No growth without change!

A Message from Najibullah Rezayee, Advance Levels’ Instructor & Quality Control Director

It was 2008 when I joined Star Educational Society, a well-known institute operating three branches and a private high school in Kabul, Afghanistan. During my tenure, I have taught different classes, from preparatory classes up to TOEFL classes. The opportunity to teach at Star and the many opportunities I have enjoyed since that time have served as a golden chance for me to restart my life and set new goals.

Star Educational Society has never confined its programs to only English Language. It is a pioneer among other educational centers. For instance, Star organizes cultural and sporting events, they established a library and a computer laboratory and recently began publishing the Interstellar Bulletin, a weekly magazine. To illustrate further, Star is in the process of changing to a language institute where everybody can learn languages like English, Russian, Chinese and Turkish.

Star Educational Society utilizes practical, interesting and fruitful methods for teaching English in a second language in the levels of introductory, Elementary, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate and especially Advance levels. Advance levels serve as preparation courses for Star’s TOEFL class and focus mainly on strengthening your reading and writing skills. Every topic in this class serves the purpose of improving your skills so that students develop powerful reading comprehension and strong academic writing skills.

In addition, Advance A and Advance B are the two advanced diploma courses. At Star Educational Society, the purpose of advanced classes is to prepare students for university and colleges. Students have to consider these two classes as university success courses. Advance A and Advance B are two consecutive courses with continuous weekly quizzes, assessment test, major assignments, diary writing, and movie assignment. In these courses, students learn how to write an academic essay, how to write summaries, how to paraphrase, how to avoid plagiarism and how to utilize the MLA writing style. Furthermore, four different kinds of essays are taught in these two courses like the process essay, the comparative summary essay, argumentative essay and academic essay. Star graduates will be familiar with academic writing as well as the different styles of bibliography, similes, metaphors and analogies.

I can certainly claim that Star Educational Society has been a consistent source of motivation for me and many others. Life in Afghanistan has been very depressing and disappointing. Like many others, there have always been ups and downs in my life. But with the help I mentioned, I refuse to be discouraged. Many of my peers were not going to school to study properly and many people stopped pursuing their education. Countless other Afghans were leaving the country due to security challenges. However, the atmosphere at Star always inspired me to keep working incessantly and diligently. I am currently a junior at Gharjistan University majoring in Computer Science. My growth will continue when I work toward my goal of studying abroad for my master’s degree. There is no growth without change. Come to Star and feel a positive change.

S.E.S.

Join Us for A Difference

The Top Students of “B-A” Semester B Branch

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Quote of the Week

“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant.”

– Robert Louis Stevenson
Reaching goals with hard work and perseverance

When I was a young student in Qarabagh district, Ghazni Province, I used to commute to school almost one and a half hour on foot. My wish was to have a bicycle to ride to school but I was suffering from financial issues. To persuade my parents to buy me a bicycle, I worked hard cultivating our land, collecting almonds and apricot seeds to sell them; and collecting wood and animal dung to burn in our oven for heat and cooking bread. Every year my father designated one sheep or goat for me to feed and water that he would sell in the autumn. Finally after a long period of hard work, I was able to buy a bicycle.

Beginning in Grade 2 until I graduated from Taqheen High School in 2012, I was the first position holder. I applied to be a teacher when I was in tenth grade and it was my fortune that I was admitted to teach when I was in the University with a degree in Political Science in 2011. He studied English at Star from 2006 to 2008 and began teaching for Star in 2009. Currently working at the Ministry of Higher Education, I am writing in a series of stories that he will be contributing to the International Bulletin.

Every day the civil war became more intense. Jihads’ drones around the city blaring heroic songs from loudspeakers mounted on their cars to motivate youth to join the war. The mountains echoed with the sounds of war. We were surrounded by the constant sounds of rockets, bullets and the howling buzz of bombs being launched from jets. Our car filled with the wailing of our neighbors whose dearest family members were lost and the screams of wounded people who cried for help that never came. The city was mostly vacant during the day. At night, people hid in basements or, like my family, in underground bunkers. The damp, crowded, dirt-swallowed room was suffocating.

My father took us near the door of the bunker to inhale some fresh air and look at our vegetable gardens. We could see our apple, damson and peach trees in the yard. The fruit was bitter and raw at that time of year, much like the atmosphere of the civil war. Padar Jan tried to cheer us up and laughed, “Look at the radish. It says, ‘I am ready to be harvested!’” Our perspective toward all phenomena was affected by the war. I was convinced that the trees and the leaves were just as frightened, appalled and worried as me.

