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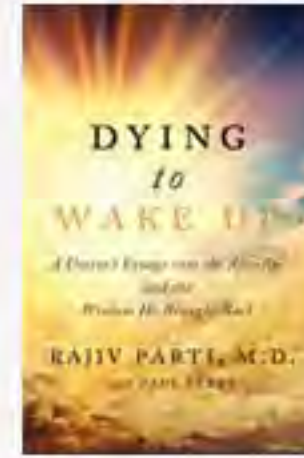
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DR. RAJIV PARTI'S HELLISH OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE CHANGED HIS LIFE

BY GENDY ALIMURUNG

16 3 0



He was a selfish man. Dr. Rajiv Parti confesses, an arrogant, manipulative man. Until three years ago, when a near-death experience "changed my life forever." Speaking to a roomful of people gathered at a small church in Santa Monica for the Afterlife Convention, he hopes that they may learn from his mistakes.

As one must when speaking of life after death, Parti, 56, begins at the beginning. He grew up in a middle-class family in India. In 10th grade, he fell in with bad company and took to smoking, drinking and skipping school. One day, he got caught. "My father was a very strict man," he says. "He used to believe, spare the rod, spoil the child. If the nail is bent, you have to hammer it to straighten it. If the son is bent, you must hammer."

Thus beaten, Parti rose from the bottom of his class to the top. In due time, he finished medical school, came to the U.S. and, while working part-time as a security guard and taxi driver, completed his medical residency. He moved to Bakersfield and married a woman he'd only met once - an arranged marriage. "My mother, as if she is giving me homework, said, 'My son, I want to be a grandmother soon.' 'Mom, I said, 'don't worry, I'm working very hard at it.'"

Nine months and 10 days later, he had a baby boy - later followed by two other children. Now his goal was to achieve the American dream. "My religion became extreme materialism and my God became the almighty dollar," he says. His house was 10,000 square feet on a golf course and a lake. "We had to use iPhones to communicate with the kids. Are they in the house or not?"

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little car cut me off? I would go behind them, with my copper-colored tank, and they would look up and just move away," he says. "I was a bad boy." And yet his heart felt empty.

One summer afternoon, as he and his wife were sipping tea in the backyard and admiring their house, the phone rang. It was his urologist. "Raj, are you sitting down?"

Parti had prostate cancer. The operation to remove the cancerous cells left him with complications - impotence, incontinence and chronic, excruciating pain. He became addicted to painkillers, and depression soon followed. Two years passed yet the complications remained. Because he couldn't control his bodily functions, surgeons implanted an artificial urinary sphincter.

That's when the real trouble began.

Within 48 hours, Parti's entire pelvic area turned red and swollen. He developed a 105-degree fever. Sepsis had set in. An ambulance rushed him from Bakersfield to UCLA Medical Center, where doctors administered antibiotics for the infection and morphine for pain.

The next morning, Christmas Day 2010, the medical staff performed emergency surgery. General anesthesia was administered. But 15 minutes later, when they inserted a catheter to drain his urinary bladder, the pain was so intense that it triggered an out-of-body experience.

Parti saw himself floating above the scene. He observed the surgeons cutting him open. The smell was awful, and to counteract it, he was aware of the nurses applying eucalyptus-scented water to their surgical masks. He heard conversations taking place, even a joke told by the anesthesiologist.

Simultaneously, Parti heard a conversation occurring between his mother and sister in India. They were discussing what to prepare for dinner that night: rice, vegetables, yogurt, legumes. He saw them sitting in front of a small electric heater, his mother in a green sari, his sister in a blue sweater and blue jeans.

"I would like to say my awareness then went to a serene, happy place," Parti says. "But no." Instead, his mind went to a dark place where a great wild fire was raging. Lightning flashed in black clouds, and entities with crooked teeth and horns scurried around. "I was in a hellish realm."

There, Parti realized his sins. "I was not kind to my patients. When I met someone, I always asked myself, 'What can I get from this person?'" He was especially harsh toward those he perceived to be lower in social or professional status. He saw how many people he'd used, how many toes he'd stepped on to get ahead.

He remembered a former patient, a 75-year-old lady with arthritis. "She wanted to talk to me. She wanted a little touch on the shoulder, because her husband was dying of cancer." Instead, he dashed off a prescription and walked out of the room. In the hellish realm, he felt deeply sorry. He wished he had done things differently.

Then his father showed up and shepherded him to a tunnel. Crossing the tunnel, the dark hell was replaced by "the light of a thousand suns that did not hurt the eyes." The light, Parti understood, was pure love, and he was being given a second chance to go back and change his life completely.

Awakening in the recovery room, he wanted to get down on his knees. He verified the joke he'd heard with the anesthesiologist, who reasoned, "You must have been light on anesthesia." He confirmed facts with his family - back in India, his mom was indeed wearing a green sari that Christmas evening, and yes, she and Parti's sister did sit around the heater discussing dinner.

From then on, he says, "Everything changed."

When a plastic surgeon friend came to visit him and complimented him on his house, Parti sold it to him. "He

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nature changed. He became a more caring husband, a better doctor. He gave up his \$60,000-a-month anesthesiology job to help people with addiction, depression and chronic pain. He became "a healer of the soul."

His own depression has been slower to heal. He struggles with it still. Nevertheless, he realized certain truths: that there is life after death. That we all are connected to each other. That there is a supreme, loving entity. That in order to heal, we must forgive.

Forgiving God - that was hard. Forgiving his father was harder. Back in 10th grade, Parti recalls, his father whipped him so hard with a cricket bat that he couldn't go to school for three weeks. That beating was one of many.

Perhaps, someone in the audience suggests, even that violence was a gift his father gave him. Parti nods. "A very difficult gift."

"In the end, he was the one who came to my rescue when I was in the hellish realm," he says. "And guided me toward the tunnel."

Hardest of all for Parti to forgive was himself. So every so often, he tells his story. Every day he tries to live a life of compassion. "I used to put people to sleep," he says. "Now I wake them up."

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