

**Problems in Combating Illicit Trafficking of Jaina & Buddhist Icons**

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Thousands of artefacts have been stolen from cultural sites in India over the past 20 years with hardly any realistic action to curb the rampant destruction. The looting is on an industrial scale, wherein dealers and experts prowl the countryside researching and scouting for easy pickings, marking out sellable art – thus making the immovable moveable and the priceless priced. Our research has shown that Jaina and Buddhist sites have been specifically and systematically targeted not only for their artistic beauty but mainly because they have hardly ever been studied let alone properly documented – thus giving a free hand to looters to peddle them in openly in auctions. India Pride Project is a grassroots effort to protect India's cultural treasures by leveraging the power of social media – a small team of amateur activists have launched the largest crowd sourced Idol hunt. The results so far have surpassed all expectations: a growing database of missing treasures, dispersed artifacts and a team that data mines the archive to spot and pursue art theft – pushing for restitution using social media campaigns! We are restoring India's pride, creating a strong deterrent against looting of its cultural treasures and spurring newfound enthusiasm amongst the villagers for learning, documenting and thereby defending their cultural heritage. The case studies will showcase successful seizures, restitutions, still open missing sculptures and work in progress cases awaiting assistance from academics – how our work has resulted in restitution of Buddhist and Jaina icons not only to India but also to Pakistan, Cambodia, Thailand.

**Key Words:** Illicit Antiquities, Idol theft, Idol smuggling, Temple theft, Restitution

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