

## THE MALDIVES TALES

When I am sitting on my easy chair and thinking of writing Maldives Tales, my dream to become a writer is fulfilled. Everything happens for a reason and life always put me in very tricky and delicate situations so that I could feel the hands of Providence always in my life, supporting and sustaining me, as well as those of the evil one trying to hamper my dream to be a writer come true. I tried myriad ways to get exposure and experience, to bring out the best in me. I went chasing a dream to be writer and the dream came back pursuing me and I learned that the best is yet to come, all is always for the better and now is the good and opportune time for everything.

There is such an episode in my life that I always wanted to forget, but never could, and it always came popping up on the monitor of my mind, like a disco, snorkelling in the shallow seas, scuba diving, beach parties or even a hard drink of Tequila with a pinch of pepper on the expense account, the life in the resorts of Maldives, a sought after destination of the billionaires and connoisseurs of the world, who did not know what else to do with their money that they had plenty of. I was offered money and wisdom on two platters and I chose wisdom and became a poet. They die poor, while novelists gets richer and richer.

The dream, goal and passion of my life was to become a writer. Life look me to such a befitting place for a writer, a holiday resort in the sought after Maldives. Soon I was

airborne to Male' city and was given the training for the new job. The date of the delivery of my wife was due and I air dashed to be with her, for she was frightened about the Cesarean. After the birth of my daughter I went back to Male' and soon I was shipped to the resort. Treasure Island was the name of the cruise and it was the first time I was travelling in the sea. Dolphins, mantas and flying fish were seen on the way and the sea was calm and serene.

I reached my destination, the resort and was welcomed there with a perfumed wet napkin and a welcome drink. It was a ten acre island, with some cottages strewn across it with the bar, restaurant and administrative office in the middle. I was shown to my accommodation and the manager took me to the bar and gave me a treat, Bacardi with coca cola that became my favorite drink. He told me that I had an expense account there in the bar and whenever I wanted I could have a drink. I got involved in the resort life, mixed with the guests who were billionaires of the world, went swimming, snorkeling and scuba diving. When I had spare time I used to float in the sea on an air mattress and it was such an exhilarating and thrilling experience. Around hundred poems started gushing out and I fed them one after another into the computer. The guests who saw that polished and chiseled it to make it publishable. There used to be disco in the middle of the bar and when the guests had a couple of drinks, they used to make some ugly gyrations by way

of dancing and I was ashamed to do that. I used to sip a drink and sat watching how they all performed.

Days, weeks and months were elapsing. The hot and humid tropical climate of the island along with the drinks that I used to take gave me an ugly sickness called piles, bleeding in the bottom. Where ever I sat there were smears of blood and it was very painful too. I found it unbearable staying in the resort and asked them to send me back. There was no facility for treatment there. I had a job back at home and I thought that I would rejoin after taking some treatment. They cancelled my visa, Okayed my ticket and send a colleague Ali Waheed to accompany me. When we were about to land in Trivandrum the sky became dark with thunderous rain and they re-routed us to Chennai as landing was possible there in Trivandrum only later.

My former colleague in the office came and took over and he took me for some treatment. He took me to a place for a crude treatment, with a bottle of brandy, some blood of a chicken and some Ayurveda medicine. His intention was that I did not recover as he was holding my post and did not want to lose that. I had a hell of a hard time and slowly recovered and overcame the predicament and joined back for my old job when the period of my leave was over.

To me Maldives is a land of dreams, tranquillity, synchronising with serenity, exotic sun, sand and sea, and all those who come there once will be like the Lotus

Eaters, never wanting to return home, so captivating, mesmerising and alluring in its charm and attraction. When we are high up in the sky, the pearly islands, more than a thousand, scattered in the blue ocean far off attract and beckon us with such a charm that we cannot break off and get acquitted.

It was accidentally that I ended up there, but the impact that Maldives had in my life was tremendous and I became a different person altogether, I became a writer, a universal citizen, a real connoisseur in the true sense of the word, and the kind of exposure I got there, even a million dollars could not buy. Good experiences and bad experiences balance at a point, the equilibrium in life, wants and needs coinciding, we had everything we wanted and don't need anything anymore and then one gets the urge to write. If the negative is more in the graph the more passionate would be the writing and love and love failures would add more charm to it. That was the ultimate for a writer to start his saga. My life had all the ingredients to become a writer and it was waiting to overflow at the tip of my fingers to the key board, the media I chose to write after my computer training in American College, Madurai in 1990. I got into the midst of a triangular love story, very passionate, intimate and I became the deciding factor of the climax of the story and I tried to make it a comedy.

It was 1990s and the computers were making their debut in Kerala, and there was so much of controversy going on whether they should be permitted in offices, whether they would displace the workforce, whether they would really reduce work load and how to learn the artificial language to tackle them. I was sent to American College, Madurai to learn how to use the computer. To know what to learn and the modus operandi, I visited a friend Priyadas G. who was giving training for using computers and while we were gabbing and making fun of each other, the man sitting next to me asked what I was doing and hearing that I was an accountant, he told me that they needed an accountant in Maldives and whether I was interested in coming.

Without thinking twice I said yes, I saw it as a God given chance to get away from the strife in my office. He told me to send an email with my bio data, the first thing I did after reaching American College was to send that email. The training was good and the American Professor who was the coordinator, used to pull my legs and tease me so much that on the last day in the farewell party I organised a skit to pay him back in the same coin.

I covered up a guy in a blanket and brought him to the middle of the rink and told them that it was skunk, a fierce looking animal from Africa and only brave people would be able to look at it. Susan from Stella Maris College came, parted the blanket slightly, looked inside and fell fainting as previously agreed. I lifted her up, sent her off

and Malkeet Singh from a college in Punjab came and looked inside and ran for his life. All were sitting tight with apprehension and then I announced that the bravest person in the whole group was that American Professor and asked him to come and have a look at the animal.

He got up with courage, looked at his wife and everyone around with a sneer, came and parted the blanket to look into and the animal fell fainting. He stood there looking like a clown when all were laughing and even his wife denounced him that he smiled at me and told me that he would never forget me or that episode. Though about computer I did not learn much, I enjoyed the stay there, the prayer services in the chapel, the company and fellowship of some smart people from all over India. The trip to and fro was such an awesome experience in the meter-gage train, through scenic places like Kulathupuzha, Chenkotta and Thirunelvely and the bridges and tunnels built by the British were fascinating.

The appointment order to join for the job at Maldives was waiting when I reached back. I had to get concurrence from the government to go abroad and my friend in the secretariat arranged it. Since I took leave, my colleague was promoted to my post, his life's greatest ambition because I was appointed when he was eligible to get promoted to my post. That grudge he kept in his mind and I had to pay the hell later, as it was by accident I landed up there.

I was a constant visitor of Kurisumala, Vagamon and Francis Acharya, the abbot there inducted me to Veda, Vedanta, Yoga and meditation. I was also in constant touch with Guru Nithya Chaithanya Yathi of Fernhill, Ooty and he invited me there to become his disciple. It was Nirvana I was seeking but life offered me untold agony and pain, because of a false step that I took. I was thinking of booking my ticket to go to Ooty, to work in the Good Shepherd School there, owned by my former boss and M.P., Varckichan Chettan as I had settled the accounts of Kuttiady estate, Calicut which was pending for the past five years. It was a Herculean task, as there was no record for anything and I had to do the whole work out of my imagination and creativity.

