eminent men Gokak took over from where they left. Though their writings still inspired, Gokak felt that more was needed. His encounter with spirituality began with the sea journey to England. As J.M Mohanty writes in his article on Gokak, “In Remembrance”

Gokak's entrance into layers of unconsciousness started very early in his life. The first ever such experience was like
Wordsworth’s experience as narrated in the *Prelude*, when he was eighteen or nineteen and he went to the top of a small hill outside the town from where he could view the whole amphitheatre for many miles all around. The effect was instantaneous on his young mind when he felt that it was an infinite amphitheatre of the universe which he was to travel and explore. The abstract reality behind the universe faded away and what loomed large before him was the universe itself, with all its intensity, and beauty. The universe was to be explored and all the attendant variety of life in it. (12)

A quick glance through the various collections of Gokak’s verse, some translations from the original Kannada, reveals a very observant nature combined with prophetic insight. Like Auden, anything and everything became a theme for a poem. Thus his collection of poems named *Kashmir and the Blind Man* stands revealed with its inner depths like the title of the collection. The beauty of nature as the blind man experiences, while what normal human beings blindly destroy in the name of revolution, makes this collection a short but memorable one with only twenty seven poems about places of natural beauty. The “Poem” is a typical poet’s dilemma and the desire for immortality through his verse is followed by the thought that it is his vanity. His verse is “A wave that spills and kills itself / on the shore of eternity” but
the truth is revealed; “The Noumenon exists apart / It’s in the phenomenon / That the poet and poem are real” (KBM 9)

In “Visnagar Again” Tintern Abbey senses overflow with “rosebud of love / and jasmine of sweet memory.” The poet’s very blood thrills at the memory of Visnagar; to him the attraction of Visnagar is eternal.

Long after pulse, heart, ears and eyes

and blood are no more than surmise

and I am but a breath of wind,

a glint of light, a speck of shade,

my soul will leap up there to find

a magic spell upon her laid,

an eternal seal; rose – bud of love

and jasmine of sweet memory:

Visnagar! (KBM 10)

The beauty and fragrance of Visnagar still linger in his memory.

Yet another place worth remembering and evoking memories in him is the Suratkal beach of South Canara. The poem is an opportunity
to reflect upon the theme of how 'Art perfects what Nature initiates.' Siva, the King of Artists, is remembered through this philosophical poem.

I am the Soul of Silence and you are its Word.

I am the straight line whose curve you are

I am the still centre before whom you bend

into a crescent for ever and ever new! (KBM 11)

Donne’s metaphysical imagery of the twin legs of the compass being compared to the two lovers is evoked here; the only difference is that here it is a relationship between God and man.

The collection of poems In Life's Temple and Collected And Recollected Poems reveal unusual themes with thought provoking lines ending in philosophical reflection as in “A Leafless Tree.”

Oh boughs! Oh branches!

Why have you stretched your hands towards the sky?

Do you think the rain of mercy

Will fall from the sky and nourish you?

What use is that army of clouds.
Wandering like vagabounds?

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 165-6)

and in "A Maiden on Womanhood"

God gave woman her loveliness that she might

Gift it nobly to the man she loved;

And He gave her a soul that outlives sex

Through which, though diverse, she is one with man.

Male and Female are two Ideas and Forms

Four constituents of the universe.

They meet and mingle in a million ways
In numberless individuals, age to age,

From earth to heaven and complete the world.

Man is something of Woman, Woman of Man

Compliments in the cosmic plan of life,

They both fulfil themselves and fulfil God. (CRP, 23-24)

Greatly influenced by Indian philosophical thoughts, Gokak's poems show a tendency to lean more towards the philosophical aspect of Indian culture. His deep-roots in Kannada literature helped him to understand not only the culture of a Kannadiga but led him to a deeper understanding of the universal man, by moving across the boundaries towards unity. Prof. Bendre, his Guru and mentor, influenced him to the extent of taking up Kannada as a medium for writing instead of English.

Vacanas and Vacanacaras

A brief history of the religious scene of India is essential to understand vacanas and vacanacaras better, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the poet Gokak, who was influenced by the early Kannada literature.

