W.H. Auden (1907-1973) is the most representative poet on the British literary scene during the thirties. Unquestionably recognised as a new talent, Auden is the voice of an individual sensibility seeking to come to grips with the real socio-politico-economic problems of the times. Socially and politically conscious in a leftwing way, he established his leadership over the group of poets, who shared his attitudes and perceptions by proclaiming the urgency of collective action and the need for active involvement in the immediate cause. He recognised the gravity of the contemporary crisis in all its entirety and made an attempt to project it by raising challenging issues in his poetry. He tried to investigate into the specific causes of the chaotic situation and sought to offer possible solutions to the issues. His analytical approach to the problems of contemporary ailing civilization and his efforts to reach definite conclusions make him a predominant poet among the socially committed poets of the thirties. Perhaps for this reason, Robin Skelton considers him a leader, an innovator and a representative voice of his time and generation.¹
Auden's major preoccupation as a poet was to materialize his persistent and sensitive concern for the sorry state of affairs which had been created for the contemporary masses by a system which was moribund and callous. He felt that the privileged elements who presided over this system not only created problems for the oppressed humanity through their narrow and short-sighted view but also partially mutilated their own humanity in the process. He drew primarily upon Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxian dialectics to integrate his efforts into poetic pattern for the fulfilment of his social vision. It was his interest in Marx which prompted some of the critics to call him a Marxist. But Auden was never a committed left-winger. Marxism, infact, attracted him as a philosophic faith, which enabled him to look into human predicament in a capitalist society and the technique of psychoanalysis helped him in diagnosing social evils.

This, however, does not in any way impinge upon the relevance of his involvement in the social cause during the thirties when active intervention was seen as the need of the hour. Commenting on Auden's views about the role of poetry in the contemporary situation Charles Osborne quotes from Auden's letter to E.A. Dodds, his old teacher:

I am not one of those who believe that poetry need or even should be directly political but in a critical period such as ours, I do believe that the poet must have direct knowledge of the major political events.
Auden's poetry reflects his keen interest in the social maladies of the times. There is no point in drawing blinkers on the consistent struggle Auden made during the thirties to find out some radical solutions to the problems which pressed very hard on his social awareness.

It is, therefore, important to identify the nature of Auden's social perspective and sensibility. A proper characterization of his radicalism is necessary for understanding the strengths and limitations of his poetic presentation of the social cause. In terms of perspective and sensibility Auden is one of those radicalised middle class intellectuals, who break away from the ruling class to align themselves with the proletarians in the hope of bringing about radical changes in the existing system but at the same time remaining within the framework of the same set up. These radical middle class elements are unable to leave their background on the subconscious level. In the poetic transcription of social issues, Auden fuses liberal feelings into what could be tentatively referred to as communist ideology. Inspite of his revolutionary fervour, the latent liberal strain is discerned lurking under the emerging social concerns. Thurley underlines the conflicting character of his radicalism when he suggests that as an intellectual Auden diagnoses the social evils of his times and looks forward to the revolutionary future and as bourgeois he looks back to the safe harbourage of
middle class security and good breeding. He attributes Auden's Marxist slant to his sense of class-guilt and feels that his reactions through irony and consistent self-qualifications were an atonement for that guilt to acquire moral probity. We, of course, agree with Thurley as far as his comment regarding Auden's emotional inability to break with his class is concerned but his attributing motives of atonement for class guilt to acquire moral probity cannot be accepted as a fair reading of Auden's state of mind on this issue.

Auden honestly wanted to bring about definite radical changes in the system and class-guilt was one of the psychological factors which produced in him the desire for these changes. As a liberal he was for capitalism to the extent that it provided an extended scope and sanction for individual freedom and initiative. But he was pained by the inequalities it created and deprivations to which it subjected a large mass of people. This contradictory response ultimately turned him into a radical reformer but not a revolutionary transformer of the system. Consciously he adopted a creed of revolutionary transformation, but his real perspective was that of a radical-liberal reformer. A.T. Tolley suggests that "in the case of Auden's work, certainly, one frequently feels a gap between the manifest concern of the poem and pressures beneath its surface". We may, here emphasise that the left-wing ideology present in his poetry is actually a
manifestation of his radical-liberal concern for reform but his commitment to individual freedom always finds expression in a form which is possible only under the capitalist system. This accounts for the gap between his manifest social concerns and the psychological pressures underneath. Nonetheless, his radicalism was also a genuine attribute of his literary sensibility and this is amply reflected in his poetry. His representative poems show that he felt the need for prompt action against social injustices and wanted his poetic talent to be harnessed to any radical involvement which aimed at this type of reform of the system. His radicalism generated in him a strong desire and passionate enthusiasm for bringing about a change in the existing state of affairs.

We may demarcate three distinctive forms which Auden's radical interventions in the social situation through his poetry took during the decade—poems where he offers psychological solutions to social ills, poems of active political enthusiasm where he seeks the resolution of his personal unrest through identification with programmes of social reform resulting in a synthesis of public and private concerns and poems of his retreat into liberal humanism when his private concerns gain a priority over his social concerns and he becomes merely a sensitive dissenter from the dominant thrust of the existing society and gives expression to his anguish at its obtuseness and obsolescence.
In the early phase Auden's survey of the socio-economic decay of the contemporary British society enables him to record the distortions developed in the mutilated individual psyche by the increasingly oppressive working of the industrial civilization. He is quite successful in providing an insight into the havoc of economic depression with the help of his inherent empirical outlook but we discern that he talks about social change in terms of change of heart and seeks psychological solutions to social ills. Here his poetry differs from that of the poets of the twenties to the extent that it is marked by a confidence in men's ability to overcome the crisis through a collective assertion of this moral resistance. He feels that if a sufficient number of people can be persuaded to see the distortions created in their psyche by the exploitative and parasitical mode of life imposed on them by the system and they muster their individual will to rectify these anomalies at their own personal levels, there will come about a significant change in the system. The governing metaphors in this type of poetry are clinical surgery of individual patient or of medicinal healing of individuals. A blending of Marx and Freud provides the basis for this type of healing of individual patients. Louis MacNeice appreciates the synthesis between Marxism and Freudianism in such poems of Auden and finds his perspective finally optimistic and socially committed and ignores the internal contradictions which do exist in such a synthesis. In poems of this category Auden tries to
merge psychological ills and economic and social evils and suggests that change of heart through love will lead to change in social order. He makes an effort to offer an accurate analysis of existing society and depicts the psychic ills in their concrete social forms but he shrinks from relating this malaise to the working of the inherent logic of the system. What gives strength to Auden's poetry here is that while he probes into the gravity of the social ailments, he does not consider them beyond redemption. In the psychological analysis Auden correctly registers certain symptoms of the decadence of the existing social order and what is even more important he does not allow himself to be overwhelmed with despair, but retains confidence and optimism in man's potentialities to get over the damage caused to his psyche by the malfunctioning of the social system and regain moral and emotional health through an affirmation of his appetite for living.

In the active social phase, which is of course, the middle phase of Auden's poetry in the decade, the poet analyses the need for undertaking a programme of effective action. He appears to realise that change of heart is not feasible and it is certainly not easy without a change in the material conditions of existence. The emphasis, therefore, shifts from inner change to the change in the environment - a concrete programme of social change. The objective social factors demand a specific response from him and
he comes out as a crusader for socio-political initiative for the overthrow of the existing exploitative system. His poetry during this phase is marked by a direct documentation of the consequences of the socio-political and economic disaster which needed immediate attention. He is driven to urge upon the readers to forget about their private anxieties and prepare themselves for real social action. However, even in this militant phase, Auden's typical liberal concern for the individual keeps lurking beneath the conscious social vision and his attention slowly gets concentrated on the questions of individual freedom and the integrity of the self. His blending of psychological and social dimensions of our experience in this phase provides evidence of the emergence of an outlook which is complex and comprehensive.

