Interstellar (adjective): situated or occurring between the stars; conducted, or existing between two or more stars

Saturday, March 05, 2016 Vol. 1, No. 29

2-3. Personal Essays
4-5. News
6. Star Related
7. Literary
8. Interview

See Inside Quote of the Week
“A broken friendship that is mended through forgiveness can be even stronger than it once was.”
– Ritu Ghatourey

Introduction Quote of the Week

Advance English Package at Star

A message from Ali Reza Yasa, Chairman and Founder

Star Educational Society is introducing a tremendous opportunity to enhance your Academic English capability with a focus on advanced writing skills. The Advanced English Package at Star introduces several interesting and yet indispensable writing and reading practices which will enable you to master your essay writing and reading techniques.

In Advance A and B, you will be taught the basics of essay writing, summarizing and paraphrasing and some of the most important tips for essays such as How to Write an Academic Essay, Process Essay, Comparative Summary Essay, Argumentative Essays or Argument Writing, Features of Academic Writing, Referencing and MLA referencing rules, Citations, Analogy and Simile, Metaphors & avoiding Plagiarism.

In the Teacher Training Course, you can hone your presentation and teaching skills necessary in teaching English as a foreign language in our classes on language awareness, teaching vocabulary, planning lessons (5ps), productive skills – writing and speaking, classroom management, the roles of teachers and learner: approaches and methods, Receptive skills – listening and reading, teaching grammar, vocabulary meaning and its relationship with context and finally pronunciation.

In our Creative Writing Class, students will cover an extensive range of topics including: the scope and diversity of Creative Writing, dialogue, Point of View, NonFiction, Writing Poetry, Writing Dramas, Scripts and Screenplays, The importance of Editing, Overcoming Writer’s Block, Unlocking Your Creativity, Resources for Writers, and Publishing Your Writing. In addition to these topics, you will also learn how to write reflection and response papers, movie reviews and book reviews.

Our Research Methods class is designed to prepare you for higher education in English-speaking countries and at a growing number of institutions around the world that use the English language as a medium of instruction. Writing academic research papers are among many of the major assignments that one needs to undertake in universities around the globe. This introductory course will allow students to advance their understanding of research by learning about research language, ethics, and approaches. The course introduces the research process elements within quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches. Students will become familiar with theoretical groundwork so they can critically review literature related to their field of study and identify the findings of their research to inform their understanding of their topic.

As our hard-working and highly motivated students at Star grow, so must we. We have heard your plea, come grow with us. Join us for a difference.

Osama bin Laden Feared Wife’s Tooth Held a Tracking Device

American drones were devastating the upper ranks of Al Qaeda, his men were killing suspected.

Beneath the cloak of Kabul’s smog

After ten years of working and living with young Afghans, I was unknowingly blind to the reality of...

Gabriel García Márquez (1927-2014)

Over the weekend the vultures got into the presidential palace by pecking through the screens on the balcony windows and the flapping of their wings stirred up...

First teaching experience: The mistake that I liked!

The weather was sunny. I was in front of the mirror talking to myself. My heart was bouncing. Perhaps I was...

Page 3

Page 4

Page 6

Page 7
Unpolished Diamonds

About the author: Frozan Shalnroori is a Star alumna and will major in Computer Science when she starts her university studies in the near future.

I held my father’s photo and said, “How do I look? Your daughter is realizing her dreams. Are you happy? Can you hear me?” I kissed the image of my deceased father, leaving the light mark of my pink lipstick on the glass. I left his room with eyes full of pearl-like tears. I quickly cleaned my warm tears with my colorful scarf so that nobody would see my weakness.

“Mom, mom, did I use too much makeup? Should I clean it.”

“No, no, it’s ok,” she replied and kissed my forehead. I left my beloved home, but I was so stressed. My legs were trembling, my heart was beating so fast. Although I was walking, I could not feel my weight. I was fully prepared and ready for my own big day, but I continued to rub my lower lip. By the time I reached the school, I had erased all of my charming lipstick.

When I entered the center, I took a deep breath and went directly to the office. After greeting the manager, I sat in a corner. Everyone was happy. I was happy too, but my mind was anticipating the only negative points. I was imagining what would happen if the students did not like me. What would I do if the behavior of some irreverent boys discouraged me?

