

**Report on the visit of Srinagar by Dr.H.T.Sangliana, Vice Chairperson,
National Commission for Minorities, Government of India, on
29.11.2011**

On perusal of a news item in The Hindu dated 13.10.2011 regarding arrest of Rev.C.M.Khanna on 19.10.2011 in connection with alleged conversion of some Muslims into Christianity under Sec. 153-A, 295 and 186 Ranbir Penal Code, I decided to visit Srinagar to enquire as to what had actually happened. I visited Srinagar between 29.11.2011 and 1.12.2011.

In this connection, requests had been received at the NCM through phone and internet from Dr. John Dayal, Dr. Richard Howell and other Christian leaders who I intimated about my plan to visit Srinagar and told them to also come at their own expense so that they could see and hear things on the spot for themselves. We met at Srinagar and they accompanied me when I called on Shri Bashir-ud-din, the Grand Mufti of the Sharia Court, Shri Umar Farooq Mirwaz, Muslim religious head of J&K and the SP of Ram Munshi Bagh Station. We also met Pastor Khanna at the above police station where he was detained. I met subsequently the parishioners of All Saints Church of Srinagar too and ascertained what had happened in the church where the baptismal ritual was conducted.

A brief report of my meeting with each one of the above individuals is as under:

1. On enquiry, Shri Bashir-ud-din, the Grand Mufti stated to have received complaints from some of his informants about conversion and baptism performed on some Muslims under duress. He had directed Pastor Khanna to appear before him on 12.11.2011 at his office for an inquiry. He reported to have enquired with Pastor

Khanna about the reported illegal conversion and baptism which Pastor Khanna contended to be a normal practice at the time of admitting new members to the Christian faith, which he said was on the free will of the individuals. He stated that he had been informed about the activities of some NGOs in Kashmir Valley in such conversion activities regarding which he is also making an inquiry. He stated that no rash action will be taken by anyone without a detailed inquiry and further stated that no room will be given for any communal troubles to take place on this account as he was going to conduct an unbiased inquiry. He offered his availability for any further inquiry even by phone in this regard.

2. The Muslim religious head Umar Farooq Mirwaiz whom I called on at his residence cum office stated that he had heard of the said conversion of some Muslims to Christianity by Pastor Khanna and he too is making enquiries into the matter. He also stated that he had received information of activities allegedly indulged into by some NGOs who are working with the Boat people in the Valley and also about Christian schools having morning prayers out of tune with the Islamic practices. However, he admitted that he too was a product of a prominent Christian school at Srinagar and that he had not seen any Anti-Islamic activities during his time in the school. He assured that he will not allow any communal situation to come up in the valley on this account.
3. The Superintendent of Police was found to have taken Suo-moto action to get the case registered and to take Pastor Khanna into custody as his life was in danger. He too promised that an absolutely

bias-free enquiry would be made in the case and that justice would be done. I suggested to him that he should spare no one who was found guilty of giving a false complaint of wrongful conversion against Pastor Khanna alleging that he had committed forceful conversions without the will of those who were baptized and that Pastor Khanna not be spared if factual proof of wrongdoing was found.

4. Pastor Khanna whom I met at the Police Station admitted that he conducted such ritual baptismal service at the All Saints Church in Srinagar in the presence of parishioners and no wrongful practice either in the form of coercion, intimidation, allurement or promise of job or money whatsoever and he did only such confirmation of faith and followed the normal procedure done in all Christian churches. He did not complain of any ill-treatment or harassment of any kind in the hands of the police. He expressed his intention to cooperate with the inquiry by the police or the Sharia court in the matter. I advised him to see that no room is given for any complaint from any quarter in the future while carrying on his duty as a Pastor which he agreed to.
5. I met the parishioners who worshipped at the All Saints Church where Pastor Khanna had performed the baptismal ceremony. They stated that they were present at the time of baptism of those Muslims and there was no untoward behavior or incident at the time. They pleaded ignorance about posting of video clippings on 'facebook' pertaining to the said baptismal ceremony which they opined had been done by some undercover agents inimical to the Church or Christian practice. They requested for early settlement of

the issue so that Pastor Khanna could return to the Church to perform the Christmas ceremony as Celebration of Christmas without the Pastor would be very hurtful.

6. I met the Principals of two Christian schools. One of the schools had only 3 Christian students out of their total strength of 7000. The other had 4 Christian students out of 12,000 and the rest were all Muslims. Both the Principals told me that for the past 150 years, the church-run schools had not indulged in religious conversion activities and the fruit of their selfless services were reaped by the Muslim majority community only. They said that if they had done any such evangelization activities, the Christian population would have been much higher than the existing number of 140 in the valley and 400 in the entire state.

In conclusion, I am of the opinion that the action being taken by all the concerned agencies as mentioned above will take the right course and things will return to normalcy as both the communities need each other for survival and progress in a country where they are both going to remain minorities for ages to come rather than entangling themselves in needless communal conflict which is definitely not the need of the hour.

No NCM team was made as thought to be by some people. The report of Dr. John Dayal as seen in the Internet regarding the above matter was totally his own and it does not contain the version or opinion of the NCM.

(Dr.H.T.Sangliana)
Vice Chairman, NCM
21.12.2011