Towards the climax of the decade, we find Auden receding back to his private self anxious once again to materialize individual concerns through social vision. This time, the ebullience and wit do, however, get subdued and the voice, though not despondent is certainly more sombre. Francois Duchene suggests that Auden's public purposes in the thirties must have been in harmony with his inner needs. He observes:

In short, if the early thirties marked the outward cycle of Auden's development the later thirties show him moving rapidly back into an inward phase. Whereas in the early thirties all private events were measured against a public yard stick in the later thirties all public happenings are increasingly subjected to private tests.
Though shifts of emphasis are sharply visible in Auden's social perspective his social engagements remain consistent throughout the decade. We must not condone that such shifts in emphasis reflected in preponderance of psychoanalysis in early poems, radicalism in the poems of middle phase and dignified and unillusioned stoicism of the final phase are in large part only surface shifts. He makes definite efforts to maintain the integrity of social vision till the end of this decade, inspite of shifts in emphasis. He does so even after the decade when his revolutionary zeal of radical reconstruction of the existing system started diluting into calm acceptance of life with all its imperfections. Infact, Auden's aim during the whole of this period remained that of establishment of a better social order which may promote healthy development of the individuals as against the contemporary system which bred only distortions and perversions.

Auden's ideal is important inspite of the limitations of his ingrained middle class predilections to shift his attention every now and then from public to personal issues. His poems reflect an acute awareness of social evils and the manner in which he has treated some of the major troubles of his time makes us feel that his approach to topical issues was more positive and pragmatic than that of the poets of the previous decade. Richard Hoggart rightly praises Auden's strong sense of social responsibility and great purposiveness.
Auden's poems, in fact, reveal his strong urge to rebel against the system and project an irresistible desire to outgrow the inhibitions and prejudices instilled in him by the middle class culture:

Certain it became while we were still incomplete  
There were certain prizes for which we would never compete,  
A choice was killed by every childish illness,  
The boiling tears among the hothouse plants,  
The rigid promise fractured in the garden,  
And the long aunts.  

Auden's intentions to bid farewell to a past which has become irrelevant in the contemporary circumstances and to reject old values and traditions can be seen in his poem. "Taller to-day, we remember similar evenings" (March, 1928) but middle class psychology that revolution may deprive him of that moment of peace, "no bird can contradict" (TEA P.26) and the comforts of private love engender nostalgic feelings in him. He feels the pull of the unconscious and appears withdrawn from his revolutionary zeal. Thurley pinpoints that Auden knew that what he really valued was a certain kind of order, calm and gentility that would inevitably go under if the revolution really happened. We may, of course, not ignore the underlying psychological pressures on Auden hinted at by Thurley but on the conscious level, the poet was intent upon coming out of the grasp of old
order and find some radical solutions to the all pervading crisis. His urge for a new dawn was irresistible inspite of his deep sense of anguish over the obliteration of old values.

As explained earlier, Auden, in the early phase of his poetry, emphasises upon the necessity of a change of heart in order to bring about a new social order. In "Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all" (oct. 1929) he advocated a change of heart through psychologically curing the distorted emotional responses which develop an escapist attitude to life. He suggests that it is high time to:

Prohibit sharply the rehearsed response,
And gradually correct the coward's stance.
Cover in time with beams those in retreat.

(TEA P.36)

Auden makes a Freudian investigation into the causes of social maladies and prefers to think that external illness is due to internal maladjustments in the form of prolonged repression of natural urges. He suggests that psychological cure of individual psychic imbalances may further help in changing social order. He sees the social scene in terms of the maladies of individuals. This amounts to a typical liberal humanist's approach. However, a committed radical poet would advocate a change in the society and this emphasis was gradually taking shape in Auden's poetry.
of the thirties. His wish to establish a new social order and to destroy the old and rotten civilization is expressed through various images in his poetry. Unlike his predecessors he does not merely present the chaotic situation and watch the decay passively, he also condemns the escapist attitude and is in strong favour of concrete changes in the social set up.

Keeping in view Auden's heightened sense of social awareness, we may try to identify the issues that he raises in his poems.

Auden exposes the social values of the ruling middle class, their pretensions and their ethical decline displaying in the process the gap between their preaching and practice. He is, at the same time, obliquely warning them to 'resist the expanding fear and the savaging disaster' (TEA P.157). He attacks 'the insufficient units' supplied with feelings by an efficient band, exposing the 'cigarette end smouldering on the Border' (TEA P.46). He also exposes those who 'control the complicated apparatus of amusement' (TEA P.155). He revolts against the tradition which breeds, 'the love raging for personal glory (TEA P.151) and sharply reacts to the apprehensive attitude of the middle class towards any change.

Not only does Auden identify the symptoms of social malaise but he also captures the devastating effect on an individual's
psyche of alienation from the larger social activity. His poetry shows his concern about 'the pleasured and the haunted' (TEA P.152) and points out 'how insufficient is the endearment and look'. He stresses on the need for public interaction to establish healthy human relationships. He sharply focuses on the topsyturvy character of the system, which hampers the growth of morally and intellectually healthy individuals. Auden protests against all kinds of institutional repression in the name of pseudo-social reform. The endemic issue of individual predicament is also raised and his poetry sounds a cry of revolt against conformity to narrow and rigid standards of the establishment which curtail individual freedom and initiative. Auden raises the issue of social injustice and inequality which was highlighted by deprivations and exploitation of the downtrodden people who shrink with fear of being sacked in case they revolted to 'make action urgent and its nature clear' (TEA P.157).

Auden highlights the issue of imminent fear of disaster and indicates the symbolic significance of the Spanish Civil war. He places social love above individualistic love and deals with the issue of love and human relationships in poems, where he seems aware of social reality in the form of 'morning's levelled gun' and 'trespasser's reproach' (TEA P.113) in private lives. Lastly, he puts a special stress on an optimistic acceptance of life with all its positives and negatives and his is first and foremost a vision for a better future for society.
Auden exposes the hypocrisy and emotional bankruptcy of the sick and decaying bourgeois society and holds the middle class responsible for the existing state of impasse. He lifts an accusing finger at the moral turpitude of the members of the ruling middle class and awakens them to recognise the impending disaster and shoulder social responsibility. His poems, "It was Easter as I walked in the public gardens (Part 4)", "Consider this and in our time", "It's farewell to the drawingroom's civilized cry", "Out on the lawn I lie in bed" and "Here on the cropped grass" deal with the issues related with the distortions in the middle class value system. In "It was Easter as I walked in the public garden (Part 4) (Oct 1929)", Auden is grieved to note that the fashionable rich classes evade the real issues through their indulgence in the superficial kind of entertainment. He painfully notes that these people view 'the destruction of error' (TEA P.40) as only an ineffective threat symbolised in the storm to be evaded by bringing in the chairs. He condemns this apathetic and non assertive response on their part. He ironically exposes the discordant and antithetical aspects of the whole civilization by making a comparison of the summer talk at the hotel with the laughter of the patients in the Sanitorium and to the mad man's cries in the lunatic asylum. He, thereby, unveils the physical and mental diseases of these sick people. The image of the 'falling leaves' (TEA P.40) is also a pointer to the decadent civilization. The awareness of the younger
generation to the approaching doom's day and the indifferent attitude of the old gang and non-acknowledgement of their own fault are effectively highlighted through bold contrasts. Auden wants to make his own class conscious enough to view with anger and disgust, the threat and induce them to find a remedy by removing its anomalies. However, his whole approach to the vital issue of combating the decadence produced by the system remains, by and large, individualistic. This should explain the character of his social fervour at this stage when he sought psychological solutions to social issues. Auden lays particular emphasis in his poems to this phase on exposing the hypocritical behaviour of the idle comfortably placed bourgeois elements.

