

## 1. Introduction

Reading of W. H. Auden's poems and poetic career is in a way a journey into a world of diverse stands of beliefs and ideals. A serious attention if given to his whole poetic career we find that besides the startling unusual meters, words and images; juxtaposition of industrial and natural landscapes; mixture of the rhymes of poetry with those of jazz music his poetry of earlier phase focuses on the psychological problems faced by the time because of the social evils rampant everywhere because of the industrialization and the rise of inhumane capitalism. There are abundant political and anti-war sentiments in his poem, yet some of his collections of poems contain lighter and more romantic verse.

He witnessed the rise of Nazism and endured the troubled period when he served as an ambulance driver in the Spanish Civil War. He later on migrated to America and searched for a new idiom of expression that he believed would eventually redeem the human mind from the psychological strain that was there due to the contaminated modern civilization and indifference of an individual toward the another individual. The image of decay, loss, contamination and warring ideas constitute his poems but they were soon ousted and dominated by his vigorous Orthodox Christian beliefs that he offered as the only solution that can draw a sense of catholicity from the severed mechanical heart of the modern humanity. When the critics surveyed his poems and career they focused either on the influence of various doctrines and theories on him, for example the influence of Marxism, Freudian Psychoanalysis, Existential philosophy and the influence of Christian beliefs in the later phase of his poetic career or rather say his life as a whole.

Auden taking shelter in the different types of philosophies and theories itself stands as a palpable evidence of his restlessness and his search for something that can

be a panacea to heal the breach and wounds festering at the heart of total humanity. Therefore if a reader journeys into the poetic world of W. H. Auden, he manages to come out only with a new vista of experience that is he finds ample evidences of his poetry being filled with a sense of malaise and maladies of modern civilization.

Moreover, his poems swing between this sense of decay brought by modern civilization and a need of creating a spiritual and metaphysical base of humanity in modern era. Therefore, this present research aims at unearthing the idea that Auden in fact envisages redemption of modern humanity saturated by malaise and maladies of modern civilization through spiritual orientation that in fact his own poetry moves toward. The critics that this research takes into consideration have not been able to focus this aspect of his poetry therefore it still remains a provocative issue to be explored. Therefore the researcher has assumed that with an unexplored issue related to Auden's poetry this research bears a significant place for those students who are interested at present and who will build an interest in Auden's poetry in future.

This proposed research is divided into four chapters: the first chapter includes introduction to the research paper, to the writer, and analysis of various literatures found on his poetry; the second chapter develops a theoretical tool that defines the vices of modernism and focuses on the contaminated modern civilization; the third chapter is inclusive of the analysis of the selected poems that sufficiently contain the evidences for and throw light upon what the researcher has hypothesized as researchable; and the last chapter is conclusion of what the researcher has found when analyzing the selected poems in the light of the tool developed in the second chapter.

### **Life and Career of W(ysten) H(ugh) Auden**

The English-born American poet Wysten Hugh Auden was one of the most significant poets of the 20th century. Auden was born in York, the son of a physician.

At first interested in science, he soon turned to poetry. In 1925, he entered Christ Church College, University of Oxford, where he became the core of a group of young leftist writers who generally articulated a socialist standpoint, while continuing the imaginative artistic revolution of such former writers and poets as T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Ezra Pound. This group included the poets Louis MacNiece and Stephen Spender and the novelist Christopher Isherwood. After graduating in 1928, he spent five years as a schoolmaster in Scotland and England.

Auden's poetic career can be divided into four phases:

A) The Early Phase (1928-1933)

His early phase encompasses a small volume of Auden's poems and his most admired and popular volume, *Poems* (1930) which was later revised with addition of some shimmering, brilliant and finest poems in 1933. In these poems of the thirties, the reader finds and simultaneously locates himself in an identifiable background of crisis. It is one of high ground, from which the hawks or the helmeted airmen survey and investigate, in loneliness, a world spread below them. Valleys containing pockets of decaying existence and subsistence, industries failed or failing, villages in discommunication from one another and the huddled and troubled communities between – their means of production and of communication – run down, themselves condensed to a unreceptive and hostile separation – offer an picture of the failed and lonely individual, attempting to break through his stillness and silence by brief and concentrated though barren, dealings, associations and relationships. Every endeavor toward unity - the groups of people to join together into a society, the individuals to congregate in love, the mind to clutch together in peace - meets a discouragement and is frustrated.

A part of the power of this landscape, nevertheless accumulating abundant frustrative elements, occurs from the way in which personal and public elements mix in it. It contains the mountaneous surroundings Auden visited and loved as a child in Westmorland, the Peak District, and Wales; these are vistas of the world from the rotting industries of the Midlands; there are bays and headlands, country parishes, the college building and the cathedral cloister. He has made the total or whole cohere together with the economic decay of a class, and by imposing upon the whole scene an unexplained state of feud and warfare, of love in opposition to death of spies against the Supreme Antagonist like the social, moral, economic and political corruptions.

One of the most vital and persistent elements is the use of the language of psychological, analytical, and principally Freudian. A frequent deportment or gesture or phrase - even the concrete development of the body into the fuzzy, distorted and destructive symptoms - will expose the psychological and spiritual maladies beneath. Again there is a practical doubleness of attitude inherent in Auden; the disease is regarded at one and the same time the typical and yet as a required expression of subdued energies working their ways to surface.

The language of these poems is also nurtured by recognition of the Marxist theory of the predictable decay of capitalist society, at present in its easily recognizable last stage. By this device, Auden gives his poems their characteristic double note. They have the elation of assurance and certainty, of being a part of historical and evolutionary process that cannot and should not be left without any serious attention. But this exhilarated meditation on the unavoidable is made intricate by a quite unlike element: the fascinating and loving affection to what is being devastated, the beautiful, simple, truly strong Englishman whom history has made

outmoded. Auden examines with nostalgia the generation of the handsome triumphants, the bankrupt and ruined boyhood, contaminated youngsters, the beggars, those present a form of life that Auden weighs up with an appreciative and green absorption, while envisioning its collapse.