When I entered the classroom, I saw a completely different environment. All the students stood up and greeted me with, “How do you do!” Although I accidentally kicked the wastebasket, I was not discouraged. The shining and hopeful faces of the students inspired me to stand up tall and talk in front of them. They made me believe that Afghanistan can have a better future. Their eyes were showing their eagerness to learn English. I had no wings to fly, but in my mind and heart I was flying and dancing in the clear sky.

The students reminded me of unpolished diamonds. They felt stress too, but they were hiding their stress behind fake, but beautiful smiles. That day I realized the importance of teaching both for teachers and students, and decided to polish these diamonds and help them to realize the diamonds held within their hearts, like I was realizing mine.

First day of class

I felt scared, but excited when I was getting ready to leave for the center. I put my books in my bag, brushed my hair and looked at the image of my pale face in the mirror. I looked as nervous as I felt. I checked my bag to make sure I did not forget anything and I left the house.

“If I can’t teach well what should I do? What if the students complain about me?” I thought to myself on the way. “Try not to lose yourself. Be confident. You have the experience of teaching. It is not so much difficult. You can do it, just believe in yourself,” I said silently to myself. My mind was busy with these words until I found myself in front of the center.

At 12:50, I entered the office of the center. I greeted the three other teachers and the manager and waited for 10 minutes. The manager gave me my teacher’s badge, whiteboard marker and eraser and showed me to my Prep One class. My heart started bouncing.

I entered the class and could hear the beating of my heart. “Hello and good afternoon,” I said. The students stood up. I thanked them for sitting down. I introduced myself and asked them to introduce themselves. I thought they knew greetings like “hello” and “how are you?” but they told me they didn’t know anything. I began to worry. I wrote the alphabets on the board and read it several times. Then, I asked the students to read it. Afterward, I taught some simple English greetings and we practiced them. The minute hand on the clock was moving so slowly. Every time I looked at my watch, it seemed that it didn’t move. In the last fifteen minutes, I decided to have the students repeat the alphabet like a race. Each student

Twinkling as a little star at Star

About the author: Parisa Ahmadi is a Star alumna and new teacher. She plans to be an engineer in the future.

Teaching was like a dream for me, even at Star with these friends and these colleagues, I could not imagine that one day I would work as an English instructor. I am not very talkative so I thought I could not teach even for one day. After some training and passing an exam, I received my teacher’s badge and anticipated my first day of my teaching.

I worried about my quiet and introverted nature and wondered if I could connect with the students. I made myself busy in the office with my backpack and my chapters. I did not know what to do and what to say. My mind did not work well. It was going to be the first time in my life that I needed to talk for a whole hour. I was assigned a Prep One class at C Branch and was surprised to see so many students squeezed into the small classroom when I arrived at exactly 2:00. There was only one girl among the crowded class of many boys. The girl was sitting in the front row in a corner, totally alienated from the crowd of noisy boys. I asked her about herself and while she spoke I was wondering what to do.

When she was finished talking, three sisters entered the class and I became relaxed. Again I asked them some questions about themselves while other students were arriving. I had twenty-eight students in my first class and discovered that being a teacher is more interesting than being a student. Speaking with others is more attractive than being quiet. Everyone tells me Paris or Parisa, but it was the first time that I was called “Teacher.”

I was walking in the sky and was so happy to receive respect from my students that girls rarely receive at home. My confidence was building. I imagined my mother and she could see me wash the dishes the night before despite the fact that I told her I had my class. I wanted her to admire me like the happy boys and girls who looked at me with upturned mouths for the entire hour that I taught them. These are the teaching memories that make my whole day and life meaningful.
First teaching experience: The mistake that I liked!

"...becoming a teacher at an institution where I studied myself was my biggest dream since five years ago. Since the time I had not even started my English language classes there, I was impressed by the fame and glory of the institute in which some of the most important people were educated."

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The weather was sunny. I was in front of the mirror talking to myself. My heart was bouncing. Perhaps I was worried about the class and students. Perhaps I was happy and very excited. I was both worried and excited. It was my first day of teaching. How would I perform? How would I tolerate the judgements of all those who would say, “The girl is changed so quickly!”

Did I have my teacher’s badge? How would I enter the class? What if no one recognizes me and think I am just another student? The badge is written “Teacher” in English letters and all of students are absolute beginners. They don’t even know the alphabets. How would that turn out to be? Would they stand when I enter the class?

My mother and sisters wished me good luck and I quickly found myself at the stop, and now I was thinking whether I should get a taxi or go by local buses? I should be there on time, I needed me to be relaxed and comfortable...I took my markers and displayed my teacher’s badge at the staff room, didn’t talk to anyone and sprang for my class.