This can be illustrated, for example, from "consider this and in our time", (1930) where he unveils the emotional blankness of the members of the ruling middle class who are supplied with feelings by very efficient music being mechanically played to them. The music is further relayed to the distant farmers. This reflects the ugly impact of the emotional hollowness more obviously present in the urban middle class people. The privileged ones are protected with 'the plate-glass windows of the Sport Hotel'; (TEA P.46) which shows their sense of insecurity and lack of confidence contrasted against the collective strength of the farmers sitting in their 'stormy fens' (TEA P.46). The poet's presentation of the members of middle class as single individuals
sitting on reserved seats as separate entities and that of the farmers sitting collectively in their farms as a coherent social body shows how the self-centred and mistrustful attitude of the middle classes have produced a deeper frustration. The poem also reflects the poet's fears of the destabilization of the system. Auden tries to diagnose the social malady by identifying its symptoms in the widespread neurosis and death wish prevalent among the middle classes and he uses suggestive images taken from the contemporary social life to bring home to us this clinical diagnosis. The poet is indignant at their deliberate and conscious acceptance of their own diseased condition. He predicts extinction for the representative bourgeois elements, 'the high born mining captains' (TEA P.46) 'the handsome and diseased youngsters', 'women who are the solitary agents in the country parishes', 'financier' and 'all the seekers after happiness' (TEA P.47). He points out their psychic abnormalities in the form of 'Fugues', 'irregular breathing', 'alternate ascendancies' 'maniac explosion' and 'classic fatigue' (TEA P.47). All these diseases are pointers to their slow death. The poet is painfully aware of the acuteness of the crisis. He exhorts these ruined members of the rich middle class to reconsider their own responses and look into the gravity of the disastrous situation. Here, we may point out that Auden's reformist perspective does not at this stage carry him beyond the point of giving a warning:
The game is up for you and for the others,
Who, thinking, pace in slippers on the lawns
Of College Quad or Cathedral Close,
Who are born nurses, who live in shorts
Sleeping with people and playing fives.
Seekers after happiness...

(TEA P.47)

When the situation is very tense and demands immediate
and radical solutions, not making a demand for a change in the
system which is responsible for developing such psychologically
sick attitudes among people and limiting oneself merely to making
a statement of the seriousness of the crisis, are not enough.
This does not, however, mean that the poet's attempt to make the
complacent ruling middle class conscious of its drawbacks has no
positive significance. It falls short of surgical cleansing but
it might bring about some improvement in the total climate by
shattering the complacency of those who are victimized by the
system and yet are unknowingly Co-opted into it. Auden, definitely,
renders a vivid criticism of the diseased society which may serve
to alert the members of the middle class to the need for change.
He emerges successful at conveying the intensity of the approaching
disaster by effectively unmasking the inconsistencies of an
attitude of surrender or of easy escapes into sterile utopias of
hedonism.
In the Epilogue" (Oct. 1931) of The Orators, Auden protests against the typical petty bourgeois middle class intellectual's fearful attitude to change. He emphasises upon the quester's strong determination which stands above the hostile forces of impracticality, Cowardice and neurosis operating within the individual's psyche and his genuine urge for a new social order. The images of a new world order as 'fatal valley' 'burning furnaces' 'maddening odours' and 'gaping graves' ((TEA P.110) visualised by the escapist intellectual, 'dark granite to grass' (TEA P.110) imagined by the coward and 'the shape in the twisted trees' (TEA P.110) imagined by the neurotic, signify the subconscious fears in the individual's psyche. Inspite of this manifestation of underground psychological pressures, the final emphasis on determination is an ample pointer to his strong impulse for social change.

Auden makes serious observations on the broad social issues and uses private idiom of his experience as a school master to work out a public vision in "Now from my window sill I watch the night" (Feb, 1932). The images of the silent school grounds, the pretentious lilac bush which 'shams dead upon the lawn' 'like a conspirator', 'the great bear above the flag staff' (TEA P.115) are symbolic of ominous circumstances ahead of the youngsters' wishing "to travel further/than the long still shadow of the father," (TEA P.115) without being conscious of 'the valley of
regret' (TEA P.115). The poet visualises the wider challenges which they may have to encounter. He invokes the power of moral constraints to help in establishing a healthy society and bless them with health, skill and beauty and to guard them as the warning of inescapable violence is seen to be operating in the society. The line "whose sleepless presences endear peace to us with a perpetual threat" (TEA P.115) suggests the poet's concern for comfortable peace which is threatened but we must bear this in mind that he is awake to the vital social issues and seeks to resolve them. The individualistic solutions that he offers are indicative of the limitation of his radical-liberal perspective.

In his poem "Here on the cropped grass" (1933) the emphasis shifts from private to the public vision. Auden seems to suggest that the cultivation of private life is the evasion of public responsibility. He considers himself and his contemporaries as unhappy inheritors of a bankrupt tradition:

"But pompous, we assumed their power to be our own,
Believed machines to be our heart's spontaneous fruit,
Taking our premises as shoppers take a tram.

While the disciplined love which alone could have employed these engines
Seemed far too difficult and dull, and when hatred promised. An immediate dividend, all of us hated.

(TEA P.144)
Auden and his contemporaries got disenchanted with liberal tradition:

"Denying the liberty we knew quite well to be our destiny,
It dogged our steps with its accusing shadow
Until in every landscape we saw murder ambushed.

(TEA P.144)

Apart from these emotional factors, objective forces also prompted him to give a call for action:

The presses of idleness issued more despair
And it was honoured,
Gross Hunger took on more hands every month,
Erecting here and everywhere his vast
Unnecessary workshops;
Europe grew anxious about her health,
Combines tottered, credits froze,
And business shivered in a banker's winter.
While we were kissing.

(TEA P.142)

The mood reflects Auden's growing awareness of the seriousness of the social crisis and the overriding necessity of collective action to stem the rot or more appropriately to completely transform the scenario. He is driven to resound Engles: "For men are changed by what they do" (TEA P.144)
Of course, the most representative poem unveiling Auden's scathing attack on the hypocrisy and self-centredness of the privileged class appears to be "Out on the lawn I lie in bed" (June, 1933). In this poem, the poet points out the typical middle class awareness of being lucky but gives the whole situation an ironical twist by incorporating in it the prophecy of disaster as a comment on the complacent attitude of seeking nothing more than comfort even at this precipitous juncture. The poet forcefully gives a warning signal:

Soon through the dykes of our content
The crumpling flood will force a rent,
And, taller than a tree,
Hold sudden death before our eyes
Whose river-dreams long hid the size
And vigours of the sea.

(TEA P.138)

The poet imagines the new generation rising out of the tidal mud left by the receding waters of revolution.

Auden, in this poem, attacks the selfish attitude of the privileged classes in their chosen position cut off from the world of grief, hunger and fear. He ridicules their false sense of delight founded on wilful ignorance:
And, gentle, do not care to know,
Where Poland draws her Eastern bow,
What violence is done;
Nor ask what doubtful act allows
Our freedom in this English house,
Our picnics in the Sun.

(TEA P.137)

There is a definite hint that the poet recognises that these escapist hedonistic gestures of the privileged elements cannot sustain their hope for long. They cannot go on building imaginary islands to evade the impending chaos for ever. The poem indirectly reveals Auden's faith in the inevitability of a social environment which does not breed this apathy and timid selfcontradredness. This environment, we must however recognise, does not involve overthrow of capitalism. It only demands a fairer distribution of comforts and amenities of life and a greater sense of fellow feeling and mutual interdependence. Infact, we can detect an undercurrent of his private concern for cultivated personal life. Moreover, the distressing tone of loss and fear and the negative prayer towards the end show liberal gestures. But the dominance of revolutionary optimistic fervour remains intact.

Auden demonstrates with a sharper edge, younger generation's strong impulse to break away from the liberal tradition in "Our hunting fathers told the story" (May, 1934).
He feels disenchanted with the decadent middle class—its privileges and the concepts of freedom and happiness. His disenchantment takes Auden to the point of revolting against the liberal tradition. He condemns the individualistic love for power and glory and advocates its use for public cause:

To think no thought but ours,
To hunger, work illegally,
And be anonymous?

