

My Impression of America Before Immigration

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An honest account of immigration, challenges, lessons, and building a new life in America.

Introduction

In the Name of God

My name is Arsalan. I am happy to share my experiences of life in America with you through this book. My hope is that my experiences can help you avoid some of the mistakes and difficulties that you may otherwise have to learn through experience.

Every person gains life experience through many ups and downs. Sometimes it takes years to understand which path was right and which direction should have been taken. In this book, I want to share my two and a half years of immigration and life in America, including the challenges, ups and downs I experienced.

My goal is for you to learn from my experiences, make progress, and avoid some of the mistakes I made. That is the sole purpose of this book. I hope you will stay with me until the end.

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Chapter One: Beginning a New Life

1. Why Did I Come to America?

For the first time, three years before the fall of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, I decided that I wanted to come to America because economic and security conditions were becoming harder for people every day. Although some people had good economic circumstances, the security situation in Kabul was not good.

I made my initial efforts, but I was not certain about my decision and eventually regretted it. Three years later, the government of the Republic fell. Everyone saw the future as uncertain, trust in the stability of the government disappeared, and people were desperate to leave Kabul, even at the risk of their lives.

I regretted not starting my immigration case three years earlier. I then seriously followed through with my plans. It took another three years, but eventually I flew to America in search of a better future for myself and my family.

2. My First Days in America

When you first arrive in America, you may experience happiness, surprise, and sadness all at the same time. You feel happy because you have reached your destination and perhaps achieved a long-held dream. You are surprised by the cities, the people, and the new culture. At the same time, being far away from your homeland and relatives can make you deeply sad.

Like many others, I went to stay with a relative in California. Here I want to say that before coming to America, you should carefully research the best state and city for your situation—one with suitable living conditions, employment opportunities, and weather.

If you choose a state that does not suit you, you may have to spend several years there before moving somewhere else, or spend a great deal of money relocating. Therefore, be very careful when choosing your city, state, and community.

Two states are often described as good options for new immigrants: California first and Texas second. If you do not know English, or do not have relatives who can help you with English, the process can take much longer and you may face many difficulties.

3. The Difference Between My Expectations of America and Reality

Naturally, in Kabul many people had a very positive image of life in America. They imagined earning a lot of money, receiving food assistance, finding happiness, and living peacefully. I

had the same expectations.

There is a saying that something can look better from a distance. People who were already in America often talked about the good things, but did not say much about the difficulties. Some people even posted misleading stories that made their lives look better than they really were.

Eventually, I came to America. After about three months, when some government assistance ended or was reduced, I realized that life here was completely different from what I had imagined.

No one had told me about how hard work and everyday life could be. Many people still imagine that food assistance means you can buy anything you want. In reality, assistance can be reduced or stopped after you find work, and the amount is not always the same.

You also have to report changes in your life and income to the government. I learned that life here operates through a system and requires balance.

Chapter Two: Challenges of the First Days

4. The Biggest Shock and Difficulties I Experienced

When you leave your home country, one of the first shocks is gradually asking yourself, “Where have I come?” The environment, people, and almost everything around you are new. Eventually, even your relatives may tell you about realities and difficulties that were not obvious at first.

One experience I personally had was when my father became seriously ill at night and we took him to the hospital. Because my English was weak, we waited about 15 minutes or more for an interpreter to connect with us.

English is extremely important in America. I also had some very unpleasant experiences with people who were rude. Almost everyone who comes here will probably experience something like this at some point.

If you are not proficient in English, you may constantly have to ask your friends for help, and you may feel that you are bothering them. In America, people often have very little free time.

5. Mistakes I Wish I Had Avoided Before Immigration

If I could go back in time, the first thing I would do before immigrating would be to learn English properly. More important than anything else are speaking and listening skills—being able to understand what the other person said and what they wanted.

Not knowing English and basic computer skills can cost you greatly emotionally, financially, and in terms of time. My first mistake was not taking English seriously enough and learning it consistently.

Second, I did not do enough research about the reality of life in America. Most of my expectations came from movies and other people's stories, rather than the real costs and difficulties.