I entered the Chairman’s office, he stood up and shook my hand! He warmly greeted both to myself and the students. It was the first class and I sounded acceptable long term and short term activities. I tried to abstain from overpromising and under-promising. I entered the class giving my schedule of the next day and explaining our priorities, goals, quick see my phone timer...I wished it was done as soon as possible. When one of the students said, “TEACHER can I go out?” I relaxed and told him, “It is wrong to call a teacher, teacher! You should call them, Sir or Madam!” I liked that mistake though, since it was the first time someone had ever called me “teacher!” I liked that feeling. I felt like, “Saj – here you go! Your dream came true! You are now in a class where your teachers used to stand and talk out loud with pride. Well done girl, you are a teacher now!” – I finished the class giving my schedule of the next day and explaining our priorities, goals, long term and short term activities. I tried to abstain from overpromising and under-promising. It was the first class and the first day of the first class and I sounded acceptable both to myself and the students.

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Osama bin Laden Feared Wife’s Tooth Held a Tracking Device

By MATTHEW ROSENBERG
Source: The New York Times

WASHINGTON — American drones were devastating the upper ranks of Al Qaeda, even when killing suspected spies, and Osama bin Laden wondered: Could an Iranian dentist have planted a tracking device in his wife’s mouth?

“The size of the chip is about the length of a grain of wheat and the width of a fine piece of wood,” he wrote, using the name of the guerou Abu Abdullah.

A few paragraphs later, Bin Laden signed off and then added, “Please destroy this letter after reading it.”

The letter was among thousands of pages of documents and other materials seized by Navy SEALs during the raid on Bin Laden’s compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in May 2011, and it was disclosed on Tuesday, along with 112 other pieces of writings and letters found in the Qaeda leader’s hide-out.

U.S. officials have said that the intelligence seized by the SEALs during the raid included letters, spreadsheets, books and personal items. They said it was only a fraction of the materials that have been made public — Tuesday’s release was the second set of documents obtained from the raid to be declassified — and experts have cautioned against drawing broad conclusions from them.

The bulk of the materials released Tuesday come from the last decade of Bin Laden’s life, and include letters to lieutenants and loved ones, drafts of speeches he was preparing to release and step-by-step guides on how to build a bomb. Though there do not appear to be any major revelations, the materials provide a glimpse of Bin Laden’s thinking and his struggle to keep Al Qaeda’s main branch and its offshoots in line as American drones killed the group’s senior leaders and demoralized its foot soldiers.

An undated will that Bin Laden is believed to have written by hand in the late 1990s was included in the documents released on Tuesday.

In it, Bin Laden reviewed his finances, saying he had received $12 million from one of his brothers and that he had $29 million in Sudan, where he lived from 1991 to 1996. If he was killed, he wrote, he hoped his family would “spend all the money that I have left in Sudan on jihad.”

A senior intelligence official who the Central Intelligence Agency insisted spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the agency did not know how much of the money, or if any of it remained at the time of Bin Laden’s death. But the will, the official said, was probably important to Bin Laden, because he carried it with him for years.

The fixation on the possibility of his own premature death, and the fear of the American efforts to track him and kill him, is a theme that surfaces again and again. In one letter, Bin Laden writes: “Whenever I see a suicide used to deliver a ransom could contain a tracking device.”

Even people presenting themselves as friends were not trusted. In another letter, which does not appear to have been written by Bin Laden, an employee laments that a Qatari diplomat visited Qaeda members in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, and brought gifts, including a “huge” watch.

But after the diplomat left, a militant identified by the pseudonym Abu Ummah was ordered to smash it with a hammer” because he was afraid of it.

The latest documents include new details about how al Qaeda leaders argued about how to impose bureaucratic uniformity across its terrorist network, including an educational syllabus for new fighters.

Titled “A Course of Islamic Study for Soldiers and Members,” it includes a list of subjects and skills to be taught. (No. 1 is reading and writing). There is also a reading list of mostly books about Islam as well as lectures ranging from the history of jihad in the Horn of Africa to “a brief word on raising children.”

Bin Laden, who considered himself a student of history, tended to view events through a conspiratorial lens that often distorted his conclusions. The documents made clear, for example, that he believed the West, and the United States in particular, was controlled by a Jewish cabal.

But Bin Laden did not reject all things Western. One document released Tuesday outlines the structure of a “chief of staff committee” replicating the structure of a military command staff that originated in 19th century France and is now used by almost all North Atlantic Treaty Organization members, including the United States.

