

Rinkle Kumari Case

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On February 24: Rinkle Kumari was abducted / disappeared early in the morning. At 11:00 am Nand Lal, her father received a call from Mian Aslam son of Mian Abdul Haq (aka Mian Mitho) who informed that Rinkle was with him and had embraced Islam. Later in the evening, family was informed that Rinkle's Nikah had been administered with a Muslim boy Naveed Shah.

Hindu community's Mukhi (leader) from Deherki, Mr. Namo Mal contacted Mitho and requested him to bring the girl and settle the dispute. Mitho didn't.

Muslims and Hindus of the area jointly protested against this and blocked the National Highway. Police showered heavy shelling on the protesters after which they went on strike closing the markets and lodged the FIR for kidnapping. Police refused to name Mitho and his sons in the FIR. Even DPO could not recover Rinkle from Mitho's custody.

On February 25: Rinkle was produced in the court of Hasan Ali Kalwar, Judge Civil Court Ghotki. As soon as she saw her family in the court, she screamed before the judge and pleaded to let her go with her mother. The judge, however, had to inform her parents if they insisted on taking Rinkle along, they would be responsible for the killing of 2000 Hindus of District Ghotki at the hands of religious extremists.

Rinkle's custody, thus, was given to the police with an order to send her to Sukkur Women's Police Station. But she was taken to Sukkur in the car of Mithu's son, as reported in Sindhi newspapers. Point to be noted, a private car belonging to the accused party was used to transport the victim, who was in police custody. The judge gave a new date for hearing (February 27)

On February 26: Rinkle's family met Rinkle in Women's Police Station Sukkur, where she was kept on court's orders. Rinkle informed her family that Mian Mitho spoke to her earlier that night on the cell phone of a police constable. When she refused to talk to him, she was manhandled and was made to speak to Mitho who reportedly threatened her to change her statement if she wanted to see her family alive.

On February 27: Police took Rinkle from Sukkur to Mirpur Mathelo, at 2:00 am according to the sources in Sukkur Police Station. The official version, though, is that they took her at 3:30 am to the Sukkur District Headquarters.

According to the official records, DIG Sukkur Police was in Karachi on February 27, while DPO was in Khairpur Mirs and DSP Mirpur Mathelo was in Karachi bench of Supreme Court. Who was the Headquarter under, that day? Why police deemed it necessary to take the girl to the Headquarter at that point in the night? At 3:30 am, SHO Zulfiqar Meher called Rinkle's family and informed that the Hearing would be in Ghotki instead of Mirpur Mathelo. Half of the family

decided to go to Ghotki, half to Mirpur Mathelo. Hearing took place in Mirpur Mathelo eventually but it is unknown why the SHO misled the family?

About a kilometer radius of the area around the court in Mirpur Mathelo was sealed. For Hindus, that is. Nobody from Hindu community was allowed even near the court, while hundreds of Mitho's armed men were there. Four people from Rinkle's family who were allowed in the court were Sulachini, Rinkle's mother, Daya Ram, her paternal uncle, Rajkumar, her maternal uncle and Manohar Lal, her grandfather. Mian Mitho said outside the court, if the decision comes against him, he would 'be obliged to fire the bullets'. At 8:30 am, only two of the four allowed family members got permission to enter the courtroom, i.e., Sulachini Devi and Daya Ram. According to Sulchini Devi, the court room was full of Mian Mitho's men At 8:45 am, people outside the court heard loud noise of 'Mubarak' (congratulations) from inside the courtroom for her 'embracing Islam'.

The court gave the judgment that Rinkle Kumari was Muslim and had married Naveed Shah.

On February 28: Rinkle's uncles addressed a press conference against this injustice and unfair treatment on the part of the state institutions and high-handedness of local the local vadera (feudal) having full governmental support. Mitho's men, led by one Hisam Kalwar (Mian Mitho denied this but there are eye witnesses of the incident) stormed into Rinkle's grandfather's office and fired at him. The old man survived, but the family got scared and shifted to Karachi.

On February 29: Mr. Ghulam Shah from Sindhi United Party and Mr. Riaz Chandio from Jiye Sindh Qaumi Mahaz were contacted by Mian Mitho, who expressed his willingness for a deal. He offered to let Rinkle meet with her family if the family compromises and accepts her religious and marital status. The family responded positively and gave commitment to honour Rinkle's decision to convert and to marry, if and only if she was doing it on her free will, not under someone's coercion. To ensure that, Mr. Ghulam Shah, a respected Sindhi nationalist (Muslim by religion) offered to keep Rinkle as his daughter in his home for 12 hours and give her free environment without letting any party meet her. Mitho did not agree to the proposition and a thin hope of resolving the issue died down. Mr. Khalid Soomro of JUI-F was contacted by the family and by the Sindhi nationalists to mediate between Hindu community and Mian Mitho. Soomro tried, but failed due to Mitho's stubbornness.

On March 3: The family filed a petition in the Sindh High Court, Karachi challenging the February 27 judgment of Session Court Mirpur Mathelo.

