

Foreword To Jeevan Zutshi's Book "The Last Smile"

When a young human life perishes, no matter what the cause is, the whole glory of human life seems to crumble down precipitously and we die with it for sometime. The grandeur of human life is supported both by the marvel that nature makes of us as well as by the imagination that human mind imparts on it. Every human life is a scintillating possibility, a grand unwritten as yet promise. Amit Zutshi's life and death are the stuff of human drama, philosophy, and religion.

Jeevan Zutshi, the father of Amit, and author of The Last smile, has written the book in a cathartic experience, to lighten his and his family's infinite pain. This is the story of inspiration and perspiration of a family to build a better life for themselves. It is the story of their severe loss and their overcoming of it. Jeevan writes as a highly tormented parent wanting to know if he could have done things differently than they were to save Amit's life. He delineates the book with scientific objectivity to probe the causes of Amit's demise, but without anger on the culture and the institutions which might have contributed to it.

The book should possibly help other parents to avert the tragedy that fell Zutshis. The title of the book, The Last Smile, comes from the last smile Amit had on his face just moments after he dissolved into the eternity. It is that which sustains Jeevan now and he hopes it will last for his lifetime. It is that he wants to spread on to others now through this book and other works he has embarked on.

Jeevan came to United States in 1972 to realize a dream for his family and himself. Most of the human dreams are alike: to pursue one's ambitions, to love and be loved, to live peacefully, to be materially comfortable and be able to help the disadvantaged. America is the hottest crucible of human dreams. It has freedom to live how one wishes to and vast resources to support that. Immigrants

often come loaded with a dream but they have to work harder than the natives and often at lesser wages. They work within glass ceilings and through layers of host countries prejudices. Also, there is a struggle of adjustment to the new culture. Immense effort to melt with America is in the end uplifting but not without excruciating heartbreaks.

Jeevan and his wife went through the full spectrum of immigrant's duel with destiny. Being an ambitious, hardworking, and an intelligent person, Jeevan created a good professional career, economic security, and raised two kids. Coming from the throes of his motherland Kashmir's tragedy, his realizing the American dream was the culmination of an arduous marathon run. The tragedy of Amit's loss is the more devastating because it came not too long after all the sacrifices Zutshi's made to build a happy life for their family. Some times we wonder how God's mind works.

Amit passed away in 1908, at the age of 31. The cause of his death was given by the hospital he was in at that time to be cardiomyopathy, which in simple words is heart failure. It is surmised that his long use of health nutritional supplements robbed his heart muscle of the necessary amounts of sodium. His father twice intervened, when observing Amit's enfeebled physical state, getting him checked by a physician and a psychologist. Both professionals saw no sign of significant health problems, and in general they saw him on the right road. Further inquiries by Jeevan to the medical personnel were thwarted by them on the grounds of Amit's privacy. Frustrated and agonized he, his wife, and the second son waited in silent agony till the curtain unexpectedly fell on their beloved Amit.

Nutritional supplements are an unregulated health support industry. Their claims are unsubstantiated and their products' use is not much known by the medical doctors. Many people have lost their lives using these products. They appeal to people who have little confidence in the organized medical world by virtue of their ignorance or fantasies. Why does the U.S. Government allow them to run unregulated? Jeevan raises this very significant question facing Americans at this time in the book and tries to answer it?

Amit was a very thoughtful and down to earth person. He achieved scholastic goals very well and earned the trust and admiration of his schoolmates, friends, and relatives. He was clear-eyed, stable, highly ambitious, and confident. But he lived in the modern industrial culture which pushes us to loneliness. Caught in the vise of the centrifugal forces of loneliness, one weaves dreams of valor, victory, and perfection. The young people of today look for the perfection of mind and the perfection of body. Narcissistic culture reigns supreme. Physical fitness has become an obsession with many a youth, a modern nirvana worth sacrificing conventional securities of life for. Nutritional supplements are heavily advertised as the elixirs for the perfect body. Amit fell prey to this fantasy even with his balanced disposition. In spite of his father's and brother's reservations about his supplement intakes he firmly stood his ground. His very goal oriented approach to life and ambitious persistence, which brought him success in other endeavors of life, took him to his ultimate ruin. Here was a tragedy of mythic proportions. A gifted man designed for success failed tragically as he was seeking success in a good goal but with wrong means.

But let us not think Amit's life and death were in vain. In his short stay on earth he conducted himself with dignity and tenacity and gave his care, friendship, and love to most of the people he came in contact with. In a brief time he lit a flame that shone high, broad, and bright. One failure in his life, howsoever big it was, can not rob it of his brilliant spirit. He will remain alive in Zutshi clan, he will reverberate in his friends' hearts, he will remain an incandescent idea in the minds of the people who came to know him after his exit. From Amit's ashes Jeevan and his family resurrected a glow and a reverence for life mightier than his death, showing all of us, who know them, that here on earth God can make some things immortal.

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Suffern, New York
7.16.09