(TEA P.151)

Auden shows a strong inclination to rise above selfish bourgeois tradition and work for a larger social vision. In this direction the poem is a definite improvement upon his earlier attempts to break with the tradition in poems like "Taller Tod" where nostalgic feelings tend to obscure his social vision. In the poem under discussion, Auden's social vision overpowers his liberal concerns. Thurley appears right when he suggests that this class-guilt was simply symptomatic of the western intellectual's confusion of the inter war years but if it aroused social awareness of the poet it should be taken as a positive sign as it gave a new dimension to the poet's thinking which he reflected in his poetry.
"It's farewell to the drawing-room's civilized cry" (January, 1939) renders an ironic exposure to the moral degeneration of the members of the ruling middle class who spend their lives in

The Buying and Selling, the eating and drinking,
The disloyal machines and irreverent thinking,
The lovely dullards again and again
Inspiring their bitter ambitious men

(TEA P.209.)

The poet gives a vivid picture of the decadent system:
"The behaving of man is a world of horror; / A Sedentary Sodom and Slick Gomorrah..." (TEA P.208). Auden, thus, highlights the gap between their preaching and their practice. There is, however, one significant difference from the earlier poems. Here the poet speaks in favour of concrete social action as he exhorts the people to forget about their private concerns to confront the critical situation.

A sense of disenchantment with his own class introduces a new socially vital theme in Auden's poems - the issue of alienation - a strong sense of isolation arising from the mechanical nature of human relationships. In "No change of place" (1931), Auden builds up this theme representing it through the failure of socio-economic system and the resultant void created
in human life. Even the delicate sentiment of love is mechanical and lacks direct emotional expression. The poet finds the pressure of social change irresistible and is determined to overcome the existing state of affairs. At this stage of his poetic career Auden opts for confrontation of desolation with a strong sense of individual responsibility aimed at achieving a larger social vision.

In "Prologue" (1932) Auden refers to symptoms of alienation in emotionally bankrupt heirs of decadent middle class society. He suggests that the unifying force of love may bring about adjustments in social institutions and help in ushering in of a social change when development of healthy human relationships would be possible. There is a recognition of the need to overcome this sense of alienation which delays the fulfilment of a dream which will reestablish the lost link between self and community i.e. individual and society. In this poem Auden emerges as the exponent of love as something that gives ordered pattern to man's understanding of social reality. Auden strongly advocates social love for the establishment of a stable society and for bringing about an environmental change which ultimately might enable people to shed their sickening isolation.

In "May with its light behaving" (1934) the poet's treatment of the issue of alienation emphasises upon the need to move beyond
possessive love to an emotional awakening for social love. Auden considers the socio-economic system responsible for loneliness of individual and underlines the importance of something more stable and lasting than temporary escape routes into pleasure trips. His emphasis on humanistic values, in concluding stanza, shows that he is conscious of a need for public contact - a larger relationship to overcome a sense of alienation. His realisation of a need for a deeper kind of relationship based on a broader concept of love becomes evident in the line: "How insufficient is the endearment and the look\(^\text{152}\). Thus in the final analysis Auden seems to advocate joyous awakening to love as an instrument of social change. Here we must note that even in this phase of his active involvement in larger social issues, he offers individualistic solution to resolve the overwhelming crisis of alienation. This, obviously, is a limitation of his perspective. His recognition of the symptoms of alienation, his condemnation of pleasure trips as mere escape routes, which have been reduced to stimulants of sensuality, his realisation of transience of such pleasures and his yearning for something more tangible are bold pointers to his radicalism. Stephen Spender suggests:

Love is the cure for the individual and for the society yet the inadequacy of such an abstract ideal must have dissatisfied Auden making him seek the workings out of the tasks of love within the social movement of his time.\(^\text{11}\)
Among other major contemporary issues, Auden takes up the issue of economic chaos which, he strongly feels, is directly related to the failure of capitalist system. In poems like "Get there if you can see" and "Brothers, who when the Sirens roar", "O for doors to be open" and "It's farewell to the drawingroom's civilized cry", Auden's attitude to the issues of exploitation, injustice and inequality emerges very clearly. In these poems, Auden gives a direct call for immediate and active social action for the amelioration of the existing state of affairs.

In "Get there if you can and see" (April 1930) the poet gives comprehensive details of industrial decay through the concrete images of vanished roads, static expresses, 'smokeless chimneys', 'damaged bridges', 'choked canals', buckled Tramlines, deserted power-stations, fallen pylons, and 'rotting wharves' (TEA P.48). Auden holds faulty trade policies responsible for this state of impasse: "Far from there we spent the money, thinking we could well afford, while they quietly undersold us with their cheaper trade abroad; (TEA P.48).

The ancestors of the younger generation were lured into an escape world and their heirs were compelled to suffer exploitation by 'the big businessmen' who make their intentions clear: "Sunbathe, pretty till you're twenty/you shall be our
The poet and his contemporaries stand disenchanted with their class: "Intimate as war-time prisoners in an isolation camp. Living month by month together, nervy, famished, lowsy, damp" (TEA P.49). In this hour of crisis, the poet's intellectual sensibility makes him reject the psychological approach of Lawrence, Blake and Homer Lane. He feels that middle class intellectuals can no longer afford to be apathetic to the prevailing crisis. He exhorts them:

Shut up talking, charming in the best suits to be had in town, /Lecturing on navigation while the ship is going down. (TEA P.49)

Auden condemns the shallow talks and indulgence in idle analysis and warns the middle class intellectuals:

Drop these priggish ways for ever, stop behaving like a stone: Throw the bath-chairs right away, and learn to leave ourselves alone

(TEA P.49)

There is a definite urge for action in the concluding lines:

"If we really want to live, we'd better start at once to try; If we don't it does not matter, but we'd better start to die.

(TEA P.49)
These forceful orders and posers suggest a call for urgent action. The poem seems to initiate his socio-economic phase in relating economic exploitation and sickness to the objective conditions of England in the thirties. The poet's impatience to rectify the system and absolve it of its ills is quite acute. Auden takes note of the industrial wasteland and points out that the intellectuals will have to take a stand and the exploited will have to rise in action. In this poem, throwing the bath chairs is presented as a symbolic gesture implying that the middle class will have to give up small comforts they have been enjoying under the illusion that their interests are aligned with those of the big property owners, Auden's programme in this poem seems to revolve round the change of personal behaviour to bring about a new socio-economic order. Although his approach shows all the trappings of his liberal humanism, his militant stand does add to the radical content in the poem.

"A Communist To others" later entitled as "Brothers, who when the sirens roar" (Aug. 1932) represents the highest watermark in the middle phase of his poetry dealing with the issues of socio-economic exploitation, injustice and inequality. Shedding his inhibitions in the role of a transformer, Auden exhorts all the workers, working in factories, shops and offices to revolt against the existing exploitative system, refuse to follow the dull routine and to crush exploitation. He is conscious that the
workers' inertia and silent suffering indicate their constant fears of economic insecurity in the capitalist system. This, Auden understands, resists them from raising a protest.

Auden expresses his solidarity with the proletariat in common fears and assures them that if they lend their support they will make this system 'tumble down'. (TEA P.121). The tone might lend the impression that Auden has finally chosen a path of total revolution but we know that a radicalised middle class intellectual has his own limitations. He can only imaginatively align himself with the working class struggle and end up trying to improve their lot within the framework of the existing system because of his bourgeois sensibility. In this case too, it leads to some inconsistency in the dominant voice. At times it might make Auden look like a compromised accomplice of the system which he seeks to denounce.

We must note that Auden gives the role of organising workers to an intellectual. Instead of thinking about collective action with which he starts the poem, the intellectual starts criticising the representatives of capitalist system. He attacks all the parasites of the ruling middle class - intellectuals, players, poets, mystics, wisemen, psychiatrists, professors, bankers and brokers, who through various strategies keep on the process of exploitation of workers. He feels desperate over the
falsities of the middle class attitudes and bursts out in anger:

Let fever sweat them till they tremble
cramp rack their limbs till they resemble

Cartoons by Goya:

Their daughters sterile be in rut,
May cancer rot their herring gut,
Their circular madness on them shut,
or paranoia.

