

# Azamgarh: From The Ruins Of Intellectual Landscape



Lie detectors, truth serums and brain mapping are some of the synonyms of torture as defined in this scientifically advanced society and its lexical, which has its own revelations of brutalities on human captives. Those who're "picked up" and detained under the legal system

are made to go through these tests which are the violations of Article 20 (3) of the Indian Constitution. Under the Clause (3) of the Article 20, it is stated that no person accused of an offence shall be forced to be a witness against himself. And these tests are meant to force detainees so that they can be recorded and presented as an evidence for the crime for which they are accused. These are some of the faces of brutalities which can be traced in the texts of the book 'Kafkaland' by activist Manisha Sethi and inscribed in the hearts and minds of the people of Azamgarh.

From the denial of basic welfare rights and freedom to the denial of fair and equal opportunities in not just the social, cultural, political and economic matters but also the legal matters have pushed Azamgarh actively to face discrimination and exclusion. When stepping out of homes, mothers come to the gates to see off their sons as any journey can bring any kind of news to them about their wards. Eyes and ears of the mothers of Azamgarh are evident to some of the blunt and brutal news in the name of encounters, arrests and detentions of those who stepped out but never returned. The complaining eyes of the mothers of Azamgarh reveal the sense of insecurity and fear because of the events taken place in the name of

national security.

Those who're picked up from their homes in front of their mother's eyes were shown to be waiting outside any transit station laden with explosives, arms and ammunition to handover them to their immediate bosses but picked up by the alarmed special force which is made to unravel anti-terror activities in the nation. But the reality is that by the series of illegal arrests and detentions, these forces have themselves terrorized the innocent, law-abiding citizens of Azamgarh. Kafkaland reveals the fact that at many incidences these 'special men' of the Indian Police system have implicated youths in false terror cases. From the breeding ground of terror to the nursery of terrorism in India, media too has played a pivotal role in demonizing Azamgarh while appeasing its political bosses and playing stories scripted by the special cell of the Indian Police. Media has portrayed Azamgarh as the land which belongs to some notorious, gangsters, mafia dons and terrorists and the region as the hub of terrorist activities.

Situated on the banks of River Tamsa and a land of prominent religious, social and political figures and an important centre during the freedom struggle in the eastern part of the United Province, Azamgarh has always been considered as a seat of learning. Allama Shibli, a progressive thinker was one such figure who emerged as the facilitator of research in Islamic studies and Oriental learning in Azamgarh. Ayodhya Prasad 'Hari Oudh', once the chairman of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, was a prominent writer of Hindi literature from the region. Rahul Sankrityayan is the architect who gave travelogue a Hindi literature form and a prominent figure of Marxist Socialism in the region. Kaifi Azmi was a renowned Urdu poet of the

contemporary time from Azamgarh.

## अब वे आजमगढ़ वालों को नौकरी नहीं देते...

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A home of talented artisans who developed an indigenous art of producing black pottery and the weaving industry in Azamgarh, which provides fiscal support to a large number of households who trade their products in the eastern part of the state and the adjoining regions of the neighbouring state. But what appeases the media house today is just the names of Haji Mastan, Dawood Ibrahim and Abu Salem, overlooking and ignoring the contributions Azamgarh made in the field of research and literature. Haji Mastan married two of his daughters in Azamgarh, one of the daughters of Azamgarh got married to Dawood's brother and Abu Salem belongs to Azamgarh. These are the only story lines which a certain section of media talks about Azamgarh and for any youth picked up from this region, media studio itself becomes the courtroom.

Even if there is something bad happening in the region, Azamgarh has a history of correcting itself. An MLA in the UP assembly (1984-89) from Utraula, Fazlul Bari, a native of Azamgarh and a Shibli College educated raised the issue of Hawala for the first time in the nation as a network of illegal transaction of money. With his revelations, the kingpins of Hawala were nabbed from Azamgarh and a whole module was busted at that time. It came in media as well, but media didn't call the whole region as the facilitator of Hawala, yet it responsibly reported the incident while taking care of the constructive side of journalism. By the efforts of media, it was widely propagated and accepted among the masses of Azamgarh that Hawala is a curse which has degraded human values and cultural ethos of the households involved in the activity though minimally present on the geographical setting

of Azamgarh.

But the current political dispensation uses Azamgarh as a case to polarise the communally divided society. A right wing BJP MP Yogi Adityanath once said during his political speech in Azamgarh, "UP bhi Gujarat banega, Azamgarh shuruat karega (UP will become Gujarat and it will be initiated from Azamgarh). This statement reminds of the book Gujarat Files, a book which is an undercover story by one of the journalists who belongs to Azamgarh, Rana Ayyub. In that book she writes that when Amit Shah gave orders during the 2002 Gujarat riots to police officers to 'take care' of certain area, he actually meant it otherwise and as police too was a party in that state sponsored killings, arson and lootings, officers knew what Amit Shah actually meant by the statement. Since assembly elections in UP are around, BJP will try to communalise and divide the society and in that process of communalising the whole state, apart from Babri, Dadri and Muzaffarnagar, the witch hunt stories from Azamgarh will play a lead role in spreading the communal inferno with the help of 'loud and shout' media houses.

*"Aaj ki raat bahut garam hawa chalti hai  
Aaj ki raat na neend aayegi  
Hum sub uthein, main bhi uthun, tum bhi utho  
Koi khidki isi deewar mein khul jayegi"*

*– Kaifi Azmi*

*By Sadiq Zafar*