



# A GOOD HUMAN

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**A**S I am grappling with my grey matter, trying to make sense of the seemingly senseless passing of hockey wizard, R Ramakrishnan, I am jolted by the realisation that 'early' death doesn't spare anyone, not even the fittest, or the healthiest.

I met him last at a Deepavali Open House dinner last October, hosted by former national women's hockey captain, K. Maheswari, and for the life of me I would never have imagined that I would be writing this tribute, five months later.

I remember how great he looked, his

disarming boyish looks belied his age, and he was already 72 then. I could see so vividly that he was at peace with himself, with his surroundings, and his friends.

His close buddy, Ow Soon Kooi, may have playfully said that night, that Rama would live to a hundred, and bury all of us. And I had no reason not to believe it. After all, he was a strict vegetarian, a teetotaller, who didn't miss his daily morning walks, and yoga.

I'm not certain if hockey would miss him terribly, as we are schooled on the maxim, that no one is indispensable. But this country, this society would.

For, Rama was that kind of human, who epitomised humility, advocated diligence, who had respect for the next man, had a kind word for everyone, always ready to help, and didn't wish any ill on anyone, not even on his detractors.

While Malaysians were focused on the headline hoppers in the 1975 Hockey World Cup in Kuala Lumpur, my sights were trained on this crafty halfback, who held the team together by not only being the supplier to headline baggers, but also providing yeoman service to the defence.

And while the stars of the team would revel in the glory, generously accorded by their adoring fans, Rama would simply slip relatively unnoticed into the shadows, happy with himself for a job well done. He was just not comfortable with the glare of media lights.

We could get him to share his technical opinions on a match, sometimes he would extol the virtues of the opponents, but you could never get him to talk about the flaws of his team mates. He was truly a captain in every sense of the word.

But what I admired most about Rama, was that he would respect the criticisms of sportswriters, even if our technical knowledge of hockey was nowhere near his astute knowledge and analysis of the game.

Hockey may or may not miss him, but this society would, for we have lost a hockey wizard who knew how to be a good human.