Teaching has always been a process of different levels, from prep to advanced classes. As an English instructor and I taught differently and got my English diploma within an institution on which I could rely and enhance and promote my personal skills and academic qualifications. I found Star a source of motivation for students seeking to enhance their skills and qualifications. Creative and curious. Star has also been an advantage that makes Star different is its practical teaching methodology which gives students the chance to display their capabilities. The immersive English environment of Star is another pro that motivates every individual to learn English. In addition, Star takes pride in possessing its own English library which can quench the thirst of book readers seeking to enhance their English skills.

What I want to finally say is that Star as an educational center has been a great and vital help to the cultural and educational development in our country. It has had a key role in opening golden gates to a brighter and more fruitful future. Similarly, Star opens doors to the world to enhance our educational opportunities, enabling us to pursue our educational internationally. It leads us toward opportunities to familiarize ourselves other with nations and cultures across the globe. Star helps our people understand the language of world, as well as its technology and diverse philosophies. Star’s efficiency, productivity and huge influence on our community and nation has gradually made it a cultural and national asset. Star has its valuable role in Fulbright, TOEFL and other international tests which now all but guarantees a chance for pursuing their higher education. Some of the students of Star are now invaluable human resources and have had great impact on the social and economic development of our country. In the midst of desperation and emotional darkness, Star has played its role as beacon of hope, and has provided people with the hope and enthusiasm to live better lives. Star’s diversity is one of the leading factors that contributes to its uniqueness and superiority over other institutions. Besides its pervasive English environment and various building programs, up to date linguistic programs and materials are among the obvious assets that make Star a better place to learn English. Another advantage that makes Star different is its practical teaching methodology which gives students the chance to display their capabilities. The immersive English environment of Star is another pro that motivates every individual to learn English. In addition, Star takes pride in possessing its own English library which can quench the thirst of book readers seeking to enhance their English skills.
How I became who I am today?

Life is difficult in this country

About the author: Hakim Sorush has newly joined Star staff to help with photography, film-making, website management and reporting. He is a Star alumnus and a photographer. He graduated from the Fine Art Faculty, Cinema Department of Kabul University. He plans to be a film director in the future.

My early childhood was a bad period. We lived in a bad situation in a village called Alaginan. My father was not at home most of the time, as he had to go to Iran in order to work and send us money. I remember the famine year when everything was expensive including food and clothing. People including my family could not afford buying most of the stuff. We had three meal-times: breakfast, lunchtime and dinner time. It shouldn’t have exceeded these three times. If we got hungry, we had to wait till the next meal time. Waiting with hungry stomach was really hard for me back then. Sometimes I could wait, but other times I would steal food to eat.

In the village, there is a tradition where brothers live together in the same household. My family used to live with my uncle’s family. Together, we were a big family of 25 people living in the same house, having to follow some rules. Upon the return of my father from Iran, we decided to separate our families. My family moved to my other uncle’s home who had migrated to Pakistan and their home was vacant. After the separation, our living situation improved, and I could eat more food than before. Also, I could buy and wear better clothes than before. My father sent me to a religious school in my village, where I learned how to read and write. After the Taliban Regime collapsed with the help of international community, I got admitted into public school. We didn’t have public school in our village, so all the village children would have to go to school in the neighborhood village. However, the school we would go to was a primary school that had till sixth grade. Therefore, I had to transfer to a high school where I could continue my education. I went to a school named “Shinadeh” high school, which was far away from my village. I studied school under bad circumstances; I had to walk four hours every day from home to school and back, and my family was poor to afford any means of transportation. At the beginning, I had three other friends that would walk to the same school with me. After a year, two of my friends left school, as they went to Iran. In the following year, my third friend also left school. When our twelfth grade halved, our class started with very big promises and hopes. Dean and teachers of our faculty promised a lot, we were very happy and friends encouraged them very well. We were counting each day in order to finish our eleventh grade and come to Kabul.

When our twelfth grade halved, our classmates made a serious decision for coming to Kabul, after much tough discussions, our headmaster allowed us to come to Kabul, we were very happy, we collected our clothes, books and other things. The day of that day we came to Kabul, we stayed three months in Kabul, we completed programs, we compelled to come at school for passing the school’s tests, I passed the tests and waiting for Kankor test, after one month waiting I passed the test and when the result announced I was very happy and think about new season of my life, I couldn’t sleep from happiness because I had accepted at Kabul University, on that time Kabul University had very big and popular name among friends and students.

