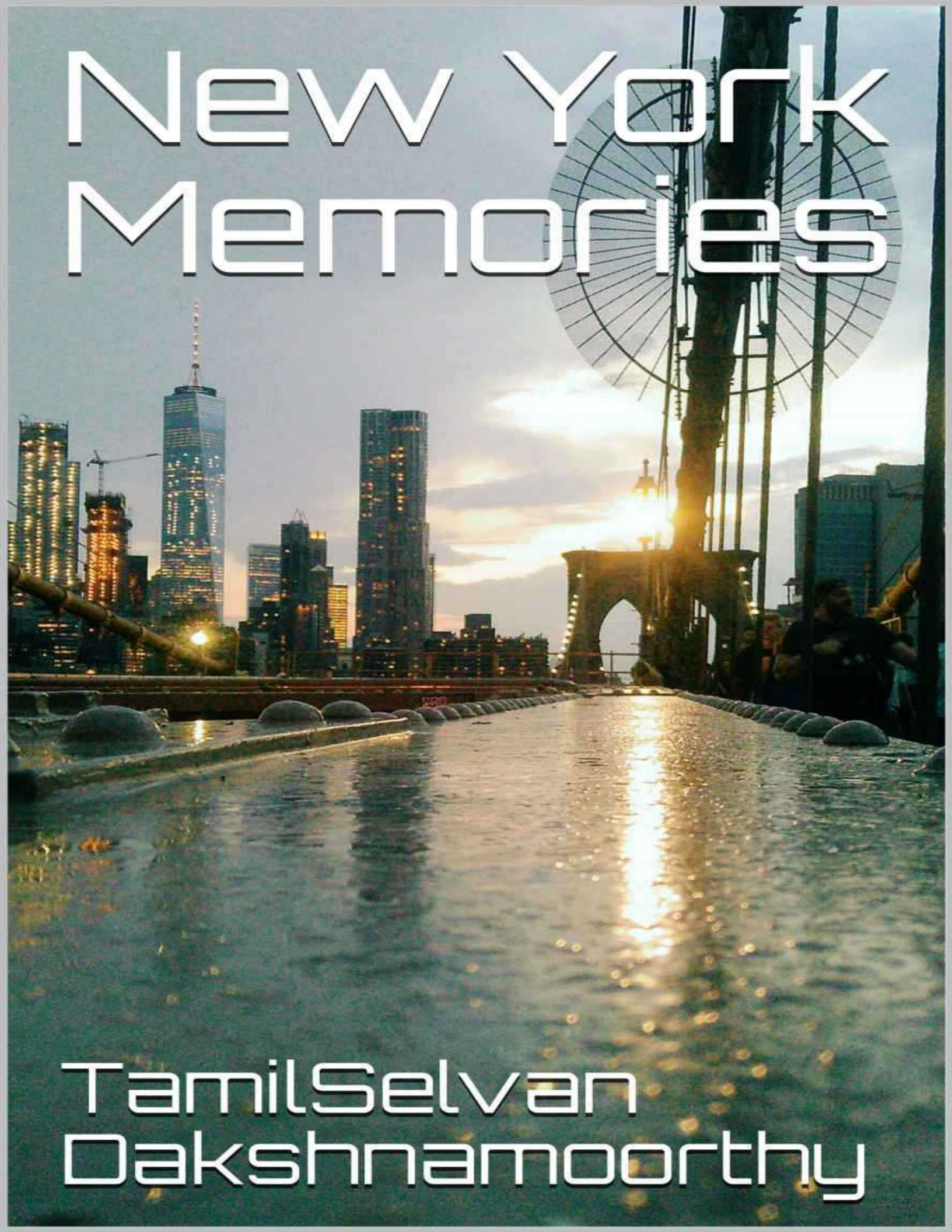


New York Memories



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Tamizh

Tamizh Publication

To my family and friends

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The flight was about to land at Dubai International Airport Terminal 3. I could hear someone snoring beside me, yes; my fellow Indian passenger who boarded the flight with me in Chennai is sleeping like a baby. He started sleeping as soon as he finished the meal that was served best by Emirates Airlines. Meanwhile, an announcement came on the screen in which I was watching an English movie, which I selected after searching for 20mins. The announcement "Hi. I am your pilot talking and we will be landing in Dubai Airport in another 5mins, everyone please, be seated and wear your seatbelts".