I was staying at Pala and my life there was full of adventure and fun. I was given a car for my travelling and could stay in top hotels like Alakapuri, Calicut. Even the stay in the estate bungalow in Kuttiady was fun. I did not know the hazards and perils of the job till I left it, my boss could not go there, his life was threatened, and there was police protection for the estate from encroaching communists. Late EK Nayanar went and hoisted the party flag there himself.

Lucky that I did not stay there; and I brought all available records to Pala and did my work there. It was a tight rope walking and I do not know how I did it, may be at a gun point, I had no other go, the burden of my family was on me and settled the last bit of accounts in a hearing at

Vadakara, at the agricultural income tax office. Somehow I convinced the officer and came away after paying him some bribe, I only paid him half and kept the other half to myself.

Soon I was in a group of merchants who went to Trivandrum for their annual convention and I met two seniors in the college. One of them told me about an opening at a college in Trivandrum and I applied for it and was called for the interview. Abbot of Kurisumala, Francis Acharya, offered to give a letter of introduction to the principal there, and I came for the interview and got the first rank. May be it was my destiny and all that I had to undergo and suffer in the bargain also was predestined to be there for me. But I came out of it all in flying colours, got the position of the senior superintendent when I retired, was at the helm of affairs when the president of India visited our college, for its Golden Jubilee and also paved the way for the top most score for our college in the NAAC accreditation. Almost two thousand friends I have in the face book and most of them are former students there who remember me with gratitude and are pleased to meet me in the course of my travelling around. I tried to be maximum helpful, to do smart work, more work in the least possible time, the easiest possible way, never putting off for another time, using the computer, which was initiated from American College, Madurai, and did all my writing using the computer.



Luckily all I wrote, I collected and kept in CDs and even posted in my website which was there as early as 1995, my cousin Alex Andrews hosting it from New Jersey. It all started with Consul Ali asking me whether I wanted to come to work in Maldives and me saying yes, that changed my life and fate. My dream and goal of life to be a writer materialised and became true, my books ON TRIVIA, AGONY and MELODY OF MALDIVES, ALL NOVELS OF PAUL G. and SIGN BOARD, CITY OF SIN, THIRUVANTHAPURANAM, RAGS TO RICHES, HOW AMAZING WAYS AND BLISS are published in Amazon Kindle and “Novels of Paul G.” brought out by Notion Books, Chennai. SPBRA books Texas had brought out E-novels of Paul G. with international standards.

## 2

I became friendly with two fellow passengers and later they played a decisive role in my life, one was Dr.Sasi, working in the National hospital, Mali and the other was Krishnan a school teacher there. I was supposed to meet Tom, my colleague and to proceed to the airport with him. But he went ahead of me and checked in and I tried to find him in the flight to Maldives.

As I was tense with apprehension, Dr.Sasi consoled me and assured me that he would take me to the main land and to my office. Krishnan assured me that I could stay with him for the time being, in his school staff quarters. I was feeling terrible head ache throughout the journey and

when I saw the pearly islands scattered in the blue ocean my heart leapt with some untold joy. Soon the aircraft landed and we went to the customs and emigration to check out and Dr.Sasi asked the guy sitting there to find out Tom, and he said that there he went, just checked out from there. I went after him, caught on his hand and said that I was pleased to meet him, but I was not sure whether he was pleased to meet me. We got in the boat to the main land and the doctor ushered a car and dropped Krishnan in his quarters and dropped me at our office and he left, promising us any help if needed.

We went and reported to our office, to the General Manager who conducted the interview in Trivandrum for recruiting us there. He introduced us to all the staff there and showed us our accommodation, close to the office, a studio apartment with two beds and a toilet attached. He took us to a restaurant close by and we had some typical Maldivian food, which I did not like at all. We had a good sleep and reported for work the next day. I had to monitor the payments from tour operators and payments to a resort, our branch concern. Tom was settling the payments to creditors in a tricky way, appeasing the greediest first, always with a part payment.

We were running the show perfectly and the stay in the mainland was uneventful. I used to visit Dr.Sasi in National Hospital and was introduced to Hema, a nurse there and Anthu, his assistant and translator. She taught me the basics of Dhivehi, their language, “Kine?” means

“How are you?” and the answer is “Rangalu”, very good, and “Kwoba” if we ask, the same thing, but the answer is “Sakara”, meaning not bad.

Once Hema was found at the staff quarters of Krishnan and I was glad that they were friends and made for each other. Dr.Sasi was making passes at both Hema and Anthu and none of them took him serious.

I used to spend my evenings in the National Library and the librarian there Jeff was so friendly and I used to clear my doubts in Library Science which I was still trying to study from IGNOU. I came across many fascinating books and Jeff introduced me to a number of great authors. Thulfa was the assistant librarian and she took a lot of trouble to reserve good books for me when they were returned. I imbibed and relished from many wonderful books like the collected works of Khalil Gibran, Alistair Mclean, Ayn Rand, Erich Siegel and it was a tremendous reading experience for me and was a deciding factor in my life of becoming a writer later.

Meeting Sylvia at the library, introduced by Jeff; opened a new vista in front of me in the form of UN parties and a new circle of friends in the Indian High Commission. She was an avid reader and we used to exchange our expertise on different authors and good books. There was an elderly and amicable Achayan in the UN and I made fun of him by cracking some Achayan jokes to Sylvia; that paved the way for me to be invited to one UN party and she announced that I knew some very good jokes. To be

diplomatic I announced that the Achayans were the most brave people in India and out of jealousy we others used to crack jokes on them, even though they call others budhoos, meaning fools. Achayan was very much flattered and I started with the first joke; that reserved a niche for me in the hearts of those people and a standing invitation for all the parties at the UN and Indian High Commission. It went on like this,

At the time of King Akbar, there were three terrible problems in the Mughal empire, a terribly stinking animal called Skunk came out from the forest and started rowing all over the country. They were so stinking and had to be driven back into the forest. The second problem was a tiger, a man eater that used to catch people and eat. The king did not want to kill the tiger because it was the national animal; if its teeth were pulled out, that problem could be solved.

The next problem was a mighty powerful witch, so powerful that she made all kinds of calamities like land slide, earth quake, thunder, flood etc. But the king did not want to kill the witch as she was the symbol of the prosperity of the country. Her power was due to her virginity and if it was destroyed she would become harmless.

The king offered ten thousand gold coins to any man who could tackle those problems and world travellers like Fahian, Huang Tsang, and Iban Bathootha all came and tried to solve the problems and did not succeed.

Everyone was so unhappy and an Achayan heard about it and he came to the Mughal Empire. The moment he landed there; all the skunk went back into the forest. He was stinking worse. The King was happy and offered him the money if he solved the other two problems also. Achayan agreed to tackle the tiger first and they escorted him to the tiger's den. After the yelling of the Achayan and crying of the tiger, for half an hour, he came out, shirt and all torn and said that he had tackled the tiger and to show him the witch to pull her teeth out. All, except the Achayan laughed like hell and he came after me, asking what the joke was about. Somebody offered him a drink, and he got diverted and forgot all about it. He became my fan and later brought a crimson coloured beautiful Kancheepuram Saree for my wife when he came back after holidays, worn by the noble ladies.