When I came to Kabul after ten days our lesson started at Kabul University, there were 380 students in our class, our class started with very big promises and hopes. Dean and teachers of our faculty promised a lot, we were very happy and one hour earlier we came to faculty in order to find a near chair to stage. The first semester finished and the second the same case, after passing winter’s holiday we came back and the second year started, discrimination was increasing and the oldest system of teaching and teaching materials were sensible, the lessons and whole faculty were uninteresting and boring.

Beside those hopeless problems we were trying, searching the newest and updates materials and finding books from various reliable resources in order to become a good specialist and find a good job and serve for our people and no wasting of time but in our faculty discrimination against each other, the oldest method of teaching and teaching materials. Nominating and supporting the students from second year as a teacher at university from teacher’s relatives were running very regularly, again we were hopeful and interested in our lessons. At these four years we studied English, photography, film-making, website management and reporting. Finally we finished our lesson with hardships and difficulties; we rent a room 5000AFG. Per month, we were five persons, searching for jobs and sending CVs in different organizations but we didn’t know much about mafia and bureaucracy systems of government and many organizations.

I worked as DFC (district field coordinator) in IEC (Independent Election Commission) for 6 months, our contract finished and again we searched a lot for finding new job but we couldn’t, I came at Star with no preparation, passed the test and my number was not good because it was a long time that I didn’t study English and specially grammar but the manager accepted me as a teacher and it’s one year that I am teaching at Star, but I am not happy because I am jobless, teaching is not my job, why shouldn’t work in my field of study? Corruption, an illegal government, two persons busy on dividing political power and many other factors are the reasons of immigration and youth generation escaping from this country.

Still I am hopeful and thinking about a good future and good job. I want to be a useful person in my life, I like humanity and being as a positive human in my honor, I want to work hard and have good consequences in my life. I hate useless guys, exploitation, illiteracy etc. I wish to live in a peaceful world with full of hopes and useful consequences.

JUNE 04TH, 2016
Don’t smoke cigarettes: It ruins your life.

This time I would like to share a tremendous lesson of my life with you and I believe you will enjoy reading it. This happened roughly six years ago in the year 2010. Have you ever smoked cigarettes? Or have you seen people who have smoked? Or like me, have you ever been caught smoking cigarettes? This seemed really funny when I was caught smoking. Unfortunately smoking has so far ruined too many lives of people around the world, specifically in my country.

It was a cold day in winter of 2010. Everywhere looked completely white. We often had to walk wherever we wanted to go. My home is in Dasht-e Barchi, Qale Now, and my father owns a grocery shop in Dalahu-e Barchi. My mother, my father and I were living in a rented room while the rest of the family members were living in our village, Now-Abad Aiken in Qarabagh District of Gharzni Province). He noticed the pain in his voice and the shivering in his voice. From the very eyes of the most important person in the world, my Dad, I was frozen in embarrassment. My throat was dried up, my lips shaking and my heart pounding heavily against my chest. I felt the whole world was pointing at me. My ears were warm, and there I was, saying to myself... “WHY?” I could never forget this speech, soon after that time I decided not to smoke again because it can be the first step toward ruining our lives. I realize the value of the short but powerful words my dad gave me. I noticed the pain in his voice and the kindness in his face, the sorrow in his eyes and the shivering in his voice. From the very eyes of the most important person in the world, my Dad, I was frozen in embarrassment. My throat was dried up, my lips shaking and my heart pounding heavily against my chest. I felt the whole world was pointing at me. My ears were warm, and there I was, saying to myself... “WHY?” I could never forget the answer to this, “WHY?”! But I see cigarettes as the Satan by which embarrassment could consume me in smoke. I will not ever smoke again, and you kind reader, if you ever do, promise yourself that one day, you should come to the decision like me and STOP it FOREVER...

About the author: Mohammad Reza Sharifi is a Star alumnus and teacher. He is majoring in Computer Science - Software Engineering at Kabul Polytechnic University and will be continuing his studies in India in the near future. He aspires to be a good writer besides he studies computer science.

Between research and activism: The role of ‘organic intellectuals’

Written By: Huma Saeed
Source: OUPblog [http://blog.oup.com]

A recipient of the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship, Huma Saeed is a PhD candidate at the Leuven Institute of Criminology (University of Leuven), where she focuses on the intersection between the violation of socio-economic rights and state crime in the context of transitional justice, with Afghanistan as a case study. She has an MSc in Human Rights from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a BA in Political Science from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She has worked with human rights and women’s rights organizations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and internationally, as well as with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Afghanistan. She is the author of “Victims and Victimization: Individuals In Action or Active Agents of Change?” (available to read for free for a limited time) in the International Journal of Transitional Justice.

