

The Script of Corruption Penned in the Ink of Rebellion: A Social Commentary in the Couplets of “Adam Gondavi”

Dr. Dharmendra Kumar Singh
Assistant Prof. (English), MHPG College Moradabad

Abstract

The world of literature is the world of morals; the world of didactic pieces, the world of rebels, the world of revolt, the world of revival, and the world of such burning questions as stir passions, emotions, and thoughts as well. Literature has always been performing its duty since the dawn of the learning. Since, a litterateur is also its part and parcel, they perform their duty of mirroring the society as possible. How can Ram Nath Singh popularly known as Adam Gondavi, being a litterateur, be an exception of it? Simply, the answer is never. His poetry (Ghazal), bombards with questions especially at the existing social discriminations and corruption, before the eyes of the great minds of the so-called civilized existing societies. He candidly comments on the apparent gap causing and soul wringing inhumanities of the existing societies. Like a cumulus cloud, his poetry **downpours over the terrain** of existing social evils in such a way that they become conspicuous to all, like the hidden stones which become **overt in the lap of the pavements** after the downpour. Whatever it is, but it is certain that his social commentary is praiseworthy. Keeping all these facts in mind, with the help of the textual analysis, visual methods, and descriptive and explorative approaches as well, the present article defining the term ‘social commentary’ **endeavours in exploring, analyzing, and presenting a 3D pictograph** of corruption prevailing, chiefly, in the moral, social, political, and economic environments. How he like an adept and bold commentator, comments on the various discriminations will also be in the core of the discourse of the present article.

Key Words : Autochthon, Badass, Erode, Miasma, Penchant, Rancour, Tarted, Terrain, Torso

Introduction

The world of Hindi literature has often been the world of the rebel poets. It also has its Byron, Blake, and Shelly who rebel against the existing beliefs, traditions, systems, and authorities fearlessly. They perform their duties of mirroring the society without any partiality. No doubt, the world has its bards for ages, but the respect which the rebels (poets) get in the world of the scholars and the honest is beyond human computation. Where favouring the chair, the bards fill their pocket, then renouncing it, the rebels sacrifice even though their best. But history, the kept woman of the flatterers, twisters and knaves, also has to break its silence with the passage of time. Time tells all, and the rebels, their time. They write a new history of their time with their sweat and blood. It is they who tell truth’s beauty no less, no more. They are men with their weird present, but the harbinger of the sumptuous tomorrow for the posterity. Their annals have ever been of struggle with the world of the authorities for making their meaningful essence. To be a rebel is hard thing. One has to pass through the furnace of time, through the Indian summer days, and through the wild forests of the giant rumors which often try to engulf their sterling faith and uncompromising purity; their ethics and their best. Butter is for the bards, and rancour for the rebels. Where, getting wet in the rain of the chair’s bliss, the bards shower the tarted tales, there the rancouring rain wets not the rebel’s penchant will of telling the tales of bitter truth of it and its contrived autochthons.

Like the history of English literature, the history of Hindi literature is also brimming with its renowned rebel poets. No doubt, it also have its Byron, Scott, and Shelley in the torso of Nirala, Nagarjuna, and Dhoomil who wander lonely as clouds over the terrain wherever they reside, and shower the fiery verses with the aim of changing the realm. Ram Nath Singh popularly known as ‘Adam Gondavi’ is undisputedly a rebel (poet) who

enhances the realm of Hindi literature, enhancing the legend of Dusyant Kumar, and the angry poet Dhoomil as well. To be Adam Gondavi is to be the incarnation of such mood swings which never look the changing mood of the chairs. He is an exceptional man in the field of compromise. When the fact is concerned with the universality of his *ghazals*, as it seems that in future the academies of Hindi literature will place him near to Shakespeare, the Indian Kalidas; and Kalidas, the Shakespeare of India, along with Tulsidas, the epic writer of the Ram Charit Manas. These three mentioned writers are almost aloof from the burning questions of their days. But such is not with him. He fiercely plays with them. What Dushyant Kumar does during the ‘Emergency Period (1975-1977),’ Adam Gondai does especially after 1980s. Cleaning such dirt as covers the worn and torn portraiture of the country (India) with the thinner of his verses, he divulges its real figure to all. The clink which is resounding in the poems of Dhoomil, and in the *ghazals* of Dushyant Kumar of 1980s, is also resounding in the *sher* of Adam Gondavi.