#### B) The Middle Phase (1933-1939)

His middle phase introduced the most excellent out of his poetic thoughts that introduced *Look Stranger* (1936), *Another Time* (1940), *Letters from Iceland* (1937), *Journey to a War* (1938) etc. Auden's imaginative force is realized in his identification with the tensions of a time and place. But this power went soon astray when he lost these tensions after his settlement in USA. We shall expose in it the depression, strikes, the hunger marchers. We shall come across Spanish and Chinese landscapes and settings. Above all we shall come upon not only the age's properties but also its fixations and excitements. This phase includes feelings, substandard of the working class, a logic that things required a new drive from somewhere that has its spiritual basis, seeing out of the corner of the age, the rise of fascism, the prosecution of the Jews, the gathering nervousness and fear of the next war that was half predicted at that time. This argument may certainly make clear the fact that there an liveliness, an excitement, or an animus in the poetry of the 1930s at its most imposing force during the years when Auden has learnt to organize and create a bondage in it, in the middle of that decade. It is this strength and intensity of present that is absent from the radiant wit and excellent conversation or exchange that has come to characterize the works of the last twenty years.

However, the enthusiastically integrated experience of a lifetime or of a civilization is quite absent from his poetry. His growth as a poet looked largely a rejection of his own past. At any rate, it seemed only a reception of that past which

matched his immediate present, gifted or cursed. Auden is noticeably at his best of his capabilities in the verses of his late twenties and early thirties in a way that does not recur in the later phases of his career.

#### C) The American Phase (1940-1950)

In January 1939, Auden migrated to America and settled there for good. His migration to America coincided with Auden's taking a more somber and unconcealed interest in Christian theology. Thereafter, Orthodox Christianity becomes the most read out and critically appraised element in his verse. However, this conversion to orthodox Christianity is not taken as an unexpected break; rather it is a continuation, a logical expansion or a gradual evolution of the beliefs and ideals he had revered and approved since earlier times. The earlier held faith in Good State (based on the equality between people and supported by his Marxist belief) now is reflected into his faith in the City of God. This search for a democratic state now becomes a search for the Just City, a place where the just God dwells. The responsibility for choosing, earlier the democratic state and now the City of God, rests completely on the individual. Every moment is important for every moment is a moment of choice. His migration to America was reflected into his search for new idiom, for new modes of expression. During his first decade in the USA, Auden published *New Year Letter* (1941), *The Sea and the Mirror* (1944), *For the Being Christian Oratorio* (1945), *The Age of Anxiety* (1948) and so on. These poems throw substantial light on his religious views, as well as on his theory of art. they also illustrate that the poet was trying to write a long work in an age of short lyrics.

#### D) The Last Phase (1950 onward)

Auden continued to write about the very end of his days. His works of the sixties make it obvious that he has attained stillness and evenness resulting from a

negotiation of opposites which had caused equilibrium in his earlier poetry. *Nones* (1951), *The Shield of Achilles* (1955) and *Homage to Cilo* (1957) are the only three successive volumes in Auden's career which, if bound together, would demonstrate something like a coherent, consistent poetical character.

These collections echoed Auden's new proficiency in syllabic meters - the most apparently unlikely of all forms for the writer of the earlier, vigorously stressed, colloquial verse. Auden has articulated a new vista of reality, deliberately set at a distance from the actual, but with a formal coherence and consistency of its own. This is a landscape where the reader finds the poet utilizing the similarities between the modern world and the declining years of the Roman empire, the world of the last Alexandrines on the fringes of a decayed Empire, ruled by the labors of clerks, a world whose dual reality is presented in "Memoir for the City".

His later work demonstrates some wilting of energy, a drying up of the creative stream of his imagination. The parade of Auden's most recent work offers more proof of mechanical deftness than of unrestricted imaginative resources. But their pose and intelligence and humor, their felicity of phrase and imitable rhythm delight the reader and arouse appreciation in him. Nevertheless, it remains truth that even in these volumes, a certain kind of imaginative force and liveliness has gone out of the poems. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that they have reflect maturity and poise of mind, and kept hold of all their old technical brilliance. It seems that one of the major sources of his imaginative liveliness up till now has almost run dry.

### **Critical Perspectives on Auden's Poetry**

As a poet, Auden bore some resemblance to T. S. Eliot. Like him, he had a cool, ironic wit yet was deeply religious. Possessed of probing psychological insight,

Auden's influence on the succeeding generation of poets was immense. One of the greatest modern poets, W.H. Auden, and his poetry has always been the center of attention of many critics. The critics have diversely interpreted his poetry and considered him a master of verse; his intellectual rigor and social conscience combine with fluid mix of styles and expert craftsmanship making him a paragon of modern poetics. In this connection, talking about images and symbols in Auden's poetry, Cleanth Brooks states:

Auden's surest triumph is a recovery of the archaic imagery – fells, scraps overhung by kestrels, the backs with their pot-holes left by the receding glaciers of the age of ice. His dominant contrast is the modern age of ice: Foundries with their fixed cold . . . flooded coal mines, silted harbors . . . dirty smoking chimneys, are all symbolic of the illness and disease in the human psyches, as well as of the decay and corruption of the contemporary industrial urban society. (30)

The images and symbols in his poems abound with multiple meanings and they enhance thematic dimensions of his poems. But the thematic dimension of the poems can not be separated from the ideas and the peoples who inherit those ideas.

Commenting on the diction in W. H. Auden's poetry, Justin Raplogle says, "Auden uses words which are dominantly conceptual, and hence his poetry seems unmoving, dry and flay more like prose than poetry to the reader used to conventional romantic poetry" (40).

Viewing the thematic aspect of Auden's poetry John Fuller says that, "the battle of dualism animates all Auden's work, in many different forms; the individual and society, freedom and law, poetry and reality, art and life . . . the poet and the city" (66). As regards to the technical aspect of Auden's poetry, Richard Hoggart says,



“The struggle between traditional metrical patterns *and rhythm*, and speech rhythm creates a *great deal of tension in Auden’s poetry*, and is, in itself, a fascinating subject of study” (57).