(TEA P.123)

Thus the revolutionary zeal with which Auden had initiated
his programme to overhaul the capitalist system is subdued towards
the climax of the poem. He drifts from a call for concrete action
to the criticism of his class which suggests his desire for
extinction of a handful of capitalists and not the change in the
whole system. His attempt, it seems, is to awaken his own class
by unearthing its weaknesses. Infact, the ultimate social vision
comes close to the emergence of a society suited ideally to the
healthy development of the individuals. It is this bourgeois
sensibility of the poet which withholds him from giving a direct
call for the overthrow of the hegemony of capitalist system.

Thus keeping in mind the limitations of his perspective,
we may derive that there is something positive in Auden's efforts
to support the cause of workers within the framework of the existing system by making it shorn of its ills and by championing the interests of the proletariat through distributive justice and the generous acceptance of the common men. Even in the partially compromised solutions we cannot deny his awareness to the issues of social injustice and exploitation revealed through the exposure Auden gives to the false values of the petty-bourgeois middle class. Auden's insight to perceive, in the workers, the potential for building up a better society and his wish for removing the foibles and inconsistencies in the existing system are definite radical gestures.

The issue of exploitation of workers leads us to the issue of inequality and injustice raised in the poem "O for the doors to be open" (1935). The poem presents a sick society wrought with the distinctions of the rich and the poor. In this framework of society some live luxurious lives and some have to satisfy themselves with envious dreams of it only. Infact, Auden labels large sections of men and women as cripples dreaming of women like Garbo and Cleopatra and wasting their lives in mere wish fulfilment:

And Garbo's and Cleopatra's wits to go astray
In a feather ocean with me to go fishing and playing
Still Jolly when the cock has burst himself with crowing
Cried the six beggared cripples

( TEA P.154)
Auden, in this poem, exposes the false bourgeois values by suggesting it implicitly through references to the celebration of prestige above festivity and enjoining the importance of glamour with sex phantasy.

The conflict between Auden's conscious concern with the poor and the underprivileged and his deeper allegiance to his own bourgeois moorings comes once again open in "It's farewell to the drawing room's civilized cry" (June 1937). His outcry for providing justice to the exploited and down-trodden evidences not only his acceptance of the identity of the common men but also his genuine concern for their lot. In this poem, for example, the sense of urgency felt in his call for direct action amply testifies the legitimacy of his emotion:

I shall come, I shall punish, the Devil be dead,
I shall have caviare thick on my bread;
I shall build myself a cathedral for home
With a vacuum cleaner in every room.

(TEA P.209)

But at the same time, his condescending tone shows his middle class sensibility which interferes with his total identification with the interests of workers. Thurley remarks
that "Auden's best political poetry, though informed with genuine sympathy for the victims of capitalism stems essentially from an astute awareness of his own real position in class-war and of what things he most cherished in life." Here we may emphasise that emotional factor is there in the unconscious but it was the concrete force of the objective factors which prompted Auden for active social action imbued with sincere sympathy for the victims of capitalism. Though the kind of solutions that he offers in the lines: 'Hundreds of trees in the wood are unsound: I'm the axe that must cut them down to the ground' (TEA P.208) are not vital enough to ensure for the unprivileged a strong and stable footing in the society, still his humanistic approach supplemented by a radical call for action provides a distinct revolutionary fervour to the middle phase of his poetry despite apparent limitations.

The radical content of Auden's social vision gets further strength from his treatment of the challenges posed by war. Auden takes up the issue of war in his poems "It's farewell to the drawingroom's civilized cry", "Spain", and "1st September, 1939". In "It's farewell to the drawingroom's civilized cry"
Auden is deeply struck by a sense of urgency and feels that skirting this deep political and social crisis by indulging in polite nothings may become suicidal. The following lines evidently suggest this:

It's Farewell to the drawing room's civilized cry,
The professor's sensible where to and why,
The frock-coated diplomat's social aplomb,
Now matters are settled with gas and with bomb:

(TEA P.208)

The lines are reminiscent of his earlier proclamations in "Get There If you can".

Shut up talking, charming in best suits to be had in town,
Lecturing on navigation while the ship is going down.

(TEA P.49)

Auden wants people now to forget the utopian world of pianos, brilliant stories of giants and fairies because the threat of war is real and the intrusion of war demons into private lives is a certainty:

Like influenza he walks abroad
He stands by the bridge, he waits by the Ford
As a goose or a gull he flies overhead,
He hides in the cupboard and under the bed.

(TEA P.208)
Auden seems to be assuming an angelic role where he must take charge of the liquid fire "to storm the cities of human desire" (TEA P.208) leading ambitious men to war. This might suggest a hypothetical solution yet his recognition of the crisis and his concern for the humanity are definitely genuine and show his commitment to the social cause.

In 'Spain' Auden raises the vital issue of future prospects of man. He traces the development of modern civilization from historical-materialistic point of view. He refers to the historical development from ancient times to the contemporary times and concludes that what was considered precious at one time has lost relevance in the changed circumstances. While acknowledging the great scientific religious, philosophic and artistic achievements of yesterday and visualizing a tomorrow of more wonders, Auden keeps an emphatic focus on the necessity of 'struggle' today:

Yesterday the installation of dynamos and turbines; The construction of railways in the colonial desert; yesterday the classic lecture on the origin of Mankind But today the Struggle.

Tomorrow for the young, the poets exploding like bombs, The walks by the lake, the winter of perfect communion; Tomorrow the bicycles races Through the suburbs on summer evenings; but today the struggle.

(TEA PP. 210-212)
Auden's survey of the past and day dreams of the future may give the poem the colour of a non-political poem still the concept of struggle that he introduces and the eloquent manner with which he executes his plea speak of the radical content of his ideology.

He, in fact, gives an objective analysis of the situation and introduces the concept of struggle to outlive the hostile forces and establish a just city for the betterment of individuals. Samuel Hynes suggests that Auden's poem, in fact, extends our knowledge of the crucial moral choice of the Thirties - the choice between fascism and its opponent by examining that choice as it was manifested in Spain in 1937. Its subject is moral decision and not political action.13

We may with some reservations agree with Samuel Hynes as far as Auden's humanistic concept of struggle is concerned. Auden himself reinforces it in the following lines:

Poetry is not concerned with telling people what to do, but with extending our knowledge of good and evil perhaps making the necessity for action more urgent and its nature more clear but only leading to a point where it is possible for us to make a rational or moral choice.14
The poem offers a choice between reconstructing the society on fresh lines by removing its anomalies or joining a 'suicide pact' (TEA P.211) representing passive suffering. The poet advocates a programme of action - a moment of self-decision rather than the outer intervention symbolised as 'dove', 'furious papa' and 'mild engineer'. He strongly feels the necessity of dynamic force of movement as he perceives that 'fever's menacing shapes are precise and alive' (TEA P.212).

A.T. Tolley discerns Marxist viewpoint in Auden's statement in the poem that men are made by what they do and are not passive victims of life force.¹⁵ He illustrates this in the following lines from Auden's poem itself:

'Oh no, I am not the mover,...
I am your choice, your decision; yet I am Spain'

(TEA P.211)

Auden views the political situation as clearest manifestation of modern malaise. Ronald Mason rightly appreciates 'Spain' as an emphatic and eloquent expression of the European seriousness ever since the beginning of the thirties. The poem epitomizes the sad drift of European affairs. It was, in fact fulfilling complete poetic consciousness of a state of world war several years before historical fact of it.¹⁶ Ronald Mason, thus,
suggests that Auden's "Spain" is a revelation of his farsightedness. It is important to point out that in Spanish civil war Auden favours active collective action against fascist tendencies. "Spain" for him, acquires a wider symbolic import of a struggle for liberation of humanity from imperialism. Anti-fascist tendencies reflect good and fascist tendencies reflect evil. Expressions like firing squad and the bomb unfold human greed for power and glory which in turn reflects capitalist culture. Similarly, tenderness and fellow-feelings shown through medical rescue work and service of anti-Franco military forces broadly symbolise the assertion of basic humanity of the people.

