Improving society through Star

- Message from Habiba Sadeqi, Cultural Program Director -

We must always wish that our presence will reduce a burden from the society we live in. I have always lived with this motto. It has been slightly more than a year since I started working with Star Educational Society. I graduated from the English language program at Star many years ago. Star was not only a school for my educational activities, but a place where I could carry on volunteer work to help improve society and reduce the problems in our country. In the last year, I began my work by launching a comprehensive library for Star Educational Society, advancing the library's approach and modernizing its operations. The library contains more than 7,000 English language books in a diverse scope of subjects, with scientific resources as well as educational resources for scholars. I am proud of this achievement.

Since I was a top student of Star Educational Society in the year 2008, I returned last year to join Star as a teacher. I soon acquired the position of Cultural Program Director. The cultural programming that I have organized in this past year has made Star shine even more than before. One of the greatest achievements for Star's Cultural Department was the commencement of the Interstellar Bulletin, Star's weekly newspaper. This weekly proved to be an educational resource for English language learners in addition to a great source to motivate aspiring writers and to report on cultural activities in Kabul and across Afghanistan. The weekly has been distributed in five provinces including Bamiyan, Daikondi, Mazar e Sharif and Herat.

Shahrzad, Star's Persian monthly magazine, is another great achievement. It is a high-quality cultural and educational publication with a focus on literature and the arts which has already received widespread acclaim and much appreciation with Persian speakers inside and outside Afghanistan. Shahzad demonstrates Star's ability to make English language literature accessible to a Persian audience and to promote Persian Literature and a culture of reading. Star recently published the third successful issue of Shahzad. With a rapidly growing list of subscribers, we look forward to publishing many more issues in the future.

Star has been an active supporter in many of Afghanistan's social justice initiatives during the past year. Some of the events we have been instrumental in hosting, promoting and participating in include: 1000 Smiles for Peace exhibition, an awareness campaign for International Anti-Street Harassment Week, the Third Annual Human Rights Film Festival, Kabul Model United Nations and several other small and big programs. Star's ability to mobilize hundreds of students, teachers and community members for civil society initiatives demonstrates Star's ability to bring about change.

I am very pleased to be a part of this journey. The educational achievements of Star Educational Society have been considerable. But Star's sense of responsibility reaches beyond the academic sphere. Star considers its educational activities of equal importance to ethical, cultural, and social activities. Studying, working and teaching in an institute with such a broad reach in society has taught me many lessons. I have never been far away from Star and will never be. I will always be directly or indirectly involved in Star activities and programs. Even if I happen to be away from Star geographically, my contribution to Star and Star's initiatives will continue. Star will be a steady supporter of the rights of women, children and young adults in different capacities. Reading skills and the culture of reading will continue to improve. Star teachers will work harder to cultivate the seeds of hope among their students, to prepare them for competitive jobs, build their confidence and stimulate their sense of duty to society. Star will continue to support and encourage its current and former students to compete for Fulbright and other scholarship opportunities. I will leave to pursue my higher education with a commitment to return with an even greater gift of knowledge, love and dedication. I love my Star family. I love my people.
She was a bold and witty girl. Looking at her eyes as green and sharp as a cat’s, one could understand her courage and confidence. She had long black hair. Her bright, white skin made her look different from us. She was the most disobedient girl in our class. Her name was Latifa and she looked happy and funny, like her name. However, her personal story was not a happy one.

Latifa was the eldest of five sisters. One day, the Taliban entered the village, and the war broke out all through Afghanistan. Everyone was crying and in shock. Everyone was hoping to give birth to a son until Latifa’s only brother, Ali Sina, was born. "My mother pays special attention to my brother and treats him differently," said Latifa. Her mother believed that Ali Sina should go to school and get a good education so that he can defend his five sisters one day. In contrast, the girls in the family received no recognition or appreciation if they did any good deeds.

Latifa’s father was disabled and had a shop in Pol-e-Sokhta that did not provide enough to cover the family’s expenses. Latifa had to do the chores, weave carpets with her younger sisters and go to school as well. One day she came to school sad and quiet. Our classmates asked about her sadness during the class break. She said, "I will soon have to get married and will not come to school anymore. I don’t know the man but my mother insists that I marry him. My mother thinks he is a rich man and can change our lives. We will buy a new house and my brother will go to a better school.”