The Bhakti movement, historically speaking was restricted to the Vaishnavites of North India, especially to the Aryans. This reawakening
of the religious zeal was an attempt to bring back those Hindus who had deviated from the path of belief. Though the reasons for the Bhakti movement were many, it did have a positive effect on the people of India. The worship of a personal deity constituted the evidence for bhakti; later the different devotional movements of the fifteenth and sixteenth century also came to be called as the “bhakti tradition” or the “bhakti movement.” These bhakti movements, instead of bringing about a unification of the different sects of the Hindu religion, helped only to the multiplication of religious sects. Several new religions came into existence as part of Hinduism. Sikhism was one such religious sect.

The main reason for this reawakening of the religious fervour was the result of the political dominance of the former invaders i.e., Muslims over India. The dwindling enthusiasm of the Hindus, naturally inspired the religious leaders to instil a new awakening among the people. The new aspect of religion thus formed became a part of history due to the tremendous impact on the multitudes. Their personal deity Vishnu and his devotees became a strongly moulded group excluding all others. This devotion, it is established, had its roots in the Vedas and Bhagavad Gita. The adherence to the Vedas and a movement created with its leading deity Vishnu assumed gigantic proportions that a similar devotional movement proved inevitable elsewhere. If the Bhakti Movement was by the Aryans, with the personal deity Vishnu as its devotional head, the
Dravidians of the South found a deity equal in power and whose worship is recorded in the Vedas as part of devotion. Siva, one of the Trimurthi, became their figure head giving rise to the Shaivite sect which became as or even more powerful than Vaishnavism. The worship of Rudra (another name for Siva) was taken as a mode of instruction by the worshippers of Siva.

Siva, the androgenic god, represents both the male and the female of the living species. He is also known by the name Pasupathi, which roughly translated means the lord of all created beings. The individual human being is limited by pasa (bondage) and is therefore dependent on the Lord (pasupati) who is the absolute and the eternal. The acharyas of Shaivism in South India especially tried to emphasise the importance of the worship of Siva among the people. The identity of the Hindu as a Vishnavite or a Shaivite gave him a kind of distinction from the rest of the Hindus. This may be taken as a mark of a positive forward movement since it created several bhakti-poets and also a lot of devotional literature. The Vishnavites worship Vishnu or Krishna and the Shaivites, Siva. Both sects had reason enough to regard their religion as one of the most ancient ones. The Shaiva philosophers date the growth of Shaivism to the Aryan or Vedic source and also to pre-Aryan source. Hinduism itself had its roots in the Vedic period. It is only one of the main currents that from the very beginning up to the present contributed to the making
of the many-sided and all-enfolding culture which now has come to be called Hinduism. Both Vishnavism and Shaivism form an integral part of this unity. Though it flourished in Karnataka, it rejected the traditional brahmanical rites which were associated with the original Shaiva Siddhanta.

Both Vishnavism and Shavism are regarded as two great currents of the vast religion, Hinduism. The rise against the brahmanical rites in Karnataka became the beginning of a revolution. The Brahmins who gave more importance to the observance of rites and rituals became so arrogant that they had almost forgotten the deity, the object of their worship. More over, with the patronage of the ruling houses of Karnataka, they became formidable and all powerful. Naturally there were protests, which were all suppressed to some extent. The Virasaiva revolt of the middle twelfth century against the existing system assumed different levels both in the life and the letters of Kannadigas. With Kalyan as the spiritual centre, Virasaiva saints assembled under the leadership of Basaveshwara, the then minister of King of Bijala. Allama Prabhu, Siddharama, Chenna Basava, Akkamahadevi were some of the other prominent vacanacaras. Anubhava Mantapa or the Academy of Mystic Experience was the institution founded by the group, with Allama Prabhu as its president. Their ethical reflections, social criticisms, along with their spiritual longing and mystical experience had a form that was
new to Kannada which they named as Vacana. They had used Vacana as opposed to the Smriti and Sruti of the vedic literature. Whereas Vacana means what is said, Smriti is what is remembered and Sruti, what is heard Vacana is “Tripati” which is a brief prose - lyric founded less on word rhythm than on the parallelism of clauses. By disregarding the classical and other indigenous metres of their predecessors and using antithesis and repetition along with parallelism, these Virasaiva saints were able to convey their mystic experience in Kannada. But religious people and saintly writers began writing hymns in praise of Siva, making him an approachable god and without the restrictions of the religious rites. These writers of hymns came to be called as Vacanacaras and their hymns, Vacañas or what is said. Siva, worshiped as Pasupathi, and Rudra is both the destroyer and the saviour. Rudra, the terrible one, the dreadful one is not an enchanting picture, with colours like brown, black and red associated with him. But the other aspect of Siva - as a patron of arts and as a companion, is taken by the vacanacaras.