I came across Jan and Mark at hotel Alia, they were the friends of Sylvia; both of them were married to Maldivian ladies and resort owners. They had their wives and children at home also. I used to play table tennis with them and spent the evenings on discussions and discourses, mostly philosophy. They were very eager to hear about Hinduism and Indian Philosophy and I explained to them about Purushartha, the Indian way to look at life, to do one's duty, karma, to make artha, money without Kama, lust and greed, and with dharma, with justice to reach moksha, heaven, the ultimate destiny of human life. They had accepted Islam and tried to attract me to it, but I was scared of the modus operandi to

become one, though the baits were high, like resorts and big business houses and on one precondition that I should marry one lady from there. With the one wife that I had, I was finding it so difficult to manage and she was driving me crazy, asking me to come for the delivery of our baby, it was going to be a caesarean and she was so scared of the operation. As the date drew closer, I applied for leave, and it was granted on a condition that I met the travel expenses and nothing would go wrong in the office and I should make alternate arrangements.

### 3

The day before I left on paternity leave, we four came together in hotel Alia and after a quick game of table tennis; we sat down and started discussing about our lives and aspirations. I told them that my dream and goal in life was to become a writer and Mark asked me what all were the requisites to be a writer. I told him that to be a writer, one had to be adventurous, suspenseful, unpredictable, simple, witty and romantic. Jan asked me how one can become romantic. I told him that if one can make a lady smile, he was romantic. Mark asked me to demonstrate it by trying it out on Sylvia.

I looked at her and started pulling the legs of Mark by saying that one day his daughter came and told him that she was in love with Tom and would like to get married to him. Mark knew the boy to be a scoundrel and instead of saying not to marry him, he told his daughter

diplomatically that she couldn't possibly marry that boy since he was her half-brother and warned her not to tell her mother about it.

Then she tried to size up Dick and told Mark about it and he too was a dirty boy, so Mark told her that he was her half-brother and not to tell her mother about it. The girl did not lose heart and she seduced Harry and came and told Mark about it. Mark did not like him either and told her not to marry Harry as he was her half-brother and not to tell her mother about it.

Poor girl went and told her mother at last, what was happening and she told the girl that she was aware of what was happening and to marry any of those boys she liked as Mark was not her father. We all laughed, but it was Sylvia who had a rip roaring time. Mark told me that no more jokes and he realised what it was to be romantic as well as to be a writer. We had some mugs of beer and good food and they wished me safe journey.

The next day I was airborne and landed up in Trivandrum. Stayed with a friend and visited the college I worked. Met my colleagues and went to my wife's place. She was all one big tummy and was so scared about the impending delivery. The day we had to report to the hospital was harthal and no vehicles were permitted on the road. We started walking and my fear was whether the delivery would take place on the road. We reached the hospital, got admitted and the doctor told me that she would do caesarean the next day.

I made a decision that changed our fate and destiny and told the doctor that since that day was thirteenth and Friday, we would have the surgery on fourteenth Saturday. She said okay, and the next day was such an inauspicious day with some special harm for the father as per the horoscope and I would have even lost my life. I had to pay the hell later, suffer inhuman suffering, but ultimately that all helped me in my career as a writer and the best in me was brought out and the best was yet to come. Saw the baby and mother, stayed with them one or two days and I flew back to Maldives and the real story began.

The moment that I came to my office, I found something fishy, my chair was occupied by Tom and I had no place to sit. I went to the GM and he told me that they had made some shuffle in the office, as Tom could manage the things there I would be sent to our resort, Bathala to be the accounts manager there. The joke of the day was that Tom had to do my share of the job also at the same pay, though it was his idea of the shuffling in the office, on the hope of getting my pay. I decided to go to the resort the next day and went and bode farewell to all my friends on the mainland Mali' as I had made my mark there in the elite circles. I met Dr.Sasi, Krishnan and Hema and invited them all to the resort that triggered on a passionate love story, so touching, affectionate and soul stirring.



Mark, Jan and Sylvia gave me a send-off party which was so memorable. I had liked them and their company and the intellectual discourses we had, was going to be over. Sylvia gifted me with a table tennis racket, as I was becoming a good player and I told her that it was very thoughtful of her. We had some mugs of beer and Jan wished that my dream to be a writer would come true and told me to go extra mile in whatever I did, kept the contacts of people on similar lines, kept the faith blazing and learning from defeat, budgeting time and money, keeping healthy and loving every one, controlling the mind with self-discipline, concentrating on the thing I did and making it a habit of life. They all promised to keep in touch and the next day I began my life of adventure, fun and thrill, which turned out to be a tragedy or a comedy I am not sure in the end and my conviction that the best was yet to come. Now I can say for sure that it ended up as a comedy or I would not be writing this.

## 4

Treasure Island was a cruise, that travelled to resorts unloading the tourists and I also got into it to reach my new destination, Bathala Resort, a small island in the Ari Atoll. Dr.Sasi and Krishnan came to see me off, and I invited them to the resort, that became a bone of contention between them in their wooing and warfare for winning the love of the same lady, Hema. I saw love and consideration in Krishnan, lust and greed manifested in

Dr.Sasi, the two lovers in their strategy to win the affection of the same lady.

The sea was calm, dolphins and mantas were seen on the way and when I got fed up with the same monotonous view of the sea, I went to the deck and soon fell asleep. When I woke up from the stupor by some hissing sound close by, I saw a smart, good looking couple, embracing and kissing each other and they did not mind at all, when I stared at them. I smiled at them, got introduced to them and came to know that they were also going to Bathala. They came to shoot a documentary film in the back ground of a resort in Mali, using remote cameras and sophisticated gadgets, to get the natural look for an ad film, and with the money they get from that he wanted to complete his M.S. from a university in Brussels. He sought my help in taking some visuals on the beach and seashore. I liked them and the passion they had for each other, the sacrifice she was doing for the man she loved and agreed to help them on one condition that I would take the visuals only with clothes on. First we came to Rannali, our branch resort, had breakfast, sandwiches and hot coffee. Some of the guests got down there.

I tried to make friends with some of them who were coming to our resort and they were all very cordial. They chose Bathala because of the excellent diving facility there. They all had training in deep sea diving and were looking forward to the captivating coral reefs and underwater flora and fauna, the star attraction of Bathala.

We were near the jetty, the landing and I climbed over the small wooden bridge and put my first step into that dreamy, exotic and captivating island, for a new phase of my life of fun, adventure and ecstasy, indescribable. The receptionist gave us all a wet perfumed napkin to wipe our faces, sweating and hot. Hassan, the manager came to receive me, showed my office and accommodation. He took me to the bar for a drink, an appetiser he told me and also that I hold an expense account for the choicest drinks whenever I wanted.

The food in the restaurant was European, and a roasted lobster was especially tasty. Tuna were fried and kept in heaps and I came to realise that it was the only fish they ate and there were times when my only food was boiled tuna with the water it was boiled as gravy. The guests kept such decorum and manners when they had the food, no loud talking and always took the same seats that were reserved for them.

The bar was the nerve centre of the resort, most visited by the guests, all the choicest liquors of the world were displayed there, inviting and alluring, but the price so exorbitant and expensive. Everyone was encouraged to drink as much as they could, it was the main revenue for the resort and the highest expense was buying tuna, which I found out later to be fraudulent and a source of misappropriating the funds. It came free from the sea and they charged exorbitant amounts for it, at their whims and fancies and kept spurious vouchers, bills and receipts.

