

IN THE LAST WEEK:

- Call up and find if there is any change of the schedule of the plane (inform the people coming to pick you up of any such change).
- Get ready to face the long journey.
- Bid adieu to all concerned.
- Find out the name of the person who is coming to pick you up at the airport. Remind those people of the flight timings, airline no, your name. Inform all these to your people at home.
- Relax the day before journey, and check all the documents you are taking with you once again.
- Arrange for the conveyance if you don't have a car. You can book with any private transport facility like City cabs.

ON THE DAY OF THE FLIGHT AND ON – BOARD:

- Since it is going to be a long flight wear something comfortable (cotton dress + full hand shirt). Wear your shoes - in flight you can remove them (some airlines give in flight shoes - else relax in socks).
- Check all the documents once again and keep them at appropriate places.
- Be at the airport 3-4 hours before the departure.
- Collect \$20 at the airport (part of it in \$1).
- Relax during flight, sleep as much as possible.
- For vegetarians - watch out before you eat - you may get non-veg even if you had asked for veg. Veg food is generally bland - fruits/juices are good choices. (Before ordering anything on board check if, you have to pay for it separately). Don't hesitate to ask questions.
- Once out of India be very careful (from sheer experience of seniors). Don't trust anyone. Don't hire a taxi (unless emergency) till you reach your destination. If required don't hesitate to spend money.

ONCE OFF THE PLANE:

You are now in the USA! Once you are out of the plane go straight to the immigration counter - rush for them to beat the queue. It might take 0.5 - 1 hour here. Keep your I-20, passport, admission & aid letters ready. They might ask a few questions like

- Is this your first time in the US? Student? F-1 Visa? Which Univ.? They will attach an I-64 card to your visa.
- Then go to the baggage counter to fetch your luggage. Pick up a cart (you get this at a machine for \$1) to carry the bags. Then pick up your bags as they come out on the conveyor (suitable eye-catching labels help here) we suggest you tie your baggage

with rope of a bright color that is visible from a distance. All this is to make your baggage appear distinct. If you don't get your baggage, inform the inquiry section - you may have to wait 0.5 - 1 hour here.

- Cart your baggage to the nearby customs. If asked tell them that you are a student, F-1 visa, school, dept., coming to US for the first time if asked to open your baggage do so slowly - do not mess up the place. If asked about the "masala powder (podis)" tell them that they are "dried Indian spices" to make traditional Indian food like curry. Rarely they might ask you to go the agris dept nearby - its a pain. If asked about "vibhuti" tell them that it is a holy Hindu powder.

Note: In most cases, you will not be asked to open your boxes at all & you will be simply waved through.

- **Now go & wait at the nearest exit for the guys who are supposed to pick you up. If nobody turns up after some time (say 0.5 hour) make a collect call (at public phone dial a "0", get the operator & ask for a collect call) else call**
 - Your Prof
 - Department
 - International Students' Office
 - Admissions Office
 - Any Indian guy in the directory

Go and ask for an announcement to be made over the PA system. Get a card, write your name & hold it up.

- Never leave your baggage unattended. Don't go out of the airport until somebody comes & picks you up. If you have doubts about the guy who comes to pick you up, don't hesitate to ask for his ID. (All this is of course being a little extra cautious). Make sure you are pleasing while you identify his identity. Lest you offend the person who has come to help you.
- Once you reach your friend's house (or your intended destination) call home & inform them of your reaching safely. If you get your hand on Internet, do type few words of your experience and email it.

FIRST FEW THINGS THAT YOU NEED TO DO IN AMERICA:

There are certain primary things to be done on reaching US. They are discussed in this section

- Your first task is to meet the foreign students or the advisors in the International students' office (ISO) or Grad Advisor or administrative secretary. Keep a record of your details (passport, visa details etc). When you leave the US (temporarily or permanently), you have to go there again.
- Meet your prof if you have got an RA or a TA.

- Open a bank account immediately. Ask seniors for a good bank.
- Find an apartment and/or roommates.
- Complete all the official procedures at the school like
 - Attending the orientation
 - Getting your student ID
 - Getting your Social Security Number.
 - Paying the Fee
 - Registering for the classes etc..

Generally your seniors or your dept through all these will guide you. So don't worry about that.

A new chapter of your life unfolds here! Work hard to make your dreams come true! I wish you success in all your future endeavors!

ALL THE BEST!!!