Here we must mention that Auden later on deleted the stanzas which demonstrate the Spanish civil war as a symbol of struggle between fascist and anti-fascist tendencies. Stanzas about the expanding imperialism which resulted in the second world war were also deleted. The reason for the omission may be attributed to his later disillusionment with the cause. Whatever may be the reasons of reconsideration but at the time of writing, his passionate involvement in the cause can not be disputed.

It seems that the optimistic radicalism of Auden visible in "Spain" vanished after the defeat of the Spanish republicans. Now he could look back to the defeat of the republican cause, his own disillusionment with communism and the beginning of the
second world war. "September I, 1939" deals with the topical issue of second world war but Auden's scepticism about the success of any radical measure to change the society also comes to the fore. There is a growing feeling about thirties decade being 'a low dishonest decade' (TEA P.245). M.L. Rosenthal's remarks seem quite pertinent when he suggests that in this poem as in others written in the same period, Auden was still 'political', but like many others of his literary generation, had turned away from the activistic idealism that marked his more whole heartedly Marxian writing. He did not seek programmatic alternatives to the communist and Popular Frontist set of his earlier thinking. Rosenthal further adds that to Auden apparently the whole realm of political action had become more or less distasteful, and with the need to identify with 'the people' that communist thought stresses. Nevertheless, Rosenthal feels that Auden was still very much a political poet, but in a new way; he used the political situation as an incentive for coaching himself into a tragic vision of man's fate.17

We may endorse M.L. Rosenthal's viewpoint about Auden's scepticism about and disillusionment with communism but his statement that he used political situation as an impetus only seems a little exaggerated. Auden's ruminations over the causes may appear sad and his conclusions individualistic, yet his concern with the exploited individuals and his emphasis on their
awakening, his condemnation of the imperialism ironically exposing America's apparent neutrality in the second world war crisis are indications of his radicalism.

Auden visualises 'Imperialism's face' in the contemporary events. He has bitter realisation that the American dream of neutrality is merely euphoric and that America needed to reconsider their stand in the war. Auden clearly hints at the grave implications:

But who can live for long
In an euphoric dream;
Out of the mirror they stare,
Imperialism's face
And the international wrong

(TEA P.245)

Investigating into the causes that led to war Auden concludes that Hitler's self-love resulted in Fascism and his fascist tendencies were responsible for the eventuality which has intruded even upon the private lives of the people. He provides Freudian psychoanalysis for Hitler's behaviour and attributes all crimes to the individual wish. We are also aware that the poet at the time of composition of this poem was sitting in a Newyork bar, 'uncertain and afraid' (TEA P.246), viewing himself and his fellow beings as 'lost in a haunted wood' (TEA P.246)
like "children afraid of the night who have never been happy or good" (TEA P.246). War, he concludes, is the outcome of egotistical love:

For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone.

(TEA P.246)

Thus he concludes that egotistical love is the cause of suffering. Auden visualises men lost in their petty private anxieties having little capacity to counteract the hostile forces. But despite the receding optimism Auden can still discern 'points of light' (TEA P.247) in an atmosphere of 'negation and despair' (TEA P.247). The poet gives humanistic solutions to the war crisis. He who gives a call for direct social action with 'trumpet and anger and drum' (TEA P.209) has now become conscious of 'Faces along the bar' (TEA P.246) and is desperately seeking to project an affirming flame. A person who earlier held rational and scientific view of life seems to betray a conservative outlook in holding out abstract theories regarding eternal human revengeful feelings as causes of war. He seems to advocate the psychological revolutionary treatment of change of heart through universal love. "We must love one another or die" (TEA P.246).
It is significant that the poem marks the later phase in Auden's poetic output during the thirties decade when his enthusiasm was gradually receding and a change in his attitude was taking place. He had started seeking private causes to the contemporary public crisis and providing individualistic solutions to social malaise.

In the psychoanalytical phase of his creative output during the thirties, Auden had been identifying the symptoms of psychic maladies leading to social crisis. He placed specific emphasis on the role of love as an instrument to implement change of heart process for ushering in a better social order. In the socially active phase, Auden lends an extradimension to the concept of love by raising it from individualistic basis to the collective social good. In the poems like "Doom is dark and deeper than any sea - dingle", "That night when joy began", "The chimneys are smoking" "O what is that sound", "Easily, my dear, you move, easily your head" and "August for the people and their favourite islands", Auden's response to the social crisis and his aversion for illusory escapes into romantic individualistic kind of love come to limelight.

In "Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle" (1930), the poet advocates a higher kind of love far above:

...dreams of home,  
Waving from window, spread of welcome  
Kissing of wife under single sheet;...

(TEA P.55)
Even in private love, the poet perceives a social sense. All these emotions make him conscious of forward looking love. At this stage, the attraction of private anxieties is difficult to overcome. Nevertheless, the beginning has been made. Still more, in "That night when joy began" (Nov. 1931), we are made conscious about the existence of social reality. Even in private moments of the lovers' union, Auden mentions about 'morning's levelled gun' and 'trespasser's reproach' (TEA P.113). Auden shows us glimpses into love as a 'cure for social insecurity but a total oblivion into illusory love is definitely missing. Again in "The Chimneys are smoking" (April, 1932), the individual struggle of the lovers represents the struggle of life against the malignant disintegrating forces. Auden is seeking once again the fulfilment of public vision through private means and a distinct shift of emphasis from individual to collective can be easily marked.

Auden's radicalism in this context finds forceful expression in his poem "O what's that sound" (Oct. 1932). Auden places the lover in a situation where he has to make a choice between his love for his beloved and the social cause he represents. The lover finally responds to the call of duty enabling the poet to build the theme of social commitment by presenting a contrast
between private love and situational urgency. The pressures of private concerns beneath the manifest social concerns of the poem are clearly discernible in expressions denoting the approaching thumping march of the 'scarlet soldiers' (TEA P.126) and the beloved's passionate reactions to these as well as the lover's false consolations'... "I promised to love you, dear,/But I must be leaving' (TEA P.126). Here the final emphasis on the lover's choice in favour of social duty, inspite of his intensity of love for his beloved, represents his active social phase.

Auden's condemnation of the self-regarding love and the illusory escapes into romantic dreams comes out strongly in "Easily, my dear, you move, easily your head" (Nov. 1934). The poet disfavours individualistic love, which moves easily through "the night's delights and the day's impressions" (TEA P.152) without any concern for the 'sombre skies' of Europe and the Danube flood' (TEA P.152). He projects the inadequacy and incompleteness of individualistic love because of its lack of concern for broader social issues. Auden investigates into the cause of social malady and pleads for a positive outlet to natural desires which, if repressed can become perverted. His consciousness of an objective world of hunger and deprivations reflects a heightened awareness of forward looking love:
Ten thousand of the desperate marching by
Five feet, Six feet, Seven feet high,
Hitler and Mussolini in their wooing poses
Churchill acknowledging the voter's greeting
Roosevelt at the microphone, Van der Lubbe laughing
And our first meeting

(TEA P.153).

Auden's belief suggests his radicalism in the line "...through our private stuff must work/His public spirit" (TEA P.153) but the intervention of individualistic love is ironical in the following lines:

The voice of love saying lightly lightly,
'Be Lubbe, Be Hitler, but be my good
Daily, nightly'.

(TEA P.154).