I had a closer look at the cottages, which were thatched huts, a round construction, a sit out, bedroom with a cot and a toilet with just a commode and shower. Some had split air conditioners, but most of them had just a fan in the middle. Just because they were on the fabulous beaches of Maldives, staying in them costed five hundred to thousand dollars per night. By the time they came to settle the bills and check out only the guests realised how they were taken for a real ride and lost their hard earned money which they had already paid for buying the holiday pax to Maldives. They ventilated their feelings when they settled the last bills like that for drinks, and told me that they would never return for another holiday or sent anyone they knew.

I used to get regular calls from Dr.Sasi and Krishnan. The doctor was full of stories about his amorous adventures with Anthu, how shapely she was and at times he used to mention that he liked Hema and would say that a good wife should be like her. He was switching his attention between those two attractions. Anthu was willing to oblige him any time, but Hema kept a distance and did not fall for his amorous approaches. He knew that Krishnan was also friendly with her and doubted that was the cause of her keeping off. I kept neutral in my attitude and decided to support the most deserving and genuine one among them and my sympathy went with Krishnan and Hema would be a great wife for him. With her amicable and soft-spoken caring nature, Krishnan was the right type of man

for her, with maturity and integrity, coupled with efficiency and erudition, and I was in his favour.

## 5

It was officially that I went to Mali' but I made it a point to visit all my acquaintances there. At National hospital, Dr.Sasi was in top form, among the two ladies he admired, witty and charming. He was examining a patient, a middle-aged lady who used to become unconscious on and off, he cross examined her and found out the cause of the illness was due to the nagging of the second wife of her husband who held an upper hand in the house hold and to get the attention of her husband, she used to fall unconscious.

When Anthu narrated her plight, Dr.Sasi advised her to take bath every day, wear clean clothes, look attractive and show more consideration and care for her husband and act friendly to the other wife, not to compete with her, but collaborate in running the household and assured her that her situation would improve and sickness go off. By way of treatment he prescribed sleeping pills for the other wife and asked her to make the other wife take it after

supper on the pretext of vitamin support for her paleness and tiredness. I smiled at the cleverness of the doctor, but was aghast when he told me that he wanted to visit our resort for a week end and ask Hema whether she would like to come. I told him that Anthu would be a better choice and he said that it was a good idea, while I felt relieved about rescuing Hema, I was sure that he was getting into trouble.

I visited hotel Alia and my friends were there to spend the evening. I played with them table tennis and had a mug of beer. I invited Sylvia to the resort and promised some discount to Mark and Jan to bring their whole house hold for a week end. I told them the latest joke that I heard about Rajanikanth, adapted it and made me the hero of the story.

Krishnan came to collect me and I decided to spend the night with him at his quarters. He was self-cooking and we had some rice and beef curry with curd. It was all so tasty and I felt envy for the woman he would marry, because he was such a nice cook.

Before going to sleep he asked my help in talking to Hema about his love for her and desire to get married and to avert Dr.Sasi from making passes at her. Hema told him that the doctor was just interested only in a physical relationship and he is so weak on his moral side. She had seen him unnecessarily fiddling ladies by way of examination and ill-used Anthu many times. She could

not understand the real disposition of Anthu, what was in her mind and why she yielded to Sasi.

I told him that I would find out the attitude of Hema, and invited them to the resort, to come in the morning and spent the day. I told him not to make passes or have sex with her before marriage but be the maximum loving, caring and courteous. He was a man of integrity and principles and I felt happy to help him. I knew that Hema was also an upright lady and both of them would make a good pair and couple.

I visited my former office and met Tom. He was so jealous of me, my fabulous life in the resort and it was he who should have gone to the resort, if he had not foul played to get my position. I came to know that he was pulling the strings to come there. I left them and took a speed boat that reached me much earlier than before.

The difference of the life in the resort and main land was that the resort was so isolated and cut off from the world. The guests wanted just that, away from the hustle and bustle of the cities, from crowds, traffic jams, schedules and deadlines of the everyday job. They get a peaceful holiday and may go back rejuvenated and with a better perspective to face life and job.

The allurements of the resort were getting into me too and I bought all the materials needed to do the writing that was trying to gush out of me. I could feel the beaches, the pure and pristine sand, and the calm and serene sea all

turn on the urge to write and the thought about my child and wife made me euphoric and romantic, that I decided to start writing once I settled down. After some discussion with the guests I used to get some idea to write and sit on the beach and scribble it down looking at the lolling waves and turbulent movement of the sea which turned on the writer and poet in me.

## 6

On Trivia I called it, one after another poems came gushing out of me, all symmetric, which didn't need much editing, almost a hundred of them. I was perplexed at the variety of the topics, all some relevant international themes, because of the crowd I was interacting, many of them, the outcome of the discussions I had with the guests. They were also surprised at the cuteness of the lines and the freshness of the themes when I showed the poems to some of the guests.

Sitting on the beach, looking at the lolling waves, with the gentle breeze winnowing over me, I got the right ambience to scribble down, whatever that came to my mind and later I posted it in my office computer. The last poem that I wrote there was 'On Slumber', why almighty God permitted all the atrocities that were happening in the world, why he was in slumber and indifferent to the atrocities, cruelties and man-made calamities. We are nobody to question the integrity of God and we would



never know why he did something to some people, I lost my job and had to flee, leaving everything because of that wrong move.

I did not learn my lesson, later on when there was a competition in Poetry.com I decided to send that poem to New York, sat in the computer room of the college I worked to type it out, somebody accidentally locked the room and I could get out only after four hours. I decided to mail it from the RMS at Quilon railway station, but slept off and did not get down in Quilon. The next stop was at Mavelikkara and I was aghast. The train stopped somewhere in the outer of Karunagappally and I jumped down. It went off, there was no sign of any station or people, all in utter darkness. I prayed and cried out to God, asking for forgiveness, soon an auto came that way; I was offered a lift to the highway and was able to reach home, though very late.

The poem was shortlisted for a thousand dollars prize money, but I lost in the finals and the collection of poems On Trivia was published as a book, nicely printed by my friend Cresence Dsouza and released by Prof.Madhusoodhanan Nair, the poet of Kerala at a function in the Public Library hall in Quilon. The function was hosted by Sangamam, the fellowship of co-passengers in the train. They also organised the hosting of my author website Paulgnet.com, at my home, Paradise by Dr.Udayakumar, the rotary governor, former director of college development council and a fellow train

passenger. The second edition of the poems, Agony was released by the late Maharaja of Travancore, with the cover page Agony, a painting by my dear friend, late Dr. Francis, who drew that painting with blood flowing out of his eyes, heart-broken, after receiving the wedding invitation of the woman he loved, while doing an oil painting, he drew that image behind the wedding card, his agony and pain untold. Now SBPRA books Texas is considering publishing it as my second book, making me eligible to get two thousand five hundred dollars they have offered. It is now available on Amazon Kindle and in my website.

## 7

Same way another poem also got me into controversy and much criticism was made about the climax that I changed it conveniently. In the poem 'On son of God', I just mentioned that the son of God really came, but was taken aback by seeing such a lot of followers, not knowing him really, but denouncing each other as fake and fighting for the church assets. He told them not to fight and become one group, instead of many, and they told him that if he said that again they would crucify him once again. I changed the ending in a later version as he did not come for all that, but to save us from the devil, so leave our bad old ways and lead a new life.