At one point, my father decided to send my two older brothers and me to our uncle’s house in Sari Kariz, 6th District of Kabul. Even though my uncle’s house was not safer, my father thought that being with our cousins would give us some psychological relief. My uncle’s house was half an hour by foot from our home in Dehbori, 3rd district. My father, an army officer, sat us down like little soldiers and prepared us for our dangerous journey. We listened intently as he coached us, “When you hear the sound of a rocket, just stop until it hits the ground. If it’s near you, then lie down and cover your head with your hands. Sparks and debris.” He continued, “Never touch the rocket pieces—explosives! There are many unexploded bullets and rockets – never play with them either.”

My father took the three of us to the government to the door of the bunker. He gave us our first instructions, “Just run to the wall and don’t stop.” He opened the door. My father ran with us around the back of the bunker, along the side of our house and to the gate of the two meter wall which surrounded our property. Our hearts raced. We stood close to the wall, looked at Padar Jan and waited for more instructions. We knew we would be alone once we passed through the gate. “You are going to cross the river. You have to run fast.” Then he opened the gate and we ran to the river guarded by my father’s eyes. Padar Jan hid behind the trees in the yard, which was half-collapsed. He yelled for us to move faster and as he watched us a rocket hit the house. He yelled, “Don’t move! Don’t be afraid, I’m right here!” Pieces of the rocket fell into the water. The place where we were lying was wet and we started choking and coughing from the smoke. I lost one of my sandals and started to look for it. My father shouted at me, “It’s not safe! Don’t stand up! Forget about your sandal!” He yelled to my older brothers who were only 8 and 9 years old, “Keep Murtaza safe! Be careful! . . . and pray! . . . and run!”

Finally, after running, crawling and creeping for thirty minutes, we reached my uncle’s house. We were glad to meet our cousins and enjoyed playing with them. After a while, my whole family joined us except for my father. He needed to stay and guard our house from looters. As soon as I knew if any house was vacant, people entered and stole everything inside the house - even the doors and windows.

Afterwards, the Jihadi leaders announced a ceasefire for three days. We walked peacefully and joyfully around the yard, admiring the trees and imagined that even the birds were inspired by the ceasefire message. The birds, especially the sparrows, sang and danced and hugged each other in to be safe and the children were happy to help irrigate the crops in the yard. While we pumped the water for the irrigation, we played and laughed and threw water at each other. My mother, her cousins, sisters and other female relatives talked and cooked different foods for all our families. It felt like a celebration.

It was nearly lunch time when my mother called me and told me to take a glass of water to my bigger uncle. I found him sitting on the balcony facing the Koh-e Star Darwaza and Koh-e Amsai mountains where machine guns normally targeted civilians in the West of Kabul and I gave him the glass of water. When I returned, I wanted to go back outside but my mother told me to bring her some water. As I handed the water to my mom, I heard a harsh and terrible sound. A strong wind ripped through the house and hit everybody in the salon. My mother wrapped around a piece of my Uncle’s shawl as a protection. She listened to the panicked screams of all the women in the room who were calling their sons’ and brothers’ names. My mother also desperately screamed the names of my four brothers, “Reza! Tariq! Ahmad! Zia!”

The air was black and thick with smoke. Inside the house everybody was shouting but no voices could be heard from outside. The mothers seemed to forget themselves while searching for their sons. The tears dropped one-by-one from my mother’s eyes as if her pure heart overflowed with a mother’s love for her sons. As soon as my mother’s tears began to fall, the door opened and my brothers entered the house covered in dust and rattled with fear. My mother jumped up and hugged all my brothers. She touched and kissed them and cried. My oldest brother was slightly injured but the rest were alright. Suddenly my younger uncle ran to the mother, who supported me to be in this position in my life. I hope my experiences will help me to support my younger siblings to set and achieve their goals and find their success in life.

About the Author: Ahmad Murtaza Ahmadi graduated from Kateb University with a degree in Political Science in 2011. He studied English at Star from 2006 to 2008 and began teaching for Star in 2009. Currently working at the Ministry of Higher Education, I am writing in a series of stories that he will be contributing to the International Bulletin.