As she was wiping her tears and waxy eyes with her sleeves, she stopped crying and became quiet. We all became quiet, reflecting on our shared destiny and powerlessness as Afghan girls. Latifa was no longer as happy as she was in earlier days. I remembered once my grandmother said, "A girl’s bad days start when she gets married.”

Latifa was not only beautiful but sharp too. She tried to see her future husband, Hamid, before the engagement party. One afternoon she wore her mother’s burqa and went to Hamid’s workplace. She was excited to see how he would be, hoping he would be the man of her dreams. By the time she reached the workshop, she discovered that Hamid was a tough-looking man, around 35 years old, and overweight.

"As I looked at him through the net of my burqa, I became frozen and speechless. My tears fell from my eyes and I ran toward the sad, setting sun hanging over my home in the west of Kabul... the setting sun of my happiness and maybe the setting sun of a happy Latifa," she said.

Now Latifa has two sons and one daughter. She said, "I lived, laughed, and cried my life for others. Once for my family, once for my society and now for my children. I could not be the person I wanted to be. However, I want my daughter to get the best education. I do not want my sons and daughter to live in separate worlds where a girl has no choice to make her own life. We Afghan women have been resting our elbow on the window sill with our chin in our hand gazing sadly out the window our whole lives. Now it’s our duty to try our level best to make a prosperous future for our daughters and the next generation as a whole."
By Bill Gates | December 7, 2015

hat You Believe Affects What You Achieve

If you have the fixed mindset and believe you lose the genetic lottery, you also have little incentive to work hard. Why bother putting in a lot of effort to learn a difficult concept if you’ve convinced yourself that you’re lousy at it and nothing is going to alter that basic equation? When I was visiting with community college students in Arizona, one young man said to me, “I’m one of the people who’s not good at math.” It kills me when I hear that kind of thing. I think about how different things might have been if he had been told consistently “you’re very capable of learning this stuff.”

In contrast, people with the growth mindset believe that basic qualities, including intelligence, can be strengthened like muscles, it’s not that they believe that anyone can become the next Albert Einstein or Michael Jordan if they just work hard enough on their physics homework or fadeaway jumpers. Instead, in Dweck’s words “they believe a person’s true potential is unknown (and unknowable); that it’s impossible to foresee what can be accomplished with years of passion, toil, and training.” As a result, they have every incentive to take on tough challenges and seek our opportunities to improve.

One of the reasons I loved Mindset is because it’s solutions-oriented. In the book’s final chapter, Dweck describes the workshop she and her colleagues have developed to shift students from a fixed to a growth mindset. These workshops demonstrate that “just learning about the growth mindset can cause a big shift in the way people think about themselves and their lives.”

My only criticism of the book is that Dweck slightly oversimplifies for her general audience. Contrary to the impression Dweck creates here (but probably not in her academic papers), most of us are not purely fixed mindset people or growth mindset people. We’re both. When I was reading the book, I realized that I had approached some things with a growth mindset (like bridge) while other things in a fixed mindset (like bankroll).

The greatest virtue of the book is that it can’t help but ask yourself things like, “Which areas have I always looked at through a fixed mindset lens?” and “In what ways am I sending the wrong messages to my children about mindset and effort?” Thanks to Dweck’s skillful coaching, you’re almost guaranteed to approach these tough questions with a growth mindset.

Basir Ahang Speech at Warsaw

Basir Ahang Speech at Warsaw

What we emphasize today is, we want the International Community to continue its aids and assistances to Afghanistan, but at the same time, put pressure on the Afghans to stop racial discrimination against its citizens, particularly the Hazaras people. Dear International Community friends! You may know that in the last fourteen years of your presence in Afghanistan, racial discrimination and oppression against the Hazaras People has been going on and this ethnic minority has always been deprived of its rights, in their area nothing has been allocated as the reconstruction funds from the bil-lions of international Community Aids to Afghanistan.