Auden’s poetry is not other than the replication of modern complex world. James Miller examines W. H. Auden's "September 1, 1939" pointing out that one of the main theme in his poems is fascism, and although touched upon briefly, Auden's allusion to the relationship between Nijinsky and Deaghler, a homosexual couple manages nonetheless to both encode and explore the theme of homoeroticism. Recognizing the thematic significance of Auden's allusion is key because it establishes a unity in the poem, emphasizing the overarching theme of dictatorial elements lurking and manifesting themselves everywhere, from the aims of artists or their patrons to the extreme case of Hitler. Miller writes:

Deagilev's "ruthless" search for the aesthetic ideal ignored human, psychological barriers or limits, and in doing so was progressive yet dehumanizing. On the one hand, Diagilev's artistic vision in ballet was innovative and constructive, committing Nijinsky's name to fame. Conversely, it was just as destructive because the pursuit of perfection led Nijinsky to madness; he eventually committed himself to a mental asylum for the last thirty-five years of his life. Nijinsky's madness could be pivotal in Auden's understanding of the dangerous and pernicious nature of any aesthetic pushed too far. Auden perhaps because he was an artist, recognized the danger of tyrannizing ideologies more poignantly in the tragedy of an artist in the case of Hitler's fascism. (2)

This is how Auden sees the imports of modernity have baneful effects upon the individual human beings. The whole humanity like Deagiliev is disoriented. He is just an example of a modern man; there are still thousands who are trapped by the callous effects of modernity and its civilizations.

In *The Encyclopedia of American Poetry*, editor Eric L. Haralson traces two convictions that virtually added to the whole of Auden's achievement in poetry, drama, opera libretti and critical prose: first that the poet must not lie; and second, that although individuals never cease to be responsible for the suffering of others, happiness must balance guilt. As per him:

Although widely regarded as one of the 20th century's dominant poetic figures, Auden has seemed to some frustratingly protean, his formal versatility and willingness to rethink his opinions seeming to deprive his corpus of the coherence usually found in major writers. It has become clear with time, however, that Auden's work is held together by a number of enduring central than poetic truthfulness and human responsibility. (35)

Stephen Spender writing on Auden's employment of meters sees how in Auden the intellectualizing and tidying of Auden's own experiences and his acute psychological observation of other people, is developed a stage further toward a classical precision and detachment. In *Nones*, Spender finds a magnificent use of meters. He views:

The alternating long and slightly shorter lines of one of the best poems in the book, "In Praise of Limestone," reminds one of the alteration of hexameter and pentameter, and the manner is that of the civilized conversational monologue, enlivened by shock phrases from the slang

of a group who correspond in Auden's mind to a campy Roman smart set. (45)

C. Day Lewis is startled by Auden's unusual power of assimilation, and highly praises the vigor of his personal idiom and its revolutionary effect upon the verse of the time. Lewis is not content with those criticisms that label Auden's satire as irresponsible. He says:

His satire has been criticized at times as irresponsible: this is to misunderstand its motive and aim; in so far as it proceeds from the life of one social class, a class which has lost its irresponsibility and civilizing impetus, the terms of this satire are bound to be superficially irresponsible. but no contemporary writing shows so clearly the revulsion of the artist from a society which can no longer support him, his need to identify himself with a class that can provide for his imagination. (55-56)

Though there are several secondary materials on W. H. Auden's poetry. They have concentrated their attention on the imagery and technical aspects of his poems and even when they have taken into consideration the thematic aspect, none on them has highlighted about his quest for spiritual transformation to safeguard the modern pathological humanity. This proposed thesis seeks to bridge this critical gap and it is thought that Auden's quest for spiritualism in an age that is marred by the malaises and maladies of modern technological as well indifferent civilization remains a virgin territory to be explored.

## 2. Methodology

The term "Modernism" refers to new and distinctive features in subjects, forms, concepts and styles of literature and the other arts in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but especially after World War I (1914-18). It involves a "deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional bases of western art and culture in general"(Abraham 119). The modernists reject objective truth as a source of meaning and believe that the "individual creates meaning by perception, action and imagination"(Abraham 119). In such monument of modern innovation as *Ulysses* by James Joyce, *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot, and *Jacob's Room* by Virginia Woolf, symbolism and personal mythmaking became the means of self-expression. Chris Baldick defines Modernism as "a general term applied retrospectively to the wide range of experimental and avant-garde trends in the literature [and other arts] or the early 20th century traditions and of their consensus between author and reader: convention of realism [. . .] or traditional meter" (65).

The modernists felt that the destructive effects of war had shaken faith in the continuity of western civilization, and raised doubts about the appropriateness of traditional literary modes to represent the harsh and chaotic realities of the post-war world. But the glorification of the inner being led the modernists to isolation and a sense of loss and despair. Modernism announces itself as a break with the past, in some ways to the assault on traditional values associated with romanticism. One of the qualities which "distinguishing modernism from romanticism, however is a generally more pessimistic, even tragic view of the world"(Daiches 10).

David Daiches distinguishes between pre-modern world (romantic, Victorian period) and modern world (early 20<sup>th</sup> century)

Pre-modern	modern
Order	chaos
Meaningful	futile
Optimistic	pessimistic
Stable	unstable
Faith	loss of faith
Morality/values	collapse of morality/values.
Clear sense of identity	confused sense or identity

### **The Social Background to Modernism**

The year 1890 may be regarded as a landmark in the literary and social history of England. It ushered in an era of rapid social change. By the last decade of the 19th century, there was a complete background of the agrarian way of life and economy. It meant "the end of rural England and the increasing urbanization of the country" (Huysen 95). There have risen problem like increase in vice and crime, fall in the standards of sexual morality, and rapidly increasing ugliness. Commentating about gloomy atmosphere of modern life Huysen says:

... the atmosphere has increasingly grown more and more smoky and noisy, and city slums raise their ugly heads on all sides. There has been a loosening taboos and an increment in sexual promiscuity, for public opinion does not operate as a check in a crowded city. Ennui and boredom of city life and its agonizing loneliness are rampant everywhere. (94)

This century ushered in an era of moral perplexity and uncertainty. The rise of the scientific spirit and rationalism led to a questioning of accepted social beliefs, convention and traditions. The wholesale criticism of the "existing order from

different angles and points of view, often opposite and contradictory, has increased the perplexity of the common man. Baffled and at bay, he does not know what to accept and what to reject" (Huysen 100).

The abnormal is no longer regarded as a sign of degeneration; it is now recognized that even the normal are abnormal and neurotic to some extent. This has had a profound influence on 20th century moral attitudes, especially on the matter of sex. Repressed sex instincts are at the root of much neurosis and other signs of abnormality. Intellect is no longer regarded as the means of true and real understanding and emphasis is placed on feeling and intuition.