While interacting with the richest people of the world I realised that money never made anyone really rich. The true riches of life were sound health, self-discipline, positive outlook, freedom from fear, hope that the best is yet to come, faith that everything is always for better, discernment to know the motive of others, readiness to share, open mind, harmony in relationships, a job that one love to do creatively and financial security. That was the longest poem that I wrote, including Niagara Syndrome, that we are rowing a boat on a sunny evening in a calm river quite aimlessly and suddenly a water fall comes and we are about to fall into it. Most of us are afflicted by that syndrome and only when a tragedy happened that we came out of that.

I also put into verse the things needed to lead an enriched life, to have dreams and find one's purpose and goal, based on that make some planning to reach the goal, going extra mile on all that we did, keeping a mastermind alliance of good friends who would support and sustain us, keep the faith that God would take us to our purpose and we had the ability to reach there. Only by making mistakes we can learn and not by doing the right thing, and that is real learning. To have a pleasing personality by smiling at people we meet, remembering their names, listening to others rather than do all the talking, appreciating the good in others and never finding fault. To have creative vision and personal initiative as well as accurate thinking and self-discipline. I wrote about concentration and cooperation, to be enthusiastic and

lead a healthy living, loving God, others and ourselves and to make this a habit of life and living. Aden was closed behind us, cannot go back, we are now in Paradise, on the way to heaven and not to end up in hell.

The poem that I liked the most from my collection came out of a midnight trip on a full moon day with my teacher and poet of Kerala, Professor Madhusoodhanan Nair, and poetry was gushing out of us, and the contention that many of us would bargain to a fisher woman, auto driver or a cobbler on the street, but spent exorbitant amounts in bars, jewelleries, and for drinking and textile shops without thinking, the poems frugality was born.

It was a wisdom dawning on me when I wrote the 'ultimate', why there was competition and conflict in the world, describing the interaction of a pack of dogs, their fight for power and sex, which I witnessed in the stadium at Pala, one a full moon night, I was sitting there, cogitating and brooding over, and realised that the two important baits were along with money. The euphoric life and intellectual discourses and discussions, the disco and choicest liquors of the world all made those poems gush out of me and I had the folder with those poems, when I left Maldives and it came out as my masterpiece and made me an internationally published poet. One American poet, Tony Conor, suggested Poetry.com as a forum to begin publishing my poems and most of them, I tried publishing in there.

## 8

Henry and Hazel approached me to help them shoot their movie on the beach and while they were doing snorkelling. I told them that I wanted to see the camera and how it worked. It looked like any other SLR, but was much sophisticated with lots of functions, and it could be converted as a video recorder as well as good enough to shoot underwater. We decided to have two sessions, one in the evening and one in the morning.

That evening we set up the camera on a tripod on the beach, near the sea and started our session. Henry told me to take anything that happened in front and he assured me that he would do the editing to make it presentable. There were three things I had to be careful, when taking stills, I had to make sure that the objects were in the middle, while zooming I had to make sure that the clarity was not compromised and in the video mood I had to see that the action was recorded at the right time.

I was behind the camera, the evening sun was casting a red tint, and they came striding slowly in front of the camera, hand in hand, with sufficient clothes on. When they came close to the camera, I took some stills and saw some passionate and intimate love scenes, revelling western films. It was all so natural and they never cared to look at the camera. That intimacy they had to each other was manifest in their movements, and I wondered

that they were selling it for money. We decided to have the scenes in the sea, next day morning.

I set the tripod on the beach little down into the sea, and the waves were not strong. They came in swimming dress, with snorkelling masks on the face. Slowly they swam in front of the camera, intertwining each other, and even kissed, lip locking and I kept the camera focussed and zooming as needed. I was taken aback and horny with every move they made, but went on shooting. They came back on the shore in between and recouped sufficient energy for the next session.

When it was over they thanked me and told me that evening they were recording the indoor and I told them to do it themselves, as I knew what would be happening. They asked the housekeeping for some good colourful sheets and pillow covers. I was having lunch with them and he persuaded her to have some gin with tonic and he took Tequila with a pinch of pepper. Seeing him do it I too had a peg to get the feel.

One thing I liked about them was that they had no inhibitions or she no ill feelings. I asked them how they got the idea and she told me about her beautiful colleague who had to sell her virginity to her professor for money, when her boyfriend had an accident and needed a surgery. That professor was after her, making passes and offering many things including marks and money. He gave her the money, but ill-used her and black mailed her for many other things.

I told them that they were taking a big risk, especially for their families and their future career. They told me that they would never get married or have children and just live together. I knew that it was futile arguing with them or trying to correct them, because they had their mind set and decided on what they were doing. I decided to keep off from them and avoided them and had very little interaction with them after that. I would never forget them or the visuals of passion and love I had seen when I shot those scenes for them.

## 9

I was surprised when Dr.Sasi and Anthu landed one fine evening there. I received them warmly and got them a cottage on the beach near the sea. They stripped, changed to swimming dress and rushed to the sea. I sat watching them and their amorous pranks, astonished at the perfect shape of Anthu, a feast for the eyes and any man would love to make love to. Dr.Sasi winked at me.

Taking the hint I left the place and I guessed what he was going to do on the lone beach with no one around. Seeing such a lot of such perfect shape of blondes and brunettes I did not feel anything special. I was waiting for them in the bar and soon they turned up in fresh clothes and gleaming. She had a sly smile on her face when she looked at me, but Dr.Sasi was in good cheer and laughing from ear to ear at the foolish remarks that Anthu was making.

I ordered whisky on the rocks for us and gin tonic for Anthu. That night there was going to be disco in the bar, the middle portion was cleared as the rink. He joined the gang that were dancing and Anthu also followed suit. The drink was taking effect on him and it was fun, his monkey dance, for the tune of the thundering music and I sat sipping the drink and enjoying the different expressions on the beautiful face of Anthu. She was catching up to the tempo of the dance and doing it as good as any western lady.

Dr.Sasi had asked me not to have dinner from the restaurant as Hema had sent some boiled tapioca with fish curry, she knew that I would love that. After the disco we went to their cottage and sat down to have the food. She was sitting close to the doctor and he suggested that she came and sat with me. I was aghast and told them that I was vowed to have sex with a single lady, our bitter half, wife and I can't break that vow for my head would blow off, if I did that. I ate the food and got away from there and left them for the amorous adventures they were waiting for. She looked at me with disappointment.

We had breakfast together and told them to go for snorkelling and I would join them for lunch. I had my work to do and the deeper I went into the intricacies of the accounts I was baffled and found something fishy. From the interaction of Rasheed the assistant manager with the purchase-in-charge, Wahid, I knew there was something



they were trying to hide from me and how ever hard I tried I couldn't figure it out.

There was a primitive spread sheet programme called Quattro Pro, designed by my predecessor an Australian accountant there. As soon as we fed the details on the debit and credit sides, it would tally itself, if the account was correct but I had my doubts that if some variables were wrong, about its accuracy and I found it, the purchase of tuna for the restaurant was an overhead on which exorbitant amounts were spent, whereas for lobsters it was not that high, though they were more costly. I did not show any hint of suspicion, and waited for more concrete evidence to nail the purchase manager. He wouldn't be doing it alone and then I saw the involvement of the assistant manager also as a possibility. Manager Hassan did not bother about such things as long as things were going on smoothly. I tagged a voucher, and went digging more into its authenticity as a test case and the result was astonishing.