The various branches of the staff are laid out numerically, much like the Pentagon. No. 1 is personnel. No. 2 is intelligence and No. 3 is operations. No. 4 is logistics, or what the Qaeda document calls its “provisions and supplies wing.”

The unidentified author added Al Qaeda’s own No. 5 role, which could be translated as a morals branch. The intelligence officials could not say whether the group ever tried to put the command staff structure into practice.

Tuesday’s release was at the insistence of Congress, which in 2014 directed the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to review the material seized in the raid and make as much of it public as possible. It has been a slow process. The review began in May 2014, and the first release, which included nearly 80 documents, books, news media clippings and other materials, did not occur until May 2015.

Most of the documents released in 2015 were notes from Bin Laden and his top deputies, and they suggested that the Qaeda leader spent his final years seeking to direct a terrorist network that appeared to have grown far beyond his control. There was talk of training recruits and of how to select the most talented to carry out major attacks in the West. There were discussions of whom to promote and how to deal with the group’s franchises in the Middle East and North Africa.

In the 2015 release, the intelligence director’s office also made public a list of books found in the compound. There were sober works of history and current affairs, such as “Obama’s Wars,” by Bob Woodward, and wild conspiracy theories, like “The Secrets of the Federal Reserve,” by Eustace Mullins, a Holocaust denier.

Then there was the application for new Queda recruits, which was perhaps the oddest find in the first set of declassified materials. The application blended the mundanely bureaucratic with the frighteningly absurd, asking questions like “Do you wish to execute a suicide operation?” and “Who should we contact in case you become a martyr?”

Whether it was ever used was a question that American officials have not answered.

The compound where Osama bin Laden was killed in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in 2011.

The Fahyab officials in northern country have informed about a big military operation led by Gen. Dostum, in Khost province. Their action is resulted in killing of three Taliban commands.

The Taliban attacks two hostages

The Fahyab officials in northern country have informed about a big military operation led by Gen. Dostum, in Khostishpul district of Khamisah shahghozhi this province.

This operation has caused a vast fatality to armed rebels and tens of Taliban has been killed, wounded and captured in this operation.

Colonel Mohammad Zahib Zahir, the spokesman of the first headquarter of the army has declared that 20 alarmist rebels were killed and 15 arrested with 15 motorbikes and some weapons and ammunition are achieved by the security forces. He has also declared that as a result of this operation, the security forces obtained three encampments and one of the Taliban’s prisons.

The operation led by the first vice president started after Taliban blocked the highway of Maimana and Mazaj-e Sharif, and kidnapped several people.

In addition, the security forces have declared that Taliban have volleyed two of the 50 passengers who were kidnapped on Thursday night in Maimana-Mazaj-e Sharif highway.

The Authority of this province has also declared that on Thursday afternoon, around o’clock, a 404 bus with three corolla cars were stopped by the armed rebels in the vicinity of Gorzad hill of Sabzpozhi district, Farazah, and their passengers were taken hostage.

Abdulh Masoomi, the governor of Khoraj Sabzpozhi district has declared that the Taliban kidnapped 55 passengers of 404 bus and three corolla cars, all of who were civilians and were the relatives of those who were killed and injured in the governmental forces in some districts of Baghlan.

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**TAPI: opportunities and challenges**

Translated by: Mahram Ali Ahmadi
Source: Elnas-e-Roz
dian markets, and it can be a good opportunity for its benefit as the first step to record its main role-play in the basis of economic improvements. Although this vital project will not be out of problems, the seriousness and strives of the Nation- al Unity Government show a bright and a better future for Afghanistan. Although TAPI is a good opportunity, it has some challenges as well.

Opportunities:
1. Enhancements in commercial and political relationship of the com- monewealth. TAPI is a project which has a mutual benefit for shareholders. As long as the agreement holds the joint benefit of the contracted countries, it causes to decrease the tension among countries, especially Afghanistan and Pakistan and open the mutual cooperation. In this case, it is expected that by applying this project and tie the relationship of com- monewealth, conditions to build trust among the mentioned countries shall im- prove. In this case, political and econom- ic cooperation will be increased among these countries.
2. Creation of job opportunities. Ac- cording to the researches, by applying the mentioned project job opportunity for more than 50 thousand Afghan employ- ments shall be provided. The recruitment of this number of people in this project will help ten thousands of people to have a better and stabler income while it has re- markable effect on the rate of unemploy- ment in Afghanistan.
3. Reduction in the budget of govern- ment. It is expected that Afghanistan will receive nearly 500 million dollars just for transportation of this project.
4. Help in providing gas energy. Gen- erally, the needed fuel of Afghanistan has imported from neighboring or regional countries and the spenders can get it in a high price. The execution of mentioned project can have remarkable effect on the rate of gas energy in Afghanistan.
5. Providing opportunity to extract the north gas of Afghanistan. Existence of gas and gasoline in the north and north- west borders of Afghanistan amount- ing 8.6 million feet³, has been proved. Hence, the government of Afghanistan can increase the level of investment and discover these resources, and through these pipe lines, supply the extra pro- duced natural gas to the Pakistan and In- dian markets, and it can be a good oppor- tunity for the government of Afghanistan in the future.

