

## His Wife Made It Out Of Hell, But He Perished

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Standing outside the gate of the neighbouring Air-India building since Friday morning, Madhu shared her story with family members of others trapped in the luxury hotel. She was optimistic about Ashok being alive, even though he had not made any contact with the family.

“We were separated in a stampede,” Madhu told another woman awaiting the return of her brother. “One of the terrorists led us up to the 14th floor from the 11th. He was right behind me. Half of his face was masked, but the other half showed he was very fair. He carried a machine gun. Suddenly he said, ‘Halt’ and moved ahead.

“Taking the opportunity, a Spanish couple and I stepped out of the queue and hid ourselves. He did not see us and led the rest and shut the door behind him. We climbed down from the emergency fire exit stairs.”

A batch of about 25 rescued people stepped out of the gate on Friday evening. Madhu looked perturbed not to find Ashok among them. Close to 7 pm, the security officers let her daughter, Shagun, and a relative into the premises and took them to the upper floor of the hotel. There they found Ashok’s body.

Grieving relatives and friends, themselves weeping, tried to console the family as best as they could. But in Madhu’s mind, it would forever be etched as the most horrific moment of her life.