Dr.Sasi came out to check out and I gave him a good discount and charged the drinks on my expense account after consulting Hassan. He was so happy and pleased about his stay in the resort and the disco, but Anthu seemed like a monkey that had bitten row ginger, especially after the crude love making of the doctor. In secret he told me that he was planning to come again, if Hema was willing, and I dissuaded him from that, and

send them off in Treasure Island, a cruise that came our way.

## 10

I was watching an East German who came to the bar and sat on a corner, without interacting with any one every day. On the first day I heard him, telling the waiter, who placed the menu in front of him to bring him 'etc.' that was shown at the bottom of the list to show that there were more to come and no money was mentioned against that.

The waiter, a Srilankan bartender looked at him quizzically and told him that he would not get it there. The guest got angry and asked him, why the hell it was mentioned in the menu. The barman went to Hassan and told him of the strange request of the guest. Hassan told him that he was very frugal and wanted to spent the least and at the same time to have as much fun as possible. So he told the barman to pee a glass and give him. He did just that.

The next day, and the next day, till the date of his departure he came and sat down and the barman obliged him with a glass of urine. That day it was a waitress and she came for taking the order. He told her to bring 'etc.' and the waitress was baffled and told him that it was not available there. The German got angry and told her that till the previous day he was getting it from there.

She went and complained to the manager and he told her what was happening and asked her to do likewise. She did that, and the guest after drinking it came and told the manager that it was real tasty, that day. Hassan told him that till that day they were serving him from the pipe and that day it was served straight from the well and that was why it was so tasty.

The Germen left the next day and after that Hassan broke that joke in the bar and all were amused. I realised that it was because of the sense of frugality that he went up to that extreme. While interacting with Claudia, a British Attorney about the different outlook and philosophies of life, she asked me what the Indian way of looking at it was. I told her about Purushartha, the law of Karma and reincarnation.

I told her that we have to do our Karma, the duty, to make Artha, money, without Kama, greed, with Dharma, a sense of justice to reach Moksha, heaven after death. According to the way of our living or Karma we would have reincarnation or re-birth.

She told me that Aden was closed behind us, we could not go back, we were in Paradise, and should reach heaven and never end up in hell. I told her that in total, both the oriental and occidental outlook were similar and gave her my personal opinion that the world was controlled by two different powers, the Holy Spirit and the evil spirit.

All that was good and positive came from the Holy Spirit and all the love and compassion we see in the world was due to his working and also the knowledge, wisdom, art and literature that were helpful to humanity and giving the right orientation. All the atrocities and havoc we saw around was the working of the evil spirit, wars, riots, fighting, terrorism, paid killing, cheating and making big money. God Almighty gave out his spirit as love and wisdom and the devil tried to bring hatred, lust and greed to destroy humans and deter them from the love of God and with each other. I told her that the end of days are neigh, the evil and wicked forces were very active as well as the Holy Spirit. Those who decided to stay with God and be good, with Dharma would reach heaven or Moksha according to their Karma. She agreed and we parted with each other, agreeing to meet another time for further discussions.

## 11

One fine morning I was surprised to have two visitors, Krishnan and Hema. They came without informing and I received them without showing my surprise, I knew there would be some reason behind their visit. I took them to the restaurant and ordered them breakfast. While eating I confronted them, I was fearing the worst, like some assault from the side of Dr.Sasi. My intuition was proved right, Krishnan told me that the doctor was always making

passes at her, speaking in suggestive language and even proposed to her. She knew by instinct that he was after her flesh and not soul, once she yielded and complied she would be a gone case. Anthu was paying for it, had to be always at his beck and call and oblige him whenever he demanded.

They wanted me to interfere and avert the doctor from further atrocities to Hema, by way of amorous approaches. I told them not to worry, in the due course of time I would interfere and just to test them, asked them whether they needed a cottage to spend the day. Krishnan told me that they were not that type and they would spend the day on the beach and leave by the evening boat. He even declined the drink that I offered him.

There were two hammocks tied to adjoining coconut trees, frequented by honeymoon couples and I led them there. I told them to enjoy the breeze and the sea shore and went back to my work. I hoped that they would share and built up intimacy between each other, so that she would have the courage and moral strength to resist the amorous approaches of the doctor. They would be the perfect couple, made for each other and I wanted to do the cupid's work, and support them as much as I could.

It was time for them to leave and I just discussed with them about their future plans and ideas of getting settled. They were resolute about working for some more time to make enough money to get settled. Then they would go

home, get married and come back to work as long as they can, as it was so difficult to get a job in Kerala. The salary they were getting was fairly good, compared to the Indian standards, especially since they were getting their pay in US dollars.

She confided something privately about Dr.Sasi, how he was taken for a ride and taken advantage by Anthu, exploiting him to the maximum and extracting all his salary, by way of jewellery, clothes and expensive gifts. She kept him tied to her apron strings, by baiting him with sex and denying it, when he was so much interested in her. He lost all his integrity, self-control, and self-esteem. Hema could only stand aside and watch, the cat and mouse game and requested my help to make the doctor aware of the dangerous terrain he was treading and the quagmire into which he was about to fall.

I assured them that I would interfere, and if things were getting out of hand, I would come to the main land Mali' and confront them. They told me that as good friends, we should see to it that the poor doctor should not be allowed to be exploited and cheated. We were sure that in the end she would coolly walk off and he would be emotionally and mentally shattered.

Krishnan figured out a strategy, to put an end to all that by making the doctor propose to Anthu for marriage, and confront her. They were sure that she would never agree for the proposal and to stop the amorous exploitation, ask the doctor to forget her and to propose to Hema, in front

of her in that instant, and then Hema would tackle the situation by acting concerned and getting him out of the fad. Krishnan also agreed to cooperate. We agreed that at the first possible chance I would go and meet the doctor and Anthu, and get the proposal done. They asked me to buy two fake diamond rings and take it along, to show Anthu at the time of proposing. We were all sure that she would never agree for the proposal, and by Hema playing the trump card, could incapacitate Anthu from further exploiting the doctor.

I saw them getting into cruise Treasure Island, such a handsome pair in love, there was no lust or illicit cravings in their relationship, and I wanted them not to burn their fingers by trying to help Dr.Sasi, who was acting like a simpleton. He was loveable and innocent, that was why he could be so easily cheated and taken for a ride by Anthu. They both waved at me adieu and disappeared among the crowd on the deck of the boat, enjoying the pleasant evening sun and soft breeze. I thought about my wife and child, far off, and wondered when I would be able to see them. To drown the sorrow, I went to the bar and had a cocktail, fixed by the Srilankan barman, only for myself, less harmful stuff among the horrible brands of liquor displayed there. I gulped down the booze slowly and had a look at the happenings around the bar, the different dispositions of the crowd there. All were glad when they had the drink, they took it slowly, enjoying it thoroughly and soon they would become mad with its effect on them slowly catching up and sad when they saw

the exorbitant bill, and lost the impact of the drink and fun they had. It was universal, the reactions of people drinking, except that in India, people would gulp down the drink as fast as they could, taking in as much as they could, when they get it free usually.