Though Vishnavism is a very prominent movement, Shaivism is more important in the understanding of Vacanas and Vacanacaras. M.Hiriyana in his book Outlines of Indian Philosophy writes about Siva,

Amongst the powers worshipped by early man there would naturally be benignant as well as malignant ones. Rudra was one of the latter - the ‘howling’ god that went
about spreading devastation with the assistance of Maruts or storm-gods represented as his sons. But in course of time he came to be designated Siva or 'the auspicious'. A truly divine power cannot in itself be malignant; and whatever dread it may inspire should be ascribed to a sense of sin in man. It is the recognition of this truth that in all probability explains the change in the title of the deity. In this double form of Rudra-Siva, he was the object of love as well as of fear; and as his importance gradually grew, he became the supreme God.

(Outlines 97)

The renowned Indian writer A.K. Ramanujan explains in his epoch-making book *Speaking of Siva*, that the Vacana is

... not what is heard, but what is said, not remembered or received, but uttered here and now. To the saints, religion is not a spectator sport, a reception, a consumption; it is an experience of Now, a way of being. This distinction is expressed in the language of the vacanas, the forms the vacanas take. Though medieval Kannada was rich in native Dravidian meters, and in borrowed Sanskrit forms, no metrical line or stanza is used in the vacanas. The saints did not follow any of these models. (37)
The influence of Vacanacaras on Gokak cannot be denied. Though not strictly following any metrical patterns used by these early Vacanacaras, the ending of each stanza with an attributive name of god like "O Master of Light" i.e., as a signature, is used by Gokak in some of his poems. Like Basavanna’s "O Lord of the meeting rivers," Devara Dasimayya’s "Ramanatha," Allama Prabhu’s "O Lord of caves," and Mahadeviyakka’s, "O Lord white as jasmine," Gokak uses the term "O Master of Light" as a refrain in his poem "A Prayer." This apostrophe to the worshipping deity became a mannerism for the Vacanacaras. Their piety made them see Siva as a very friendly and benevolent God. They wrote about him in short poems not calling him Siva directly but always with a name that was associated with him. Their hymns ended with this signature or 'ankita' each one has chosen for himself or herself. So when Basavanna wrote in his hymn 500 about Kudalasangamadeva or Lord of the Meeting Rivers and himself as a musical instrument, the lute, for the lord to play his music on, it became a heart felt prayer.

Make of my body the beam of a lute

Of my head the sounding gourd

Of my nerves the strings

Of my fingers the plucking rods.
Clutch me close

And play your thirty two songs

O lord of the meeting rivers! (SS 83)

A devout Siva worshipper, Devara Dasimayya was one of the earliest of the Vacana poets and each one of his Vacanas was addressed to Ramanatha, i.e., Siva, worshipped by Rama, hence Ramanatha or Rama's Lord. His Vacanas exemplified his philosophical attitude.

Unless you build,

Space will not get inside

a house;

Unless the eye sees,

mind will not decide

on forms;

without a way

there is no reaching

the other,

O Ramanatha how will I know that this is so? (108)
Mahadeviyakka, who worshipped and fell in love with Cennamallikarjuna, took this name for a ‘signature’ (ankita) in all her Vacanas. ‘Mallikarjuna’ when translated means ‘the lord white as jasmine.’ Her total surrender to the lord can be seen in the vacana 88.

He bartered my heart,

Looted my flesh,

claimed as tribute

my pleasure,

took over

all of me

I’m the woman of love

for my lord, white as jasmine. (125)

Allama Prabhu worshipped Siva as Guhesvara or Lord of Caves and this name appeared almost in every one of his vacana. Thus in Vacana 219, he puts his experience of the world without his Lord as

It’s dark above the clutching hand.

It’s dark over the seeing eye.

It is dark over the remembering heart
It's dark here

with the lord of caves

out there. (154)

Though not as precise as Vacanas, Gokak's verses also exhibit a profound spirituality and the personal relationship with the Lord along with a philosophical outlook about this world. However, unlike the Vacanacaras, he does not have a signature for all his poems. Yet his poems are not all prayers or spiritual outpourings of a devotee. Very much a man of the world, he cannot ignore the world around him and the country of which he is a part, Bharat or India. The classification of religion into different sects had only made the dream of a universal citizenship all the more far-fetched, yet he aspires for the realization of that impossibility.