The movie started playing again after the announcement and I wanted to see the visuals of the landing switched the monitor to visuals that would be playing with cameras attached to the nose, wings, and tail of the Airplane.

The cameras placed on the outside of the Airplane are not shot in iPhone so, they are not as clear as expected but I would take it considering that this is my First ever Flight travel. Yes, this is my first flight before which I have not even stepped into an Airport. First flight travels that too NEW YORK what more you can ask for.

As I was watching the not so great visuals from the cameras the flight was about to make the landing. Screech and a little wobble of the seats the flight landed. I could hear someone sitting in the front screaming out of fear while landing. I did OK for a first timer showing no fear "at least I was good at pretending". Captain "we have landed in Dubai and we will make it to Terminal 3 once we have got the parking space. Thanks, everyone have a wonderful morning"

We got the parking space after 5mins and the flight moved slowly to the parking area. Cabin crewmembers stood from their seats and started helping passengers unloading from the upper deck. I stood up and picked my backpack. We got the signal from the cabin members to start the departure to enter into Dubai Airport.

One by one just like ants following their lines passengers walked outside of the Boeing flight and entered into Dubai Airport. I came out of flight and walked straight to an attendant who was there to help.

I asked, "I want to board the New York flight and which way should I take to reach Terminal 4" he replied "straight and then take left".

Thanked him and started walking towards the Terminal 4. First visuals of Dubai left me in awe of the airport and with no time click pictures, I strolled fast searching for the signboards, which helped me to Terminal 4 after 5mins.



Entering the waiting area to reach the departure gate took another 5mins, as we had to wait for the officials to complete the security checks. I got my passport and boarding pass verified, they left me to enter the departure area.

On my way to the departure gate, I saw a girl who was standing there "She looked taller, a little duskier in tone, on seeing her I know she is from India but from the Northern parts not a South Indian like me".

"I thought she must be waiting for someone" I asked "how to go to departure area as if I don't know the way" just wanted to start a conversation with her. She said this way and I said thanks and gave a smile to her in return. On reaching the departure area there was another check in the security where they wanted to see the laptops and scan them. After passing the scanning I entered and sat there in an iron chair near a group of people from South Africa.

Man these black people from SA look tall and well built but they must be more than 50yrs the least. This guy whom I sat next to was listening to music and was very involved in it. On seeing him I took out my MP3 player which I carried with me and plugged in the Sennheiser earphones. Flipped through the random songs and played an ever favorite Rahman song.

Listening to the song I saw the numbers in the crowd started growing and the few seats that were left empty was now occupied by diverse people from all over the world. I could see many new faces from different regions of the world all in a single place for the first time in my life.

Suddenly, I could see the same face which I saw 10mins earlier and yes it was the same girl who was standing there is now sitting in front of me and facing me. I looked at her and gave a smile she recognized me and smiled in return. After few minutes she left her seat to use the washroom. Within few seconds after she left someone sat on the same seat making my

prayers go in vain.

She came out and saw her seat occupied her eyes scanned for another seating. Now she is sitting to my right at the end of the hall maybe at a 30 feet distance. Gave few random looks to her and she never saw me.

Suddenly she was having a smile on her face but that smile was not for me. She was looking at someone to her left and was smiling. A tall bald headed Indian it is and my thoughts were sure that he can never be her husband. I said to myself saying he might be her co-passenger or someone who has come to her on a business trip.