Once an activist, always an activist. This maxim seems to prevail even when one enters the world of research and academia, marked by its ostensible “objectivity” and “neutrality”. I started as an activist and ended up – for now at least – in academia. However, in my research experience, both through field visits as well as in the theoretical component of my current work, I don’t seem to let go of the activist constituent in me; that drive toward making a difference, even if it is on a small scale.

I have pondered many times whether and how the two worlds can merge in praxis exactly, if at all. Not only because in academia we are taught about the principles of “objectivity”, but more importantly because academia, inevitably, has a tendency to push one towards becoming an “armchair” researcher. This, at times, has instigated a feeling of being stripped away from the actual world one is trying to understand, analyze, and ultimately change, which in turn has led, occasionally, to a sense of skepticism not experienced during my years as an activist. Are the two spheres really so different from one another? Or do the theoretical and empirical components merge to form a praxis that is intended to improve the surrounding conditions?

Such reflections have led me to question the role of researchers as intellectuals, in particular during my field visits to Kabul, Afghanistan. Once in the field, many aspects I had read in methodology books to orient my research seemed to have become rather irrelevant. This is not to question the importance of a sound methodological design. But when one conducts research in a conflict/post-conflict terrain, where security concerns become the dominant paradigm, all that seems to matter is the safety of the researcher and research participants. If we are to get to a meaningful research, interviewees can be approached, questions can be asked, and answers can be obtained. Despite being a native researcher, equipped with a cultural, socio-political, and environmental compass, I nevertheless found it difficult to find my own position in all this. Where do I stand in relation to those I interview?

I have been researching transitional justice and war victims since 2008. I took a deep interest in this topic because of my own background. Like most Afghans, over decades of conflict I have lost close family members, and before coming to academia in 2005, I served as a full-time activist to advocate for human rights and women’s rights in particular. This background has obviously left a deep mark on my engagement with academia, including on my own relationship with the war victims, I’ve been studying. Many questions have come up in relation to this, such as: What exactly is my role as a researcher, who knows the empirical reality of my case study so well? Is there a place for me to represent the victims I interview, and if so, through which means? Does the question of representation even matter in academia or is it something to be left only to the realm of activism? How do victims perceive me as someone who, on the one hand, shares and understands their pain and suffering, and, on the other, as a researcher ought to keep a distance, thus becoming the “other”? Such questions have been with me in my head ever since I started my research, particularly as a PhD scholar.

These questions, however, to lend itself as a valuable lens through which to reconcile such incongruities is the Gramscian concept of “organic intellectuals”. Gramsci, in one of his essays in the Prison Notebooks (written between 1929-1935), discusses the process of the formation of intellectuals and their roles in society. He defines traditional intellectuals as those who see themselves as autonomous and independent from the ruling social group, believing to stand for truth and reason. Organic intellectuals, on the other hand, emerge from and are tied to a social class within an economic structure. As such, they speak for the interests of a specific class or social group.

Gramsci’s proposition challenges the supposed “objectivity” and “neutrality” claimed to exist in academic work, and the argument to fit within the traditional model of intellectual activity. As we know, the academic world is predominantly Western ruled, often serving a particular social group or class. It is perhaps more candid to adopt Gramsci’s notion of the organic intellectual in our academic work, as has, arguably, been pursued by great thinkers such as Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, Mahmoud Mamdani, Stanley Cohen, and many others who have challenged the dominant, traditional pattern. This approach, perhaps, can also bridge the gap between activism and academia. It provides a venue where scholars, like me, can engage with research, analysis, and activism. This has been predominantly studied and written upon by outsiders. This way, I see research and activism as a tool to counteract and change the status quo, as opposed to merely engaging with idealist notions in abstract.
The central department of statistics and the ministry of public health, says about the result of this survey by a short report that for achieving this estimated statistics, they have interviewed 24395 families, 29461 women, and 10760 men between the ages of 15 to 49 years old through questionnaires. The Afghanistan's first health and demography survey key indicators show that 84 percent women and 51 percent men are illiterate in this country.

The health and demography survey done by the central department of statistics and ministry of public health, economically supported by the US department of international development have been done in 34 provinces, also shows that only two percent of women has higher education in Afghanistan.