In his emphasis on individual responsibility to mould the love in a positive or negative manner, Auden calls for an action which should have a social base but depending on the capacity of the individual to overcome selfish individualism. Love, here, is supposed to emerge as a basis for social relationships, social harmony and individual fulfilment. As analysed in earlier poem also, Auden's solutions when they emanate from individual capabilities, are essentially rooted in his social vision.
Auden's spontaneous urge for social kind of love is further reflected in "August for the people and their favourite islands" (Aug., 1935). The poem unfolds his disillusionment with illusory ideas of individualistic love held precious by him and Isherwood in the early thirties. The poet considers illusory the dreams of freedom enjoyed by the holiday-makers and condemns the evasive efforts of these apparent controllers of "the complicated apparatus of amusement" (TEA P.155). The poet is greatly critical of any romantic escape into self-regarding love and regrets believing earlier that "one fearless kiss would cure the million fevers" (TEA P.156). Love represented through private joking and the solitary vitality is insufficient, as a mere 'flabby fancy' like the studied taste and 'the whisper in the double bed' (TEA P.156) in the face of contemporary social challenges. Here, Auden's major contribution lies not in underlining the power of love to cure the psychological ailments but in the extension of the power of love to get over the material chaos. His greatness as a poet again lies in his ability to visualise a situation demanding urgent action where the tension seems acute:

Greed showing shamelessly her naked money,
And all love's wondering eloquence debased,
To a collector's slang, smartness in furs,
And Beauty scratching miserably for food
Honour self-sacrificed for calculation.
And Reason stoned by mediocrity,
Freedom by power shockingly maltreated,
And justice exiled till saint Geoffrey's Day.

(TEA P.157)
Auden dooms it as the sacred duty of a poet to unbare and confront the existing social challenges and problems. He exhorts his friend Isherwood to fulfil his duty as a poet and to warn the members of the affluent class against impending doom:

So in this hour of crisis and dismay,
What better than your strict and adult pen,
Can warn us from the colours and the consolations,
The showy arid works, reveal
The squalid shadow of academy and garden,
Make action urgent and its nature clear?
Who gave us nearer insight to resist,
The expanding fear, the savaging disaster?

(TEA P.157).

The unconscious pressures of the shared guilt are there, of course, but these promote his social awareness in favour of the dynamic force of social love. His realisation that individualistic love must be forefeited to avoid a greater loss, his recognition of the insufficiency of individualistic love to cope with the broader issues demanding urgent action and finally his desire to merge individual into social demonstrate his strong urge to find radical solutions to radical issues.

Again, in his poem "Fish in the unruffled waters" (March, 1936), Auden projects love as a powerful factor in establishing
a better and happy social order. His optimistic attitude that man can work for social harmony inspite of his realisation of the fallible nature of human beings, is a broad socially potent gesture conveyed through this poem.

Auden realises that the degenerated civilization is at the root of contemporary man's dissatisfaction and has given rise to the confusions that modern man is in. This issue of human predicament and dignity has been raised by Auden in poems like "Hearing of harvests rotting in the valleys", "Musee des Beux Arts" and "The Unknown Citizen". In "Hearing of the harvests rotting in the valleys" (May, 1933) he attributes this state of affairs to the inert and escapist attitudes among the individuals. He is grieved to see them seeking escape routes to romantic ideals of love and religion. The emptiness of the allurements given to the starving people in the valley surrounded by barren mountains becomes the focal point of Auden's anger. But Auden is optimistic when he exclaims:

... Ah, water
Would gush, flush, green these mountains and these valleys
And we rebuild our cities, not dream of islands

(TEA P.136)

Here the images of water, gush, flush, green—all are symbolic of creative regenerative revolutionary force. They seem
to project a sanguine faith in the strength of human will to rebuild the cities collectively denouncing utopian flights in a dreamland. The poem puts a definite emphasis on Auden's untiring faith in the socio-economic reconstruction of the fragmented social set up. Here Auden strikes a break with modernists in his condemnation of escapist tendency and in his advocacy of the role of cumulative efforts in rebuilding the shattered civilization. The undercurrents of the liberal concern for the personal, moral and psychological condition of the individuals lurk beneath the manifest social concerns. Nevertheless, the final emphasis is on the cumulative efforts of the individuals for re-establishing the decaying civilization and this serves as a pointer to his overall radical-liberal perspective.

In "Musee des Beux Arts" (Dec.1938) his condemnation of human apathy to individual suffering implies an ironic attack on the self-centredness of people in general. His stress on human indifference symbolised in Icarus painting, the careless attitude of the ploughman for whom Icarus' fall was not an important failure, indifference of the ship crew when Icarus fell—all these details give us an insight into the distortions in the humanistic cultural traditions and bring us in face to face with the brutal egocentricity and self-love of the modern man. The poem, indirectly, gives us the glimpse of his deep concern for the anguish of the lonely suffering individual also. Auden underlines
the place of individual suffering in the order of things through contrast and irony. The conspicuous predominance of other things in Icarus painting - the ploughman, the horse, the sunshine and the ship painted in minutest details clearly show the insignificant existence of individual suffering in the indeterminate nature of reality. His concern for the individual evidently comes out in his own statement in his 'Introduction' to The Oxford Book of Light Verse where he remarks that the problem for the modern poet is to find a genuine community in which each had his valued place and can feel at home. It is the beginning of a new phase in Auden's poetry, as Auden, in this poem, seems to seek private vision of the happiness of the individual through the projection of a public reality. The poem, thus, shows Auden sliding perceptively into a phase where he is more and more inwardly inclined.

In "The unknown citizen" Auden decries a system which curtails freedom and happiness of the individuals. Here his criticism of the system is subjected to his deep concern for the well-being of individuals in a society. He ironically suggests that the success and identity of the unknown citizen are defined by his conformity to the rigid standards of the regimental establishments. He criticises the mechanization of an individual by economic, commercial and even ideological institutions which exploit him to their own suitability. Auden can distinctly
visualise the malfunctioning of the system reflected in the imposition of conformity upon the unknown citizen. The unknown citizen is presented in a well-satisfied and comfortable position living in a materialistic utopia where he is fully employed, fully insured, perfectly healthy and has all the amenities and luxuries. But the simultaneous ironical exposition of the implications of this forcible conformity expected from the unknown citizen shows Auden's devastating critique of the contemporary ethos and his liberal concern for the freedom and happiness of individuals. The poet's sensitiveness about the well-being of the individuals shows his growing inward inclinations towards the final phase of his poetic output during the thirties. Nevertheless, his condemnation of the institutions which impose conformity and consequent curtailment of the individual dignity and initiative reflects that he is well aware of the inconsistencies in the system.

This line of criticism of the system leads us to another aspect of the topsy turvy nature of the system, which breeds unhealthy, mentally imbalanced and impractical neurotics. In two significant poems, "Miss Gee" and "Victor" Auden has raised his voice against another form of social malaise which is responsible for distorted emotional responses of the individuals i.e, the authoritarian and overprotective attitude of the parents towards
their children. Auden holds over-religious puritanical training responsible for creating all kinds of inhibitions and resulting ultimately in morbid mental conditions.

In "Miss Gee" (April 1937) a lower middle class character is portrayed as a victim of her ingrown inhibitions. She lives under the constant threat of moral constraints which she imposes on herself. Auden presents her as a hypocrite puritan maiden knitting for the church Bazaar, attending to evening church service and listening to church music and doing everything to satisfy puritan norms but her repressed psyche, which reflects the middle class hypocrisies and inhibitions, is laid bare by Auden when she is shown secretly cherishing romantic longings of physical love. She is presented as an emotionally and spiritually starved spinster whose existence remained unacknowledged due to her plain appearances and meagre resources. The repression, we notice, bursts forth in a dream where she thinks of herself as being the queen of France dancing with the vicar of Saint Aloysius. Auden is quick to focus on the inner torture which in reality, she undergoes in the process of putting up the facade of what the poet considers as perverted morality and reveals her inner cosmos in the following lines:

She could feel his hot breath behind her,
He was going to overtake;
And the bicycle went slower and slower,
Because of that back pedal brake

(TEA P.214)
In real world Miss Gee avoids normal love and feels guilty when she entertains romantic feelings. She makes a false show of her modesty to cover up her frustration and represses her dormant physical desires. The expressions like "with her clothes buttoned up to her neck" (TEA p. 215) and "with her bed clothes right up to her neck" (TEA p. 216) are suggestive of inner repression through implication. Miss Gee's prayer in the church exposes the ultimate extent of her hypocrisy:

Lead me not into temptation
But make me a good girl please

(TEA p. 215)

Thus, through outward show of modesty she assures and reassures herself that she is a perfect puritan and follows the dictates of the church.