Dreamseller” in Vol. 1, No. 4, August 22, 2015.

“Don’t be afraid, I’m right here!”

Vol.1, No. 6

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Learning How to Fly

About the Author: Soheila Neiri graduated from Hejaz High School in Iran in 2013. She returned to Afghanistan in June, 2014 and studied English at Star from September, 2014 until May, 2015. She began teaching at Star as soon as she graduated from Advance B level. She plans to major in Economics when she begins her university studies.

I was a blonde nine month old girl when I immigrated to Iran with my family because of the civil war. At that time, my older brothers could not go to school due to my family’s bad financial situation and the absence of an ID card. I was so lucky because every obstacle was passed when I reached the age of seven. So I started going to Iranian governmental school. My family always encouraged me to study my lessons and be a hardworking girl. The most memorable part of my life were the moments when I listened to my brothers talk about the value of education with eyes full of tears. My baby teeth had just fallen out and I was too young to fully understand, but I knew the secrets of their tears. Talking about school made them sad because they never enjoyed that privilege. Those days are linked in my mind because they made me who I am today. Every simple word they said to me created greater responsibility.

In my early school days, I had one extra note book and I carefully wrote all my brothers’ names on its cover – Zaker, Bagher and Yaser. If my teacher told us to write a story, I did it once for myself in my own notebook and then I wrote it again in my brothers’ notebook. Foolishly, I thought that this would help them to become educated too. I showed it to my oldest brother because we were close and he thanked me and asked me to do it again and again. Years later I understood that he did it to make me happy. Everything passed well and I enjoyed my life with vagay. One rainy day when I was in the third grade, my mom came to my school to get my result card. I was so upset to hear those words. I just took my mother’s hand and I did not speak with her the rest of the way home. I entered a room and slept without showing my results card to anyone.

When I woke up, I started wondering why God created me as an Afghan girl – an immigrant who suffers from things which others do not. From that time, I started comparing myself with others and lost all of my self-confidence and happiness. From that time, I no longer kept a notebook with my brothers’ names. I went to school without any hope. I became jealous and considered all my Iranian classmates my enemies because their government did not allow my brothers to go to school. After a year and a half, in the last month of summer, students needed to register to begin the new school year. In that year, the Iranian Minister of Education ordered Afghan students to pay tuition to attend school and many Afghan students were no longer able to attend. Since my family always supported me, they found a way to pay the fees so my younger brother and I could attend school.

Those days were a new start in my life. I was able to go to school with my brother and it was like a dream for me. We were the only two Afghans in the Shahed Sani School. I realized that I am a lucky Afghan girl and I should not compare myself with people who are not in an equal situation with me. Life gave me a new perspective. A new Soheila was born with new beliefs which made me stronger and more successful than before. I rejected all the negative feelings which stopped me from studying hard and being happy. My expectations became higher and achieving my goals were among the only things that made me satisfied with my life. I just paid attention to my studies and did my best to make my family happy. Day by day, I became more mature, responsible, social and responsible.

With every passing minute, my world became more wide-spread and I encountered it with new feelings. My older brothers supported and encouraged me and played a vital role in my life. But one by one they left me to build their own futures by moving abroad. At this time, I realized the value of my elder sister who was always busy helping my family around the house when I was busy playing with my older brothers. I didn’t recognize that she was with me every second of my life and also was my guide. She was not only my sister but also my most trusted friend in the world. We fought, cried, and laughed together. But then she left me alone like my brothers.

My sister moved to Finland to start a new life and my worst days began. I felt myself really alone and I thought that it was all God’s fault. I cried for two weeks. I felt that I couldn’t breathe or live anymore. My father took me to a psychologist and I attended two sessions with her. The only thing she suggested was for me to depend on God and ask him to make me relaxed. At first, it seemed like a stupid idea. But since it was my only option, I started doing it and, surprisingly, it helped me to be the old Soheila. Yup, it was not God’s fault. It was the result of my sister’s decision to get married to a boy who lives abroad. I understood that God did not leave me alone. Good or bad, everything passed. My sister is really happy and satisfied with her life and she is really lucky to have a good family.