His *ghazals* are chiefly famous for social commentary which as a term is “a bit of an abstract concept to unravel (web.)” It “is an element of a narrative that levels a comment— usually a critique— on societal issues or general society as a whole. Any issue relating to or ingrained aspect of a society can be a target of social commentary. The presentation of social commentary can range from obvious and on-the-nose to subtle and layered within subtext. It can be found in literature, music, television, and cinema. Not all stories contain an element of social commentary. Targets of social commentary criticism can range from extremely board, such as the concept of racism, to more specific, precise targets such as Reagan’s handling of the Aids epidemic (Web.). With this touchstone when a person tests his poesy, s/he finds that his poesy is rich in this context as he criticizes such society as ill with corruption.

Adam Gondavi, with a poor background and a hectic life style as well, is rich with his pen. He belongs to Gonda district (U.P.) which historically falls in the regime of Lord Rama like whom, he showers the arrow of his couplets (*Sher*) on the Ravana of corruption. Every couplet hits the navel. His collections of poesy— *Dharti Ki Satah Par* (Translated as ‘On the Surface of The Earth’) and *Samay Se Muthbhed* (Translated as ‘Encounter with Time’) are its witness. About him, Udit Misra writes:

He was not an educated person but he was as sharp in his observation and as biting in his choice of words as any poet can be.... He was just after India’s independence in 1947 and died in 2011—well before the present government took oath to uphold the Indian constitution. So it is obvious that none of his poetry was directed towards the present lot of politicians, especially those who are in power, but, even today his poetry resonates just as loudly as it ever did (Web.).

The telescopic study of his works reflects that his “poetry was known for social commentary, scathing view of corrupt politicians, and revolutionary in nature (Wikipedia). Call his poetry whether couplet, or *ghazal*, or *sher*, but one thing is certain that it highlights the plight of marginalized castes, *dalits*, and impoverished people of the country. It’s the very fact on which resides the existence of his *ghazal*. It’s its ribs, and corruption its backbone. It contains chiefly harsh poverty, gender inequality, unequal equity, mite of corruption, the rise of the authoritarianism, unsustainable development, and heinous rape which are persisting in present societies, i.e., the worse things for which India has to be ashamed of, make his poetry to be proud of. For, his poetry is satirical, and satire is always with the intention of inspiring the social reform. This is why, as it seems, he declaring the manifesto of his poetry, writes:

Manavta ka dard likhenge, maati ki bu-baas likhenge,
Hm apne es kaal khand ka, ek naya itihās likhenge (P.21).

(I’ll write the plight of the mass, and the smell of the soil
Write will I a new-new history, of the annals of this span)

His pen does not take a pause here. Further, he writes:

Tala lga kay aap, hamaari juban ko,

Kaidi ka rakh sakoge, jehan ki udan ko (p. 53)?
*(You can't suppress my voice with thy lock.
Can you check the soar of my soul anyway?)*

Really, he keeps his words. He writes, what he sees. What he sees, he writes. No more, no less. He writes about the miseries of the world without concealing anything by any dint of force. Diagnosing all the diseases of the society with ease, his poetry presents the X-Ray report of the day. The poetry, he composes, spreads the fragrance of its motherland. In other words, it may be sometimes bitter, and sometimes sweet. But, in Adam Gondai, it's always hot and bitter. None and nothing who or which causes bad can escape (from) his eyes. Even though, the advertisements which stir the mind and soul of the mass in buying a certain thing have also become the thing of sarcasm in his poetry. He frankly comments on such advertisements as are erotic and can't be seen with the members of the family. He writes:

T.V. se Akhbar tak, hain jism ke mohak katav
Ye hamari soch hai, ye soch ki gehrai hai (p.26).