The impact of these vacanas in the literary field cannot be underestimated. The various movements which shaped and contributed to the growth of the Kannada literary scene moulded people like Gokak and his contemporaries. As a writer, the religion of his forefathers and the culture embedded in his nature came to the forefront in his writings. The change to a totally different medium and culture like that of the West was indeed something which helped the poet to have a comparison with the East. Though he admired and appreciated all that he had seen in the
West, he became convinced that the rich and varied heritage of India was indeed far superior to that of the West. The revelation this feeling created in Gokak found expression in his poems rather than in his prose writings.

Towards Self Realization

The alienation that Gokak felt in the West, and a like alienation his western education created as he came back to India caused much dilemma. His novel Bharat Sindhu Reshmi is more autobiographical in this manner than in anything. The thoughts that came to his mind during the voyage to England and from there to India were put into verses. These verses reflect his religious leanings as he finds the different aspects of Siva, the deity that he worshipped, all the more inspiring. Siva is also neelkanta or one with the blue neck because of the poison that he had swallowed. Many poems attributed to Siva have more similarity with the Vacanas than with any other school of poetry. Since no other critic seems to have noted this aspect of Gokak's poems, it is to be assumed that, at least on the part of the poet, these poems are those which obey the maxim "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" while the rest of the poems come under "emotions recollected in tranquility."

An analysis of the earlier Siva poems reveals a very simple devotee's wonder at the magnanimity of the lord; while the later Siva
poems are more philosophic, scientific, precise and also have more depth than the earlier poems. The reason for this change of attitude with the same topic, can be traced to the experience the poet goes through during the political upheaval that was taking place in the country culminating in a change of rule. This was the period of the independence struggle and the latent patriotism which invoked thousands of people to write and work towards a common goal. Colonialism had left its mark on the country and the recouping that followed was not easy for India which was drained of its resources. The partition which came in its wake was yet another blow to the already impoverished country. Adversity gave new strength to the struggle of nationalism and there was enough and more support from all around. Gokak was glad to note the interest taken in Indian Writing in English, by the new rulers, which was a boon of the colonizing days. The enthusiasm that the authorities found in this sphere made them realize that there is much that India can contribute towards globalization. All Gokak’s writings support this view and aim at achieving a world citizenship for the twentieth century man. In his book the *The Concept of Indian Literature*, Gokak clearly states his findings and dreams

An Indian may subscribe to any religious belief or profess any philosophy. But he has to value this significant Indian experience and its persistent manifestation through the
centuries for its own sake and for promoting an increase in his own consciousness [. . .]. A true Indian is one who is intensely aware of the gifts of Time as well as the gifts of Eternity [. . .]. One may say, therefore, that the Indianness of Indian Writing consists in the writer’s intense awareness of his entire culture. This awareness has to be vertical as well as horizontal. (Concept 113-14)

Cultural Context

The culture conscious Gokak became part of Kannada literature with his innovative work of Navya Kavya. When India became independent, the problems of the country were not solved automatically; nor was there any hope of solving them in the near future. As a result of the stagnation that ensued, there occurred a situation where the people no longer could blame anybody since the rule was by the people themselves. To present this situation through images proved to be an inspiration for certain poets. Navya Kavya was the result in Kannada with Gokak at its forefront. His literary contribution to Indian Writing in English at this time was also remarkable. The inordinate love, affection and admiration he had for seers like Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, the great philosopher S. Radhakrishnan, and Sri Satya Sai Baba, found expression in his writings. Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy and spirituality, Tagore’s Indianness, S. Radhakrishnan’s philosophy of culture and Sri Satya Sai
Baba’s appeal to millions of people attracted and influenced Gokak, the man and the writer.

Gokak makes a distinction between Brahmarshi, Karmayogi, Rasarshi, Rajarshi and Jnanarshi while speaking about Dr. Radhakrishnan and the eminent nation builders of independent India. It is thus these great men are assigned their proper names as per the lives they had led.