My life had many of ups and downs. I experienced a lot of discrimination at school, was not able to participate in special exams in school and was rejected from other opportunities because I was Afghan. I tolerated all those difficulties because I was hopeful and I believed that time is passing and in the future I will reach to the new position like now. I graduated from high school and my major was math. I learned English and after eighteen years, I came back to my own country, Afghanistan, with my family. Actually, first days passed difficultly because Afghanistan does not have the faculty such as Iran. But as soon as I put my foot on Afghan soil and I saw my own country’s flag, I felt free without any limitations. Now I am nineteen years old. I am a successful teacher in Star Educational Society and I plan to start university either in Afghanistan or abroad. All events which happened in my life proved one quote. “When God leads you to the edge of a cliff, trust Him fully, and let go. Only 1 of 2 things will happen: either He will catch you when you fall, or He will teach you how to fly!” The exact thing which he has ever done. Thank God.
In recent years, Afghan youth leave the country for different reasons. They immigrate to foreign countries because of the prevalence of battles, bomb explosions and destruction. They go toward an unclear destiny and immigrate in dangerous situations. On the way, some of them die due to hunger, some get killed by swindlers and some others drown in the seas as a result of a shipwreck. Afghans make up the biggest number of emigrants in the world. 2.7 million Afghans currently live in Iran and Pakistan. They live in critical situations. They are insulted, disdained and harassed because they are immigrants and Afghans. Their children are deprived of education. Immigration has crossed the borders of Iran and Pakistan because living in these two countries is worse than living in Afghanistan. Nowadays, our youth immigrate to Australia, Germany, Greece and many other countries. I heard a sad story about a young man, who immigrated with his wife, mother and two children for a better life. They were shipwrecked in one of the oceans and thus, all of them drowned except this man himself. This story is one of many very tragic stories similar to the tragedies and pathetic stories that befall our people. Death waits in ambush for us everywhere. It is better to die in our own country than become prey. Fleeing is not the solution. We have to stay and defend our country. It is impossible for a country to improve without its people.

The new parliament building of Afghanistan which is being built by the Indian government will be completed and ready for opening within the next six months. The new parliament building building has been funded by the government of India, is being built with the highest international standard and costs 220 million dollars.

Amar Sinha, the Indian ambassador in Kabul, said that work progress is according to schedule, and the next MPs will start their work in this new building. The new building is quite big and located in the vicinity of the Darulaman Palace.

The new Afghan Parliament building has been built in an area of 57 thousand square meters. It consists of four separate floors and is assumed to be five times bigger than the current building of parliament. It is built by Indian financial support and with materials that were produced inside Afghanistan. Previously, the time of opening and utilizing this new parliament building were postponed due to several issues. The construction implementation was stopped and the restarting date was unknown. Indian official authorities in Kabul didn’t mention any specific reason concerning the issue, and only added that the precarious situation delayed the resumption of the project.

Although people’s access to internet usage has increased and its price has decreased in recent years, the internet provided is of low quality compared to its cost. Yesterday, in celebration of social media, Mujib Khawatgar, the head of the Afghan watchdog NGO Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan (NAI), said that according to the information of NAI’s office, the quality of internet is 50% less than any of the European countries. However, its price is hundred times higher.

He said that NAI’s office has tried to provide cheaper internet with a higher speed. He also asked the Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology to provide people with more access to internet services. In addition, people complained about not having internet with high speed. Two days ago, Afghan fiber-optic network was not available for more than 30 hours. As a result, it created many problems for people. Although in recent years the price of internet has decreased 20% per each megabyte, its quality seems unsatisfactory. After decrease in the price of internet, some Kabul residents blamed companies for providing internet with low speed. Khair Mohammad Faizi, head of Communication Services Arrangement, in response to these complaints, stated that fiber-optic price for each megabyte has decreased to 67 dollars by government and added that Ministry of Communication is trying to reduce the price to 30 dollars.

The new chairman of Afghanistan Investment Support Agency Office (AISA), Muhammad Qorban Haqjoo, says that AISA needs a serious reformation. He declared that he will start his work to create more jobs, reduce poverty, and create a sustainable and balanced growth that will bring changes in the lives of the Afghan people. Haqjoo explains that the economic situation is fragile and continued to describe that the appalling poverty, unemployment, human capital flight from the country and the lack of investors’ confidence and public investment are the economic problems of the country.