Statistics, they have interviewed 24395 and the ministry of public health, says about the result of this survey that for achieving the estimated statistics about education, the level of pregnancy among the women, mergers, tendency to pregnancy, knowledge and using from the methods of family regulation, nourishing the babies with mother milk, the death of children and mothers, the health of mother and child and the way the families deal with, particularly the pregnancy diseases caused by sex relationships and also the disease of cancer and tuberculosis. The accumulated results of the survey have said that this survey was started from 15 June and ended on 23 February 2016.

In a short report, the central department of statistics and the ministry of public health say about the result of this survey that for achieving this estimated statistics, they have interviewed 24395 families, 29461 women, and 10760 men between the ages of 15 to 49 years old through questionnaires. The total result of this survey is going to be published in the month of December this year.

The summary of the findings of the Afghanistan health and demography survey shows that 19 percent of the men and 8 percent of the women in the country, the level of their education is up to primary, 25 percent of the men and 7 percent of the women went to secondary and 7 percent of men and 2 percent of women have higher education than secondary. The result of this survey indicates that the level of education has been effective on pregnancy of women particularly the girls who have married under the age of eighteen. Based on this survey, the girls who have married under the age of nineteen and their education have been higher than secondary; have been less pregnant or mother before the age of nineteen. The issues of pregnancy of the illiterate and the girls under the age of eighteen, have been reported more than twice of the literate girls. In the findings of the health and demography survey has come that the level of women education also has effects on profiting their children from the vaccination services. The mothers who have higher education, 65 percent of their children have been benefitted from the vaccine courses. But the children whose mothers have been illiterate, the level of their benefit from the vaccination services is 42 percent.

The first health and demography survey indicates that most of the women between fifteen to forty nine years old in Afghanistan have three to five children. The numbers of the having children are different between the women living in urban and rural area. Also, most of the women who have been interviewed have said that they are not willing to have more children. 26 percent have said that they do not want to be more pregnant, 14 percent has said that they want to have another child soon, and 24 percent have said that they are willing to have child with a longer period. The mother death level is not mentioned in the findings of this survey.

The health and demography survey result shows that nearly half of the women in Afghanistan are in need of family regulation. Based on this survey, only 23 percent of the interviewed women have said that they have the information about how to regulate family and 47 percent of them have said that they are need of introducing the methods of regulating family. The findings of this survey show that the well-to-do families have more followed the family regulation.

The Afghanistan health and demography survey shows that the level of children death in our country has decreased during the last years. Based on the findings of this survey, from every 1000 baby, 45 of them lose their lives as they get one year old. While the number of children deaths under the age of one year, from 2002 to 2005 from every one thousand live birth was 66 baby, from 2006 to 2010 reached to 54 babies but from 2011 to 2015 has reached to 45 babies from every one thousand live birth.

The level of the children death under the age of five has also decreased and based on the result of this survey, from every live thousand children, from 2002 to 2005 it was about 69 babies, and in 2011 to 2015 it has decreased to 55 babies.

Despite this, the central department of statistics and the ministry of public health say that although there has been a good improvement in decreasing the number of children death, still the children and women access to the health services is considered a big challenge.
Taliban Change Spring Operation from Omari to Chadari
Translator: Qasim Karimi
Source: Hashi Sohb

The operation called Omari has been launched was unsuccessful because most of the Taliban leaders have been arrested using Chadari to escape. Our command- ers titled it Chadari in different areas under the Shafaq operation. The command- ers who are responsible for shafaq massive operation have changed Taliban spring operation’s name from Omari to Chadari and mentioning that due to failure of Omari operation against Taliban; their leaders are using Chadari to escape.

Mr. Sidiqi, spokesman of ministry of in- terior announcing this news and claiming that security forces have arrested most of Taliban important leaders tending to es- caping using women veil called Chadari. Mr. Sidiqi in a jointly press conference with spokesman of ministry of foreign affairs has said, “The operation has been launched called Omari and some of our friends named them Chadari is failed, be- cause most of Taliban leaders have been restrained using Chadari (women veil) to escape. Our leaders in different areas under Shafaq operation, named this op- eration Chadari because most of these Taliban use chadari to escape and some important members have been arrested with Chadari.

Moreover, spokesman of the minis- try of interior has said that when some of Taliban have been wounded during any military operation and wanted to go Pakistan from Afghanistan for treatment dressing women clothes. Fortunately, our forces found such matters on the way.

Taliban announced wearing Chadari obligatory for women during their sover- eignty, but according to military officials’ statements Taliban fighters are wearing Chadari now so that to rescue their lives and keep away themselves from security forces. Regarding a case in which Taliban provincial governor for Ghazni province entitled Qari Yusuf dressing women veil has been arrested. National security in- formation agency at the end of Hamal announcing the news and said, “Qari Yu- suf has been arrested shamefully wear- ing women veil tending to escape fromShaikh Amir village of Garboz district to Khost province.”