Challenges:
1. Insecurity: The existence of ter- rorist groups is one of the challenges that prevents the TAPI execution in Af- ghanistan. This gas line lengths 735 KM including Afghanistan, and it has to pass nearly some insecure provinces like Far- ah, Helmand, and Kandahar. Therefore, insecurity will be a big challenge for this mentioned project and the serious ques- tion is, can Afghanistan provide security for these pipe lines or not? Hence, Af- ghanistan should think of a practical way to provide security for execution of this project. The existence of insecurity will challenge this beneficial project and it might destroy the possibility of execution of this project.
2. Peace Pipe Line: Peace Pipe Line is the name of gas transmission of Iran to Pakistan and India. According to this project, Iran has guaranteed the trans- mission of gas to Pakistan and India for 20 years. Although the government of Iran tried a lot to execute this project, nothing happened and Iran power and energy diplomacy failed in this regard. If the government of Afghanistan cannot provide security for TAPI project, at that time, Peace Pipe Line will be implement- ed instead of TAPI project.

**Murtaza receives football and jerseys from Leo Messi**

United Nation Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has announced that five year old Murtaza Ahmadi proudly re- ceived the new signed jerseys and a ball from UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Leo Messi.

Murtaza’s photo went viral after he was pictured wearing an Argentine Na- tional Team soccer jersey made from a Argentine National Team soccer jersey made from a Turghon- di harbor entering Herat province and crossing Farah, Helmand, and Kandahar through Spin Boldak in Pakistan. The im- plementation of (TAPI) project will help regional contribution and will affect the universal development.

TAPI is the result of the serious re- gional contribution. Regional countries need much cheap and useful projects. The main need of different countries even with different views and benefits is to come to an agreement and sign the con- tract. The execution of this project will help the regional countries in field of re- gional contribution to contribute more in order to keep security stable. Therefore, this project has advantages for regional countries especially for Afghanistan.

The execution of this vital project can stabilize an enduring policy for Afghanistan in order to co-operate regional countries for their mutual benefits to accompany this project which covers Pakistan and India, despite all other advantages that it possesses.

This opportunity is a trigger itself for political and economic stabilities for Afghanistan. On the other hand, the all over support of west for execution of this project is to avoid the gas transmission of Iran to India and Pakistan and it can be a good chance for Afghanistan to use this opportunity for its benefit as the first step to record its main role-play in the basis of economic improvements. Although this vital project will not be out of problems, the seriousness and strives of the Nation- al Unity Government show a bright and a better future for Afghanistan. Although TAPI is a good opportunity, it has some challenges as well.

Opportunities:
1. Enhancements in commercial and political relationship of the com- monewealth. TAPI is a project which has a mutual benefit for shareholders. As long as the agreement holds the joint benefit of the contracted countries, it causes to decrease the tension among countries, especially Afghanistan and Pakistan and open the mutual cooperation. In this case, it is expected that by applying this project and tie the relationship of com- monewealth, conditions to build trust among the mentioned countries shall im- prove. In this case, political and econom- ic cooperation will be increased among these countries.
2. Creation of job opportunities. Ac- cording to the researches, by applying the mentioned project job opportunity for more than 50 thousand Afghan employ-
now, after my first visit to Afghanistan, I am slightly less blind than I was before.

Kabul is cloaked in a veil of smog. The image of the city is reflected in the soot-covered bursas enveloping the women beggars who sit passively on the pavement in the middle of Kabul streets, inhaling exhaust fumes from passing vehicles. Wood and coal are burned to provide inexpensive heat for homes in the grossly overpopulated city. Over 200,000 diesel generators kick in when the electricity frequently goes out. Over a million cars clog the roads of the city emitting more poison into the city’s air. The thick, brown cloud of smoke and fumes hangs chokingly across and above the city, staining everything beneath it to a shade of brownish-gray. The beautiful mountains surrounding Kabul entrap the smog and try desperately to rise above the oppressive toxic veil.

