Twitter Thread by Gaurav Sabnis ■■■■



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True story. My first visit to a grocery store in the US 15 years ago, I asked an employee where to find "capsicum". He sent me to the juice aisle. I asked another employee. Also juice aisle. Third person I asked came with me and patiently pointed out the Capri Sun shelf. ■■■

> Alas, some spoilsport clarified the misunderstanding. pic.twitter.com/KRgJ0imxun
>
> — My Annoying Opinions (@WhiskyOpinions) January 15, 2021

Reminiscing about my grocery store visits when new to the US. Only kind of shopping I do recreationally. First couple of weeks, I spent hours just hitting different grocery shops and checking out all the foods and randomly buying some that I'd read about or seen on TV.

One of my first instinctive purchases was a turkey drumstick. So huge! Reminded me of those big joints of meat eaten by Jughead or Obelix or Flintstones. I bought it and tandoorified it at home right away in my oven debut. I had never seen an oven before that. Was a bit scared.

I remember the time I came home with a can of spam and my roommate (who was in his 5th year in the US) was like why spam? It sucks! I said yeah, but I have to taste the meat so bad that junk mail is called that. I gamely finished the can. Never bought it again. ■■

I visited 1st in 05 and moved in 06 so it was the cable TV, blogs, torrents age. Not exactly a time when US culture was largely unknown to us. I knew it's okra not ladyfinger, eggplant not brinjal, 1 oz is ~ 30g, 1 lb ~ half kg etc. But some blind spots remained. Some for years.

The first time I ran out of my Crocin stash and went to the convenience store to buy a replacement, I was shocked to learn that the employees there had never heard of paracetamol! What kind of country doesn't have paracetamol, I wondered. Later learned it's acetaminophen here.■

First time we went camping in the US, asked at a store "do you have any torches?" And the guy deadpanned. "Nope. No pitchforks either. But if you need flashlights, they're over there." ■■

Oh one more confusion from early days.
"Which aisle for dry fruits?"
"Aisle 9"

Goes to aisle 9. Finds no almonds, cashews, pistachios. Just literally, dried fruits. Like apricots and stuff. ■

I was petrified the first time I filled a car, because the first few times I drove in the US was with a friend in NJ where it's full service by law. So first time in PA, I thought some random spark from my phone would blow up the whole pump. ■■ https://t.co/FRuuc8ySm4

> Things which really made me nervous, for the first time there, was using an ATM, I used one there, before it was in India. ('96)
>
> Also filling 'gas' in the car, by myself. I paid 10$ but apparently filled only for some cents. The man came rushing out, and helped me.
>
> — K (@rehack20) January 16, 2021

By the way, because NJ is full service by law, a frequent sight at gas stations in surrounding states is college students looking very lost about what the process is. And since most of my students are NJ kids, they readily identify with my story of my self service experience.

Back then, there was internet but no smartphones. And talk time was limited to 400 daytime minutes a month unless on the same carrier. So a lifehack was reciprocal googling arrangement with others on Verizon. I'll call you to google stuff for me when I need and vice versa.

So like "hey, I'm in Kissimmee Florida with this gujju woman I'm dating on such and such street and I need a nice Ethiopian restaurant nearby if possible." And the dude is like "on it".
He calls the next week from Cleveland asking for some bar with rock and roll history. Etc.