The greater mobility has also weakened the authority of the old over the young and increased the rootlessness of man. This rootlessness has brought in its wake its own problems and frustration" (Huysen 108).

This same ethos can be found in Eliot's masterpiece *The Waste Land* that reveals a harrowing consciousness of this phenomenon of 20th century city life. The reaction of the post-war world has been to suspect all manifestations of authority. Political and religious skepticism, general disillusionment, cynicism, irony etc. have become the order of the day. The temper of the age is anti-heroic. Interests have shifted from the "extrovert" to the "introvert". Neurosis and spiritual gloom are wide spread: "Economic depression, unemployment, over population, acute shortage, etc. have increased the hardship of life, and caused stress and strains and nervous breakdowns" (Eagleton 385). There is an atmosphere of moral unease and uncertainty, a collapse of faith in the accepted patterns of social relationship and a search for new patterns. Religious controversies no longer exercise any significant influence on public issues; "moral and ethical values are no longer regarded as absolute" (110).

The disintegration of faith and traditional beliefs has really made the modern life very uneasy.

### **The Moral Dilemma of Modernism**

The fundamental question of ethics is, who makes the rules: God or men? The theistic answer is that God makes them. The humanistic answer is that man makes them: "there is ever changing answer to this question of who makes the rules, God or men" (Cotton 105). Regarding the moral dilemma of modernism Ray Cotton puts forward the following points:

- Prior to the modernism of the mid-1830s, the answer was clearly that God does, as men sought for a transcendent truth. There may have been disagreement about what that truth was, but mankind generally agreed that there was truth out there beyond themselves. This is truth with a capital "T".
- Modern man believes that the answer is found through rationalism and empiricism, through man's ability to reason and conduct scientific investigation. Truth comes from men himself. Naturalism is the order of the day. This is truth with a small "t".
- Post modernism that has come into vogue since after WW II says that there is no truth, that all we can hope to do is still meaning into life by bringing in our own interpretation. This is an elimination of any truth. (Humanist Ethics 130).

Basically cotton finds two reasons why a modern man, acting autonomously, cannot establish a valid and satisfying moral theory on either naturalistic or humanistic moral theory. The scientific method is limited. Science can collect facts, but these pieces of information cannot tell what we ought to do. It ignores the very real possibility that something real exists beyond the natural world, and it is then doomed to look within its own self-defined "closed system" for an adequate ethical

base. Unfortunately, dishonesty exists philosophically, except the natural law of nature.

The problem today is that "society has abandoned belief in a transcendent, absolute truth, a morally blinding source of authority that is above our rights as individual. To modern man, then, there is no absolute other than perhaps the belief that" there are no absolute" which is in itself a contradiction" (Ray 140). Modernism assumes that there are no intrinsic values, yet it must assume that intrinsic values exist wherever it gives guidance in making moral decisions. If ends and means are relative for modernists regardless of the ethical system professed, their own point of reference must also be in flux.

Gordon H. Clark also says about the moral dilemma of modern people as the so-called modernism strives to dismantle the following foundations of Christian ethical absolutes yet seem to be inclined towards the spirituality

1. They are based on an authority higher than man-creator god given through revelation-rather than human experience, individually or collectively.
2. The absolute standard for morality is God himself, and ever moral action must be judged in the light of his nature.
3. Man is not simply an animal, but a unique, moral being created in the image God.
4. God's moral revelation has intrinsic value; it is normative rather than utilitarian.
5. Scripture is accepted as morally authoritative, the world of God, being derives from God.
6. In the scriptures, law and love are harmonized, and the modernism too attempts at the same sort of reconciliation in the art. Or, it will be better to say



that rather it tries to replace the religion and its scriptures with the art written in the so-called post-religious era. The literature therefore acquires a scriptural significance.

### **Some Attributes of Modernist Literature**

- **Perspectivism:** It refers to the general practice of relocating the meaning from the viewpoint of the individual. Moreover, it draws our attention toward the use of narrators located within the action of fiction, experiencing from a personal, particular (as opposed to an omniscient or objective) perspective. The writers and the artist use many voices, contrasts and contestations of perspectives and rely on the consequent disappearance of the omniscient narrator, especially as "spokeperson" for the author. The author retires from her or his fingernails.
- **Impressionism:** It emphasizes on the process of perception and knowing. All the devices, formal, linguistics and representational are used to present more closely the texture or process or the structure of knowing and perceiving.
- It represents a restructuring of the literature and the experience of the reality. Art always attempts to imitate or re-present reality. What changes is our understanding of what constitutes reality, and how the reality can be best re-presented to the mind and senses most faithfully and fully. Modernist literature is marked by a break with the sequential, developmental, cause and effect presentation of reality of realist fiction, toward representation of experience as layered, allusive, and discontinuous.

- Language is no longer seen as transparent, something if used correctly allows us to see through to reality. Rather, language is seen as a complex, nuanced site of our construction of the real. Language is thick, its multiple meanings and varied connotative forces are essential to our elusive, multiple, complex sense of and cultural construction of reality.
- Experimentation in form in order to present differently, afresh, the structure, the connections, and the experience of life but not necessarily in connection with the former, to create a sense of art as artifact.
- The tightening of form and an emphasis on cohesion, interrelatedness and depth in the structure of the aesthetic object and of experience. This is accomplished in part through the use of various devices such as motif, juxtaposition, significant parallels, different voices, shifts and overlays in time and place and perspective.
- The representation of inner or psychological reality, including the flow of experience, through devices such as stream of consciousness.
- The use of structural approaches to experience such as psychoanalysis, myth, the symbolic apprehension and comprehension of reality.
- The use of interior or symbolic landscape in order to present the world as moved inside, and as a place structured symbolically and metaphorically.
- Opposed to the Romantic interaction with transcendent forces, the modernist literature seeks to present the Romantic representation of the world as a physical, historical, contiguous site of experience.

- The modernist literature undergoes the experience of the appearance of the various themes: the question of reality of experience itself; the search for a ground of meaning in a world that is often defined as post-religious; the critiques of the traditional values of the culture; and the loss of meaning and hope in the world and an exploration of how this loss may be faced and compensated.



