

Dear Family and Friends

I stand before you, not to mourn, but to celebrate my dad's life

Dad loved to tell us stories – the stories of his life. One of them starts with his daily 2 mile walk, barefoot, from his father's coconut farm, in the village of Cheloor in Kerala, India to high school in the nearby town of Irinjalakuda.

I can imagine him dreaming of his future as he walked down that road, with rice paddy fields and coconut trees stretching away into the distance on either side.

From those humble roots, grew large dreams - dreams that would become the driving force for the rest of his life.

It would propel him study Engineering at IIT Benares, a three-day train journey from home, to get an advanced degree in aeronautics in the UK, a 21 day ship voyage from Bombay and finally to return to India to design and build India's first jet engine against all odds.

It took vision, courage and bold leadership that led to many more successful projects and his eventual recognition as being the father of engine design in India.

Dad had a big brain, but he had an even bigger heart.

Above all else, he loved his family very deeply. Family, to him, was more than just Mom, his sons and daughter-in-laws and his seven grandchildren. It extended to all our relatives in Bangalore, Kerala and around the world.

He gave so much of himself so willingly to each of us, that all us, a part of this extended family loved him back.

Mom, of course was his pillar of strength. She wrapped him with some much TLC – her tender loving care that he enjoyed a long life of dreams fulfilled.

And his grandchildren loved and admired him too
Here are some excerpts from their memories and letters to him

George's sons, Varun and Vishal wrote
We admire Apppen, for his kindness and patience with each of us grandkids. Grant him eternal peace and happiness.

John's daughter, Divya writes
It is a great regret to mine, that I did not get to know my grandfather better. Seeing email messages from all our relatives reminds me of how special and talented my Apppen was. He once told me that when his father died he was away at school in Benares and he was unable to return home until many months later. We may not have had a lot in

common, except for what really counts: a great sense of adventure and challenge in our educational pursuits

My son, Matthew Thekkethala writes

Whenever I came to India, I'd have long conversations with my grandfather. And each time, I'd learn something new about myself because he asked me the same question every time. One of his favorites was, "*Who do you want to become?*"

When I was 10 or 12, I really did not know the answer. But, by 15, I found the answer.

All I wanted to do was to make a difference in the lives of people like he did.

The last thing he said to me, as I was departing for my flight back to the US was "**Come back, mone.**". Goodbye Appapen. I love you, I miss you, and I **will come back.**

Mark and Ria sent this email

"Appapen was always a role model to us. Every Christmas he always took time to talk to us and ask us about how we were doing in school. He was a brilliant man who overcame a lot of struggles and accomplished a lot in his life. It is difficult to say goodbye because of all the wonderful memories we have had together. We will always have a special place in our hearts for him. Even though he has passed, his spirit will live on forever. We will always love you Appapen.

His extended family did not end with our relatives but extended to his many close friends in Bangalore and colleagues from 30 years of work at Hindustan Aeronautics. To them he was the ultimate gentleman. One of Dad's senior colleagues once asked him at a HAL function, years after they had both retired. "George, why do so many of the engineers at HAL have such admiration for you" He responded simply. "Because I stood up for them".

Dad's journey mirrored that of our entire nation - from humble beginnings and big dreams to major accomplishments.

And so, the journey that began as the dream of a high schooler walking down a road in rural Kerala, will continue. It reflects the journey of India in the 20th century - from Independence to "India Rising". Our generation stands on the shoulders of these giants of the generation before us – They were India's greatest generation.

Without them there would be no "us", without them, there would be no rising India,

Dad, we miss you so much because we all know we're doing a lot better because you lived and let us rise.

"We love you in a place where there's no space or time"

We love you for the rest of time.

For You are Us and We are You