



Be Prepared | Get the Edge

Understand Daily Life in the US Before Leaving India

A Book Review by Jennifer Kumar

Looking for a novel approach to cross-cultural guidebooks? Meet Subbu, a typical guy from Chennai who shares his story and cultural ups and downs, that almost any Indian or foreigner to the US can empathize with in the book *Ketchup and Curry: Your Guide to Life and Success in America*.

Dos and Don'ts Through Real Life Scenarios

It's not the extraordinary differences that cause as much problems as the day-to-day ins and outs of living one's life in a foreign culture. That's where this book is refreshingly different. While the author does highlight cultural concepts, the method is not through tedious dos and don'ts checklists, philosophical discourse or cultural theory, but easy-to-relate-to stories.

When moving to a drastically different culture as an adult, many quickly realize that many "simple things" we thought we already knew must be relearned. A few such "simple things" Subbu had to learn or relearn included how to give introductions and make small talk, use manners expected in public, body language, tackling answering machines, safety tips and how to handle strangers, answering party invitations, road rules, preparing to travel on planes, trains and in automobiles, and giving directions when lost. As this barrage cultural tips are weaved within the natural progression of Subbu's journey, any reader can easily empathize with his immense learning curve and be impressed with his quick transition to such a new and different lifestyle!

Success Today and in the Days Ahead

Since the book is organized as a story and not on concepts, the reader will learn how to tackle ordinary situations in day-to-day life in the US. While most of the tips focus on foreign assimilation, other tips are handy for even native-born Americans entering college, such as safety tips and the comprehensive approach

to finances and money management. These kinds of tips not only help the reader to prepare for their immediate life in the US, but how to prepare for long term success in the US if they plan on settling in the US.

Tackling the Identity Crisis

While understanding oneself is a life-long process, partaking this process in the formative college years, and as a foreigner in a foreign country can add extra challenges. Almost anyone who has moved to live with a different group of people in their lifetimes can relate to the culture shock, culture adjustment and culture acceptance that occur. In this process, many question their self-identity and how the 'new culture' can be a part of their identity without 'sacrificing' their true identity. Subbu is no exception, as he also faces this common expat struggle throughout the book. Readers learn how he struggles with some aspects of cultural immersion, feels at times he has split personalities and finally comes to an acceptance of his new cross-cultural self, which hasn't sacrificed anything, but has gained so much.

This power-packed book is quite entertaining to read as any reader regardless of nationality can relate to Subbu in this wonderfully told story. For those who want to learn more about the US before they go or for those Americans who want to learn more about some of the challenges faced by foreigners while adjusting to life in the US can buy this book from Amazon India or Amazon US. Happy reading! ■

Author, Jennifer Kumar is an American living and working in India, a cross-cultural expert bridging the cultural gaps in the workplace for Indians working with Americans. Learn more at www.authenticjourneys.info.



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