Sri Aurobindo, with Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, was the brahmarashi, the seer of spirit who visualised the integral life and the path that leads to it. Gandhiji was the karmayogi who sowed the seeds of this new life and won the independence of India that could make this life possible. Tagore was the Rasarshi, the poet who gave us the aesthetic and educational crystallization of this vision. Pandit Nehru was the rajarshi of this generation. He was the philosopher-warrior, a blend of Janaka and Arjun. It is indeed India’s great good fortune that she had as President a Jnanarshi, the celebrated philosopher statesman of his generation, to guide her in her progress and in her march towards a glorious future.

(Concept 180).

According to Indian philosophy, a man goes through various stages in life, each one important in itself and leading him to the final stage of spirituality and from there to oneness with the Atman.
Spirituality for each one is quite different from the other and is unique in that the Self is the deciding factor. The path of realization, that the person follows in order to attain this Self, is also worth noting if only to understand the leading philosophy and spirituality that he has attained.

As mentioned earlier, Gokak's admiration for the leading men of India was based on his philosophic outlook which was attained during his life and involvement with literature. He attained the finer points of his philosophic notions mainly by reading and understanding as is seen in his assessment of the eminent nation builders of India. The religious dogmas which prevailed in Karnataka and the revolt against them in the form of Vacanas which later influenced Kannada, form part of Gokak's education of life. As a devotee of Lord Siva, Gokak had the knowledge to see beyond Siva as only a deity to be worshipped, to the cosmic force of changing time, destruction and rejuvenation. Siva as Pasupati or Rudra worshipped by the Shaivates, has a corollary in the form of Dionysious in Greek mythology. Allan Danielou, the French writer has studied the various forms of Siva and the Dionysian cults and had compared the two with a most remarkable instinct in his book Gods of Love And Ecstasy:

In the puranas, the philosophical and moral teachings of shivism is attributed to Skanda. He therefore corresponds to what the Greeks called the Second Dionysus not because a
less ancient doctrine is involved but due to the period in which it was accepted in the Greek or Indian world.

(Danielou 139)

It is quite evident from this that similarity in the various aspects of the worship of gods can be taken as an indication of the similarity in the thought processes of the people continents apart. Moreover, philosophers had taken the actions of Siva to mean the ebb and flow of life in this vast ocean which is the universe. A leading philosopher, Ananda Coomarasamy had made this distinction and had found a scientific philosophical meaning to the dance of Siva, Siva as Nataraja, the patron of arts. In their quest for truth, scientists use any method and are ready even to work with the religious philosophies. This search, finally, leads them to the truth and it is this that had happened in the case of Coomarasamy and later, Fritjof Capra, a scientist philosopher. Their study of the cosmic time had led them to Siva, the primordial God and his dancing movements. They had connected this to Space Time Continuum, a theory of physics. Capra goes a step forward in his book *Tao of Physics* and compares similar aspects in Tao, Zen and Hinduism. His explanations are complementary.

Gokak’s poem “Space Time Continuum,” published before Capra’s book *Tao of Physics* emulates the same principle but not as a scientific observation but more as a devotee trying to decipher the deity
that he worships through the knowledge that he had acquired. Fully conscious of the fact that knowledge and the acquiring of it is indeed a step forward in the direction of a proper understanding of God, Gokak utilises the knowledge properly. It is this knowledge that made him aware that all human beings, irrespective of caste, creed and nation are his brothers. The moment that Gokak felt concern for that brother and his well being, was the beginning of his spirituality. For an educated man, however religious he might be, needs a redefining of God and religion. God is defined variously by various philosophers: to Descartes a western philosopher, god is a being who possesses all attributes in perfection and one who is infinite. We worship this allpervading being because we were born and brought up in the faith and had been blindly following the rituals connected with this belief. Doubts creep into the mind as we acquire knowledge through education. For Gokak a similar situation formed a crisis in his life as his writings reveal. The doubts, the despair, everything had to overcome. The trip to England helped to view the Indian scene only better. The long journey was thought-provoking, at the same time a re-affirming of the faith to which he was born. This understanding brought about a philosophical outlook which led him to spirituality. Thus it is that Gokak the man aspires for a universal citizenship encompassing people all over the world. The generation which had gone through the first and second World Wars would naturally
aspire for an ending of the constant rivalry between nations. However apart they might be from the scene of action, they were affected by war and the socio cultural scene of the country. The basic spirituality of Indian culture has helped the Indians to revert to a life of optimism. The spirit of philosophy which had dribbled on to the common man in various forms had helped the Indians to have a basic faith in religion and gods. So also, the teachings of various philosophers and other great leaders, interpreting the Vedas for the benefit of the common man and leading a model life of asceticism, had helped to shape the thinking process of Indians. The great leaders – philosophers like Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurbindo, and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan had practically shown with their lives the co-existence of philosophy and spirituality. The coercive force of this unity during and after the freedom struggle was looked on with great awe by people all over the world. It was a re-enacting of the principles of Jesus Christ from a bygone era and a farther continent off showing the other cheek to the one who slaps you. It was also putting into effect the theories that the great Buddha had taught in India centuries ago. In an age where money is spent on having a weapon with the utmost destructive power and when the world leaders are thinking day and night of the total annihilation of the enemies with the help of scientific technology, a colonial nation like India, without any remarkable skill or weapons to use against its oppressors had only an
inherited culture. It is only right that they should fall back on their inheritance, on the teaching of the great sages and use their wisdom to fight against a formidable colonizer like Britain.