The image of the city is reflected in the brown cloud of smoke and fumes hanging over the city, staining everything beneath it to a shade of brownish-gray. The beautiful mountains surrounding Kabul entrap the smog and try desperately to rise above the oppressive toxic veil.

Just as the smog conceals the mountains, stories of hope and triumph are concealed by the ever-visible darkness of poverty and despair in Kabul. Each day I cross the Pol-i-Sukhta Bridge to reach Star Educational Society where I work with some of Afghanistan’s brightest and most-promising young scholars. Near the bridge is usually a flock of dirty, emaciated sheep with nothing more than a pile of garbage to graze on in the mud-packed median of the busy two-lane roadway. The city’s drug addicts live on and beneath the bridge and are packed as densely as the sheep, huddled together in their filthy clothes and matted hair. Pedestrians cover their mouths and noses as they cross the bridge and I hold my breath inside the car not wanting to experience the foul odor that fills the air. Immediately across the bridge, we turn the corner and soon enter the courtyard of Star’s A Branch campus. Concealed behind the campus walls, the dull black, brown and gray of the city evaporate and I am struck by the crisp white-washed walls of the building and the bright colors adorning new classes and celebrating top-performing students. Modernly dressed students and teachers of Star engage in lively conversations and greet each other enthusiastically. The center of the courtyard features a dhama wheel-shaped garden, with green grass outlined in white landscaping stones. Like the symbol of the dhara ma wheel, I am reminded of the transformative nature of education as the path to liberation and enlightenment – a theory that resonates most loudly in a country like Afghanistan.

Inside my office on the second floor, I offer advising services for Fulbright Scholarship applicants – serving Afghanistan’s future public health managers, university professors, engineers, diplomats, researchers and education administrators. With the poverty and despair out of view, the fog lifts from my mind and I focus on the hope and triumph of this wounded country – the young generation. This is how most of my days are filled, with a series of highs and lows that leave me exhausted as my good and bad moods battle each other to dominate my frame of mind.

The other day we headed to the Bayat Media Center to enjoy the 6th annual concert by the students from the Afghan National Institute of Music (ANIM). After a thorough security screening where we gave up our cell phones and cameras and they confiscated my treasured cough drops, we entered a beautiful auditorium that seated approximately 200 people. This was yet another face of Kabul. Sitting among the middle to upper class Kabulis, listening to Afghan folk songs and classical music played with traditional and western instruments brought me to tears. Afghanistan’s musical culture is being revived through the ambitious efforts of ANIM and its founder, Dr. Ahmad Sarmast. Fifty percent of ANIM students are orphans, former child street workers and economically disadvantaged youth. I could not look at the faces of the beautiful children without wondering what kinds of lives they had escaped by being chosen to attend ANIM. We experienced the musical talent of Afghanistan’s first all-female orchestra led by the first Afghan female conductor, 19-year-old Ne grip Khpulwak from Nuristan. Negin lost both her parents and spent more than half her life in an orphanage and claims that music saved her life.

My time in Kabul has reinforced my belief that more efforts need to be made to support Afghan men. The hopes and triumphs of most Afghan women would not be possible without the support of Afghan men. Yasa, who founded Star Educational Society, is largely responsible for the opportunity his only two sisters enjoyed studying high school and college in the U.S. He has been instrumental in helping many other Afghan girls to enjoy similar opportunities including the scholarship of my Afghan daughter, Masooma, to seek her undergraduate degree at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh. Yasa has been a true ally in the fight for women’s rights in Afghanistan. Masooma’s brother, Mohammad, delayed his university studies to support his wife while she finished her degree first and is currently teaching her to drive.

My female Fulbright advisees are only able to pursue this opportunity because of the blessings they receive from their fathers, brothers and husbands. One of my Afghan sons, Ali, delayed his dreams of attending university so that he could support his family by enabling his younger sisters to give up carpet weaving and return to school. Farida, the 46-year-old mother of another Afghan son, Sameer, is able to study law because Sameer’s father encourages and supports her. This is not a popular decision in a conservative and patriarchal society and the men in the families carry the burden and judgment of such decisions. Farida’s five sisters never would have received university educations without the blessings of Sameer’s grandfather. It is to Dr. Ahmad Sarmast’s credit that 50% of ANIM students are girls. When Afghanis have more strong, open-minded men like these, women’s rights will improve exponentially and it is with great pride that I know so many of the men who are contributing to this trend.