You should beware that even nowadays, as back to the nineteenth century, the Hazara citizens of Afghanistan are kept deprived of their basic rights, by the Afghanistnian government and they still suffer injustice and prejudice. They are facing a systematic ethnic cleansing even in the contemporary Afghanistan. You might ask yourself, why so many Hazaras area leaving Afghanistan and risk their lives to reach Europe. Well, the answer is easy: Hazaras of Afghanistan are constantly targeted by the Taliban and they are constantly attacked by extremist groups, therefore, Hazaras have to allocate your aids to Afghanistan, conditioned on discrimination-free measures to guarantee social justice in this country, so that the Hazara citizens wouldn’t be forced to flee their country for survival.

What we want from the Afghanistnian Gov-ernment President Ashraf Ghani! You are here to give speech and assure the Inter-national Community, about your good government, formation of your justice-based political and government structure. Let us remind you: our constitution which you are obliged to implement, protect and respect, emphasizes on social justice, fair treatment of all citizens, equal rights and equal development for all citizens. Dur-

ing your electoral campaign, you used the slogan: “No citizen is better than the other one, nor one is worse than the other one” and promised to unlock the Hazara lands naturally and provided to improve their ways and bringing them development.

Now after two years and half of your term, you still don’t care about the direction of what you promised, even to the point that you have violated the con-
sitution. Let us remind you that you have been changed one of the most important na-
tional projects of the country that would pass through the Hazara areas and which helped better lives of millions of Hazaras, only because of your discriminatory poli-
cies. The TUTAP Power Transit Line through Bamyan would help Afghanistan get self-sufficient in long term with ther-
mal power plants, as well as the extraction of Huajqong from Mine and Anak Copper Mine but you changed the original mas-
ter plan in February this year. To change the original master plan, you said, that the budget have been changed from 35 million dollars more and the International Community would not pay that, while now you say that the Asian Development Bank is ready to pay 100 million dollars for the alternative plan. Mr. Ghani, by promising electricity for 20,000 of Bamyan, you stopped a huge development project for central Af-
ghanistan.

Thousands of thousands of people came on the roads to protest, you stood against them. Now you are here to ask the support of international Community, while your popularity in Afghanistan is being re-
duced drastically. Let’s us tell the Interna-
tional Community that reasons behind the fall of your popularity in Afghanistan are; the monopoly of power by you, oppres-
sion, and violation of constitution. Let us tell, that the president who receives the bountiful foreign aids, paid by every sin-
gle penny of the tax payers of democratic countries, use that money against democr-
acy, social justice and fair treatment of its citizens. Mr. President! Are you supposed to be in Afghanistan as the representative of non-Pashtun people are not represented when it comes to national decision mak-
ing? Have you ever paid attention to the list of disproportionate number of non-
Pashtun being appointed as ambassador to foreign countries?

You call Afghanistan, a home for all Afghans, but not all Afghans are repre-
sented when it comes to provincial lead-
ership. Mr. President! We all know that systematic discrimination and injustice drove Afghanistan into a protracted civil war. Under your rule, there is a fear that the mounting chaos may drive the country again to another civil war. Are you aware where you are taking the country, after all? But, we, the people, stand against injust-
ices, raise our voice against your discrimi-
natory attitudes.
Promote Scholarship Program provides scholarships for 720 girls in the next five years. Promote Scholarship Program, which is supported by American International Development Office in Afghanistan, started functioning on Wednesday, 29 of June in Kabul.

Investing on education is investing on peace, prosperity, and development," said Abdullah Abdulrahman in a program held in American Embassy in Kabul. Mr. Abdullah also recommended those who do not use the scholarships to use them in good way.

According to Chief Executive officer’s sayings, our country faces crises though they have been struggling for 15 years to improve this crisis. Diplomats with (few exceptions) now travel to and from Kabul airport only by helicopter. The road to the embassy – fewer than three miles long – is deemed too dangerous. (The US embassy refused to comment, citing “security matters”). The US embassy has a similar policy.

There's always something in this. For a decade, Afghanistan attracted adventurers, do-gooders, racketeers and reporters like flypaper. Many got stuck in an intoxicating ‘Kabubble' of adrenaline and booze. Stories abound of drinking in brothels, drag racing through empty streets at night and making out at Talalib-themed costume parties.

