

Sivaganga custodial death: Where police run kangaroo courts

The custodial torture and murder of Ajith Kumar, a young security guard at a temple in Sivaganga district, have prompted protests across the State. The sheer brutality of the violence and the deliberate abandonment of due procedure have eroded public faith in the police as custodians of peace and law and order. C. Palanivel Rajan does a deep dive to unravel this horrific, distorted tale

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Irreparable loss: B. Malathi, 52, the mother of Ajith Kumar who died in police custody, mourns with her relatives at her home at Madapuram near Tirupuvanam in Sivaganga district. | Photo Credit: L. BALACHANDAR

When B. Malathi, 52, waved goodbye to her son B. Ajith Kumar on June 27, she did not know that it was the last time she was seeing him alive. On June 29, she held her eldest son's bruised dead body close to her. By the evening of June 28, the dramatic events that unfolded in a remote hamlet, called Madapuram, in Tirupuvanam taluk of Sivaganga district triggered public outcry against the systematic custodial torture by the police.

Ajith Kumar was a security guard on contract at the Adaikalam Katha Ayyanar Matrum Badrakaliamman Temple at Madapuram. It all started after a woman, named J.P. Nikitha, of Tirumangalam in Madurai district made a complaint against Ajith Kumar for allegedly stealing her gold ornaments which she claimed were kept in her car. Nikitha and her mother J. Sivagami Ammal visited the temple on Friday morning. They had then given the key of the car to Ajith Kumar to park the vehicle. As he did not know driving, Ajith Kumar asked his friend Arun, an autorickshaw driver, to park the car. When the mother and the daughter returned, they took the key from Ajith Kumar and drove away.

Within an hour, they returned to the temple and questioned Ajith Kumar about the 10-sovereign gold ornaments which they claimed were kept in a bag in the car and were now missing. When he denied taking any of the items kept in the car, Ms. Nikitha informed the temple administration and the Tirupuvanam police station. A temple worker took Ajith Kumar to the police station, where the first phase of investigation began. Later, he was taken in a police vehicle to various places. All this happened without any official mention in police records.

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