*(From the TV to the Newspaper, are scattered erotic ads
It's nothing, but our thoughts and the depths lying behind.)*

Additionally, he writes:

T.V. se Akhbaar tak gar sex ki bauchhar ho,
Fir batao kaise apni sonch ka vistaar ho (p.28).

*(If there is showering of the sex in each and every means of news,
Tell me please, how can we expand the hidden thoughts of our muse.)*

The scholars who are familiar with Adam, know his poverty very well for it is well reflected in his poetic discourse. He knows poverty. His days have seen poverty. It has wrung his heart and soul at each and every moment. A man like Adam who has encountered it, knows it well. This is why, it again and again occurs in his poesy in various forms. None can forget his mesmerizing line: "Bhookhmari ki dhoop se dilgeer hai meri ghazal (p.19) which is translated as "My ghazals are disquieted by the heat of hunger." calling it as the mother of all crimes, his hungry poetry often cries hunger-hunger. The result of it is that he writes:

Ved mein jinka hawala hashiye par bhi nhi,
Ve abhage aastha-vishwas lekar kya Karen (p.37) ?
.....
Garm roti ki mahak pagal bana deti hame
Parlaukik pyar ka madhumas lekar kya karen (p.37)?

*(Those who have nothing to do with the Vedas,
Why should those wretched have faiths in its gods.*

.....
*The aroma of the hot loaves maddens us
What should we do with the spring of true love.)*

Mahal se jhhopadi tak ekdam ghutati udaasi hai
Kisi ka pet khali hai, kisi ki rooh pyasi hai (P.47).

*(From the palace to the cottage, there is only grim gloom,
Someone is with hungry belly, and someone with lusty loom.)*

Shabnami honth garmi de na payegi sukoon,
Pet ke bhugol main uljhhe huye insaan ko (p.35).

*(Dewy lips can nor bring love, nor the peace for the soul,
For all men who are stung by the heat of the bread.)*

Ek ham hain bhukhmari ke jahannum mein jal rahe,
Ek aap hain duhara rahe kisse naseeb ke (p.57).

*(We are, here, burning in the hell of hunger,
And you, here, are telling your destiny's tale.)*

The ditch which divides the rich and the poor has also been the part and parcel of Adam Gondavi's poetry. But one of the chief causing factors is corruption. To him, as it seems as he thinks, earlier we Indians were the slaves of the kings; again of the British Rule; and now of the corrupt officers and of the substandard leaders. Slavery is in our destiny. Thinking all this, he has always been against red tapism, and disguised democracy. This is why he writes: "Jo Dalhausie kar na paya vo ye hukkam kar denge / Commission do to Hindustan ko nilaam kar denge (p.33). Most of the officers are so corrupt that they are ready to up the country on sale or for auction only for commission. To them, taking the bribe is in their blood owing to which they force the poor to grease their palm as possible. For it, they linger on the important files and check the progress of the country. He writes:

Rishwat ko hak samajh ke jahan le rahe hain log,
Hai aur koi mulk to uska misal do (p.48).

*(Where is the country? Would that I may know!
Where people take bribes as their set right)*

Tumhari filon may gaaon ka mausam gulaabi hai
Magar ye aankde jhootho , ye dawo kitaabi hai (p.51).

*(Pink is the clim of villages in your files
Cheaters are these figures, as your reports beguile.)*

Mahaj tankwah se niptege kya nakhre lugaayi ke
Hazaron raste hain, Sinha Sahib ke kamayee ke (p.64).

*(How can salary fill the tantrums of better-half?
What to say about Sinha who has lot offs!)*

Ghooskhori, kalabazari hai ya vyabhichar hai
Kaun hai jo kah rha Bharat me bhrastachar hai (p.87).

*(Here and there everywhere, there is regime of the sleaze
But who can say in a muffled voice, there is corruption in this empire.)*

Commenting on these corrupt leaders, be it on their wills, or on their intentions, or on their ways of performing their duties, Gondavi makes a bitter satire. His sarcasm is pointed, and pointed is the style of his playing on the words. This bitterness of his soul for them causes him to see them not even though with blind eyes. He has presented a three dimensional photograph of their corruption, of their grandeur and luxuries, of their devilish will and intention. He wishes, as it seems, to present their real nature behind their show of serving the nation. He writes:

Mulk jaye bhaad main esse unhe matlab nhi
Kursi se chipke huye hain janfishani dekhiye (p.85).