### 3. Textual Analysis

#### Poem Percolated with Modern Maladies

The twentieth century is a great age of modernism, which brought tremendous changes in the society. Industrialism, urbanization, demographic explosion, development of mass communication and an advanced state of science and technology have radically changed the attitude of human being. The so-called tradition is sacked by different innovations in 20th century. People of 20th century have already experienced two devastating world wars, which brought great destruction and havoc in the society. Due to the destructive activities; people's psyche is shaped by the fear of the third world war. The sense of humanity, morality and religiosity has gone from the society. Mores are now replaced by money; mere anarchy is loosened everywhere and people are fated to live the life amidst hostile and fearful environment created by the above-mentioned modern maladies. W.H. Auden's following poems capture those sentiments.

In "Musee Des Beaux Arts," Auden has shown the callous indifference to suffering of the modern humanity. Auden brings the lyric by pursuing the painter of Burghel who understood the nature of suffering and humanity's Indifference to it. This fact is well illustrated by a number of paintings of the famous painter of Finlanders. This painting shows that he realized that while individuals suffer, the daily routine of life goes as usual undisturbed. People eat and drink and enjoy, the dogs continue to live their lives as usual and children continue to play unconcerned even in the midst of such a great tragedy as a crucifixion of Christ. Some devout, religious-minded people may care for Christ but humanity, as a whole is not much interested either in the birth of Christ or his crucifixion as he says in the poem:

About suffering they were never wrong,  
 The old Masters: how well they understood  
 Its human position; how it takes place  
 While someone else is citing or opening a widow or just walking dally  
 along;  
 How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting.  
 For the miraculous birth, there always must be  
 Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  
 On a pond at the edge of the wood . . . (*Selected Poems* 36)

The poet juxtaposes the past with the present and how people of the past were filled with a sense of honor and respect for each and everyone. He points out to the dread of the sense of sympathy and empathy in the modern man for other people, for the race that is different from his own. The pronoun 'they' of these quoted lines refers to the people of the past and by making 'they' to accumulate, the poet compels us to concentrate on ourselves as being living in the modern age and compare us to the pre-modern or even the ancient forerunners:

They never forgot  
 That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course,  
 Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
 When the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's house...  
 (*Selected Poems* 35)

A third picture of Broughel entitled Icarus brings out this indifference even more vividly in the poem. It shows Icarus falling from the sky into the sea, farmers hearing the great splash, turning to sea what the matter was, and then turning once again to their work entirely at ease and undisturbed. The great disaster is also observed by a

crew of 'a ship at sea'. They are much amazed to see a boy falling from the sky, and then only two white legs rising out of the sea. This amazement is their only response to the disaster. No effort is made to rescue the fallen boy. The ship sails on unconcerned. The paintings fully bring out the indifference of humanity to individual suffering. It is taken as a matter of routine. This is the point what Auden brings out in the poem. His poem can be taken as a satire on the callous indifference to the suffering of the modern humanity. As the poem goes:

In Bruegel's Icarus, for instance: how every, for instance:

How every thing turns away quite leisurely from the disaster;

The ploughman may have heard the splash, the forsaking;

But for him it was not important failure:

The sun shone as it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green

Water: and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen something  
amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,

Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on. (*Selected Poems* 36)

This indifference exists there mainly because of the loss of the spiritual basis and of a marked desire to die for other's sake just as exemplified by Christ.

Auden seems to be surveying with assonance the recent history of Europe, analyzing the causes of war and asserting what his own attitude to the future will be as in his poem "In September 1, 1939" He begins by branding the thirties as a low dishonest decade and his explanation of why Germany has adopted Hitler as its 'psychopathic god' is a blend of Freudian, Marxist and Christian ideas. Auden is not explicit enough and tends to throw curt reference at its with inefficient explication. He mentions 'Luther' presumably as the symbol of the subjection of church to state power. He alludes to what occurred at 'Linz'. Without telling us that this is 'Linz'.

Without telling us that this is where Hitler wants to an Austrian invasion. These short hand notes are not really expanded enough to enable us to agree with his conclusion that.

Those to whom evil is done

Do evil in return. (*Selected Poems 22*)

This might refer only to the German nation's reaction to Luthers, or to Hitler's reaction. On to his schooling, or possibly to the current below on the thirties, that a haze was a product of a revengeful Versailles Treaty after the first Word War. Whatever the value of Auden's ideas, he wrote that he is still indebted to Freudian psychology for his analysis to Hitter's school induced psychopathic state and to social historians for his conception of 'statism' which has ' driven a culture mad'.

As in his earlier poems the maladies of individuals and of sate capitalism are seen as inter- connected. Auden's views remain Marxist enough to discover similar maladies in th American capitalist system, and his vocabulary still includes the terms 'imperialism' and competitive,' though it is significant that his lines on 'collective man' voice fear rater then left wing confidence (for Auden an American sky- scrapper symbolizes collective man rather than collective capitalists) the New York bar, with its incessant music and electric lights symbolizes man's retreat from his the metaphysical state which is likened to being "Lost in a haunted wood/ Children afraid of the night/ Who have never been happy or good" (*Selected Poems 23*). The very first stanza, with its " unmentionable odor of death," figures prominently in any discussion of the poem's connection with the vast tragedy that lay in Europe, America, and Asia:

I sit in one of the dives

On fifty- second street

Uncertain and afraid

As the clever hope expire  
 Of a low dishonest decade  
 Waves of anger and fear  
 Circulate over the bright  
 And darkened lands of the earth,  
 Obsessing our private lives;  
 The unmentionable odor of death  
 Offends the September Night (*Selected Poems* 24)

Of course, the portrayal of an immovable cataclysm must be necessarily vague and even in the first stanza this vagueness gives rise to the kinds of generalizations that would legitimately anger many of Auden's critics. In this stanza alone, however, several of the themes that had already occupied Auden, and would continue to do so until he died, are clearly present: Psychology and neurosis, the conflict between the individual and the state and the individual's moral responsibility in times of national crisis. These are the themes that engage Auden in this poem.