## 12

That day, they requested my help to capture some visuals of underwater scenes of scuba diving, with the diving outfit and all. I accompanied them on the boat that went to the diving spot, and one after another, they lowered into the sea, and disappeared under the tranquil façade of the blue ocean. I tried to capture as much as I can of them lowering into the sea but after that the images were blur.

All of a sudden, the two of them surfaced, embracing each other, and I focussed on them, wading on the surface with their mask and other outfits on, and took video of their swimming together. After those gimmicks they went diving into the belly of the sea and did not turn up for some time.

The time allotted for the diving was over, most of their oxygen tanks were empty, and they surfaced one after another. I took more of their visuals, as they removed the masks and other paraphernalia like the oxygen cylinders and all. I put the video mode on as the boat went back to the resort and captured some dolphins that came our way, jumping and sneezing to catch our attention. They



were so harmless, in spite of their huge size and looked so gentle. There were also flying fish, sea gulls and mantas, on the way and I tried to capture as much as possible to give an authentic look to the episode.

They thanked me for my help and told me that they would do the editing of the movie that night itself and email the rushes to their clients. Then only they would make the payment to settle the bills of their stay there, to make sure that they did not cheat and get away, taking their money. Those were the rules of the underworld and they had to comply all of them to get their final payment.

I wished them the very best and told the boy, not to forget the sacrifice she made for him and not to go for a better model after his studies were over and getting a good placement. They thanked me for my help and support, and I told them to find more meaningful and healthy way of fund raising in future.

I did not want to meet them again, and felt sorry for the girl, because it was her at the losers end, whatever be the outcome. I knew that they would blackmail her and ill-use her further as an actress and the boy might get away unharmed. She had such an innocent, meek looking face, sleek and slim body that was not at all alluring and sensuous.

I saw lights in their cottage, even after midnight, and was late purposefully, not to meet them, ever in my life again, when they came for checking out and depart by the cruise

that came and unloaded another crowd of guests into our resort. I was not surprised to see that their payment was made promptly and on time before their departure. I checked the server and found that a large file of data was transferred to some servers of unknown destination. Everything worked out the way they planned and my only wish was that it had the expected results and outcome they wanted and hoped for.

## 13

Things were brewing up in such a way that I wanted to make a thorough system analysis and find out some discrepancy that I was sure taking place. Funds were flowing to one overhead, purchase of tuna for the kitchen, and the vouchers that they kept were not convincing enough. I tagged a particular payment, went tracing to its original voucher and found it to be so unconvincing, that I contacted the person who had signed as receiver and came to know that he never got that payment on that day.

I noted the details of the whole payment and same way traced another similar voucher on a later day and did the same checking and cross checked with the receiver and came to know that he never got that payment. I noted the details of that payment and to be more thorough, asked the details of some payment really made to him, took the date, amount and other details and it was not found in our records.

I had enough evidence to nail the culprits, but pretended as if I had not suspected anything and waited for a chance when they would make a false move and fall into the trap that I had set for them to fall. I found the house keeper and the assistant manager who was supposed to make the payments, conspiring each other, and talking in hushed tones between each other, when I looked at them intently.

But the arrival of Tom for a visit made the scene much worse, and he teamed up with them, to make hay while the sun was shining. He even took up the role of a mediator to negotiate for those scoundrels and suggested that I kept quiet and my share of the loot would come to me accordingly. He requested me to just ignore the matter and overlook that as a clerical error. I knew what he had in mind and so made a report of the whole situation and took copies of the spurious vouchers and kept them in my back pack. I wanted to display them and discuss that matter with the general manager when I went to the main land.

Soon the chance came, in the form of a phone call from Krishnan asking me to come to the main land and interact with the doctor as we had conspired before. I set sailed at the first possible chance to go to Mali, when there was a transfer of guests to the airport. I knew that Tom was looking for a chance to creep into the administration of the resort, but I overlooked that possibility, when I left for the main land. He joined hands with those thugs and with

his expertise and knowledge of accounts and auditing, destroyed all the evidences that I had noted and made the accounts fool proof and perfect. All the evidences that I had earmarked were tampered with to make them convincing enough.

I had to pay dearly for that oversight in the future developments that took place. He lobbied against me with everyone to be reckoned with in the resort and tarnished my image by spreading the rumour that it was a punishment transfer that I had to the resort. Same way he won the favour of the manager of the resort, and tried to creep in there, at the very first chance possible.

## 14

The first thing that I did after landing at Mali was to go to the head office and have a meeting with the GM and other authorities there. I pinpointed the evidences that I had brought and presented the extent of corruption that had taken place. They were not surprised and told me that a much worse racket had been operating there, and it was with great difficulty that they could clear the muddle, but the old crew was retained and they found new modus operandi.

They assured me that proper corrective measures would be taken in due course and I left the place half convinced. By evening I visited Dr.Sasi and suggested that it was Valentine's Day, a very auspicious day for proposing and persuaded him to call Anthu for a treat to the close by

restaurant on Majidu Maagu. I showed him the rings and he believed that they were real diamonds and requested him to propose to Anthu. I never mentioned to him what I had in mind and it was a very costly error and miscalculation that I made. I had arranged Hema to make a call on my mobile after I made a missed call and act agreeable to what Dr.Sasi said.

We three got out of the hospital and walked to the restaurant, got in there, I ordered three ice creams and gave the box containing the rings to Dr.Sasi. He took the hint and blurted out, “Anthu, shall we get married?” offering a ring to be put on her finger. She just giggled and withdrew her hand saying, “Kwoba?”, “No Sasi, I can’t think of getting married to you, let’s always be friends.”

I made the missed call without them noticing. Sasi was thunder struck and not opening his mouth or saying anything. Suddenly my phone rang, I said Hello and went on describing how Sasi proposed to Anthu and her declining it. I added the tag line, why don’t I ask him to propose to you, and cut the phone. Hearing about proposing Anthu got furious and left the place. She understood to whom I was speaking and what I was hinting at, but poor Sasi was not aware of it and it would have cost his life. I ate her share of ice cream also, stayed the night with Sasi and left for the resort next morning.

# 14

News had reached the resort even before me that I had reported the matter about the corruption in the office to the head office and they were waiting for me to give me some task. Tom was at the helm of the conspiracy and he wanted to dethrone me and acquire my position. The modus operandi was to defame me with some allegations that I would leave the place without a fight or stand my ground.

As I was thunderstruck and demotivated another tragic news arrived in the form of a phone call from Hema, Anthu tried to poison the doctor, putting some Mentos in a cock which turned out to be cyanide. Unwittingly he drank it, was in critical condition, after being made to vomit many times to get rid of the poison getting into his system. Both Krishnan and Hema were near him and once the doctor gained consciousness he had to be air lifted to Trivandrum to a better hospital with more facility.

I felt concerned about my friend more than the stinking job there, took a paper and wrote a resignation letter and gave to the manager and told him that I was leaving on the next boat that came for the transfer of guests. He did not say anything, accepted the letter and I told him to inform the head office about it and did my packing.

The staff there, hearing that I was leaving came to bid me farewell, one after the other and I too felt sad in leaving the place all of a sudden. I thanked many of them who

had been affectionate and kind in their dealings and told them that I would never forget them or my stay in the island resort. I downloaded the poems from the computer and kept it in a CD and also emailed them in my own email id.

