

NINE DAYS

A RESCUE MISSION



B JOHN KUNTHARA

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Dedication

*This book is dedicated to my loving wife Marykutty
and my grandchildren Neela and Andrew.*

Disclaimer

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination and used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead or actual events is purely coincidental.

Prologue



Thousands of NRIs go to their motherland for vacations at least once a year, especially those have parents still alive back in India. Elsy and Mathew were not any different from those ordinary people. Every year they looked for this vacation time. Since their children were grown-ups and taking care of themselves, Elsy and Mathew was a worry-free couple. They loved to spend time in their apartment in Kerala and take some side trips while they were in India.

This year also they started their vacation travel from Houston, Texas, where they were settled. But this time, on the second day of their arrival in Aluva, Kerala, all their plans got shattered. Vacation became a nightmare and days were filled with tension.

They became victims of a crime they fell in without their willingness or knowledge. But they did not lose their faith and trust in other good people. Good people in India showed willingness to help them. How did the drama unfold at the end and who were the players

in this drama? How did Elsy and Mathew become victims? Who helped them to find an end to that difficult period?



About The Author



B. John Kunthara, lives in Texas USA with his family. He is originally from Kerala India. He immigrated to America several years back. He has a Bachelor's degree in communications from the State University of New York. He was in business for the last 30 years and now retired. He enjoys writing and play with his grandchildren when they are at his home.

This is his second novel first one *The Unbeaten Mind* was published in 2014 a novel based on historical facts. This novel *Nine Days*, he has a different story line and very contemporary to events happening in the world today.



Chapter 1



As I was sleeping with the small pillow cushioning my head to the side window of the aircraft, my husband tapped on my shoulder. As I was waking up, I could hear “.... Captain has turned on the fasten seat belt sign.” Then I heard Mathew, my husband, saying we were about to land. Then he quipped, “At least, someone could sleep on an airplane.”

Qatar Airways from Doha to Nedumbassery, Cochin, was about to land in a few minutes.

I looked through the window. The dark gray sky was overshadowed by clouds on the horizon and below on the ground dim lights were peeking through coconut tree leaves. Soon those dim lights got clearer, and that could be the final approach for the aircraft to land.

“Cleared to land,” was the announcement heard. It was a smooth landing. The flight reached ten minutes late. As soon as the flight landed, many passengers unbuckled the seat belts and got stood up from the seats. “Please remain seated while taxiing to the gate,” this reaction came on with an angry tone from one of

the flight attendants. It was normal for most flights from the Gulf countries to India.

Our journey started from Houston, Texas. Doha was the connection city on our way. This route was not strange to us; we had traveled to India several times in the past on this course.

Immigration and customs staff were much faster that time than in the past. People with less luggage were asked no questions at the customs. During that period, several flights from the Gulf countries arrived at the Nedumbassery airport. After a short stop at the duty-free shop, we came out from the terminal.

As always, outside the terminal building, there was a carnival atmosphere. One thing always was puzzling us: why do so many folks come to the airport to receive or see people off? Thank God, in Indian airports only passengers and people with special passes are allowed inside the terminal.

We looked out for our driver, Plassy, in that crowd. My husband located him among all those cheering people.

“Plassy is over there. Let us go,” Mathew pointed his finger into the crowd. I looked in the direction and saw Plassy was waving his hand at us.

We rolled out our cart with two suitcases. Plassy fought through the crowd and came near us to help. He had been our driver in Kerala for the last five years. He was a very reliable and honest person.

Whenever we were in Kerala, he was the one who drove us to all places we traveled—from the time we got out of the airport terminal till he dropped us off for the return flight.

He knew all the usual places we traveled in Kerala, to visit our relatives and friends, so we never had to give him directions how to get to places.

Receiving areas of most airports are busy with cars and pedestrians running in between cars and luggage carts. Nedumbassery airport is not any different.

After storing our luggage in the trunk, Plassy pulled away from the terminal building. Easing over the speedbumps and paying the parking fee, we got out to the main road connecting the airport to the national highway.

Both sides of this way out were well landscaped with shrubs, small trees, and flower beds. The morning mist was fading away, and the sky looked clear with the half-moon getting ready to say goodbye.

“Looks like gonna be a good day,” Mathew said.

As Plassy drove, he and Mathew talked easily while I looked out the window.

My mind started to wander around the surroundings, taking in the sights and sounds of our second home in Aluva, Kerala.

On both sides of the street, other than coffee shops and food stands, all shops were closed. But in a couple

of hours, the shops would open, and people would walk along the streets going about the day's business.

The distance from the airport to our apartment (condominium) in Aluva was about 14 km and took less than 30 minutes to get there.

Aluva is a small city in the district of Ernakulam, a city embraced by the bountiful Periyar River. With less than 30,000 of a diverse population, Aluva could be a model city in India, showing how people with different persuasions can live in harmony.

Our apartment is located very close to the Periyar River; this river is also locally called Aluva Puzza. The name of our apartment complex is Periyar Blossom. We bought our apartment in this building about five years back, and we like it very much.

The location of our apartment is very convenient for us. Food, grocery stores, transportation, and most other needs are available within walking distance. If Plassy is not available to take us to some place, then there are auto rickshaws and cabs accessible within walking distance.

Since our apartment is facing the river, we are insulated from most of the city noise such as the loud horns and occasional whistle from the railway station.

At night a fresh breeze will come from the river most of the time. In the evening, the steps leading to the river bank are very much alive. People are bathing and

cleaning clothes. So many youngsters use the riverbank as their meeting spot.

The only disappointment we have about this river, I would rather say about the people using this river, is knowingly or unknowingly polluting this water with all kinds of activities. Lots of people live on the banks, and businesses have no concern for the health of this precious waterway. For example, in many places raw sewer is dumped and untreated wastewater from factories and other businesses flows into this river. We don't see people complaining about it or the government taking any action to restrict this crime.

Mathew, my husband, told me once that when he was young, he came to this river as part of a school trip and he bathed in it with his friends and even drank water. At that time, the water was immaculate. Now, whenever we are in Aluva, all we can do is to simply walk on the banks of the river afraid to touch the water.

On the other side of the river, there is a famous Shiva temple, and every year, there is a festival attended by people from all over Kerala, called Aluva Sivarathri ("night of the worship of God Shiva"). Aluva Sivarathri is celebrated at the Shiva temple on the banks of Periyar River, and this place is called the *Aluva Manal Puram*. This festival falls every year between February and March, lasting two weeks.

On the way from the airport approaching our city, we could see the life around both sides of the street slowly waking up. When the car stopped, I looked

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Have you ever had the experience of dragged into an event unexpectedly? That is what happened to this couple when they came for their vacation into their mother land. Their programmed vacation plan became a nightmare. They travelled through unknown paths learned so much about the web of greed. Agonizing nine days, but the family found strength and patience through the help of some good people they met on the way of this journey.



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