Auden's another world famous poem, taken as satire on the modern craze for statistics questionnaires etc. that put the identity of man at stake while measuring a man is "The Unknown Citizen". In the poem, he describes a man whose monument is erected by the impersonal state to commemorate his death because of his contribution to the state. But the commemoration of the man denies his human identity and simply measures him on the basis of statistics as the epigraph written on the monument clarifies: "To Js/07/m/378/ *This marble monument is Erected by the State*" (*Selected Poems* 8). The poem is an attack on the concept of a human being who is not much more than the product of all the economic commercial and ideological pressure groups, which force him to conform to a standard pattern of life and thought:



He was found by the bureau or Statistics to be  
 One against whom there was no official complaint,  
 And all the reports on his conduct agree  
 That in the modern sense of an old flashboard word, he was a saint  
  
 For in every thing he did he served the greater community.  
 Except for the wan till the day he retired  
 He worked in a factory and never got tired,  
 But satisfied his employees fudge Motors Inc.  
  
 Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views. (*Selected Poems* 8)

This poem seems to be attacking the concept of a human being who is not much more than the product of all the economic commercial and ideological pressure groups, which force him to conform to a standard pattern of life and thought. Modern mass-organizations such as the factory or the trade union impose uniformity on the individual, and this is strengthened by the press and the educational system. Any personal variations are immediately spotted by social psychology of the workers or other bureaucratic corrective mesmerisms. Commerce is an interested party, for it sells the average citizen his necessary phonograph, radio, car and fridge. Andean protests against a society which maniples man by the laws of mass organization, commercial exploitation and a social research and spying system. This kind of criticism of the killings of individual identity, freedom and happiness came, and still came from men of very different view points. This poem after all exposes the fact that how in modern time an individual is reduced to mere in number at the expense of his/her underlying individuality due to rampant commercial and bureaucratic social make up.

His another famous poem "The Plains" is one of the seven lyrics which conveys Auden's horror of the plains. Plains, for the poet, are nightmare landscapes, for their dead-level uniformity has a chilling effect on the soul. They are the very pictures of desolation and so the poet is horrified at the very thought of living in them. His prayer to god is that he may never have to love in any plain:

Which goes to show I've reason to be frightened not of plains, of  
course, but of me. I should like who wouldn't? to shoot beautifully and  
be obeyed

(I should also like to own a care with two exists);

I wish I weren't so silly. Though I can't pretend

To think these flat poetic, it's as well at times

To be remained that nothing is lovely, not even in poetry, which is not  
the case. (*Selected Poems* 38)

Plains kill all initiative or urge to action. Hills inspire a man to make effort, to climb and reach the other side. Even the valleys inspire young people with an urge to sail downstream and make their mark in the wide world outside. But no such inspiration, no such urge to action, is forthcoming from the plains. Their uniformity is deadening and chilling. Everything these are reduced to the same dead level, to the same all pervasive uniformity. The poet, therefore, is filled with horror at the thought that the combined action of melt and snow may reduce the mountain to the level of plains, at sometime in the future. The very thought is horrified as the poet says:

A pantheist not a solipsist,

He co-operates with a universe of large and noisy feeling-states

Without troubling to place them anywhere special, for, to his eyes,

Funny face or elephant as yet mean nothing,

This destination between me and us is a matter of taste;

His seasons are dry and wet, (*Selected Poems* 39)

The plains have also a chilling effect in love and romance. Stern grandmothers frown on lovemaking, and so in the plains marriage are arranged by them, and not by cupid, the god of love. Life is orderly and goes on at the same prosaic uniform level without any thrills and sensation. In this lyric Auden uses the geography as symbol of the facts of human life. The plains symbolize the forces in the human psyche that deaden and chill sensibility, and make a man effeminate and complacent. They are symbols of spiritual decay and desolation. They kill all initiative and urge to action.

Similarly, in another poem "Canzone" the poet begins by referring to the evil and wickedness rampant in the world. Ferocious dictators like Stalin and Mussolini are making a lot of noise. They have grown big like rhinoceros, and the cherished values of humanity are being denounced, violently and vehemently. The masses are absent-minded and unreceptive, they are carried away by the "orations" and "wooing poses" of than wicked, selfish rulers, and are like 'dumb-driver cattle' in their hands. They cannot think for themselves and so become willing tools in the hands of the power-crazy dictators. Disaster looms on the horizon, and man's salvation lives in his learning to love rightly. Eros must take recourse to *Agape*; there is no choice open to man. As the poet says:

When shall we learn, what should be clear as day,

We cannot choose what are free to love?

Although the mouse we banished yesterday

Is an enraged rhinoceros today,

Own value is more threatened than we know:

-----

Whole phyla of resentments everyday

Gives status to the wild men of the world

Who rule the absent-minded of the world

Who rule the absent-minded and this world. (*Selected Poems* 49)

Man is born in this world to suffer; sorrow and suffering are basic to human condition. This suffering arises largely from his selfish materialistic desires. Either he lives and moves in a world of romantic nations which cannot be realized, or he is greedy for worldly wealth and power, which too cannot be achieved such romantic yearning whether for romantic love and happier or for unalterable materials and social status are the root causes of his suffering. Man is selfish; he loves himself alone. From this self-centeredness result his panic and despair, his spiritual deadness and his psychological fears. He should give up such dreadful appetites and transform *Eros* into *Agape* and regeneration will follow. Universal love is the only remedy for the human malaise.

In the third stanza of "Canzone" we find the maladies of modern sick world.

As the poet says;

Drift, autumn, drift; fall, colours, where you will:

Bald melancholia minces through the world.

Regree, cold oceans, the lymphatic will

Caught in reflection on the right to will:

While violent dogs excite their dying day

To bacchic fury; anarl, though, as they will,

Their teeth are not a triumph for the will

But utter hesitation. What we love

Ourselves for is our power not to love,

To shrink to nothing or explode at will,

To ruin and remember that we know

What ruins and heavens cannot know . . . (*Selected Poems* 50)

The poet points out in the above-mentioned stanza that autumn has over-taken the world. These of spiritual death and desolation abound. Melancholy and depression are widespread. People have grown lethargic and their wills are paralyzed. They are unable to act. The result is that power-hungry dictators have grown all-powerful and deliver freely speeches to incite them to their own distribution. But the dictators despite all their violence and destructive, funny, will never be able to get their heart's desire. They will themselves be destroyed in the long run. Such destructive rage is blind and unproductive. Those who want to possess and dominate, those who are selfish and self-oriented cause destruction and are ultimately consumed in the fires they ignore. The poet warns us against such selfish love and exhorts us to forget our own selves, and love all without destination.