I know I will never fully understand the real Afghanistan. I imagine it has as many faces as there are people in it. I have been fortunate to see the best faces of Afghanistan and I cling to the hope that these people represent the face of the cloak of Kabuls’s smog are fighters and survivors. This country is full of beautiful, talented, generous, and warm-hearted people. I have a stronger sense of purpose now that I have seen Afghanistan with my own eyes.
About the author: Hadi Zaher was the first graduate of Quetta’s branch of Star Educational Society in the year 1999. He has an MA from the University of Wollongong in Australia and is currently a post-graduate student at the University of New South Wales.

Stories
My Grandmother Told Me

A long time ago, a man from Haidar visited Balna-Aaghil of the village. He was there to borrow a bull from Chaman to crush his wheat-yield for the year. He was staying in Chaman’s guestroom when dark clouds rolled in over the village. At that moment, Chaman’s wife happened to be on the roof, cleaning the roof-surface to dry apricots.

In a few moments of mid-day later that day, a man from the village saw her being flung from one end of the roof to the other; half of her body landed on the ledge with the torso dangling off the edge. What followed was the loudest crackle and thunder I have ever heard in my life.

The guest from Haidar, the man I was talking about, he lay dead in Chaman’s guest room. He had been standing at the window inspecting the drizzle outside when he was struck by lightning. He could not move one step before he was struck dead. He was killed in an instant. The same lightning bolt that killed him, also struck Chaman’s wife on the roof. She was badly hurt but fortunately for her, still alive.

The villagers got together at Chaman’s to inspect the damage. We were all so shocked we couldn’t believe it. The villagers in Haidar couldn’t believe it either. The man’s family suspected that he had been murdered. They sent many villagers to look at what had happened. Some of them came armed, ready for a fight. They spoke to the people from our village. They met Chaman’s wife and saw her perilous condition, they saw the visibly charred path of the lightning bolt. Only and only then did they believe that their man hadn’t been murdered but had been the victim of nature. In sad mourning on a dark afternoon that afternoon, they carried his body back across the Haidar mountain pass.

In the village of Awboorda-Joysulito, a woman, who had sat by the window of her house spinning wool, was struck by lightning and killed. Another man was struck in the village of Shilbisto, just past the gorge. He died on the spot. In Daala-Ambolagh, a lightning bolt struck a large rock and sliced it in to two clean halves, with one half rolling down on to the pathway.

So you see Hadi jan, that is why I am very scared of lightning.

Gabriel García Márquez

(1927-2014)

Born in Aracataca, Colombia, writer Gabriel García Márquez grew up listening to family tales, eventually becoming a journalist. His fiction work introduced readers to magical realism, which combines more conventional storytelling with vivid fantasy.

Writer and journalist Gabriel García Márquez was reportedly the first story while in college and then extended period of time to complete his One Hundred Years of Solitude, published in 1967. The author drew international acclaim for the work, which ultimately sold tens of millions of copies worldwide. García Márquez is credited with helping introduce an array of readers to magical realism, a genre that combines more conventional storytelling forms with vivid, layered fantasy.

Throughout his career, García Márquez won numerous awards and honors, including the 1982 Nobel Prize in Literature. The writer was diagnosed with cancer in the late 1990s. Gabriel García Márquez died in Mexico City on April 17, 2014 at the age of 87, with the world immediately honoring his immeasurable literary legacy.

Gabriel García Márquez wrote long paragraphs with rich details. This is the beginning of Marquez’ Autumn of the Patriarch, a book he personally considered his best:

Over the weekend the vultures got into the presidential palace by pecking through the screens on the balcony windows and the flapping of their wings stirred up the stagnant time inside, and at dawn on Monday the city awoke out of its lethargy of centuries with the warm, soft breeze of a great man dead and rotting grandeur. Only then did we dare go in without attacking the crumbling walls of reinforced stone, as the more resolute had wished, and without using oxbows to knock the main door off its hinges, as others had proposed, because all that was needed was for someone to give a push and the great armored doors that had resisted the lombards of William Dampier during the building’s heroic days gave way.