Third, if you do not know how to drive, that can be a major disadvantage. In America, homes, stores, and parks are often not close to one another, and you usually need a car to get around. If you do not know how to drive, learn before you leave your country.

Fourth, I did not learn skills before immigration that could generate income for me.

Fifth, I did not have enough savings for the first few months and the period that followed.

Sixth, I had not asked enough questions of people who had already experienced life here.

Seventh, appreciate your country and your relatives and friends before you immigrate.

6. Things No One Told Me Before I Came

Everyone says, "Learn English." That is true, but not everything is about English. There are realities of life such as loneliness and the extreme demands of work.

American jobs can be physically demanding even if you know English. For example, if a bottle breaks, you may have to clean it up and stand for eight hours. There are fewer jobs where you can simply sit and work on a computer for eight hours, although those jobs are still good opportunities.

A mistake at work can sometimes put you in a difficult situation with your supervisor or manager. Life here is not always simple.

It can be very stressful, and a person who is impatient may have difficulty adjusting. If you are assigned an overnight shift, you may be told that you have to work in the middle of the night and adjust your entire routine to that schedule. This can have a significant impact on your mental well-being and daily life.

It is very helpful to have income-generating skills before coming here—or even to have an income source that can continue after you arrive. Life may then become a little easier.

Finally, if you do not want to remain only an employee of a company, you can eventually start your own business. Financial independence is very important here.

Chapter Three: Building a Future in America

7. Finding My First Job and My Work Experiences

I applied for jobs myself and also asked relatives to apply on my behalf. I had a basic level of English, and fortunately I was hired at a good place. It was not easy, and the job required standing, but it was not extremely difficult.

Many people here find work through employment agencies, depending on their English level or simply because circumstances force them to accept whatever job becomes available. If you do not have savings, you may have no choice but to accept the work you can find.

In some jobs, if you do not work for one to six months, you cannot expect a full week or four days of vacation. You have to be punctual. In some workplaces, even being one minute late can cost you points or affect your attendance.

You may think, “I want three days off for Eid,” but if the employer does not approve the request, you still have to show up for work. At work, you need to be serious and maintain boundaries with coworkers. If you become overly familiar with people, your professionalism may be at risk.

8. Saving Money, Banking, and Credit

In America, saving money can be difficult because of expenses such as rent, monthly phone bills, water and electricity, car payments, and car insurance.

As I mentioned earlier, it is very helpful to have income-generating skills before you come. A skill can serve as a side job alongside your main employment. If you are alone, you may need to work one or two jobs, or several members of your family may need to work, in order to save some money.

If your household income reaches a certain level, health insurance or other assistance may be affected. Despite these challenges, if you learn how money and opportunities work in America, it truly can be a land of opportunity. With time, effort, and the right approach, you can build significant wealth.

Regarding credit, if you do not have enough money or do not understand how your bank account works, do not rush to get a credit card. If you build credit responsibly from the beginning and have enough money to manage it, it can be beneficial. Credit is a measure of your financial reliability. When your credit is strong, people and institutions are more willing to trust you.

9. Housing, Cars, and New Responsibilities

After coming to America, I realized that finding a job is only the beginning. Every month, you have to pay rent, bills, and living expenses on time. If you do not, your credit or financial

standing can be affected.

Buying a car, especially with financing, brings new responsibilities such as fuel, insurance, and repairs. Little by little, I learned that money management, budgeting, and financial literacy are important parts of life in America.

These experiences taught me to become independent, take my responsibilities seriously, and make wiser decisions about the future.

If something in your home needs repair, you may not be able to fix it yourself, depending on the situation. You may need to contact the apartment management or landlord and have a plumber, electrician, or other professional come to repair it. Sometimes this can take a week or even two weeks.

Chapter Four: Life in a New Society

10. American Culture and Differences

American culture is a combination of many different cultures from around the world. In America, independence, punctuality, and responsibility are generally highly valued.

People here usually communicate clearly and directly. Respect for cultural differences and other people's beliefs is an important part of society.

Some states and cities have very friendly and encouraging people. In other places, people may be more reserved, may not like talking to strangers, and may prefer a private life.

