

'Let us all unite and make our country strong'

He was a 1967 batch IPS officer of Karnataka cadre. During his service, he had an impeccable track record as a tough and honest police officer which prompted the film industry to make three films on him. He even booked a case against his wife when she borrowed his official car for buying vegetables. After retiring, he represented Bangalore North Lok Sabha constituency. Today he is lending his services to National Commission for Minorities. Indeed, Dr. H. T. Sangliana, Vice Chairperson, National Commission for Minorities is a versatile man, who genuinely believes in honesty and sincerity. In a candid interview with our Editor-in-Chief Mr. Amal Das, he spoke about his life and contributions. Excerpts:

From an IPS officer to a Member of Parliament, and now Vice Chairperson, National Commission for Minorities, how has the transition been?

My work in Police service was basically Social Work. It was prevention and detection of crimes and prosecution of criminals. It involved maintenance of law & order by controlling anti-social elements so that development works can go on unhindered. Vehicular and pedestrian movement can go on smoothly so as to ensure movement without obstruction. It was literally that of taking the side of victims of crimes and wiping their tears of sorrow away by promptly responding to their cry and restoring lost smiles on their faces. So, the transition from Police to Parliament and then to National Commission for Minorities has been rather easy for me as I found similarity in all the organizations as their obsession and the task confronting them are all social problems.

Which responsibility according to you is the toughest?

No doubt it was police work which was the toughest as I was adopting the style of leadership that advocates leading the force from the front. That involved taking highest personal risk and taking criminals frontal. I faced such dare devil criminals single handedly with equally or more dares on a number of occasions which I now realized I could handle due to the presence of God with me. Parliament and Minority Commission related works involve no personal risk if handled tactfully and objectively. They are basically white-collar jobs.

As the head of STF, you earned accolades for deftly containing crime, particularly institutional ones, in Karnataka. How did you manage that?

In addition to handling every branch in police department at different stages and ranks I was indeed assigned the task of supervising the Special Task Force which was created to stop Veerappan's menace which I did for some time. I regret that I could not get him alive before Tamil Nadu police killed him as he was a storehouse of political and criminal secrets which could have exposed many questionable stakeholders who were in Veerappan's syndicate. It was a great and rare experience that I had when I saw the wonderful and mysterious creations of God in the form of the countless and countless number of stars which I could see and watch through Night Vision Binoculars while searching for Veerappan on dark nights.

People of Bangalore still remember your contributions in eliminating the menace of illegal parking and all the major traffic problems. Apart from traffic woes, what are the major problems of Bangalore as you have served the Garden city both as a police officer and public representative?

Yes, I did serve in Bangalore city as Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of Traffic and Commissioner of Police. I introduced many new steps for traffic management in the city. Many of today's traffic handling systems in Bangalore were introduced during those days when I was in charge. In fact, in the early 80s when I was in charge, Bangalore traffic was considered the best in the country and many tourists including foreigners who visited Bangalore told me so and they even wrote me very encouraging appreciation letters. My main plank was enforcement of the **3 E's** namely Education of road users, Engineering of road alignments, curves and parking systems and strict Enforcement of traffic rules and regulation.

How do you see your stint as Member of Parliament from North Bangalore?

As MP my main success was in connection with 100 per cent utilization of MP Local Area Development funds for the benefit of the people in my constituency in the form of road repairs and road construction, supply of water by sinking bore wells, construction of schools and compound walls, health-care centers, waiting-sheds for bus passengers, funds obtained from Prime Minister's Emergency Relief Funds for treatment of patients with emergency conditions such cancer, BP, kidney and heart problems, etc. No other MP has done as much as I did, for the people of any constituency in the country, which will be proven only if minute auditing is done. This I could do as I have been and even now am against corruption and dishonesty.

My firm stand for honesty and hard work has strengthened me and that strength has been further reinforced by the grace and help of God. The people of Karnataka know me well and judge me with a different yard stick. Their trust in me has been visible even when they elected me and sent me to Parliament. They have been with me all along, even now, though I came from Mizoram. They know that I have given my entire corruption-free life for them during my service as an IPS officer for 36 long years.