Time passed by and the black guy sitting next to me is still shaking his head and was enjoying the music. By now my old MP3 player stopped playing saying a "Bye message" as it ran out of charge. An announcement happened and soon passengers started to form a queue. I took few minutes to understand what is going on and joined the big queue. After 15mins in the queue, they allowed me to enter the Airbus to New York.



Entering into an airbus for the first time gave a special feeling which cannot be explained in words. Airhostess asked me to take right and I was looking for my seat number. Being a south Indian and a first timer in airplane I selected my seats in the middle of the plane exactly to the sides of wings. Thinking even if there is a crash I might be safe just by sitting in the middle. The scene from the movie "Sully" was playing in mind where Tom Hanks lands plane on river Hudson and saved everyone on board. Irony is that river Hudson is in New York. After placing my bags in the upper deck I looked at the seat behind me. Surprise!!!!

Oh yes, I thanked God silently and smiled at her. "Yes, it was the same girl whom I saw in the transit area." She gave a smile in return and I went to sit in my middle seat. I couldn't resist from talking to her but something stopped me from doing that.

Next to me was a teenager who was sitting there before me. He was busy searching for movies in the screen. Seeing him I could guess he must be from India but definitely not from Southern part. I didn't want to disturb him by asking any questions so kept quiet. Skipping through the channels and movies kept me occupied for few minutes. I saw a middle

aged woman keeping her bag in the deck and sat in the seat next to me. She could guess from my looks that I am an Indian and asked from which part of India do you come from. I proudly said that I come from Chennai.

We Indians are normally good at giving advice about anything in any field and at any time as it is the only thing that comes free of cost.

She gave me advice on what to do in this 14hr long flight travel and how long it will feel even after sleeping for hours. I thought I should have not said that it's my first flight trip and that to NY. I heard her silently as there was no other things to do. After 30mins of free advice and talking she said stopped when the air hostess came to serve our morning breakfast (with different time zones I don't know if it is even a breakfast or lunch).

After completing our so called breakfast I felt little sleepy and went into sleep mode for the next 40minutes. Between I checked on the girl who was sitting behind me she was sleeping too. Resting her head on the window and covering herself with the blanket. After 2 rounds of sleeping I wanted to use the restroom now.



After completing the rest room quota I came back to my seat and she was still sleeping. Switched on the movie tab and went through the list of movies that was present. It had the same movies that was there in the Boeing flight from Chennai to Dubai. I continued watching the same movie that I left in the middle of Chennai to Dubai flight.

Time passed by we got our second meal of the flight and this time non veg. Sliced chicken, smashed potatoes and a bread piece filled my stomach for time being.

This time it was my turn to explain things to my so called co - passenger on where am I going what job and to which company am I working for. Blah blah blah... After an hour of talking we finally exchanged our names. To my surprise she also said that it is her son who is sitting next to me (that teenager who is sitting to my left).

I turned to him and gave a smile which I got in return too. I introduced myself to him and asked his name too. He said he is doing his final year in high school. Like all Indian parents I also asked him the same question "What next after high school?" He replied he wants to do major

in finance. I gave some tips as if I am an financial expert and wished good luck.

It's time for my second round of restroom visit and after finishing it I didn't want to go sit straight away. I stood near the exit window and was watching the air hostess refilling things for their next round of service.

Behind at the next exit window I could see 2 ladies standing and talking to each other. One was co-passenger and the next one seemed to be a known face too. Yes, you guys guessed it right it was her the same girl who was sleeping is now awake and talking with my co-passenger.

I had this thought of joining their conversation but again being a shy guy stopped me from doing that.

After an hour talking they both returned to their seats. And I also completed filling the immigration forms which will be given for non immigrants other than US citizens.

Well filling a form is one of the difficult jobs one could do. But I completed the form within 3mins as I was given prior knowledge what should be the answers for the questions in this form. Just check "No" box for all the items in the form was the advice given to me by my Manager. And I just did the same.