Breaking Through

Thus it was that Gandhiji could propose Ahimsa and non-cooperation as his most effective weapons to fight for the freedom of his nation. Against these weapons, the enemy had only man-made, down-to-earth weapons that only destroyed and did not rejuvenate. This unequal struggle ended with the victory of the principles while the world looked on with great anxiety and not without a lot of misgivings. The aftermath of the first and second world war which ended with the annihilation brought about by the atomic explosion was still smouldering; yet this ray of wisdom from the east was the ray of hope for so many nations involved in nation building. The firm foundation that Gandhiji had laid for the nation was a model for many of the educated people to uphold.

Swami Vivekananda, who fought against ignorance, was intent on redefining religion and had appeared before Gandhi as if to pave the way for him among the Indians and also among the nations of the world. First appearing as a disciple of Sri. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda was more of an activating influence on the lethargic Hinduism. With his theories of Knowledge and Ignorance, his re-defining of religion,
reality, creation and transmigration, Vivekananda was able to bring about socio-religious reforms in pre-independent India. Endowed with tremendous energy and a zeal imbued from meditation, Vivekananda brought the ritualistic religion to mean the right realisation of the meaning of Self or "That thou art" which leads to the final God-experience. Spiritually and socially, modern India is much indebted to Swami Vivekananda.

Tagore was more a writer than a social reformer or spiritual leader. As a nobel laureate, he was able to present to his countrymen a hero figure to look up to. It is in the sphere of education that Tagore is best remembered. His Santiniketan became a world university and Visva-Bharati, a centre of Indian culture, did much to bring the students to a communion with nature so that the tedium of learning was lessened and the talent of each student was given the nurture it needed. While giving the right importance to the development of the personality of the student, Tagore had given an equal importance to religion and to unpolluted environment which made it a reality. The ancient 'Gurukula' method of education, where the learned teacher and his students lived together in a humble abode situated in forest colonies formed the basis for Tagore's ideal university. A student is one who lives and works with the guru, untroubled by the cares of the world, totally involved in the acquiring of knowledge imparted by his guru. This teaching is not formal but more
informal and most often in the form of stories or fables. It was more personal than the modern impersonal education. Moreover the student grows up with an innate vision of the eternal life. He is equipped in body, mind and spirit to take up his duties as a citizen in the outside world. A full development of the personality creates a responsible citizen. Tagore’s educational ideals and reforms were carried out in both Santiniketan and Visvabharati. Gandhiji approved of this ideal, though Tagore did not approve of Gandhiji’s non-cooperative movement in freedom struggle. As opposed to western education, Indian children were to grow up learning their culture and civilization. An education based on these ideas and founded on the spirituality of the country, formed the basis of Tagore’s educational principles in India. He was supported in his endeavour by important leaders of India.