*(Whether the nation becomes the hell, they never care for its fair
If they care, it is the chair, look their drudgery, O my dear!)*

Further, he writes:

Jitne haramkhor the kurbo jawar mein
Pardhan bankar aa gye pahali katar mein.
Diwar fandne mein jinka record tha,
Ve chaudhury bane hai umar ke utaar mein (p.63).

*(Here and there who rascals were, became the chiefs of their sects,
Those bastards who were with past, became the heads in their age.)*

The farcical and deeply hypocritical debate about what our politicians eat before going to work (Web.), and how they serve the country is put well in his couplets. To him, all of them, except serving the nation, do all the evil deeds wearing the KHADI robes. His best sarcasm on the government is seen in the given lines:

Kaju bhuni plate mein, whisky glass mein,
Utra hai Ramraj vidhayak niwas mein (p.62).

*(Roasted cashew on the plate, the finest malt in the glass;
It is as if Rama's domain, has descended at MLA's place)*

Pakke samajwadi hain, taskar ho ya docait
Kitna asar hai khadi ke ujle libas mein (p.62).

*(True socialists they are, be they smuggler or the robber
Look what miracle does the khadi's gleam do!)*

To him, the leaders never care for the country whether it turns into the hell. If they care for anything, it is commission, bravery, and nepotism which they lead in true sense. This is why he writes:

Mulk jaye bhad mein, esse unhe matlab nahi,
Ek hi khwahish hai ki kunbe mein mukhtari rahe (P.85).

*(Whether the nation becomes the hell, they never care for its welfare
If they care for anything, it is the pining for getting attorney in their clans.)*

Corruption which is "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, undoubtedly erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development, and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division and environmental crisis (Web.)." The whole definition of corruption is craved on the stony leaves of his poesy. In his terminology, only few leaders are for the country. Others are busy in selfish indulgences. To him, gone are the days of the class-struggle. These days are the days of the social inequality and injustice. About it, he writes:

Vo jiske haath mein chhale hain, pairo mein bivayi hai,
Usi ke dam se raunak aapke bungllow mein aayi hain.
Edhar ek din ki aamdani ka ausat chauwanni hai
Udhar lakhon mein Gandhi ji ke chelon ki kamayee hai (p.56).

*(Look, those whose hands are with sores, and the feet with the cracks
It is their deed which has brought gleam in the castle of your dreams.*

*They get a penny as an average of a day,
While you, a Bapu’s pupil earn lacs on the way.)*

.... ..
Ye roti kitni mehngi hai ye vo aurat btayegi
Ki jisne jism girvi rakh ke keemat chukayee hai (p.56).

*(How costly is the loaf, will tell you that lass
Who has owned it on the cost of her chaste.)*

How hard the life in the villages is! is reflected well in his poetry – ghazal. The pictograph that he presents throughout in it is heart wringing. Although the leaders of the country talk about the ‘global village,’ the existence of the villages of their country is in hell. He writes:

Yun khud ki lash apne kandho pe uthaye hain
Ye shahar ke vashindo! Ham gaon se aaye hain (p.72).

*(We have just carried our biers on our necks
Hear, O Urbane! We have come from the village.)*

..... ..
Tumhari filon mein gaun ka mausam gulabi hai,
Magar ye aakade jhoothe, ye dave kitabi hai (p.51)

*(Pink is the clim of villages in your files
Cheaters are these figures, as your reports in rhyme.)*

..... ..
Mahaj sadko pe gadde hain, na bijli hai na pani hai,
Hamare sahar Gonda ki fana kitni suhani hai (p.35).

