

# Matriarch of a multicultural family

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**BUKIT MERTAJAM:** It's a melting pot of cultures in retired nurse S. Selva Rani's family.

Five years ago, her son T. Ashwin Thiren @ Muhammad Ashwin Thiren married Anis Syahirah Abd Rahman, both 35, and just last week, her daughter, T. Laxmie Niranjana, 32, tied the knot with Lui Wooi Kit, 33, complete with a tea ceremony and a traditional Hindu wedding.

"Now, we have the best excuse to celebrate all the major festivals!" Selva Rani said with a smile.

At home, she added that her two Indian-Malay grandchildren call her "patti", which means granny in Tamil.

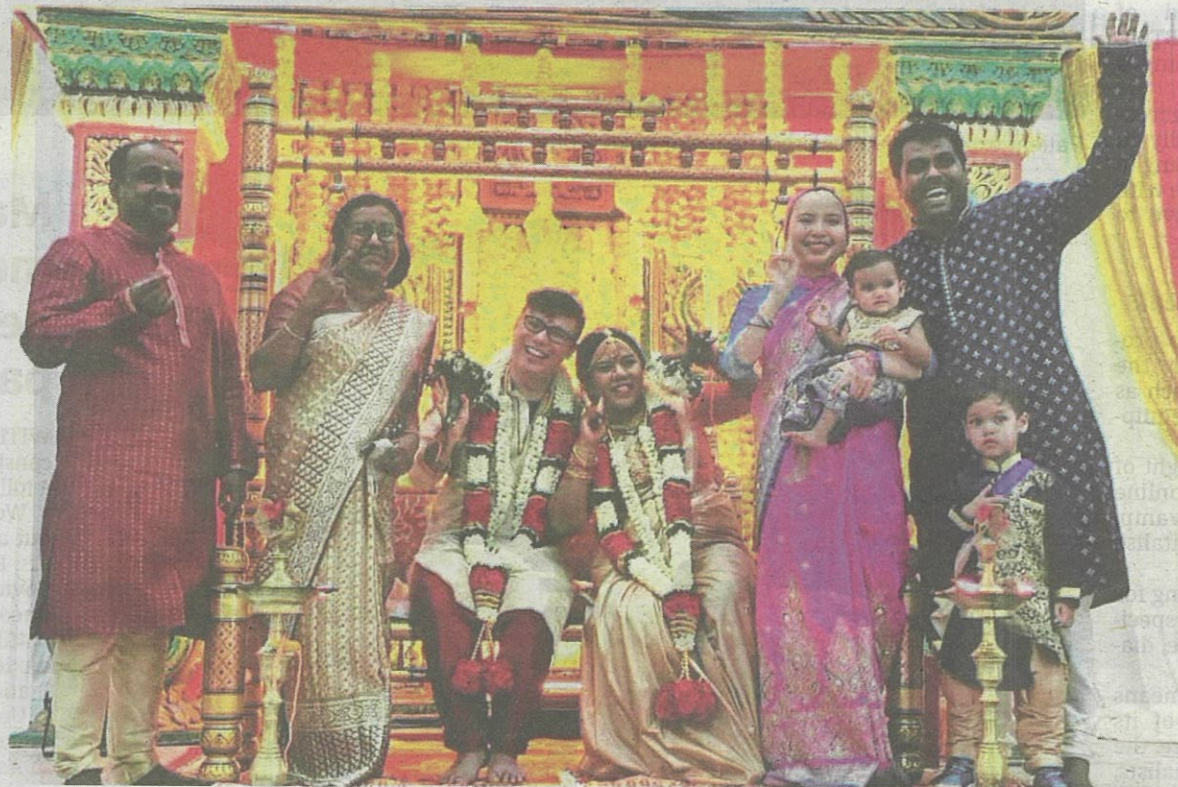
Since her son's marriage, she had been going to Balik Pulau to celebrate Hari Raya with him and the in-laws, besides giving out "duit Raya".

Selva Rani, who lives in Taman Kota Permai, Bukit Mertajam, with her elder son T. Gaejendran, 36, who is still single, said she has no qualms about allowing her children to marry whoever they want as long as they lived happily.

"I love my family and I raised my children to get along with other races as well," she said.

When Muhammad Ashwin Thiren first wanted to get married to Anis Syahirah, Selva Rani was worried as she was not convinced if the interracial marriage would work.

However, the couple, who have a son Zayn Aariz Muhammad Ashwin Thiren, four, and daughter Camelia Amara Muhammad



**Truly Malaysia:** Selva Rani (second left), Gaejendran (left) and Muhammad Ashwin (right) with Anis Syahirah and their children at the wedding of Lui and Laxmie.

Ashwin Thiren, two, learned to tolerate one another and their marriage is a success.

"An interracial family is about understanding each other's culture and religion well enough to be able to function as a family.

"My daughter-in-law and my family share a very good relationship," said the widow, whose late husband S. Thangarajoo, a teacher,

passed away in 2006.

Selva Rani said her son's conversion and marriage never stopped him from being a filial son to his family.

"Nothing much has changed, except for his dietary habits and worshipping ways. He comes over for Deepavali and attends family functions as usual," she said.

As for Liu and Laxmie, who

speaks fluent Mandarin, they were in a five-year relationship before they decided to tie the knot.

"In our Asian culture, marriage is about two families coming together and not only about two individuals.

"Interracial marriages are bound to face hardships in the beginning but in the end, it is real love that prevails," said Selvi Rani.