

401, Vraj Avenue, C-2, Swastik Society,
Navrangpura, Ahmedabad - 380 009, India
Phone: (079) - 26560979. Fax: (079) - 26401892
Site: www.ncclindia.org | E-Mail: nccl27@hotmail.com



ATTACKING EVILS

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

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Ref: NCCL/AHD/VKS/NBA/22/

Date: 19/08/2008

Ms. Shabana Azmi,
Sagar Samrat,
Green Fields, Juhu,
Mumbai 400049.

Dear Ms. Azmi,

Sub: Politics of Religion - New Player of the Old Game

As your contemporary citizen of this country and as a person who has adored your lifetime accomplishments, I take this opportunity to briefly reflect upon the great respect and honour my generation has attached to your family and yourself. We have lived in a society wherein you have occupied an enviously successful position and you have enthralled a generation of people and left behind charming remembrances. When we were very young, we read your illustrious father's poetry and wondered at his genius of creation. As you entered the public life, we felt pleased that an illustrious father begat an equally illustrious daughter of talent. Your onscreen abilities fascinated us and we decorated you with worthy awards. Your association with an equally talented lyricist and writer brought home to us the togetherness of talent and creativity. Your intelligence and fearless advocacy of social issues brought to you further recognition of the society and you lead us at the House of Elders – the Rajya Sabha. In all, you lived amongst us as a special person and we took pleasure of decorating you with accolades after accolades. You became one of the blessed daughters of this land and a sister whom we collectively doted upon.

Living upon the bed of such social affection and rare privileges of life, you betrayed our trust in you by declaring early this week that **the Indian democracy has been unfair to muslims and that you were denied a home because your are a muslim.**

We stood in long queues to secure tickets to your movies and it never crossed a moment in our mind that you belonged to one particular community. We applauded when you took up social issues and it did not occur to us to see you in any light of your community allegiance. You worked, earned and commanded a life of elite richness as a celebrity amongst the poor and underprivileged of this country and no one ever detested you because of your personal beliefs. **And one fine morning, you chose to reveal your hidden ugliness to the horror of the nation in which you have been amongst the chosen few.**

What made you speak so dishonourably from your honourable position? Was it your desire to acquire another prime property in Mumbai, which could not happen for some or other reason and you found it fashionable and politically opportunistic to blame it away on religion? Did you fall short of money for some prime property and decided to raise money by speaking sensationally and exploiting the opportunities bestowed by the media in the aftermath?

Did you think that your contemporary social workers and politicians have hogged more limelight than you at this point of time and you should come back to news? OR is it as plain

and simple that one of your neighbours of a particular community just annoyed you in some way and you whipped out the belt of your power to beat up a peaceful society that has always heaped rewards at your feet?

How could you and how shameful of you to do so?

By saying what you have said, you not only betrayed the trust of a nation but you have caused immense social disturbance, unnecessarily. You have provoked a peaceful society to think erroneously and possibly polarize along the community lines. You have wrongly exploited your position and privileges to make unethical, immoral and deplorable gains.

Where is the end to this kind of irresponsible sulking, Ms. Azmi? Many more successful people of this country could take cue from you to stir up social turbulence. There can be a spate of meaningless complaints. Your colleague Mr. Shah Rukh Khan could come up and say that someone denied signing a film with him because of his community allegiance. Dr. Abdul Kalam could claim that he was denied the second term in office because of his religion. Why goes that far! Your complaint is as meaningless and irresponsible as these would be.

The National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) challenges you to come up with facts and tell the nation the name of the builder or project that denied you your right to property on the basis of your religion. I assure you that we shall support your cause and fight for your rights, if you could provide proper and justifiable evidence to what you have said. On the other hand, if you have just spoken out of the irresponsibility that does not behold your position and privileges in the society, please be assured that we shall not tolerate people who disturb the secular peace of this land.

We have personally spoken to many well-known builders in Mumbai in the last two days and they vouch that they will never ever do such a thing of denying someone the right to property on the basis of the religion. We have also found that almost every prime real estate in Mumbai houses people of every religion, co-existing peacefully and affectionately for long.

In this background and in the light of the social responsibility you have always seemed to exhibit, please identify the project that shunned you on the basis of your religion and secure the whole hearted support of us – the people, the NGOs, the legal framework and social opinion that will all come together to uphold the secular image of this society. On the other hand, if you have spoken out of mischief, political opportunism and abuse of your popularity and privilege, either apologise to clear your conscience or refrain from making such irresponsible statements.

We still regard you and wish you further success and honour.

Yours sincerely

For National Council for Civil Liberties

V K Saxena
President


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