Sidiqi was appreciating Shafaq mili- tary operation which is full of achieve- ment and said that since the beginning of this operation, some of most important leaders of Taliban either have been ar- rested or wounded. Moreover, Sidiqi has added that tens of them including five significant Al-Qaida members have been killed or wounded during military opera- tion. According to Mr. Sidiqi, Qari Abdul- lah entitled Hizifa and brother of Hazifa, Besmalilah, Masjodi entitled Hannu were the most important members of Al-Qaida terrorist group that have been killed by air strike attack in Chahar Darzi district of Kunduz province. Ministry of interior spokesman emphasized that one of the goals of Shafaq military mission is to tar- get most significant terrorist groups and it is going on well.

Meanwhile, ministry of foreign af- fairs is formulating the conducting of nightly military operations that are going on well due to the contribution of people.

Dawlat Waziri, spokesman of Min- istry of foreign affairs have mentioned during his yesterday’s press conference. Nightly military operations conducted throughout in the country from one o clock to six o clock in the morning and it has obtained so many achievements. Mr. Waziri says if people do not contribute conducting nightly military operations, we will not be able to succeed. Whenever any terrorist groups are gathering that people do not inform us, the nightly mili- tary operation will not be conducted. Spokesman of ministry of foreign affairs has emphasized that most of the operations have been conducted and scheduled according to the reports of people from terrorists’ assembly and ex- istence in the area. According to Dawlat waziri, security forces investigating and analyzing the reports due to existence of terrorists in an area from the people and then launch nightly military operations.

Spokesman of ministry of foreign affairs has said that security forces of the coun- try using advanced features for imple- mentation of nightly military operations so that to not damage innocent people. Moreover, Dawlat Waziri added that we have especial type of airplanes of (pc 12) for nightly military operations: these air- planes clarify all the targeted area for the operation and continually send photos of the area which is visible on TV in Kabul. Even the operation is to be implement- ed in Helmand would be led in Kabul. It means that these features and facilities exist in Afghanistan.”

Dawlat Waziri says that most of nightly military operations have been ac- complished in Helmand province. As he said, hundreds of innocents and security forces have been freed due to implemen- tation of nightly military operation that they have been arrested and imprisoned by Talibans in Helmand Province.

Taliban Order Baghlan’s Farmers to Plant Poppy
Translator: Sharif Nasirx
Source: Manzedar

Baghlan’s high profiles say that Tal-iban make the farmers to plant the poppy. Abdul Rashid the instigator police security guard of Baghlan says this mat- ter: “In area where is Taliban subterrain- eously in Baghlan they don’t spare of any cruelties.”

Some of farmer’s also say after Talib- an dropped in 2002 and establish of government in the, level of poppy got zero, but after increasing recent Taliban’s attack again farmers obligated to plant poppy.

As they says the level of planting poppy in Dand-e-Ghori and Dand-e- Shahabuddin is more than every areas in this province. They say that Taliban obtain their military equipment from business has been Norcotic and encourage their income like before.

Farzalhaq Andarabi, the adminis- trator of anti norcotic of Baghlan province into this problems showed ignorance but confirmed that the level of planting is higher than other times.

Mr. Andarabi reveals the reason of increasing poppy is insecurity and per- coute of Taliban in majority areas of this province.

He says, in Deh-salah, Pul-e-Hesat, Jelga, Baraka and Tala wa Barfak district’s more than 190 HR planted poppy.

According to his speech the most dis- trict’s are in Talibans’ possession.

Tell now Taliban rewelt nothing about this.

According to the resent reports the level of planting and trafficking of nar- cotic is lower than other times.

Destruction of Buddha’s Temple in Baghlan
Translated: Asadullah Rezayee
Source: Open Society

House officials said that Taliban attacked and destroyed many parts of Buddha’s temple in Sorkh Kotal region in Pul-e-Khumri district of Baghlan province.

This temple is from Kaneshka, the king of Koshan (2000 – 2000 years ago). Karimullah Rahemi, who is in charge of protecting cultural legacy of ministry of culture and information has said, that police who have been responsible for protecting this temple for over eight years were besieged by Taliban for seven days. After they ran out of their ammunition, Taliban seized the temple. The temple is simi- lar to a typical room. This room is sur- rounded by vaults. In addition, there are many Buddha’s idols and ancient dishes around it.