Worldly wealth, power and status, and not any spiritual and cultural values, are the object of human love in the modern sick world. Thus worldly wealth is dishonestly acquired; hence the poet refers to it as a stolen language. But all this worldly wealth cannot give man that security and tranquility which his soul craves.

At last mockingly and ironically using the technology of love, "Dear Fish, dear mind, dear spirit etc" the poet knows that love in the true sense of the term is present in his selfish, greedy desires, his wicked impulses and instincts cannot tolerate the presence of *Agape* or universal love. As he says in the poem;

Dear flesh, dear mind, dear spirit, O dear love,

In the depths of myself blind monsters know

Your presence and are angry, dreading love

That asks its image for more than love;  
 The hot rampageous horses of my will,  
 Catching the scant of heaven, whinny: love  
 Gives no excuse to evil done for love,  
 Neither in you, nor me, nor armies, nor the world (*Selected Poems* 52-  
 53)

### **Spiritual Orientation**

W.H. Auden's many poems are saturated with spiritual value and mores that accordingly to Auden are the true factors to save the entire humanity from the eternal damnation. In his own words *Eros* of the humanity activated by modern maladies should be replaced with the *Agape* for eternal bliss. *Eros* in Auden refers to all those debased desires of modern humanity that has put the whole humanity at stake and caused its movement in the direction of callous indifference, fragmentation, chaos and decay. This has subsequently contaminated the whole of humanity. *Agape* comes to balance, or even redeem the humanity, from the evils of *Eros* and forms the spiritual basis of humanity addressing the drought of a meaningful metaphysical meaning felt by the modern world after the supposed death of the God. In his poem, "Lullaby" he seems to be valorizing the sense of spirituality so as to get rid of from the modern pathological social make-up.

Auden, here points out that satisfaction of carnal passions brings with it satisfy. The loves have to pay the full price in terms of suffering, for their moments of physical satisfaction, with the morning comes disillusionment, and all their vision of love and beauty come to an end. Hence fort, they will not like to waste one look, thought or kiss, on each other. They will grow entirely indifferent to each other. The fountain of love will dry in their hearts, and they will become spiritually wretched

and miserable. Auden suggests only one cure for this spiritual and emotional dryness. No doubt their love for each other will come to an end but still they have a beautiful world to live in. They should accept it as a great blessing and thank for it. Then by providence by divine dispensation, foundation of love will flow out of their hearts for god who has blessed them in this way. Just as Venus inspires sexual love, so god will inspire them with spiritual love and with love for all God's creatures.

In short, *Eros* should be transformed into *Agape*, universal love and charity healer, it alone can protect them from the insects, cares and worries of the world. This is the very core and center of Auden's philosophy, and thus is the 'message' of present lyric. As the lyric goes:

Lay your sleeping head, my love,  
 Human on my faithless arm,  
 Time and fevers burn away,  
 Individual beauty from.

-----

Soul and body have no bounds,  
 To lovers as they lie upon,  
 Her tolerant enchanted slope,  
 In their ordinary swoon.

Grave the vision Venus sends  
 of supernatural sympathy,  
 Universal love and hope,

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Among the glaciers and the rocks. (*Selected Poems* 75-76)

Another poem with spiritual overture is "Diaspora." Diaspora means dispersion or scattering and the sonnet is Auden's comment on the Nazi oppression of Jews, as a result of which they were compelled to leave Germany, and were scattered over European and other parts of the world. This condemnation of Nazi brutality is, however, oblique and indirect and brings out the cyclic process of history. What you do unto others will also be done unto you, sooner or later, sooner rather than later.

Auden finds objective correlative, for the contemporary situation in what happened to Christ 2000 years ago. Ages ago the Jews had oppressed Christ. They had beggared him, persecuted him, and made him an exile. They made him a scapegoat for their social malaise and ultimately crucified him. Not satisfied even with this they distorted and falsified his teaching. On the one hand they presented a false image of Christ to the people and, on the other hand, they deceived the people by holding out to them false hopes of a heaven, a utopia, which had no existence in reality. In this way, they deceived the people by the false promise of a "land of mirrors".

However, in the modern age they have been paid back in their own coin. The Nazis have oppressed the Jews- the oppressors of Christ in the past- who have been compelled to run away from Germany. Thus they have been dispersed, scattered far and wide. They have been called treacherous and a distorted image of them has been presented to the German people. The German people have been deceived by the romanticization of "German superiority" and the Ethiopian hope of German conquest of all Europe. This is the case of the oppressors of Christ the wheel has come full circle and the 'oppressors' of the past have become the oppressed of today:

Had they not beggared him themselves to prove



They could not live without their dogmas or their  
land?

No worlds they drove him from were ever big  
enough:

How could it be the earth the confined,  
Meant when it bade then set no limits to their love?  
And he fulfilled the role for which he was designed:  
On heat with fear, he drew their terrors to him.

*(Selected Poems 73)*

Moreover, the poet goes on to describe the ubiquitous presence of the God and the pains and sufferings of those who tortured him. The God is presented in such a manner that he is taking revenge on them:

And was gods end to the lowest of mankind.  
Till there was no place left where they could still pursue him  
Into a land of mirrors without time or space,  
And all they had to strike now was the human face. *(Selected  
Poems 73)*

In the sonnet, Auden has compressed whole ages of history. The past fuses with the present, and the oppressors are transformed into the oppressed. A warning is thus held out to oppressors and would-be oppressors, like twitter. Then sins will be visited on their own heads, and they will one day suffer as the Jews are suffering today for their past sins. They must, therefore beware. The sonnet thus seems to be ethical in nature, reflecting Auden's Christian concerns.

