Everyone is just so gloomy, but you see me on the side smiling. My feet seemed to be too small to fit the shoes that I was wearing. Walking with a pace of a step per word, I listened to one person after the other as they paid their respects and shared stories of my papa’s achievements. After each statement I heard, my feet rattled more and more inside of my shoes. The synthetic leather boundaries of my shoes constantly rubbed against my feet’s exteriors and soon the distress became a little overbearing.

Approaching the center of the park, I didn’t know what to expect. Then suddenly, draped across the typical Indian half-dirt, half-grass ridden landscape, a lavish white, silk tarp captured my attention. Hundreds of people, and more arriving every second, sat in alignment facing the same direction with their traditional Indian posture: backs straight, legs crossed, and arms extended so that their wrists could rest on their knees and their open hands could dangle perpendicular to the ground. Musicians on a massive stage were using the rhythmic abilities of tablas, dholaks, accordians, khartaals, and sitars, to sing bhajans and engender a serene atmosphere. The wake was underway.

It is Indian tradition to take of your shoes before walking onto sacred ground, so

I took off my shoes and stepped onto the white, silk tarp draped It is a Hindu tradition to take off your shoes when entering sacred ground

arrived at the park and before stepping on the tarp, I took off my shoes.

Took off my shoes because it was holy

How am I supposed to fill his shoes because that’s what I thought continuing a legacy meant. I had to achieve the same amount my father had.

Then, someone told me on the way out. It was supposedly one of my father’s good friends, but I hadn’t seen him before. However, he had something meaningful to say.

I put on my shoes now in comfort. They didn’t bear as much pain, but instead relaxed my feet.

You don’t have to force yourself to achieve all of those things because they will come in time since you already have those characteristics. Just be yourself and success will come.

My shoes didn’t fit me, but I didn’t have to change myself and I would grow into the person that I was supposed to become and soon the shoes will fit.

You’re probably wondering if I hated my dad or there was some disconnect between us, right? Well the answer to that is a clear, “Heck no!” I was just doing well on another one of his little tests. He was challenging me to see if I retained everything that he taught me.

In panic mode, shaking in my chair, I try to understand the theory of relativity, when suddenly, a banging on my door startles me. Without a chance to respond, I see the door shoot wide open. I don’t see anyone there. Then BAM! In comes a dancing fool, wearing only a pair of tighty-whiteys, highs socks, a vest of chest hair, and a thick coat of shaving cream covering his face (except his prized mustache, of course). It is my papa. He starts to sing, or should I say screech, at the top of his lungs Miley Cyrus’s “Party in the U.S.A.” But then he sees me freaking out about my physics final, so he stops, finally showing some seriousness. He comes towards me and whispers into my ear, “Just get a zero!” I realized this was just another one of his episodes, making fun of me for blowing things out of proportion and unnecessarily becoming unnerved. I couldn’t help, but smile.

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*First and foremost, I am absolutely proud to be the son of Sanjiv Gupta. He was my role model and will continue to be my role model. I don’t think that anyone will be able to replace his presence in my heart. But even more so, no one will be able to take his spot on the Ping-Pong table. We played everyday and oh boy, did the battles get heated! We would shout out ridiculous insults at each other like, “Let’s go old man!” and, “You’re as athletic as Steve Urkel!” According to him, “he let me win,” but come on who would ever believe that…excuses, excuses. I could go on and on about my beloved papa, but I’ll end it on this one last note. I love you.*

I could see during my speech, one-by-one, the tear-ridden faces look up in amusement. There were even some chuckles when I mentioned our insults. The hundreds (yes, hundreds!) of people, sitting on the lavish white, silk tarp draped across the typical Indian half-dirt, half-grass ridden landscape in the outdoor park, where the wake was decided to be held, were no longer sulking. This was just another one of my episodes. They couldn’t help, but smile.

Obviously, my papa’s death wasn’t a joke, and trust me, I was pretty devastated when I received the news, but I couldn’t just mope around and let others do the same. He lived happily and died happily. He went out dancing…literally! At a business party in India, my papa was dancing without a worry in the world, when something happened. No one knows exactly what, but the image of him getting his freak on was the only closure I needed.

Now, I continue his legacy. I am my father’s creation in a sense. He awakened me and showed me that life deserved to be filled with the right amount of fun. He molded me into a little version of himself: a mini-him. I have his genes and now, I wear them too. I have his everlasting sense of humor that really has no “off-switch,” his charisma that can captivate an audience, his zest for life that is so very contagious, and even his short stature, coupled with his inflated nose and his hairy chest (shhh, let’s keep that a secret though!). I do not have to go soul searching to find the missing piece of my papa because there is no missing piece. My whole intertwining is my father. I am he and he is I. I have no duty to continue his legacy because I don’t consider being myself a duty. I honor him by being myself. There is no point in mourning his loss because he is not lost and will always live inside of me.

I believe that this is all just a test he’s giving me to see how I have grown. And I am damn proud to say that I’m passing with flying colors. I guess whether it’s ping-pong or just his tests, I always get an ace. Sometimes, I just wish that he’d given me a heads up.

I never had that one “Eureka” moment when I figured out had first thought that I needed to somehow upMy papa left a legacy, and I realized that I didn’t have to search for what it was because, as a matter of fact, it is I. My father’s personality, charisma, sense of humor, and zest for life have been

I know this is just a test all along to see if I have learned everything my father has taught me. He wants to see

He didn’t live in When I thought about the story behind the incident, I couldn’t hide my smile because he did it his way. On a trip to Indian, he was on a business party In To put it briefly, I am my father’s legacy. The legacy of my father’s humor, his zest for life, and even his short stature,

My papa passed away unexpectedly, while on a trip to India. He was at a business party, dancing without a worry in the world, when he suddenly had a gripped pain in his stomach. He was gone so soon, and for a reason that may never be determined. Obviously, a death of this proportion can haunt an individual if he lets it take over his life, but every time I think about his story, only one thought fills my mind. He died dancing for Pete’s sake!

“If you ever start taking things too seriously, just remember that we are talking monkeys on an organic spaceship flying through the universe.” -Joe Rogan

In light of such a serious situation,