

## 《跨越种族和文化的父爱》

3月5日，83岁的Koh Leng Kiat先生去世，他的印度继子和他的亲生孩子以传统的道教方式给他举办了葬礼。



Their love story is uniquely Singaporean, and its beauty lies in the sacrifice, kindness and devotion it exemplifies.

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When Mr Koh Leng Kiat died at the age of 83 on March 5, his Indian stepchildren and his biological children conducted his funeral the traditional Taoist way even though they had little knowledge of how to do it.

3?5??83??Koh Leng Kiat????????????????????????????????????????????

Theirs is a family unlike the norm, a family brought about by an incident that happened in 1966.

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That was the year a car accident killed 24-year-old Meena Jaganathan's husband, leaving her with eight children, the youngest of whom was just two months old.

????Meena Jaganathan?24????????8????????

To make ends meet, she joined a construction company as a manual labourer in 1967.

????????1967????????

After just a few months on the job, she had appendicitis. Mr Koh, 32, who was her supervisor, took her to hospital where she was warded.

????????32??Koh????????

Desperate because there was no one to look after her children, she turned to Mr Koh. To her relief, he agreed to help and headed to her kampung home in Joo Chiat.

????????Koh????????

What he saw upset him, five boys and three girls with an uncertain future, living in a small house without a father.

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Shaken by their predicament, he was determined to do something.

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After Madam Meena returned, he started to help out bit by bit, providing financial assistance and buying goods for the family of nine.

Meena????????

To repay his kindness, Madam Meena would often cook and serve him food during his visits to her home.

????????Meena????????

Slowly but surely, love grew despite language and cultural barriers.

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Mr Koh's acts of compassion melted Madam Meena's heart, while her care and concern attracted him.

Koh Leng Kiat????????Meena????????????????????

Appa (father) loved amma's (mother) cooking a lot. He loved dalcha, mutton curry, chicken curry and fish curry. He often joked that he fell for those dishes, said the couple's first child, Mrs Chitra, 46.

"????????????????????????????????????????????????????????????"????????????46????????

Despite his parents refusal to give their blessing, Mr Koh married Madam Meena in 1970, and the couple lived in her Joo Chiat home.

??Koh Leng Kiat????????????????1970??Meena????????????????????

They had four children of their own - two boys and two girls.

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It was only after Mrs Chitra's birth that Mr Koh's family started to accept his wife and stepchildren.

????????????Koh Leng Kiat????????????????????

The stepchildren and the biological children grew up in a tightly knit family that used a variety of languages to communicate.

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Appa was a good man. He neither smoked nor drank alcohol. He always came home directly after work. He always spent time with us, recalled one of their children.

"????????????????????????????????????????????????????????"????????

He said that in the late 1980s, the family moved into a three-room Housing Board flat in Bedok.

????20??80????????????Bedok????????????

Sadly, Madam Meena died in 1994 at the age of 52. Mr Koh was heartbroken and found it difficult to accept that she was gone.

????Meena??1994????52????????????????????

Mr Koh treated all the children the same way, making no distinction between his stepchildren and his biological children.

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When the elderly man was hospitalised, though there was a limit of four visitors at any one time, his family members divided themselves into small groups and took turns to visit him within the same day.

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On seeing all of us, appa would gain new strength, said Mrs Chitra with a smile.

“????????????????????????????????”

Initially, the children fondly called Mr Koh "uncle".

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But in the final stage of his life, his stepchildren started calling him "appa", which moved Mr Koh tremendously.

????????????????????????“??”????????

It was only two months ago when my dad told me to conduct his funeral in a Chinese way. He knew that his time was nearing, said Mr Nalandran. "I was his favourite son. He shared everything with me."

“????????????????????????????????????????????????????????”

After Mr Koh died early this month, his stepchildren and biological children conducted the funeral according to his wishes.

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The children were dressed in traditional funeral clothes, there was a band and everything was done according to Taoist tradition.

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During the three-day wake, the family cooked non-vegetarian dishes and served them to those who attended.

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