

**STOLEN STONE IDOL OF MAHAVEER FROM SIVAN TEMPLE**  
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The recovery of the Mahaveer stone idol from Sivan temple in Alathur, Pudukottai District of Tamil Nadu is one of the difficult cases as the sculpted stone is placed below a tree outside the temple walls, and thus scientific aids to investigation are closed to the CID. In the absence of any eyewitnesses, only method left is to cast the net wide searching for probable offenders and also activating the network of informants.

The Agastheeswarar temple is situated on the Illupur – Ponnamaravathi main road, just 3 kilometres away from Illupur Police Station. This temple is under the maintenance of Archaeological Department. A Mahaveer Jain idol sculpted from stone and measuring about 1 metre in height is kept in an open area under a tree in front of the temple for many decades. It had been declared as a monument falling under the purview and protection of Archaeological Survey of India.

On 5<sup>th</sup> August 2004, some criminals came prepared in a light commercial vehicle (LCV) and after parking their vehicle near the temple under the pretext that the vehicle is off the road due to a breakdown, they waited till the late hours of the night. The vehicle was positioned in such a way as to cover their nefarious activity and so that the idol could not be viewed from the road. Shortly this ancient Jain idol was put inside the van and the thieves decamped with the booty.

Responding to the complaint of Malaiyandi caretaker of the ASI, a case was registered in Illupur Police Station in Crime No.

127 / 2004 under section 379 of the Indian Penal Code. Investigation by the local police led to a dead end; there was absolutely no clue to follow up.

Providentially the Idol Wing CID sleuths received information about the theft of the Mahaveer Idol, and even before the formal transfer of the case, they activated their information network and after sustained efforts they finally unearthed some facts. Based

on suspicion , on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2004 , they detained a 42 – year old suspect named Kaniarasan , son of Sundarathevar of Bodinayakkanur in the process of transporting the Mahaveer Jain Idol in his LCV enroute to Pondicherry , where he planned to sell the idols to foreign buyer.

The timely arrest before the vehicle crossed the State borders and recovery of the monument of Mahaveer Jain saved the state from embarrassment and the Jain disciples were happy to have their idol for worship once again . In this case the vehicle used in perpetration of the crime was also seized . The accused was remanded to custody by the Judicial. Magistrate Court at Keeranur. It was thus that the Idol Wing Cid met the challenge , solving the case successfully , even though they had nothing to go on with at the beginning.