He expresses that serious reformation and mobility can be the only ways to break this situation and bring improvement in different areas. Haqjoo also stressed that within a year he will change AISAs to a legal entity and will seek membership in international organizations.
Afghan Muay Thai Fighters win four Medals at IFMA Royal World Cup

Afghanistan National Muaythai fighters achieved four gold medals and one silver medal at the Royal World Cup tournament held by the International Federation of Muaythai Amateur (IFMA). The championship was held at the National Stadium of Bangkok, capital city of Thailand from August 13 to 23 with participation of 1500 athletes from more than 100 countries. Ibrahim Haidari beat his Hong Kong rival in the 48 kg category to win the first gold medal for Afghanistan. Abdullah’s triumph over his Indonesian rival in the category of 51 kg earned Afghanistan’s second gold medal. Jawad Ghelijayee won Afghanistan’s third gold medal of the event. Yosuf Jahangir claimed the silver medal by beating his rivals from Switzerland, Turkey, U.S. and Japan. The gold medal winners are already qualified to the world 2017 games sponsored by the International Olympic Council.

In addition, Afghanistan received voting member status to the Afghanistan National Muaythai Federation from their National Olympic committee. Afghanistan is considered one of the strongest muaythai nations in Asia.

Celebratory shootings and gunpowder use outlawed during Eid

The Ministry of Interior Affairs has announced by a declaration to cease the purchase, sale and use of gunpowder and celebratory shootings during the days and nights of Eid. In this declaration, it has been mentioned that according to the Director of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, national military forces have been obligated to prevent people from selling, buying and using gunpowder and celebratory shootings to prevent the suffering and annoyance of our citizens during the blessed and auspicious days Eid. In addition, the practice can sometimes provide misused opportunities for criminals to threaten security. Therefore, the Ministry of Interior Affairs has demanded that our citizens abstain from such actions and cooperate in this course with the national military forces, especially with national police. The Ministry of Interior Affairs said that several operations were conducted in parts of Kabul City in order to prevent people from selling the incendiary substances and gunpowder. As a result, 27 gunpowder sellers have been arrested from the operation.

Anagrams – Answers to last week’s word game

An anagram is a word made by using letters of another word in a different order. Rearrange the letters from each word below to form a new word.

Example:
Stalk - _talks_____
Lamb - __balm_____
Hoses - __shoes____
Shotgun - __gunshot__
Chum - __much_____
Hearty - __earthy___
Kitchen - __thicken__
Salted - __lasted___
Trains - _strain____
Saltier - _realist, retails_
Below - _elbow_____
Cheater - __teacher__
Section - _notices___
Star Futsal Tournaments

There are many pages in the book “Star Educational Society” and every page in this book is the result of the tremendous and everlasting contributions of every single individual who has worked to make this academy a real success and a shining star in the sky of education for Afghans. Star Educational Society is not only an English language institution but also a small community of thinkers and activists who have dedicated themselves to developing the potential of talented Afghan youth.

Star is multi-dimensional and has spread its wings to bring changes in other aspects of our people’s lives. Star Educational Society strives for a sound society and has always encouraged our youth to actively participate in activities which can push us forward. Star believes that taking part in sports can promote good health and steer youth away from the tendency toward narcotics and drug abuse. Sports are a vital ingredient for better physical and mental strength and, therefore, Star has organized several Futsal tournaments in recent years. Star Educational Society will hold its 4th Futsal tournament within a couple of months. In 2013, Star Educational Society held its 1st Futsal tournament which was highly welcomed by schools and other educational centers. Moreover, the auspicious and unique tournament held by Star caused Sport and Olympic Federation Committee officials to attend, encourage and honor our Futsal Tournament.

1st Futsal Tournament: In our first tournament, we registered 40 teams from all over Kabul. Ultimately, in the finals, Real Star Futsal Team defeated Tak Star Futsal Team by 5-4 in penalty, winning the cup.
- Best Player: Qader, member of National Futsal Team of Afghanistan
- Best Goal Scorer: Mustafa Sakhizada, member of Super Star Futsal Team
- Best Goalkeeper: Rohullah, member of Jawanan Maihan Futsal Team

2nd Futsal Tournament: Mujahideen Futsal Team won the tournament after defeating 32 other teams registered in this competitive tournament.
- Best Player: Hussain, member of Afghanistan National Futsal Team and Real Star Futsal Team
- Best Goal Scorer: Sayeed Ali Naser, member of Afghanistan National Futsal Team and Mujahideen Futsal Team
- Best Goalkeeper: Abdul Ali from Mujahideen Futsal Team