Why did you decide to leave the BJP and join the Congress Party?

When the civil nuclear deal issue came up in Parliament, I voted in favor of it as I considered availability of atomic energy as of vital importance for all-round development in the country. BJP, wanting to be included in the agreement as one of the signatories attempted to retard it. They feared that the Congress/UPA might get all the credit for it and that the BJP might lose votes in the process in the 15th Lok Sabha election that followed. Thus, I was expelled by BJP for this narrow political reason. I however considered national interest more important than narrow party interest.

What kind of role does the National Commission for Minorities play?

National Commission for Minorities like any other Commission has its own limitations mainly in matters related to effectiveness. It has only a civil judge's power of issuing summons to get presence of witnesses at its sittings for hearing of cases pertaining to injustice, violation of minority rights, discrimination, etc as per the Constitution and laws of the land. It has, however, succeeded in delivering justice to many victims of unfair decisions and uncaring attitudes of certain officials against their subordinates or even ineffectiveness of officers who failed to act justly for fear of their own position at the hands of politicians. What is needed is wide awareness of the existence of the Commission which calls for wide publicity in the country. The Commission is also keenly observing the implementation of Prime Minister's 15-point program in the country and many other minority development programs and policies.

Union Territory of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli still do not have any Commission to oversee the welfare of minorities of the region? Will you suggest constitution of such a committee in these UTs?

The States and UTs are advised to have their own Minority Commission as it is a state subject. So far 16 have got their own State Commissions and they have done many good works. Some other states are yet to have it including Daman & Diu. Such a commission can act as a catalyst to bring to the government's notice the existence of

problems which can be solved by the administration without giving room for the existence or birth of hidden and unsolved problems which can cause irritation and disharmony in society leading to serious security threats.

The commission can also provide employment opportunity to some and it can closely monitor implementation of various developmental schemes of the Centre as well as the state for the benefit of Minorities. Various scholarship programs are there as well for minorities which many do not know of. Particularly, Church authorities in Daman were not aware of what the Ministry of Minority Affairs, which is the nodal agency for the NCM, and the NCM, can do for the Christian minorities in the UT.

The reports of Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission & Rajinder Sachar Committee were eye openers. How do you see the recommendations of these commissions?

Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission and the Rajinder Sachar Committee reports are indeed revealing and implementation of the recommendations calls for serious and determined efforts to solve problems faced not only by Muslim minorities but even the other four religious minorities as most of the problems faced by the poorer section of Muslim minorities are similarly faced by other minorities as well. It is imperative that such far reaching recommendations are simultaneously implemented for the other four religious minorities also, without waiting for a separate commission or committee to study such problems, as suggested by many in order to save public money. It is a fact that there are poor in every community including the Hindus who are worthy of sympathy and love from the more fortunate sections of society and any efforts made by the government to pull them out of their present situation should address them side by side, and in a phased manner without concentrating on one or two communities at a time. At the same time, no community's poor should try to remain spoon fed for endless time. They should all try to stand on their own feet and try to become economically, socially and educationally improved at the earliest by adopting family planning and by trying to become quality and not just quantity citizens. All said and done EDUCATION is the SOLUTION to all problems and there are no problems which cannot be solved if there is genuine willingness to solve it.

What is your message for the people of this country?

My message for my fellow Indians is that there is no alternative to honesty, not as a mere policy but as a habit for lasting peace and happiness. Hard work is a means to become educated as there is no luck unless there is hard work behind it. We should know that there is a God who is watching over us as a father does for his children and so we should be pleasing to Him by word, by thought and by deed at all times. We should love one another as members of the same family feeling oneness and togetherness always. We should compete among ourselves as to who is more Indian by our daily conduct. We should not be divided by regional, cultural, linguistic and religious differences at any cost. Let us all unite and make our country strong and prosperous economically. Let dirty politics go away from us and let selfishness and corruption disappear forever. Let us all try to live a quality life and have the Fear of God as our life's guiding principle so that we will soon be proud on becoming a beautiful and God-fearing nation. I wish a Happy and Successful Year to all in 2012.