Rahemi added that there are so many idols and ancient dishes in Sorkh Kotal, and if the Government doesn’t pay attention and doesn’t try to retrieve this region, Taliban will de- stroy all ancient things. He also said a week ago Taliban got the ancient idols in Baghlan Markazi, there is no obvi- ous report about whether they have been destroyed or not.

A Family of Eleven Killed in a Bomb Blast
Translated: Esa Oral
Source: Eslaa-e-Hoce

Baghlan – the local officials in Baghlan province admitted that 11 members of a family have been killed by a bomb blast in Qaisar-Khil area of this province. Baghlan’s governor, Ab- dul-Satar Bariz, told BBC on Friday, May 20th, that on Friday morning, when the family was leaving for Central Baghlan City (Sahr-e-Bagh- lan Markazi), their car knocked up the embed- ded bomb in the road. According to his words, 11 members of this family including 5 children and 2 women were killed and 3 members were injured.

He said the Taliban grabbed the area from the tribal Jihadis some days ago when they em- bedded the bomb in the area. The Taliban have not commented about the event yet.
A Cheerful First Date

About the author: Mohammad Ali Fakur is a star alumni and a human rights activist. He has a BA with honors in Law and Political Science from Gawharshad University. He is also a civil society activist with numerous appearances on TV shows. He is currently studying Creative Writing at Star Educational Society.

- "How did you find my number, Sir?" asked Yalda politely.
- "I took it from Farzana, your classmate," I replied with a trembling voice, trying not to say anything about Farzana.
- "I can’t believe how these people dare to..." said Yalda with a raised tone and anger.
- "Anyway, what can I do for you, Sir?" she continued.

I thought about Farzana, about my reputation in the Academy and among my students, and about my career. Not only because Farzana will unreasonably be blamed for my lie, but also because a love story of a teacher with his student will be pervaded and talked about everywhere.

- "Nothing, I just have a small request," I replied and then closed my eyes and pulled my tongue under my front teeth.
- "Go on," she said.
- "I would like to meet you outside of the Academy. Somewhere in Pol-e Sorkh, OK?" I added.

After a long pause, she softly asked, "Why? You can tell me anything in the classroom or on campus, or over the phone.

I had nothing to add, but struggled to find a reasonable answer as my final words.

- "Please, Umum..." I swallowed the saliva and then said.
- "It’s very important. I want to tell you in person. Please..."
- "Deed- deed... deed..." The call was cut off.

It took me almost six months to reveal my feelings for an arrogant girl who used to say that she hated LOVE and the LOVERS. Yalda, unlike her younger sister Sahar, paid much more attention to her physical appearance, and the odor of her French perfume dispersed all around that tiny classroom. The best thing about Yalda was that she was smart, and would speak with openness and sincerity. No doubts in her words and no hesitation in her actions. This, never let me reveal my feelings for her. Standing before the white board, as everyone was writing notes from the white board, I would stare at her for long, long times and would dream about our worldview and partnership. For so many times my gaze would catch up with hers. Though I knew my cheeks would blush and my face would turn pale, she used to say nothing as if she had never noticed.

One summer afternoon, after lecturing about Gerard and Infinitive, I asked Yalda to give her textbook to me. I took both her book and mine. As I turned the pages, I pretended that I was fantasizing to produce cold air, but I got out of the classroom. Behind the class’s door, I quickly put the letter I had written the night before inside one of those inter-change books, and gave her book back as I entered into class. The following night, I realized that my first attempt had failed, for I had placed the letter inside my own book. The other day, while correcting the students’ homework, I found Yalda’s phone number behind Farzana’s notebook. With pretext of drinking water, I got out of the classroom, and saved her number in my phone.

She did not come to the class that afternoon. I was afraid that my call was the reason for her absence. It actually was! It had made her think about all possible reasons behind my call, it made her doubt on the gentleness I exclaimed all those six months as their teacher, and blame Farzana for not being a confident friend. She said all these things after our first visit in Pol-e Sorkh. The following Friday in August, I tested her and told her that I wanted to catch her in 10 minutes after getting done with the monthly meeting of the Academy. I rented a taxi to Pol-e Sorkh, and then to Kabul Fried Chicken restaurant. I had faced her reluctant smile outside of that tiny classroom, and usually blemish suspending looks from her classmates, but this time, we were alone beneath one ceiling. Her appearance, smell, and dressing were different. Unlike usual, she was wearing a white scarf slung on her shoulder that whirled from right to left side, letting the whiteness of her throat be visible. She had a supple, curvaceous figure with ravishing red- berry-like lips; arched eyebrows on sweeping eyelashes, delicate ears and a set of dazzling angelic arches on sweeping eyelashes, delicate ears and a set of dazzling angelic arches; a slim body, and the odor of white teeth gleamed as she blew gently on her carmine-red fingernails.