I heard a voice from my back seat "pen iruka?" In tamil. But I didn't hear it fully at first I just turned back to look the person who was asking this pen. It was the same girl now asking for pen to fill the immigration form. I just gave a smile and gave her the pen. After giving the pen to her and turning back I realised that she actually talked in tamil (my mother tongue). After few mins she called me again to return back the pen. Now I asked her are u tamil?? She replied yes with a little smile on the side of her lips.

Only thought that was running on my mind was "14hr flight journey ah ippadi waste pannitae da!!"

I said I m Tamizh she replied back "me too". This is usual for me when I say my name in short everyone think that I m telling about my mother tongue but the real fact is I am named after my mother tongue Tamizh and my name is Tamizh Selvan. I gave her a smile and said my

name is Tamizh and she laughed at the situation. After controlling her laugh she said I am "Viya". Viya haven't heard such a name till that second but I am not going to forget this name for the rest of my life. I complimented her for her name and she thanked in return. Asked her the meaning for her name she said it means "gentle breeze".

She should be around 5.7 to 5.8 feet tall which is considered to be an above average height in India. An average height of an Indian girl is 5.4 to 5.5 by this standards she is taller than the rest. I guess she should have got the height from her father. "She could be a sports person with her lean and tall look. A volleyball or a basket ball could be the sport for her". Loose hair with curls at the end flowing till the shoulders were the perfect mixture to go with her black eyes and long pointed nose. She didn't have a bindhi on her forehead which confirmed that she is not married. "A typical Indian way of finding if a girl is married or not. And from her looks she didn't look married to me". Her cheek bones were skinny and it had a perfect v shape to her face. With all these she does look like a gentle breeze!!

With the conversation taking pace I could find few things that she is not staying in New York and heading to Durham from New York. It is another 4hr journey from NY.

I also learned that it is her flight trip too just like me. She is staying in US for 3 weeks whereas I m staying for 2 weeks. And to add the cherry on the cake she asked me what is the plan for the upcoming weekend in New York.

I said I have planned to Niagara falls and she replied that she is going to Niagara the week after with her cousins. Time passed by we noticed that the landing is about to happen and the seat belt icon was blinking on the front screen. Seat belts fastened and the flight landed smoothly. For a change I didn't hear anyone screaming this time while landing.

Passengers were standing in the queue to enter into the NY airport. I took my backpack and helped my Co passenger in getting her bag. Viya took her bag and was standing in queue 2 to 3 persons behind me.

I was giving the casual looks and checking on her that we are not standing further from each other. Stepping out of the plane I could see people picking pace and started walking faster. I came out and was walking slowly than compared to others to synch with Viya. At last I was there walking in parrallel to each other. It was time to check in at the NY

airport and we were guided to the Non immigrants section by the airport sign boards. Before entering into the check in we shook hands with our co passenger and her son and wished him luck.



Now we are just 2 of us "so called first time flyers" entering into the check in area we saw machines which were placed to scan our passports and finger prints. Viya and I tried the machines but initially we were not successful in doing anything. After few minutes of panic we switched to another machine and the same was happening "our passports were not scanned".

By now Viya tried in a different machine and it worked for her. I heard "Tamizh Inga va I found out how to do it". I went to the machine and Viya gave me instructions on what needs to be done which I followed and completed the mini exam successfully.

It's time for another test this time with a human and that too an American. We both were standing in the queue next to each other. I was guided to one immigrant officer and there was the formal questions of how long will you stay in America, what is the purpose of the visit blah blah... For which I answered patiently and was finally allowed to pass through.

Coming out I stood at a distance and was waiting for Viya. She came after 2 minutes and she looked relieved too. It's time for collecting the luggage. We followed the announcement and reached the luggage section which was crowded by now.

When we reached the counter we saw our co passenger standing with her son. She was waiting for the luggage and gave a smile when she saw me.