Tom and gang were keeping away and they could not understand the reason why I was leaving the place, without even explaining my stand as they knew too well that it was they who should have been leaving the place. Except them few the whole crowd on the island came to see me off and I embarked the speed boat that left the small pearly island to which I had fallen in love and where my poetry book was born. It was fading away from my vision, but the short sojourn there was so memorable, my interaction with the guests, the booze and food, the sea and beaches, it was an unpaid holiday for me, a rare treat that I would always cherish in my mind. As no good things would last long, my life in the resort also did not last long.

## 15

I rushed to the hospital, and saw the condition of the doctor was improving, and told them to arrange his transfer to Trivandrum hospital. I reached the head office and reported there and told them that I resigned my job, how impersonal the manager and other officials there were about it, and so I did not want to work anymore in Maldives and going back to my country. They told me to think twice, as the opening which Tom left was vacant

there and I could immediately join the work there. I told them that I had made up my mind about the whole thing and adamant in leaving the job and requested them to arrange my exit papers and okay the ticket which I already had. Neither did I tell them about the real reason of leaving the country.

Both our papers were ready simultaneously and before leaving to the airport the GM in the company called all my colleagues together, who were working with me once, in a meeting to give a send-off for me. He was lavish in praise and approbation about my discovery of the fraud and misappropriation in the resort, my cleverness to probe deeper and collect all concrete evidences that could nail them. But he confessed that they had made some thorough intervention and patched up all the loop holes that I had found and cleared the accounts beyond any challenge. He told them that he was giving me a gift of appreciation for the timely help that I did and gave a cash gift of thousand dollars.

I thanked them all and got away from there, knowing very well that it was Tom who was behind the clearing up job of accounts in the resort and I had a feeling that he would replace me once I am gone. Those thugs would have given me a fortune, instead of the thousand dollars that the GM gifted me. I went to my bank there in Mali and withdrew the maximum possible amount and went to the hospital.



Sasi had gained consciousness, but was very tired. When he saw me, he was so relieved and looked at Krishnan and Hema who had been attending to him the whole night, sleepless. He slowly collected their hands and joined them together, as if blessing their reunion. As he was being pushed to the entrance on a wheel chair, he saw the face of Anthu, peeping at him, smiled at her and waved his hands in her direction, though they were strapped with tubes and needles for giving glucose. She hid herself behind a shelf and Sasi saved her face, without going for giving a complaint against her.

At the departure terminal of the airport, just before embarking into the flight, Sasi was looking for someone, and they came, Hema and Krishnan. He smiled at them, pulled out a small packet from his pocket, the fake diamond rings which he was still believing to be real diamonds and signalled them to put on each other's fingers. With me the only other witness they exchanged the engagement rings and I pushed the wheelchair into the tarmac, Sasi waving at them farewell.

## 16

Life treated me quite badly after coming back from Maldives. I got Sasi good treatment and after getting discharged from the hospital he preferred to go back to his native place and practice there, the nightmare of Anthu still haunting him. I tried to get back my old job in college, but the guy who was posted in my leave vacancy

would not step down and he tried many a trick to incapacitate me from joining for the job. When I was selected for the job he was eligible to get promoted to my post, now when he got my post and was getting the feel of it and enjoying it, he did not want to step down. I waited till the period of my leave was over and went and joined there one fine morning.

But years later I had to stand aside and watch all he did me misfired and came back like a boomerang and tragedy befell on him in the form of some illness of his son, who died by his own hands at a mishap. I get frightened and awestruck thinking about those incidents, how he manipulated my friends and acquaintances to put me under some terrible treatment and medication, that took away my mind power and it is a miracle that I could write this story now.

I went on with my work, travelling between Quilon and Trivandrum, a distance of a hundred and seventy kilometres every day, till my senior in the office had some bright idea to displace me to put his nephew in my position, as he was going to retire and I would be becoming the office head. He tried all tactics, did not succeed and as a last resort increased the pressure in my work and with the help of my colleague, a nun, dumped all the difficult work on me and made it impossible for me to operate and perform.

There was no other go, no way to survive and I contacted the people in Maldives whether I could come over there

on a visit and find some job. My friend in Quilon Joseph Netto wanted to make a study about sea planes and the feasibility of implementing a velodrome in Quilon, arranged my ticket. The mother of Hema, hearing that I was going to Mali, asked me whether I would take some beef curry and borottas, which she liked to eat in her advanced stage of pregnancy. I agreed to take it and the next day went to Trivandrum and embarked the flight.

Landing at Mali, when I went to the customs and emigration for getting the visa for my stay there, they asked me whether I got five hundred dollars, a credit card or a hotel reservation. Hearing that I had none they asked me to wait there, and they would not give me visa or allow me to go to the main land. I contacted many friends, including an MP there, but none of them could help me as Fausia Hasaan, the spy scandal lady came and shot all the places she had been tortured and showed it as a movie in Mali city and they were waiting for a Keralite to come to pay back in the same coin. The lot fell on me.

As providence would have it, the food given by the mother of Hema acted as my dinner along with some mineral water, while I was detained in the airport lounge, and the next day, I requested them to send me back home in the next flight. I was conversing with my fellow passenger and he gave me all the details of the sea plane and even the place where it could be ordered with their email id.

I went back to my office and things had changed for the better, the threat to my chair was over, the guy being

absorbed in the government through the back door. I joined back and could retire as the office superintendent, getting a handsome pension and lots of money from the government by way of gratuity. Though I did not give in to the baits and temptations of bribes and lures, I was given my rightful share by the Almighty. The climax of the story was Krishnan phoning and telling me the next day that Hema gave birth to a healthy boy and they were going to call him Sasi.

All my journeys to Maldives was from Trivandrum, but I landed up in many different places like Chennai, Mumbai, Calcutta, Bangalore and Hyderabad. I always took a train back home to re-join my job and retired on superannuation. After that I made a trip across India, to see the great country, spent a week in Delhi, ten days in Mumbai and a fortnight in Jabalpur. I visited Goa with my wife for the silver jubilee of our wedding and which was much different than it used to be, like the old Bangalore, or even Trivandrum, where my soul lies.

Three important functions that I attended after were the Golden Jubilee of the college I studied, presenting a paper in IIT, Hyderabad and addressing my former classmates in SD College, Alleppey after forty years. I was a feeble, nincompoop, just weighing twenty four kilos of shit at the age of fourteen when I left home to do higher studies. Life took me to different destinations, when I wanted to go to Kuwait, marry a college mate, I landed up in Maldives, when I should have been learning literature,

and I had joined for commerce, which fetched me a livelihood all these years because of the brand name of SD College, Alleppey. When I was offered tons of money by way of bribes and commission I forfeited it and now I get a life-long pension good enough to lead a simple and happy life.

I always loved travelling, on the class social of my graduation I travelled in a truck after meeting Jose Cyriac my dearest friend in Ernakulam and played a tune in the accordion that made the eyes of all my friends swell with tears. I visited the Vaga border, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mumbai. I had travelled to Ercaud to visit the Montfort School there and was the hero of the annual tours in my wife's company, KMML. Once I read a lots of psychology and counselling books and my eldest daughter took up that field and after writing so many books and publishing in Amazon Kindle and from Texas, my second daughter has taken up literature for her higher studies.

Maldives always fascinated me, the mythical place with the exotic sun, sand and sea there, with snorkelling, diving and disco makes me nostalgic and euphoric and I became a writer just because I accidentally landed there.