On March 6: The appeal accepted by the Sindh High Court. March 12 was given as the hearing date. Takes Rinkle in police custody. SHO thana Frear Town Karachi South allegedly facilitated Mian Mitho to speak to Rinkle, ordered Hajra Usman Inspector South to make Rinkle talk to Mitho. Inspector Hajra reportedly manhandled Rinkle and coerced her to take Mitho's phone call. Mitho once again threatened Rinkle of dire consequences if she changes statement and denies being Muslim. Contact with both police officials could not be established, however, according to some Sindhi language newspapers, they denied these allegations.

On March 8: Supreme Court of Pakistan takes note of the incident and re-opens an old pending petition against forced conversions of Hindu girls by local extremist elements, filed by Pakistan Hindu Council (PHC) in 2007. Supreme Court included Rinkle's case in the PHC petition, along with two other recent cases of alleged forced conversion, Dr. Lata Kumari and Aasha Kumari. Next hearing was fixed on March 26.

On March 11: Rinkle's press conference was organized while she was still in police custody. Who bore the expenses for the press conference is unknown. Although some Karachi based reporters confirmed that Mian Mitho's men informed them about and invited to the press conference. In the press conference, Rinkle was being dictated through the Bluetooth mobile device. Her complete ignorance of basic Islamic tenants was visible to many reporters, while she insisted that she was 'influenced by Islamic tenants'. Cross-questioning was not allowed by Mitho's men, who took away Rinkle when the reporters tried to question. Reports of the Press Conference were highlighted in the mainstream media to influence court's proceedings and public opinion, who now believed that Rinkle had embraced Islam on her own free will.

March 12: Around two hundred men of Mian Mithu with open display of weapons make their appearance outside the High court. The court keeps Rinkle's custody to Police and closes the proceedings in view of Supreme Court's orders to produce Rinkle on March 26. American Congressman Brad Sherman wrote a letter to the President of Pakistan urging him to look into the matter.

March 26: Rinkle Kumari and Dr. Lata Kumari were produced in the Court. During the court proceedings, Rinkle cried and screamed she wanted to go with her mother. Seeing similar reaction from Dr. Lata, Chief Justice ordered the court to proceed in camera. After taking detailed statements from both the girls, Chief Justice announced in front of national and international media that Rinkle Kumari had pleaded to go with her mother while Dr. Lata was double minded. To the surprise of many, despite her clear statement Chief Justice ordered to keep both the girls in Panah, the shelter home, where both should not be allowed to meet anyone so they get a free environment without any influence, to decide about their life. Panah is run by revered Justice Majida Razvi, former chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women. Court adjourned till April 18

March 27: Maulana Shirani, Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology gave the statement that Rinkle should be sent home if she has been forcibly converted and that forced conversions have no place in Islam

April 10: Naveed Shah, so called husband of Rinkle, requested the Supreme Court for permission to meet Rinkle. Chief Justice rejected the application saying she wanted to go with her mother. Speaking at a seminar organized by Anjuman-e-Talaba-e-Islam in Islamabad, Mian Mitho while answering a question said he will not accept the decision of Supreme Court if it decides against him. He also said at the event that all the 'gaddi nasheens' (caretakers) of Dargahs in Sindh take money and let such girls go, including Mian Abdul Khaliq, the gaddi nasheen of Bharchundi Sharif (who is Mitho's nephew).

April 12 – 14: Naveed Shah and Mian Aslam allegedly met Rinkle several times in Panah, a charge Justice Majida Razvi strongly denies and offers to produce CCTV footage if needed by the court. The family, however, insists that they have credible information that two lower level staff members were threatened by Mian Mitho for facilitating those meetings. They said they would provide the witness in the court.

April 17: Human rights activists along with the family of Rinkle held a press conference in Islamabad in which her family categorically declared that they have no objection if their daughter embraced Islam of her own free will and for the love of Islam. They also declared they would accept her decision of marrying Naveed Shah and would rather celebrate the wedding with all the traditional customs including gifting her dowry. But their only request from the court was to look deep into the matter if the conversion and marriage is on her free will in real sense of the concept.

April 18: Rinkle, along with Dr Lata and Aasha were presented in the Supreme Court. As soon as they appear, Chief Justice said they should record their statement in Registrar's office and should 'freely' tell where they wanted to go. Based on their 'free' statement, they would be allowed to go wherever they wanted. Upon entering the court Rinkle handed over a piece of paper to the Chief Justice. It never came out what Rinkle wanted to say, which was not heard by the court. The Court wrote the Order before taking the statement from any of the girls and gave half an hour after which girls had to record their statements in Registrar's office. But curiously enough, they were called in Registrar's office after one and a half hour during which Mian Mitho and his sons are reported to have met with the Registrar. When asked via email, the Registrar's office did not respond to the query. According to some reports, Naveed Shah, some policemen and Mian Mitho's son were present when Rinkle's 'freewill' statement was being recorded in Registrar's office.

As per Rinkle's statement issued later by the Registrar's office, she opted to go with her 'husband'.

May 17: While disposing off the petition by Pakistan Hindu Council regarding forced conversions of Hindus, Chief Justice of Pakistan declared that in the existence of Article 20 of the Constitution, there was no need for special legislation regarding the protection of the rights of minorities.

May 22: Rinkle's family files a Review Petition in Supreme Court of Pakistan and urges inquiry into the role of Ghotki police and of Mian Mitho in the case.