Auden's another poem "Nones" is based on well-known scriptural events. It follows immediately in context; the crucifixion, the archetypal sin, has taken place

and we, the crowd, though trying to evade responsibility are left along with the feat. Now, we can no longer believe ourselves innocent; we must see that evil will have its sway. The poem gains much dramatic effect from being set in the siesta hours of sleepy after-dinner stillness, after the act but before the consequences: it is well, the poet suggests with realism and humility, for our minds to try to escape, though they escape into nightmare and here. Auden begins pointing out that Christ was crucified thousands years ago and the significance of his crucifixion has already been forgotten. As the poem goes:

Though time after time foretold  
 By wild hermits, by shaman and sybil  
 Gibbering in their trances,  
 Or revealed to a child in some chance rhyme  
 Like will and kill, comes to pass  
 Before we realize it. . . .  
 . . . Yet the blood  
 Of our sacrifice is already  
 Dry on the grass; we are not prepared  
 For silence so sudden and so soon:  
 The day is too hot, too bright, too still,  
 Too ever, the dead remains too nothing.  
 What shall we do till nightfall? (*Selected Poems* 47)

Sinful man no longer follows the teachings of Christ, nor remembers that He died for his sake. He tries to restore order in his disordered world, but such an order can come about only by chance like a child's chance rhyming kill, with will. This is so

because man does not understand the implications of Christ's martyrdom, and that he is a sharer in the sin of those who betrayed him, the Son of God.

Spiritual deadness has overtaken humanity, and man makes no effort to build the good city the city of god on earth. His will is paralyzed and there are corruption and death within him. Life goes on as usual on the physical plane, but there is complete spiritual inertia and deadness. Haunted by a sense of guilt man tries to escape the reality of his guilt in various ways. He dreams romantic dreams of impossible, quixotic achievement but all such dreams are more illusions, symptoms of corruption and disease in the human psyche they can be of no good whatever corruption, sin, sexuality are widespread and human attempts at reform are unrealistic. Order can be imposed upon the chaotic condition of contemporary civilization, only if man returns Christ, Eros or own sinful, selfish desires must be replaced by Agape, love for all in the Christian sense. Then alone will spiritual regeneration take place as Auden says:

That while we are thus away our own wronged flesh  
 May work undisturbed, restoring  
 The order we try to destroy, the rhythm  
 We spoil out of spite: valves close  
 And open exactly, glands secrete,  
 Vessels contract and expand  
 At the right moment, essential fluids  
 Flow to renew exhausted cells . . . (*Selected Poems* 49)

Thus the theme of the poem is religious, having for its background the various events connected with the crucifixion of Christ. It reflects Auden's preoccupation

with Christian theology. Symbolic imagery drawn from the contemporary industrial-urban society has been tellingly used.

Another poem with spiritual overtone is "Petition." This poem begins in the manner of a conventional prayer by praising this 'sir', this Supreme Being. He is the enemy of none and he forgives all. He is the very embodiment of Christian virtues of love and charity. He forgives all the sins of mankind except one. That sin is the result of the drive will, resulting from man's pride in his own intellect and powers of reasoning which suppress the instinct and emotion. This is no doubt a heinous sin, but the poet prays to the supreme to be prodigal of his generosity and forgive even this deadly sin. The poet says:

Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all  
 But will his negative inversion, be prodigal:  
 Send to us power and light, a sovereign touch  
 Curing the intolerable neutral itch.  
 The exhaustion of weaning, the liar's quinsy,  
 And the distortions of ingrown virginity. . . (*Selected Poems* 39)

The beginning of the poem is comparable to the prayer to the God. The poet sounds like that of a guilt-ridden visitor burdened with the heave with sins and wrongdoings. He wants the arrival of the God in order to reorder the disordered human world. He goes on highlighting the power of this spiritual entity that can

Prohibit sharply the rehearsed response  
 And gradually correct the coward's stance;  
 Cover in time with beams those in retreat;  
 That, spotted, they turn though the reverse were great;  
 Publish each healer that in city lives

Or country house at the end of drives;

Harrow the house of the dead; look shinning at

New styles of architecture, a change of heart (*Selected Poems* 39)

The poet prays to this Supreme Being or Supreme Healer to bless the modern people with the power to resist, presumably, the negation of the will and give them knowledge and wisdom enough to avoid the various psychological ills from which they are suffering at present.

At the end, Auden prays to the supreme healer to make known to the world about his magic, which can cure the maladies brought out by the civilization. It is the same heavenly father who could destroy the decayed social order and could build up a new social order. He could also bring about change by heart by correcting the modern human beings who have developed in the maladies of modern civilization.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is almost impossible to conclude any literary work in general and widely acclaimed poetry of W.H. Auden in particular. This present is an attempt to draw a distinct conclusion unlike others by applying the theoretical-methodological framework of modernism and its pervasive social evils, which have made the life vary pathological in nature.

The present age is marked by the growth of rank materialism, which is subversive of true happiness. People have begun to regard god and spiritual as superfluous and openly indulge in all sorts of blasphemy. The doctrine of love, humanity and sense of humanity are just put aside by the modern humanity. Talks of self-realization, cultivation of otherworldliness and the practice of devotion, etc. are declared as useless and nothing but impediments to the progress of the nation or community. Material advancement is recognized as the *somnum bonium* of human existence. Gratification of the senses is looked upon as the highest form of bliss. Practically all the fields of life are supersaturated but the malady of modern civilization. In such an age something dealing with devotion, dispassion and disinterested action are little calculated. Modern people are hankering after plays, powers and prosperities at the expense of spiritual life.

After readings the poetry of W.H. Auden one can find that his poetry is filled with a sense of malaise and maladies of modern civilization and it time and again swings between this sense and need of creating a spiritual and metaphysical base of humanity in modern era which is marked by the complete breakdown of the agrarian way of life and economy. It means the end rural life style and the increasing urbanization of the country. This has given rise to problems like increase in vice and crime, fall in the standards of sexual morality, and a rapidly increasing ugliness.

There has been a loosening in sex taboo and an increase in sexual promiscuity, for public opinion does not operate as a check in a crowded city. Ennui and boredom of city life and its agonizing love liners are rampant. Modern era is an era of moral perplexity and uncertainty. The rise of the scientific spirit and rationalism led to a questioning of accepted social beliefs, convention and tradition.

Wars and destructions are about to swallow this world. People have already witnessed two devastating world wars and are frightening with the fear of the predicted third world war everywhere, wars, destructions, chaos, unemployment, crimes and so many other anti-social activities are rampant. W.H. Auden's poetry is the brilliant interplay of the above-mentioned malaise and maladies of modern civilization.

Auden envisages redemption of modern humanity saturated by malaise and maladies of modern civilization through the spiritual orientation. In his own words *Eros*- the repository of all malaise and maladies should be replaced with universal love and core - *Agape* that is the storehouse panacea for all sort of modern maladies.

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