The law and respect for other people's rights are very important. Unlike some cultures, people in America often place greater value on personal privacy. Life in America offers many opportunities, but taking advantage of them requires effort.

Understanding the people and society around us helps us communicate and build better relationships in our new environment.

11. Loneliness, Being Away from Home, and Finding Good Friends

When you move to a new country, you may feel lonely at first. Trust takes time, and finding good friends can take even longer. You may deeply miss old friends and the good moments you had in your home country, while the bad memories of your old life may seem less important.

A good friend is someone who respects you, respects your boundaries, and understands you. Over time, some people begin to feel a sense of belonging in their new community and

country.

In America, relationships and networking are very important. They can help you move ahead in life. It is always good to treat people well, especially in the workplace.

12. Common Mistakes Made by New Immigrants

One common mistake is not taking English seriously, delaying learning it, and failing to develop skills that can generate income.

Some people only communicate with people who speak the same language and miss opportunities to meet new people and become part of the wider community.

Another mistake is making important financial decisions without researching them or spending money unnecessarily, without remembering that you may need to work hard for an hour just to earn \$18 or \$20.

Having a plan for education, work, and your financial future is very important. Success and a comfortable life in a new country take time.

One thing I learned from my own experience is that having a transit card can sometimes be very important. Yes, you may have a car, but there are times when you may use a bus or train, so it is a good idea to keep your transit card with you.

Chapter Five: Lessons I Learned

13. Balancing Education, Work, and Life

One of the hardest parts of immigrant life is finding a balance between education, work, and personal life.

At the beginning, many immigrants have to work and study at the same time in order to build a better future. Sometimes we become so involved in work and responsibilities that we forget to make time for rest and family.

Experience has shown me that working more is not enough. We also need time for learning, health, and peace of mind. Planning our days helps us accomplish our daily goals and create balance among the different goals in our lives.

While working toward success, we should not forget the good moments and our relationships with others. Real balance means building a better future without forgetting to live and appreciate the present.

14. What Would I Do Differently If I Started Over?

First, I would take English seriously because language is the key to communication and greater opportunities.

Second, I would connect more with the new community and avoid being alone so much.

Third, I would set clear financial goals for myself.

Fourth, before making any major decision, I would do more research and consult experienced people.

Fifth, I would download the apps that are necessary for life in America from the beginning.

Sixth, I would appreciate my family more. After finding a job, you may not have as much time to spend with your family.

Seventh, I would create a better balance between work, education, and life so that I could build a good future while also enjoying the present.

Immigration taught me that patience, hard work, and having a plan are among the most important things needed to build a better life.

15. My Advice to New Immigrants

First, prepare yourself mentally, little by little, because you are about to experience a new life, new people, and a new country.

Be patient. Do not expect everything to become better immediately. Success here requires effort and time.

Take advantage of opportunities to learn about business, work, and education, and always keep learning.

Try to learn the art of communication and persuasion. Learn how to connect with different kinds of people, and do not limit yourself to one place or one group.

Use your time and money wisely. Save money and research carefully before making financial decisions.

Understand the law and your responsibilities. Organization, trust, and following the rules are very important in America.

16. The Benefits of Life in America

America offers many opportunities for people who are hardworking, goal-oriented, and skilled.

If someone can create value and use opportunities wisely, they can build a good income, financial independence, and a better life.

The large markets in technology, education, and employment create opportunities for people to grow.

Despite the difficulties, good ideas and strong relationships can turn into major opportunities in America.

However, success in America does not come simply from arriving here. It requires learning, planning, and consistent effort.

End of the Book

In this book, I tried to briefly share my experiences of immigration and life in America, from the difficult days and challenges to the lessons I learned along the way.

My goal was to talk about things that perhaps no one told me before I immigrated—from cultural differences, new responsibilities, work, and education to loneliness and the effort required to build a better life.

Immigration is not simply a change of country; it is a major journey of growth, learning, and discovering yourself.

I hope my experiences can give people who are considering immigrating to America, as well as those who have recently arrived, a more realistic perspective and useful information, and perhaps make their journey a little easier.

I am deeply grateful to Almighty God for giving me the opportunity to write this book. I also sincerely thank you, dear reader, for taking the time to read my experiences.

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