Marquez’ paragraphs sometimes run on for entire pages. Along with Marquez’ stunning eye for sensory details, this often means that the reader has to stop mid-page, take a deep breath, and gather his thoughts before moving on. The effect can be disorienting, but the rewards for the patient reader are immense.
First of all, tell me about yourself? My name is Nazir Ahmad Farhang. I work as a Senior Information and Dissemination Officer in Afghanistan Institute of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. I was 6 months old when my family moved to Iran. I grew up in Iran, and I got married there too. However, at the beginning of the interim government of Afghanistan, we came back to our homeland Afghanistan. The place where I feel proud of, I pursued my higher education in Kabul and I got my bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Kateb University.

What are your words for the people who are leaving Afghanistan especially the young generation? Nowadays, I know Afghans are facing many different problems. Although people who leave Afghanistan do not have enough chance to arrive alive, still they are leaving, and the problem is our government. However, I must say that this government was chosen by the people of this nation and it is the people of this nation who have to work hard and bring stability in this land. Without people’s strong commitment it will be difficult for the nation to develop. If the young generation believe in themselves, and believe in their abilities, Afghanistan can improve. We should not wait for other countries to assist us; we as a nation should help each other to succeed in life and to develop this war torn nation.

Who and what encouraged you to be successful? Well - the problems which I faced in my life motivated me. I lived as a refugee in Iran, I was a simple worker, and I could not do anything because it was not my own country. When I came to Afghanistan, I continued my education. Furthermore, my family, my friends, and especially my wife, Maryam, supported me.

How did you improve your self-confidence? When I was a child, physically I was small. As a result, my friends and my classmates behaved differently with me and disturbed me. But I did not give up. I tried and I succeeded in my life. When I go to university, my students respect me. When I talk as an expert in some TV programs and when I talk as the president of an organization, these things give me a positive view of my life from where I started and now where I could arrive. I want to say that being positive and thinking positive helped me to be successful in my life.

Could you tell us what jobs do you like more? Teaching is a good experience. I strongly believe that by this profession I can bring change. Besides teaching, I take strong interest in writing.

Have you published any books? Not yet, but very soon, I promise, I will publish a book together with one of my friends. I do not want to name it now as I want it to be a surprise for the readers.

At the end, what is your message for the readers of Interstellar Bulletin? Believe in yourself. Be yourself. Be honest with yourself. Secondly, think about your future and believe in your future.

Afghanistan should try to find a sense of hope in themselves. They should consider how to find a solution for these problems. At that time, we can make and we can improve our country.

What is the reason that you studied sociology? When I took the entrance exam at Kabul University, I could not succeed. Therefore, I went to Kateb University. I wanted to study economics because we were poor, and I thought if I study economics, it will help me. I went there to register myself, but they didn’t have economics and I registered in sociology and graduated four years later.

What activities do you enjoy in addition to your job? Besides my job I do some social activities and cultural activities. Last year, I and some young and active people gathered together and wanted to make empathy organization that could bring happiness to Afghans.

You have traveled to different countries. Which trip was most enjoyable for you? One of my trips that I will never forget was the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (COP 15) Denmark it was a great trip in my life.

Nowadays, we see many street murals with a motto of anti-corruption. Can you give us more information about this campaign? The project is called Art Lords and I am one of the core members. A picture can say many things and it can show many things. Therefore, we decided to hide the stone walls with pictures for encouragement and awareness of our people. Further with these paintings we want to make the corrupted individuals aware that enough is enough and corruption must stop.

Among the pictures, I saw a picture of huge eyes. What is the meaning of that painting? It means “We’re watching you.” It is for awareness. With that picture we want to discourage people from participating in corruption. It is basically shown that they cannot hide behind the stone walls. The eyes of the public can see them. In this way, we would awaken the consciences of the people who are corrupt. Moreover, it is volunteer work; we have friends from different nationalities, and different religions. It shows that we Afghans are always together.

What is the greatest achievement in your life? I have had many professional achievements in 2015, however one achievement which really affected my personal and professional life was the award of my master’s degree from Kateb University. I strongly believe that this degree will assist me to build my career and will help me to work for the betterment of Afghan rural communities that are deprived of some of their basic human rights.

What do you think about the future of Afghanistan and the future of Afghanistan’s young generation? We have many problems in our country. Beside that we have many facilities. The problem is that we don’t want to open our eyes, and we don’t want to see the good facilities which we have in our country. If the young generation believe in themselves, and believe in their abilities, Afghanistan can improve. We should not wait for other countries to assist us; we as a nation should help each other to succeed in life and to develop this war torn nation.

The interview with Nazir Ahmad Farhang

Civil Society Activist
Raising Awareness in Afghanistan