3rd Futsal Tournament: Sarrallah Futsal Team won the cup after a close competition with Sedaqat Futsal Team.
- Best Player: Muhsen, member of Afghanistan National Futsal Team and Sedaqat Futsal Team
- Best Goal Scorer: Ali Naweed, member of Sarrallah Futsal Team
- Best Goalkeeper: Sultan, member of Afghanistan National Futsal Team and Sedaqat Futsal Team

By: Rahmatullah Doorandish, Futsal Tournament Organizer

Tongue Twisters

Read the following tongue twisters aloud. Then read them faster. Then three times in a row as fast as you can. Compete with a friend to see who can say them best and fastest.

- She sells seashells by the seashore
- I saw a kitten eating chicken in the kitchen
- I thought I thought of thinking of thanking you
- A big black bug snoozed on a big black rug
- He threw three free throws
- Thin sticks, thick bricks
- Fred fed Ted bread and Ted fed Fred bread
- If two witches were watching two watches: which witch would watch which watch?
About the Author:

Hadi Zaher was the first graduate of Star Educational Society in the year 1999. He is the nephew of the founder of Star in Quetta, Mr. Nabi Atiq. Hadi was both first position holder and also one of the first Star graduates who, together with Mr. Hussain Yousof, was selected as a language teacher. Hadi Zaher has an MA from the University of Wollongong in Australia and is currently a post-graduate student at the University of New South Wales. He is the president of Zahiristan, a virtual world of professional photography that he describes in these words: “A land of good people, a free people. A land where flowers bloom in streets, rubab music plays in the samovar tea houses, and kites fly in the skies.”

A t noon we reached Lashtkira, a small dusty town controlled by the Hezbollahi group. We were afraid. We were also carsick; so carsick that we almost forgot we were afraid. We had tea. I got better, and afraid again. We journeyed on. We spent the night in Moor waiting for a caravan of large trucks to travel along to escape the bandits, the Kuchis and the Mujahideen.

The following evening, we stopped by an isolated mud-house hotel by the road. The late Qambar Ali asked if we wanted to eat. We didn’t want to eat, and for that sin the hotel owner didn’t let us in. We had to spend the night sleeping over one another inside the cramped car. Qambar Ali and Qadeer stood outside and guarded the car all night. At day break, we hit the open plains and the car jumped up and down and swayed from side to side as it crept towards the unknown.

That evening, just as the darkness fell upon us; the sound of bullens cracked from all directions, our vehicle was being shot at. We screamed and hugged another one. We were told to keep our heads low. The car sped up. It raced through the open plains as fast as it could. The crackling died down and we survived. Qambar Ali pointed at a faraway light: “Those are Kuchis. They wanted us to stop. They would have shot us either way”. We journeyed on.

At noon the next day, along a narrow pass, the car was stopped by an armed Pashtun man who stood straight in the middle of the road, guns blazing. He demanded that we let him travel in the car or he would kill us all. The man from Sahn Chob jumped out of the vehicle, raised his rifle and challenged him. They yelled at each other a few times before the Pashtun man let us go. As the car left, the guns laughed at one another. We were covered head to toe in white soft dust and looked like ghosts. We had evaded death, we were homeless but we were happy that we had survived.

“If writing novels is like planting a forest, then writing short stories is more like planting a garden.”

– Haruki Murakami

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<th>Stories</th>
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<td>My Grandmother Told Me</td>
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| There is a special joy in simplicity. You don’t need many reasons to be happy, just a few good ones. We lived simple lives, and simple things made us happy. At weddings men walked great distances to find a Ghaazal Guy who could sing songs for the occasion. On sunny winter days, grown men spent their time playing shigabai and goulai on the roofs and big rocks slabs. The young pelted passersby with snowballs. We ate carrots, turnips, while lamb jerky was a delicacy reserved for special occasions. The old were good storytellers; the young were keen listeners. Old white-bearded men gathered in small circles to sing ghaazal. At night, we all got together, drank tea, told stories; the women spun their yarn, and told of tales from places beyond the mountains. The birth of a son was a special occasion. Everyone had to sing – the young, the old, the able, and the talentless. Men covered themselves with chador and did aakhoo and charkhag. At one shashwai, Ghulam I dressed as a peerag. He knocked, and when I opened the door, he pushed his way through the door. I screamed, ran terrified and jumped into my father’s lap. They all laughed. These days, people don’t talk straight. They talk in riddles. Life is not simple anymore.