Auden also believes that unsympathetic and cruel attitude of the people around her only aggravated her sense of loneliness. "The loving couples' who did not 'ask her to stay' (TEA p. 215) the students who began to laugh and 'a couple of Oxford Groupers' who 'carefully dismounted her knee' (TEA p. 216) expose shallow social behaviour and human apathy to individual suffering. Thus
Auden raises the question of human dignity and social justice which hints at his generous acceptance of a common human being. He shows his anger against the social maladies symbolised in the metaphor of cancer. Sending Miss Gee to Anatomy department for knee dissection while the disease was somewhere else, underlines the confusions that operate in the social value system of middle class. The choice of social characters taken from the contemporary scene. Miss Gee, the loving couple, the vicar, the doctor, the servant, the doctor's wife, the surgeon, the students and the oxford groupers reflect Auden's social perspective. The texture of the poem with colloquial language, apt epithets, bold images and expressive vocabulary give us the genuine feel of the social content of the poem. We find that the criticism of the system in the poem is motivated by the poet's liberal concern for the growth or development of healthy individuals, their freedom and happiness.

In "Victor" (June 1937) also, Auden is critical of the system which develops totally impractical characters like victor. He is, for example, trained in the childhood to honour the family traditions and to develop Christian values of purity, Charity and truthfulness. He develops a negative attitude to the fulfilment of natural desires and that turns him into a misfit in the society when he overhears the clerks talking about his wife's flirtations with them his puritan values look threatened. He, in a fit of
frenzy, rushes about to seek refuge in Nature, God and religion but fails and in frustration kills Anna, his wife to rectify the sin and to bring about the regeneration of man in the name of false religious values. His behaviour shows his impractical approach to the problems. Auden, thus, sarcastically highlights the anti-life tendencies of the orthodox Christians which eventually result in socio-psychological maladies beyond the curative power of orthodox religion.

Auden, infact, holds the system responsible for the lop-sided development of victor's personality. Even his manager says: "He is too mousey to go far" (TEA P.219). Victor maintains a false show of modest behaviour when he is extended an invitation by other clerks to visit women. He merely smiles and shakes his head contented that he is living perfectly in accordance with the norms set for him by parental authority. At night he reads the consequences of being immoral in the Bible to reassure himself that he is not spoiled by the corrupt values. Auden underlines that such moral pressures unconsciously affect the healthy development of victor's personality adversely. Even a kiss appears to him to be 'a blow on the head' (TEA P.220). He is dazed when he is hotly kissed by Anna, his wife who is an uninhibited personality. Auden is highly critical of victor's abnormal act of killing Anna and describes it as a symbol of victor's morbid mental condition. But in the final analysis victor owes his
psychic distractions to the faulty social system. The distorted value system of middle class culture is highlighted through description of the clerks' talk about having fun with women, their visits to downtown on Saturday night, Manager's smoking a Corona Cigar, Anna's visit to Paveril, her flirtations and the sadistic pleasure clerks find in Victor's suffering. These are adequate evidences of the distortions and degeneration of values in the bourgeois culture.

Thus both these poems criticise the system for neglecting the healthy growth of human personality which indirectly reflects that Auden's emphasis is on the individual's free and healthy development. Towards the climax of the decade when these poems were composed Auden seems to seek solutions to private concerns through social criticism. In fact, his radical liberal perspective encompasses the development of healthy individuals as contributive to a better social order.

"In Memory of W.B. Yeats" (1939) Auden underlines his concept of the poet and the social role of poetry which reflect a high degree of social consciousness in his poetic vision. He suggests that art should play a constructive role by generating love and other human values required for the establishment of a well ordered society which he considers as a necessary prerequisite for the healthy development of the individuals. The role of
optimism is ardent in the tone of the poem:

Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;
In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start...

(TEA P.243)

The analysis of the representative poems of Auden spanning the thirties decade, thus, shows the cumulative impact of emotional as well as objective factors on his literary sensibility. His poems show that he promptly responded to the contemporary socio-political and economic situation and offered sharp analysis of the vital social issues of the times. In his analysis of socio-economic chaos Auden could visualise and register the tensions caused by Economic Crash and its adverse impact on the weaker sections of society. In some of his poems he waged a scathing attack on pretensions and insufficiency of the ruling middle class. He unveiled dormant imperialistic tendencies and strongly condemned fascism and gave a call for collective action to stop wars.

Towards the end of the decade we notice that Auden's social attitudes grew inwardly inclined and the dominant radical thrust was subdued. Auden, we find, looked to religion for support. The
above study establishes that even in his most radical and militant phase Auden's perspective was that of a radical-liberal and his sensibility was bourgeois. This perspective refrained him from going beyond the frontiers to overhaul and reconstruct the existing society. We must, therefore, acknowledge that an individual with this type of perspective and sensibility cannot sustain his radicalism in somersaults of acute emotional crisis, which he appears to have experienced after the defeat of republican cause in Spain. The predominance of the liberal concerns in the later phase of this decade of Auden's socially productive literary period may subdue the overall social impact of the poems to some extent but the urgency of social vision for healthy development of individuals remains intact throughout. Auden himself remarks: "Individual in Vacuo is an intellectual abstraction. The individual is the product of social life."19

A significant shift of emphasis in his attempt to develop a coherent world outlook can be clearly noticed but as analysed earlier all these shifts were within the framework of his radical-liberal perspective. John T. Wright's comments seem very relevant here:

Auden sees the reality in sudden shifting perspectives and presents a general truth about life or man or ourselves - perhaps Freud's truth or Marx's truth but other truths as well and especially truths that relate one sphere in which we live to others - the public to personal, the interior to the cosmic or social.20
Auden's perspective for building up a just society through liberal humanistic means remains constant in his poetry. His poems encompass a social vision in which we may change the social conditions by some shared social action and restore a better society for the harmonious development of individuals. His poems show that all his efforts were directed towards bringing about changes in the existing set up, extension of human personality by promoting human values of love, truth and justice and optimistic confrontation with the challenges of life - the values that could give man his due place in society so that both individual and society may struggle for a meaningful existence.

Robin Skelton refers to 'Sir, No man's Enemy', 'A communist to others', 'To A writer on His Birthday', 'Spain' and 'September 1, 1939' as poems which Auden considers 'to be trash which he is ashamed to have written'. But we find that these poems are the most significant topical contributions to topical state of urgency. These substantiate Auden's belief that poetry can help people come to terms with the objective social realities. These poems demonstrate the ideas and feelings seriously held by Auden at the time of their composition. Auden may have done revision or reconsideration of his poems of active social phase in accordance with his changed conceptions at a later stage in life or to fulfil new artistic needs as Watson suggests that Auden's later alteration and suppression can be attributed to the fact
that he had ceased to believe in that cause in the course of second world war\textsuperscript{22}. A.L. Rowse defends 'September 1st, 1939' when he remarks that the last line of 'September 1st, 1939' 'we must love one another or die' raised a doubt in his mind. He finds it rhetorical, no doubt, but he feels that 'absolute apposition is unconvincing, just not true\textsuperscript{23}'.

To conclude, we might assert that whatever Auden later thought of these poems, was' his retrospection but the incontrovertible fact remains that he wrote them imbued with passionate involvement in the crisis. So his poems shall continue to claim significance from the point of view of their contemporaneous appeal. These poems, indeed, constitute a direct and symbolic representation of objective socio-politico-economic realities of the times and are effective reflection on the urgency of social purpose.
What a writer writes about is at every moment related to what he believes, what he writes about also implies an attitude to the time in which he is living.

Stephen Spender