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School drop-out 'tricks' archbishop of Rs.15 lakhs
By our Special Correspondent

MADRAS, June 18: A school drop-out of Srirangam, who has allegedly brought off one of the biggest confidence tricks in this part of the country by inducing no less a person than the Archbishop of Madras to part with Rs.15 lakhs, is now in remand in the Central Jail here.

On a complaint by Archbishop (Dr.) Arulappa, the state CID arrested 59-year-old Ganesa Iyer and produced him before a metropolitan magistrate last week.

According to the police, Iyer, an imposing figure with a flowing white beard, introduced himself to Dr. Arulappa as "Acharya Paul", a scholar of philosophy now engaged in research, especially on the history of Christianity in India. This was some time in 1977. Producing photo copies of alleged rock inscriptions, palm leaf manuscripts and other "evidence", "Acharya Paul" sought to make out that the ancient poet Tiruvalluvar was a Christian and that some of the renowned temples of Tamil Nadu were originally Christian shrines.

The Archbishop a research enthusiast himself, apparently impressed by "Acharya Paul", financed his "researches" from 1975 to April 1980 to the extent of nearly Rs.15 lakhs. "Acharya Paul" also made two trips to the Vatican and other Western countries in 1977 and 1978. Escorted by the Archbishop, "Acharya Paul" had the rare privilege of audience with the Pope and breaking bread with him.

He had a free run of the Archbishop's palace but later preferred to do his work in a couple of the city's five-star hotels. He was also provided with a retreat in the Nilgiris.

But suspicion was finally aroused in the minds of the Archbishop and others by the more extravagant "research" claims of "Acharya Paul". The CID was alerted. They nabbed him in Srirangam in the last week of April. Ganesa Iyer went up to the high court to get bail but was refused in view of the huge sum of money involved. The police have launched a widespread investigation into the antecedents of Iyer.

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