*Ghaazal = Traditional Hazaragi songs that combine Persian poetry with a variant of throat singing
*Ghaazal guy = Ghaazal singer
*Shigabai, Goulai = Traditional Hazaragi games played with animal bones
*Aakhoo, Charkhag = Traditional Hazaragi dances
*Shashwai = Tradition wherein the family stays awake the whole night singing, playing games, and eating sweets to celebrate the birth of a son
*Peerag = Old man; Young men disguise as old men as part of a Shawshini fun/game usually to scare the kids

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<th>Dream Within A Dream</th>
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<tr>
<td>By: Edgar Allan Poe</td>
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<td>Take this kiss upon the brow! And, in parting from you now, Thus much let me aver-- You are not wrong, who deem That my days have been a dream; Yet if hope has flown away In a night, or in a day, Is it therefore the less gone? All that we see or seem Is but a dream within a dream. I stand amid the roar Of a surf-tormented shore, And I hold within my hand Grains of the golden sand-- How feel! yet how they creep Through my fingers to the deep, While I weep--while I weep! O God! can I not grasp Them with a tighter clasp? O God! can I not save One from the pitiless wave? Is all that we see or seem But a dream within a dream?</td>
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Edgar Allan Poe 1809-1849

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<th>Who was Edgar Allan Poe?</th>
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<td>Edgar Allan Poe was born in 1809 to two impoverished parents, orphaned at the age of two, and then adopted by a man named John Allan whom he never grew to love. Poe was one of the earliest American practitioners of the short story, and is generally considered the inventor of the detective fiction genre. He is further credited with contributing to the emerging genre of science fiction. He was the first well-known American writer to try to earn a living through writing alone, resulting in a financially difficult life and career. He was broke all his life, often begging for money that he soon spent on alcohol. For all of his problems, in the course of his relatively short life, Poe revitalized American literature, producing perfectly crafted stories and poems while creating whole new genres. The guy who spent his life on the outside is now, a century and a half after his death, considered a member of the inner circle of American literature. It’s an ironic twist that Poe himself might have approved. He died penniless at the age of 40 after being found disheveled and unconscious in a Baltimore gutter. The mystery surrounding Poe’s death has led to many myths and urban legends. The reality is that no one knows for sure what happened during the last few days of his life.</td>
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Tell me about yourself, dear Zinat. I am Zinat, a student of Advance A. First, I was in C branch. Then, my teacher instructed me to study advanced levels in B branch. I study in Marefat High School. I am a very talkative girl and I am very interested in English language. When I was seven years old, I started learning English and now I am nine years old.

How long have you been studying at Star? It is about three years I have been studying at Star. My father says that I have to learn English because English is the communication language throughout the world. Therefore, I decided to learn English and I preferred Star Educational Society.

Can you please tell me something about your family? I love my family! My mother is jobless. My father is in Australia and is working hard for us. My brother is studying at Marefat High School and at Star. He is in intermediate classes and my sister is in grade five. She also studies at Marefat High School.

Who loves you the most in your family? My father loves me the most in my family because he was not with me a lot and I am very talkative.

Who is the most important person in your life? My mother is very kind. She is the most important person in my life because she works hard for us at home and she lets us study outside.

From whom did you learn more at Star? I learnt the most from Mr. Khalilullah Bahada and Zakaria Bahadara and they are my favorite teachers.

Which of these skills are you good at? (Reading, writing, speaking or listening) I am good at speaking. I am not very good at reading because when I read something, there are some new words that I don’t know. Likewise, I am not very good at writing because when I write my homework a lot, I get a headache.

Do you have diary? Yes, I have diary but now it’s not with me. I have written about myself since I was six years old.

What is your favorite program at Star? My favorite program is "Reading" at Star. When there are some reading parts or some articles, I am very interested to read them to improve my vocabulary and I try to pronounce the new words correctly.

Why do you think English language is important? Because English is an international language and when I go to foreign countries, I want to understand what people say.

Can you tell me one of your best memories at Star? One of my best memories at Star was when I was in level three, we all had a party and all the teachers liked our party.

What is one thing you value the most in your life? My mother and father are the most important people in my life because they are very hard working and strive for us to reach high levels of our studies and grow up in a good and positive way.