*(There are potholes on all the roads, but no light, and water supply
Look, look! How ruinous is the site of my city, Gonda— my life.)*

Having a cursory glimpse at the plight of the rural environment, when one explores the picture of the country that he depicts, is also horrible. He writes:

Bhukhmari ki jad mein hai ya daar ke saaye mein hai
Ahale Hindustaan ab talvaar ke saaye mein hai.
Chha gayi hai jehan ke patton pe mayusi ki dhoop
Aadami girti huyi diwar ke saaye mein hai.
Bebasi ka ek samanadr dur tak faila huwa
Aur kashtee kaagaji patwar ke saaye mein hai (p.46).

*(Be it in the grip of hunger, or in the shadow of the fear
This, our country as a whole, is in the shadow of the sword
Gloomy light is over mind’s leaves
And man in the grip of falling walls.
Ocean of helplessness is spread far and wide
And the vessel is to be steered with a paper oar.)*

Adam is not such a poet who resides in the lands of clouds, cuckoos, and nightingales. He walks on the hot scorched land of reality with his barefooted poesy. The diversity of his writing determines the waves making quality of his writing. His *ghazals* are hunters. They hunt both high and low with the aim of chasing shadows. He works charmingly. He is not one among those poets who remain miles away from the burning questions of the day. He makes a bee line in selecting the subject matter or content for his poetry. He especially targets such people who are the ring worms on the body of the country. To him, the condition of the country is going from bad to worse day by day. The existence of the citizens of the country is in danger. There is chaos everywhere. According to him, people are waiting for the 'second coming' like thing which can save them from the existing anarchy and Phoenix like rising corruption which is eating the country into day by day. When the things become intolerable, like a great, bold and fearless warrior, he takes his arms (pen) to face the challenges existing in this country of Bhagat Singh and Azad. He depicts why and in which condition a man takes up arms. To him, it is done only with the aim at changing the contemporary regime. Keeping all this in his mind, he writes:

Adab gar jindagi ke daayare se door hota hai,
To vo tahjeeb ke seene mein ek nasoor hota hai.
Rawayat aahni janjeer bn jaati hai pawon ki
Bagawat ke liye insaan fir majboor hota hai (p.92).

*(When respect goes far from life's soar
It becomes in culture's breast a sore.
When traditions irons the progress' legs
Man is forced to be up with holds.)*

Writing about Sudama, the Brahmin, like penury of the poor, he further says:

Haay ri kismat ! ki khaali pait bachcha so gaya,
Maa ke kadamo se lipat ke barha manuhaar pe.
Kya galat hai kl ko uski chetna baagi bane
Pal raha hai bachpana jo bhookh ke angaar pe (p.92)

*(What cruel of the destiny! the baby slept with empty belly
Near its nurse' feet with her lori full of fancy, n' full of glory
What is wrong? When in future, its sense takes turn to be butcher
For its teens is growing up slowly in the cinder of hunger lowly.)*

Admonishing the poets of his time, he writes:

Bhukhmari ki rut mein nagme likh rahe hain hai pyar ke,
Aaj ke fankaar bhi hain dogale kirdaar ke (p.93).

*(In the days of thirst and hunger, those who launch the amorous verses
are such writers of these days, as they are men of the hybrid—race.)*

To him, as he feels, the plight of the poor is immortal, and immortal is the plight of the country and its denizens. This is why he writes:

Sadi Sukraat ki ho ya ki Rudad Gandhi ki,
Sadakat jindagi ke morche par har jaati hai.
Fatte kapdo se tan danke gujarta ho jahan koyee,
Samajh lena vo pagdandi 'Adam' ke gaon jaati hai (p.94).

*(Be it the era of Socrates, of Derrida, or Gandhi's
Truth has ever lost its race, in life's each 'n' every field.
Wherever you see someone passing covering his shape with torn clothing*

Know then, that trail leads to nowhere, but to the "Adam's" abode.

