In 1959, 18-year-old Tariq Abbas departed from Lahore and arrived in New York City, en route to where he had been placed through the American Field Service foreign exchange program. Texas, he soon realized, wasn’t exactly America he imagined: “I only knew of New York... I had no idea, no concept of what to expect or what I was going.”

In 1973, Mamata Misra left Mumbai for the United States with her husband of six weeks, and came to her own conclusions about the country she had just adopted: “I realized that for real, for months and months I would be meeting not strangers talking strange and it was up to me to make friends out of strangers and create familiarity out of the unfamiliar.”

Two of these snapshots form a part of the “First Days Project,” a new initiative by the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) to collect and share stories from South Asians about their first day in the United States. An ambitious and interactive online exhibition, the First Days Project creates a platform for community members to upload and share the story of their first day in the U.S.

As Abbas and Misra’s stories illustrate, the first days in a new country can be full of both excitement and anxiety, a sense of loss and gain, and a mixture of other emotions. It was with that mind that SAADA’s co-founder Samip Mallick began to imagine the First Days Project. “As the South Asian American community is starting to see its second and third generation in the U.S., it is imperative to begin to document these stories and provide a way for generations to connect with each other’s narratives,” explains. “Through interviewing my parents about their first days I learned something new about their experiences, hopes and dreams when first arriving in this country.”

With the First Days Project, SAADA continues its longstanding effort to showcase stories that reflect the diversity of the South Asian diaspora. According to the 2010 census, there are more than 3.4 million Americans of South Asian heritage, a growth in 81% between 2000 and 2010. In other words, 1 in every 100 Americans traces their heritage to South Asia, which includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives. Yet there is also a portion of South Asian Americans being lost, particularly the ones left out of history books and not featured in the media. Stories like Tariq Abbas and Mamata Misra’s underscore just how diverse and complex the lives of South Asians in the U.S. have been.

The First Days Project reveals the intimate details of arrival that are often lost in the grand sweep of history. “The First Days Project captures… the first few days that are filled with excitement and anxiety, a sense of loss and gain, and a mixture of other emotions. It was with that mind that SAADA’s co-founder Samip Mallick began to imagine the First Days Project,” says the website at www.saadigital archive.org. “As the South Asian American community is starting to see its second and third generation in the U.S., it is imperative to begin to document these stories and provide a way for generations to connect with each other’s narratives.”

The website at www.saadigital archive.org invites you to browse stories, learn more and submit your story at www.saadigital archive.org/firstdays. All materials and stories that SAADA collects are made freely accessible to the public through its website at www.saadigital archive.org.

Contributors to ‘First Days Project’ Invited

You may get deviated from your good work this week, which may lead you to lose your focus. Ganesha advises you to maintain your focus and try to control your wavering mind. You need to maintain your composure, both in your personal and professional life. Work burden on you may increase too much, and you may have to put in extra hours to fulfill all your work obligations. You should not do it complaining, since you don’t like to pass the buck as far as work is concerned. If you are reasonable in your approach, things will be reasonable in your efforts.

You may accomplish a lot, making you feel happy and positive. Ganesha advises you to be patient, and don’t be in a hurry to implement your plans immediately. This is a favourable and a fun-filled week for you. You are all set to make excellent progress on the work front, and you may share a great equation with people around you. This is a favourable period for discussing various issues affecting your life, and you will be happy in your presence. Restrain yourself from taking part in blame games and don’t be in a hurry to implement your plans immediately. Things will be reasonable in your efforts.

This is a favourable period for you. This week will be totally en- grated with work. You need to train up to come with a better solution to your work related woes. Since you have set very high standards of delivering quality work, you tend to expect the same from others too. This may lead to some arguments, as everyone may not measure up to your stringent quality standards. At work, you may organise brainstorming sessions and impose tight dead- lines to complete the work on hand.

You shall be cool and composed at work, handling everything with ease, this week. You will be mature and straightforward in your dealings, and this will impact your work in a positive manner. This positivity shall have a spill-over effect, and your colleagues will feel happier too in your presence. Naturally, the work atmosphere shall be vibrant. This will also help you all to achieve what you have set out to do, and you will be rewarded in your personal and professional life. Work burden on you may increase too much, and you may have to put in extra hours to fulfill all your work obligations.

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Prime Time Tours & Travel

A favourable week for you is in store, as you look set to be all bubbly and cheerful - in everything you do. Brimming with zest and enthusiasm, you will work hard and shall earn a great deal of respect and recognition. If you have been planning to initiate some new plan or project of your own, this is the right period and your success is guaranteed, says Ganesha. You will utilise each and every opportunity to add onto your existing things and equipping yourself with enhanced knowledge.

This is a favourable period to formulate plans for fulfilling all your ambitious goals and targets. However, Ganesha advises you to be patient, and don’t be in a hurry to implement your plans immediately. Consult your near and dear ones, and wait for a better time to initiate new projects. Don’t make any major decision in your life, which may affect your stability. If you are married, avoid the temptation of an extra marital affair. Rather stay loyal to your spouse.