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At Arakonam Town of Vellore District in TamilNadu , there is Balasundravinaiyagar Temple , where the two consorts (Valli & Deivanai) of the elephant God's brother Lord Muruga are represented in the form of panchaloga idols. *Pancha* means five and *loha* is metal. In an ancient craft that is still a closely guarded secret known only to some senior sthapatthis , the actual alchemy

process of mixing the five metals – brass , copper, nickel, tin and gold is not known outside.

It is perhaps this myth that is responsible for theft of idols by ignorant thieves. Now after detailed investigation the author has been able to determine that in ancient times- especially the 12th Century – 16 th Century AD hardly a few grams of gold were added to the idols. The real purpose of blending 5 metals was for their medicinal properties ; after abhisekham, very minute traces of the metals would dissolve and be present in the “prasadam” Copper and Brass are the main beneficiaries , while tin was added for improving the malleability . An astrologer familiar with the subject confirmed that the gold content would not exceed 1 % of the mass of the Idol. A fact confirmed by Jayaraman, Joint Commissioner HR&CE . Sundar Raja the Astronumerologist added, “it is nearly impossible to extract the gold once the metals are mixed and cast in to an idol; the metal refining process is an expensive one and not suitable for small quantities . The gold has a token presence only for religious purpose to complete the 5th element.

On the night of 27th April 2007 , two persons stealthily scaled over the 10 feet high wall , and stole the idols of the two Goddesses each about 18 inches in height. As there were no clues, scientific evidence or even suspicion of any of the regular gangs or ex-convicts being involved the task of the Idol Wing CID detectives was a tough one.

Relying on the oldest method of spreading a net far and wide and a lot of legwork in following up rumours and picking up wisps of information, it was suspected to be a local job, more so since the temple was in the midst of a town , where strangers would easily be noticed.

Finally working on a tip off that the idols were to be transported to Chennai to show it to buyers there , detectives kept a close watch at the Arakonam Railway Station on June 12th 2007, especially on passengers embarking on Chennai trains . The vigil paid of and

police were able to nab a youth named Yuvaraj son of Selvam , a resident of Arakonam and also recover both the idols dating back to the 12th Century . On interrogation it was revealed that the first accused Yuvaraj was assisted by his friend Hussain who has been named 2nd accused . Idol Wing CID Cr No.03 / 2007 dated 12.06.07.He is still absconding .

The irony is both Yuvaraj and Hussain lived in abject poverty and were coolies managing on their meager daily wages whenever there was work. Thy did not realize that by stealing idols from a temple they would be pitted against one of the most competent teams of the Tamil Nadu Police sleuths of the Idol Wing, who invariably get their men.

Perhaps a massive awareness campaign by the Government to explain that panchaloga contains no retrievable gold would have these idols from being stolen in future.