

VE

CHAPTER FIFTH

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Auden emerged in the thirties as a political spokesman of the dissatisfied generation. Politically speaking, the thirties was a period of crisis and dismay. Many intellectuals such as, doctors, journalists, teachers and writers took active interest in the politics of the decade. The Marxist prophecy of world revolution seemed to many on the brink of fulfilment. The poets such as, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice, John Upward, Christopher Isherwood and W.H. Auden led a leftist literary movement during the thirties. John Strachey's book, The Coming Struggle For Power popularized Marxism. The publishing house, The Left Book Club and the various periodicals such as, New Writing, New Verse, Left Review (etc.) were the result of the conscious literary efforts of the Auden group. Though Auden's early poetry (1927-1932) does not reflect dominant political ideas, it does reveal marginal political ideas through the images, symbols and myths. For instance, there are images like "spy", "wanderer", "gang" and "secret agent" and images of "feud-war" and "sport". A characteristic representative figure in Auden's early poetry is that of a wanderer. He is a man who goes out in a foreign land like an exile. He is primarily a social reformer and a revolutionary. He tries to find out the possible order in the interesting and muddled life of people. Auden's early poetry is more under the influence of the psycho-analysis of Freud than the sociology

of Marx. Auden, like a doctor, tries to diagnose the sickness of the society and tries to provide some solutions to them.

With the publication of Look, Stranger! Auden's political stand becomes dominant. His poetry from 1933 to 1938 is more under the impact of Marxism than the psycho-analysis of Freud. The leftist ideology provides Auden the socio-economic analysis of the society. He begins to realize that the very socio-political environment of the society should be transformed in order to cure the sickness of the society. The Marxist ideas such as, the doom of the capitalism, the evolutionary principle of history, the idea of class-struggle, the conviction that the proletariat class will rise up as a revolutionary class, the sympathies for the proletariat class, the decaying culture of bourgeoisie democracy of capitalist order, the impending doom of fascism and its true nature clearly show Auden's leftist stand. The poems such as, "A Communist To Others", "Two Worlds", "The Malverns", "The Watchers", "A Summer Night 1933", "Perhaps", "Our Hunting Fathers", "Birthday Poem", "A Bride in the Thirties" express the dominant political ideas in the volume.

In Time of War is a sonnet-sequence which appears in the book, Journey To A War. The book is an account of Auden's and Isherwood's journey to China. The sonnet sequence reveals an extended philosophical essay on the political and spiritual condition of the world at the time of the composition of the work. It also gives a socio-historical account of mankind in work. It also gives a socio-historical account of mankind in

terms of Marxism. Besides, some sonnets deal with the war-situation in China. The political ideas such as, the phenomenon of chivalry, the rise of prophets and poets, the process of civilization in the form of finance, churches, monasteries, the rise and fall of religion, scientific discoveries, the rise of democracy etc. reveal different evolutionary stages of human history at different time. Besides, the other political ideas such as the true nature of fascism, the inevitable fall of capitalism, the history of mankind as the history of class struggle, the alienation of masses in a decaying capitalist society etc. have been largely reflected in the sonnet sequence. The verse commentary that accompanies the sonnet sequence also takes a broad survey of human evolution. But it deals with the idea of moral choice of man and it makes an appeal to build up a "Just City", that is, a city without exploitation. Such a city could be built by bringing up change in individuals rather than in the economical structure of society. The moral choices of an individual will compel him to bring upon a change in himself and then a desirable change in socio-political formation of a society. It is, obviously the bourgeoisie democratic stand of Auden. Thus, In Time of War marks Auden's gradual departure from Marxist ideology.

Another Time is Auden's last major volume of the thirties. It reveals the major political ideas such as the war against fascism, the social democratic revolution, an urgent and immediate action of moral and political character, the picture of decaying capitalist society and the Spanish Civil War. As

compared to Look, Stranger! and In Time of War, Another Time cannot be regarded as a prominent volume of political poems. The political ideas are still there but they are no more dominant. Besides, the volume largely portrays the typical and characteristic situation and circumstance of the period and its relation with man in the period. Auden tries to find answers to the tensions of the period in humanitarian philosophy rather than in the sociology of Marx. The doctrines of humanism are derived from the doctrines of Christianity. Thus, the volume reflects Auden's ideological belief in existentialist Christian theology. The poems such as, "As He Is", "Danse Macabre", "Dover", "Prophets", "Brussels in Winter", "The Capital", "Musee des Beaux Arts", "Gare di Midi", "The Unknown Citizen", "Funeral Blues", "Spain 1937" and "September 1, 1939" express the dominant political ideas in the volume, Another Time marks the completion of the excursion of Auden's political journey.

In English poetry, a communist revolutionary position is reflected in the poetry of Auden, Lewis, Spender and Lehman. As a political poet, Auden's communist revolutionary position is obviously reflected in Look, Stranger!, In Time of War and Another Time. But it is necessary to examine how far Auden's communist position is genuine and what level of art it achieves. In other words, a reassessment of Auden as a political poet is necessary. According to Marxist interpretation the art of Auden's generation can be termed as the bourgeoisie art. It has three possible roles in relation to the proletarian revolution: opposition, alliance and assimilation. Most of the middle class

artists of the thirties, including Auden, were walking along the road of alliance. But a little close observation of these artists would illumine the fact that these artists did not enter the proletariat organization. Their role in relation to the proletariat was that of alliance and not that of assimilation. Thus, these artists remained outside the proletariat organization. They often glorified the revolution as a kind of giant explosion. They thought that something was going to come after the giant fire work of revolution. In short, the Auden generation was fascinated by the idea of revolution. Hence, we have in their poetry some vague and unknown aspirations for freedom and equality of bourgeoisie character. On the whole, they made an attempt to visualize the brave new world in terms of their passions and desires.

Nevertheless, the political phase of the thirties in Auden's poetic career can be understood as an important excursion. As T.S.Eliot had an excursion in Hinduism, and W.B.Yeats in Byzantium mythology, Auden has an excursion in Marxism. The excursion provided Auden a more mature poetic vision as reflected in his later poetry. The central theme of his later poetry expresses the hopes and aspirations for social reformation not necessarily in terms of political categories. For instance the theme of the New Year Letter and The Sea and The Mirror is based on the presupposition that this historical world is redeemable world. In his later poetry Auden feels that we are witnessing a collapse of cultural-political civilization for which we are collectively responsible. He therefore thought that as a result of our

extreme situation we are seeking some form of Catholic unity to correct the moral, aesthetic and political chaos.

Auden's later poetry and prose writing was influenced by the metaphysics of Søren Kierkegaard. Auden believed in the categories such as the Aesthetic, Ethical and Religious, as evolved by Kierkegaard. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume that Auden's later poetry is wholly based on the Kierkegaardian categories. In the thirties Auden believed that the contemporary humanist thought of Freud and Marx would resolve the riddle of the period, that the psychology of Freud and the sociology of Marx would provide the answers to the problems of the individuals and society. But he came to realize that the theories of Freud and Marx supplied only half-truths, and so he could not afford the full intellectual allegiance that Marxism demanded. Though unwilling to forego the genuine insights of Freud and Marx, Auden sought a synthesis which could include what was valuable in their theories. Auden came to accept this new synthesis as reflected in his later prose and poetry with room for contemporary philosophical, psychological and sociological theories.