You guys done with immigration questions she asked for which I replied Yes. Her bags came by now and her son collected it from the rotator. We bid goodbye to her and stood there for our luggage.

Viya said that was her suitcase and I took it from the rotator. I asked tats it? She said there is one more bag and she was looking for it. Meanwhile my single Black American Touristor bag came and I collected it and checked if there were any damages. Viya collected her second bag

by now and we were set to go.

We came out of the departure gate and by now we were set to go in different directions.

"Tamizh unnoda number sollu" Viya asked and I said I don't have an US number. Anyways I ll give my Indian number for which she shook her head.

We exchanged numbers I got both her US and Indian number to be on the safer side. Saved her numbers as Viya US and looked up from the mobile screen to bid bye. I thought of asking for a picture but the shy personality in me took the place and those words didn't come out.

See you Tamizh, bye Viya!!



She didn't look back and walked into the boarding area to catch her next flight which had 3 more hrs to take off. I strolled my luggage and was heading to the exit gate.

Seeing people standing in queue to get taxis "the world famous yellow taxis" which I am have seen only in movies till now is standing in front of me right now. But standing in queue and getting the taxi will take another 30 minutes which I didn't like so, took the short cut boarded a Uber cab with a fixed price of 70\$.

Black Honda Civic with left hand driving and automatic gears. Driver looked like a Chinese guy but he said he is American. Didn't want to ask further questions I put the seat belt on as the car started moving.

It was a dream to see towering buildings of NY and I started to pictures in mobile. The radio in the car started "I am in love with the shape of you" which made hum to the tune.

I asked the driver to increase the volume and he asked do u hear English. Tats it our conversation started and continued till we reached Sheraton Times Square.

We talked about movies, he explained how he was amused to see me without a turban. It took me few minutes to explain him that I m from a different part of India and made him understand how the culture is different from Punjabi's.

The long flight journey has taken its effect on me "I am a having red

due to jet lag" and with a smile on my face I greeted the receptionist.

Showed her my booking Xerox copies that I carried from India and she noted the booking id in the screen in front of her.

Room no 554 sir on 5th floor she said and I enquired of there is a gym that is free to use.

She replied back Yes it is free for all the staying customers and also u can avail 20% discount if I dine in at the hotel restaurant. After thanking her for the details I left to catch the lift with my luggage.

The lift operating system was different from what is in my office. So, I copied what the previous guy was doing and got the elevator for 5th floor.

My room was the last one near the exit stairs and I entered the place where I am going to stay for 16 days. It is a small room with a king size bed, a 50inche TV, mini bar with chocolates, nuts etc., I placed the suitcase on the bed and opened the lock, took out the dresses and hanged them in the wardrobe.

Meanwhile I also checked the washroom which was very clean couple of soap bars, shampoo with conditioners. After unpacking the suitcase I crashed on the bed and switched on the TV.

Skipping through the channels I switched it off and took out chocolate bar from the mini fridge and tasted it. Was laying on the bed for half hour and I don't want to sleep right away to avoid the odd sleeping hours. So I took a bath and freshened up. Locked the door and went for a walk to the Times Square!!

After roaming on the streets of New York I returned to the room by 9:30pm after filling up my tummy with chicken from KFC (even KFC chickens over here in NY tastes different)

Now it's time for me to watsap Viya to her Indian number. Luckily there is no limit on the usage of data in the WiFi service provided by the hotel and I entered the password to connect to the WiFi. Read through my watsap messages that I got over my flight travel.

Checked out my FB page and also few mails over Gmail account.

Hi!! Did you reached as I typed and sent the enter button to check if she has reached her hotel safely. Time passed by and my jet lag started to set in and my eyes closed automatically. I was hoping that she would message me but I didn't get a reply.

I entered my FB status as feeling exhausted at Sherston Square New

York and went to sleep. I heard few popping sounds in my mobile but this wasn't a message that I was waiting for. Soon my first night at New York was coming to an end as I slept.