"Salaam," she said, turning her sight from me to outside of the coffee shop window at her left shoulder.

"Salaam, How are you?" I asked back. This time she looked down at her fingernails. "Good. Thanks."

She did not ask about me, and this paused the conversation for a minute or two. I grabbed the X-shaped brown chair to slowly put next to hers. She blushed as if she wanted to keep the distance further.

- "Why? You can tell me anything in the classroom. Somewhere in Pol-e Sorkh, not in here," I said politely and severely.
- "Before saying your conditions, please tell me that you have accepted," I asked.

She paused and then said. "No, list-ten to me. You may not accept them. That is why I..."
- "I will accept them all. Whatever they are. Just please tell me you have accepted it."

She pointed at the palm of her left hand, which led me to think that those were the wishes or demands she would talk about. Although I followed her look in her left palm, I was not able to read.

- "Before saying your conditions, please tell me that you have accepted," I asked.

My heart was not battering anymore. I felt calm, light, cheerful, and free like a man who reaches climax during sex, like a snake after emptying its venom, like a soldier who shoots his last fire and kills an undefeated enemy. I had expressed all my feelings. I had drained off everything: my words, my concerns, and above all, my LOVE. Now it was Yalda who had to make the final decision.

A police boy whose shirt’s back was labeled "KFC" put a rectangular tray on which a Chinese teapot, two cups, and a small plate of dried fruit were placed on the table. I thanked him and turned my face to Yalda.

- "What would you say, huh?" She was still thinking.
- "Pouring sugar and milk in the cof-fee glasses, I impatiently repeated. "Hey, Yalda. Do you hear me?"

She was now looking at the list in my hand, a paper that was crumpled as a result of rubbing with my sweat, and was playing with her fingernails. However, she seemed to say something. "Why doesn’t she say something? " How a gar-ulous and an arrogant girl turned out to be a reticent one?"

After a short pause, as my concern was growing bigger and bigger, she calmly uttered. "I may agree with what you have said, but you have to promise these three things first."

She pointed at the palm of her left hand, which led me to think that those were the wishes or demands she would talk about. Although I followed her look in her left palm, I was not able to read.

- "Before saying your conditions, please tell me that you have accepted," I asked.

She paused and then said. "No, lis-ten to me. You may not accept them. That is why I..."
- "I will accept them all. Whatever they are. Just please tell me you have accepted it."

She usually would hesitate to look directly at my eyes, but on that very moment, her eyes met my gaze. Her upper lip’s corner was trembling. Her eyes would widen and then narrow as she listened to me, jotted down a list of wishes and plans. Is she that arrogant girl who used to hate LOVE and the LOVERS? Am I her dream boy? No, this can’t be right. But why does not she protest? Why doesn’t she slap me in the face? And...
Where did you go Kakai? He smiled and looked away. I visited Koh-e-Qaaf. It was beautiful. I met fairies there, and now I have returned because I am hungry. Young Shirin Jan’s and Ewaz’s father had died, their mother was well and alive. People still called them orphans. Mullah Khagbad adopted his niece and nephew, and married the widow mother, but not long after, the mother too, died. With the mother and father gone, there was no one in the world to care for them anymore. They had no family. Their relatives abandoned them. They had been good young children, but after that, they became orphans, they were discarded, and forsaken. To survive, the brother and sister began doing manual labour for the families in the village. They herded cattle, collected firewood, worked on people’s farms, and performed household chores in exchange for food and handouts. They grew up. Ewaz lost his mind, and weeks, and then suddenly reappear. That innocent girl would believed those kids. They would make her lie face-down and then they would pretended to clean the lice off her head. She would think of it as a game. Meanwhile, the other kids would go through every corner of their family orchard, their home and steal all they could carry. This happened all the time. She would believe those village kids and play with them. In turn, the kids would steal, go away, return and steal again. Shirin Jan didn’t change. The kids didn’t either. Ewaz turned into a recluse. They called him Iwaz Kakai – the uncle, Ewaz Dewna – the mad. He spend his nights in people’s barns, amongst cattle, on the trees, and in the hills. He barely ever went home, and barely spoke to anyone. He had no place to call home. Occasionally he would come to us to ask for food. He would tell us stories, of genies, demons, fairies of Koh-e-Qaaf, of things he said he saw at night. He would go missing for days and months, and then suddenly reappear one day, and ask for food. Where did you go Kakai? He would smile and look away. I visited Koh-e-Qaaf. It was beautiful. I met fairies there, and now I have returned because I am hungry. Ewaz grew old, and died alone, in someone’s barn, without a family or a loved one by his side. Shirin Jan was married off to Iaw-borda village. I think she too, died a few years ago.