In this way, Adam reflects the perching fire of his soul in his poetry. The agony of his heart causes his poetry and the poetry of his collection causes horror and terror in the heart of the guilty causers. The existing anarchy, economic slavery, consisting plight, penury of the people, and partiality in each and every thing gives birth to the poets like Muktibodh, Dhoomil, Dusyant Kumar, Kumar Vikkal, and Adam Gondavi. Where Kabir describes the hypocrisy of his time, where Dushyant Kumar the bitterness of the Emergency Regime, there Adam describes the corrupt politicians, the corrupt authorities, and the fragile destiny of the poor of his time. In Adam Gondavi, we find the poor and the exploited in centre. This is why, again and again, his poesy entices and summons the people to take up arms with the view of heralding revolution for entire societal change. Here too, he says as well:

Jab bhukhmari ki dhoop mein jalte kisan hon
Munh main jabaan rakhate huye bejaban hon,
Nafrat ki rut main dango ke sholay jawan hon
Jamhuriyat ke tan pe jinaa ke nishaan hon,
Janta ko haq hai haath main talwaar utha lain (p.16).
*(When in the heat of democracy, breeders be burning with its legacy;
Being with tongue, when they be tongueless;
When in the season of despise, may the riots getting wise;
When on the body of democracy, may be the sign of immorality;
People have right for the sword to hike for one and all.)*

In his last *Ghazal*, he writes:

Jab siyasat ho gayi hai punjipatiyon ki rakhail,
Aam janta ko bagawat ka khula adhikaar hai (p.87).
*(When the politics be the capitalists' kept
Public have right to revolt with might.)*

To him, as the study of Adam Gondavi witnesses, there are only two types of castes, or one may call 'class' in number. The first one is of the rich, whereas the second one is of the poor. The former is dominated by the corrupt leaders, idle authorities, and shrewd corporate, but the latter, by the downtrodden, the marginalized, and the people struck by hunger. The result is the anarchy, revolt, and blood-shed. Here, he reminds Karl Marx, his *Das Capital*, and his theory of the Class-struggle. No doubt, his poesy often attributes the *Das Capital*.

Whenever one passes through the world of his poetry, one finds it nothing, but an optical illusion. It has the power to reveal the darkest corners of the society in layers. At first sight, it reveals the half truth, but at the next, and the other successive sights, the whole. The existence of all the truth comes in existence layer by layer. It does not only reveal the condition of the contemporary society, but also the life and personality traits of the poet and his belongings. Everyone who sees it, reveals new things at each and every moment whether it is related to the poet as a person, or to his poetry world in which he lives forever. He etches his name in the history of Hindi language and literature with his prophetic vision and scathing views of social condition in such a way that he becomes the icon and spokesman of the marginalized and downtrodden people as well. The path which he selects, is not straight; it is spiral; it is thorny and stony as well. He continually comes back to the things (corruption, inequality, and exploitation); he thinks; he understands, and always sees the deeper truth.

Note: The Couplets/Ghazals quoted in this article are translated by the contributor himself. Such translations are placed within the brackets just after the couplets.

References

Gondavi, Adam. *Dharti Ki Satah Par (On the Surface of the Earth)*. Ed. by Om Nishchal. New Delhi: Yash Publications, 2020.

Gondavi, Adam. *Samay Se Muthbher (Encounter with Time)*. New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 2010.

Web Sources

<https://m.jagranjosh.com/current-affairs/poet-ram-nath-singh-popularly-known-as-adam-gondavi-passed-away-in-Lucknow-1234299448-1>. Retrieved on 12 June 2022.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20171214141745/https://hindi.oneindia.com/art-culture/2011/people-poet-adam-gondavi-passes-away-aid0146.html>. “Kuchh es tarah thi Gondavi ki rajniti par kataksh.” Archived from the original on 03 November 2016. Retrieved on 05 June 2022.

<https://www.aajtak.in/literature/profile/story/poet-ram-nath-singh-popularly-known-as-adam-gondavi-passed-away-229262-2014-12-18>. “Adam Gondavi, Vidroh ki roshnayi say likha bebak kalam.” aajtak. in today. In (in Hindi). Retrieved on 01 June 2022.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/adam-gondavi-s-india-118041301401_1.html

<https://www.studiobnder.com/blog/what-is-social-commentary/> Retrieved on 29 June 2022.

<https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption> Retrieved on 11 June 2022.

About the Contributor

Dr. Dharmendra Kumar Singh is Assistant Professor of English at MHPG College Moradabad, affiliated to MJPRU Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, the Republic of India. He can be contacted at dksinghdharmendra@gmail.com