When Sri Aurobindo retired from public life and settled in Pondicherry, he took up philosophy and meditation along with spirituality. The religious experience that he had earlier turned him away from the path of revolution and started him along the path of spirituality. With a proper study of the Vecas and Upanishads, Aurobindo was able to write his interpretation of the same which was published as *Life Divine*. While writing about social philosophy, education, aesthetics, knowledge and ignorance, Aurobindo firmly acknowledges *Brahman* as the absolute, the *saccidananda*, – existence, consciousness and bliss (i.e., sat + chit +
Aurobindo calls its creative activity as Super Mind. He believes in the Divine Spark which guides man's actions. According to him there are four ascending steps of consciousness. They are "Higher mind, Illumined mind, Intuitive mind and Over mind. Beyond Over mind, consciousness undergoes certain changes to reach the summit, the Supremind or Divine Gnosis" (Mahadevan & Saroja, 171)

Indian art and culture are taken as products of spiritual realization and Aurobindo feels that it is comparable to the Upanishads and the Epics. The presence of spiritual beauty in Indian art is emphasized by Aurobindo. He corroborates nature as power while acknowledging the fact that the originator of that power is the soul or the conscious being. The psychic being is as important to him as the spiritual being. Aurobindo had fully utilized his time in Pondicherry and was able to do much spiritually to the independent struggle than he could with his revolutionary methods. The nation regards him as one of the eminent freedom fighters.

More than a politician, Dr. S Radhakrishnan is first and foremost a philosopher and a nation builder of the foremost calibre. Radhakrishnan did his best to uphold the name of India among the other nations of the world. Well versed in the sacred texts as well as in the Vedas of the country, Radhakrishnan could formulate an ideal for the co-existence of different religions in India. He firmly believed that a religion which does
not aim at the good of man has no appeal to the modern mind. He strictly believed that a believer in God loves his fellow men as he loves himself, seeking their highest good as he seeks his own by redemptive service and self sacrifice. Moreover he will put justice above civilization, truth above patriotism. When the country was torn after partition, the religious prejudices and lack of tolerance seemed to pull the nation apart. As president of the country Dr. Radhakrishnan tried to make the fighting factions understand that the spark within of divinity is the same in all human beings. Only when the human being becomes null and void, the spark will pervade the gloom to form the self or Atman. The Atman which forms the kernel of personality is the Universal Self. A man aware of this fact will not quarrel with another in the name of religion. Dr. Radakrishnan’s argument along these lines was most effective and was like balm to the wounded soul of India. No wonder Gokak aptly assigned him the title of Jnanarshi.

Eminent men like Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in their own way, by their life, writings and dealings formed and shaped young Gokak. This is evident in his writings. It is their enlightened vision that made Gokak think of himself as not merely as a Kannadiga but as a universal citizen. The progress from regionalism to universality was slow, but steady. Later in his life Gokak pays his tribute to all these
visionaries in his writings acknowledging his indebtedness. The growth of the poet Gokak as a philosopher and a spiritualist could be found with traces of the philosophy and spirituality of these great men. The firm realization that India has much to offer him than the West changed his outlook on life itself. A reflection of the same thought can be found in his poems.

Gokak, born as a Kannadiga, had to pass through various stages to become a universal citizen as he had envisioned. Though the task was not in the least simple, his persistence really paid off when he got the final acolade in the form of the highest honour India can give to her deserving son, i.e., the Jnanapeeth award. The award was not merely for his contribution to Kannada literature but the efforts that he took to stabilize Indian Writing in English which had just started its tentative toddler's first step. As the first Indian Chairman of Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Gokak had the heavy job of keeping up the standard of the institution. Though the colonizers had already left the country, they had left behind their language which the people accepted without any demarcation. But to write in English and get it published seemed beyond an Indian. As Mr. Tickoo, a teacher of CIEFL and a student of Gokak writes in his reminiscences:

Among University Teachers at whose feet I sat to learn, I have noticed two types. There are those who impress but
often fail to inspire and those who inspire though they may not always impress. The former act mainly as efficient purveyors of knowledge, the latter add to this role another - that of long lasting pursuit of truth and excellence.

Our director is one of those rare teachers who successfully combine the two roles. Learning from him is like drinking from a running stream. One enjoys the link to the source at the same time as one bathes in its freshness. More importantly, in learning from him who is always occupied with learning, one feels an insatiable thirst for more knowledge and greater wisdom. (*Souvenirs* 102-103)

A teacher who can inspire so much in a student is indeed a Guru. Gokak has indeed reached that pinnacle of height yet to be scaled by many with the right combination of the Western and Eastern Cultures.

Thus it could be found that the various movements and great men had left their mark on Gokak, who put his thoughts into words much more effectively than any other Indo-Anglian poet. This chapter points out the formative influences of the poet Gokak; the elements that transformed him from a mere regional writer to a universal citizen.