*Bechara – Poor  *Koh-e-Qaaf = The Caucasus Mountains – Legend has it that fairies live there
How do you describe yourself? Who are you? Well, this is always difficult to capture one’s entirety in a few sentences but I will try. I’d say that maybe the word “student” captures most of what describes my personality and activities. I am a student in that I love learning about new sciences, new cultures and new people. I also love to convey what I learn to people. Through learning and teaching, I am seeking to be a useful member of society.

Who or what has been influential in choosing the path you are following now? Many things and people have been influential in my life. I was enrolled at a school where I received love and encouragement from my teachers. I realized that students can exhibit their talent in a community where they are treated as human beings regardless of their ethnicity, religion, and race. Furthermore, since my parents never had the privilege of getting education due to tradition and negative ideas about education in Afghanistan, they had strong desire to raise their children educated, and I was benefited by their support and help in the golden journey of getting education. My hope is to contribute to developing our education system so that our schools would instill love and passion for learning and respect for others in our students, not the opposite.

How long have you been in this job? I only played a minor role in their success. Mostly, I believe that students can exhibit their talent in a community where they are treated as human beings regardless of their ethnicity, religion, and race. Furthermore, since my parents never had the privilege of getting education due to tradition and negative ideas about education in Afghanistan, they had strong desire to raise their children educated, and I was benefited by their support and help in the golden journey of getting education. My hope is to contribute to developing our education system so that our schools would instill love and passion for learning and respect for others in our students, not the opposite.

How did you get accepted to Fulbright? Please explain the process you had to go through? Wanting to get my Master degree, I applied to Fulbright for 2014-2015 academic year, but I didn’t get accepted. As I thought about my mistakes and reasons that made me miss that chance, I reapplied to Fulbright and used my past career experience to decide about my field of study, and this made me a stronger applicant for 2015-2016. My research, work experience and spending sufficient time on my application helped me secure this scholarship.

You not only got into Fulbright yourself, but you even helped six of your students to get into Fulbright. What were the secrets of this achievement? I only played a minor role in their success. Mostly, I believe that students can exhibit their talent in a community where they are treated as human beings regardless of their ethnicity, religion, and race. Furthermore, since my parents never had the privilege of getting education due to tradition and negative ideas about education in Afghanistan, they had strong desire to raise their children educated, and I was benefited by their support and help in the golden journey of getting education. My hope is to contribute to developing our education system so that our schools would instill love and passion for learning and respect for others in our students, not the opposite.

What is your most important message to your fellow? Dream and go for it. Never give up. And be grateful for what you have. A few personal questions now! You are known for your integrity and peace? Are you really in peace deep in heart? I think so. But I am also restless in that I always want to try new things, make progress, and achieve more. I want to surpass myself. Have you ever fallen in love? Yes!!! But please don’t ask the details yet.

What do you like about teaching? I love teaching English Language with so little experience that I had to prepare for days in order to teach for one hour.

About the author: Qamar Nisa is a Star alumni who is currently a senior at St. Margaret’s School, a private high school in Virginia, U.S. She is supported by the Afghan Girls’ Financial Assistance Fund. In a few years, I intend to go for a Ph.D.

What is the most crucial lesson you have learned in your life? I have learned many lessons in my life. Mostly importantly, in 2012, I unexpectedly got sick and I wasn’t able to move my arms and legs for a couple of days. I could not stand, walk or hold a spoon or pen; life was suddenly so despairing and frightening. But thankfully that experience was very short-lived. Yet it gave me a powerful message about the importance of everything that we take for granted in life. It humbled me and at the same time it taught me that life is so short, and before we know we no longer can do something, we should take the opportunities that life presents.

What is your most important message to your fellow? Dream and go for it. Never give up. And be grateful for what you have.

The most important lesson you have learned in your life is that life presents.

Mostly importantly, in 2012, I unexpectedly got sick and I wasn’t able to move my arms and legs for a couple of days. I could not stand, walk or hold a spoon or pen; life was suddenly so despairing and frightening.