If the expat bubble in Kabul in the 00s was like a pool scene from Boogie Nights, Kabul in 2016 is more like Panic Room. Take, for instance, one European embassy (which will remain unnamed). One night, its staff were awakened by gunfire. Frantically, they scrambled for the underground safe room. One clenched a gun, another cried in the corner. Their radios were silent. They assumed the security team was busy fighting outside. It turned out Afghanistan had won a big cricket match and half the city was engaged in a little celebrity gunfire. The embassy security team was indeed busy watching the game.

This episode is like the cartoon version of why foreign governments fail in Afghanistan: they don’t understand the game.

The mosque in front of my house is silent. The Peoples' Democratic party (TDP) Kairos, the case of Turkey's membership to the European Union, Johannes Hahn, the commissioner of European Union has said that it looks from the fires and arrestsments after the failed coup that Turkey's Government had a list already. On 18 of July, the German Government has announced that by returning of the death penalty in Turkey, the case of Turkey's membership in European Union is over. The Peoples' Democratic party of Turkey, a Turkish parliament member that most of its fans are from Kurds, has also said that they will not support any plans regarding to the returning of the death penalty.

The Turkish official news agency has announced the number of fired officers to 8777 among whom governors and mayors are also included. Moreover, the media says that after the Friday's coup in 15 July, more than hundred generals and army commanders are arrested. Accorded Binali Yelmen, the prime minister of Turkey, yet around 7500 army forces and juridical persons are arrested because of being involved in coup moves. The Turkey's government says that Fethullah Gulen, a political and religious leader living in United States of America is involved in this coup, but Mr. Gulen has ignored it and has claimed that Rajab Tayyip Erdogan himself is involved in these recent evolutions. The ministry of interior of Turkey says that after that a failed coup in that country, 7900 police officers and more than 600 gendarmes fired in different cities. Eight thousand Turkish police officers were fired. How could you not love the street kids who shout “What’s up?” before stopping the traffic and holding the car door open for your seat? You’ll find pool sharks gambling hundreds of dollars; old men on street corners writing love letters on request; young women organising street protests; proud coppersmiths; millonaire kleptocrats and philanthropists; poets and rappers; one Jew (reportedly); and the best jokes about Pakistan you’re likely to hear.

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On July 18th, the Afghanistan Green Future Organization held a biking competition to celebrate the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking which falls on 26th June, each year. Wearing white t-shirts with anti-drugs imprinted slogans on them and tightening their shoe laces, the participants lined up behind the start line. The 6th district police officers too, hurriedly began to block the roads to ensure convenience and safety.

The bikers had to race from Baba Mazari Square all the way to Darulaman Palace which is 2.4 Kilo meters, not much for the boys, but overwhelmingly tiring for the female competitors.

At exactly 6:30 in the morning, the whistle went off and in a glance, the sportsmen fathomed ten to twenty meters. Initially, Ahmad Zia (no 4) took the lead, but eventually, two other contestants (Number 7 and 8) overtook him. Soon after, Amir (No 9) caught up with the two leading bikers of the competition. The three competitors (Numbers 7, 8 and 9) stole the attention of photographers for almost the entire competition, whereas, the rest of the bikers lagged behind. From the very beginning, competition for the first position was too tight between Ali Asghar (No 7) and his teammate Asghar (No 8), whereas Amir (No 9) was lagging slightly behind them, seemingly, securing the third position.

Suddenly, the bikers began to appear from the Finish line. The more they were getting closer to the line, the faster they were peddling. Finally, as expected, Ali Asghar (No 7) secured the first position against his toughest rival Asghar (No 8) with an insignificant difference. After few seconds, Amir (No 9) crossed the finish line and won the third position of the boys’ team.

As the boys’ team was done, the girls’ team began peddling against one another, towards the finish line. Results of the girls’ competition were easily predictable from the beginning. Sima (No 2) had already shown great transcendence against her opponents. Unlike the boys’ team, the toughest competition was marked amidst two starians; Taiba (No 1) Prisa (No 4) who were pursuing Beta (No 3).

In few minutes, Sima made it to the finish line and won the first position. Beta crossed the finish line second, as expected, whereas, Taiba and Parisa were diligently competing for the third position. It was not clear who would win the third position until they both were few meters away from the finish line. Taiba’s efforts paid off and granted her the third position with a minor difference with her colleague, Parisa.

The first position holders of both the teams were introduced amidst a thunderous applause, and gifts and certificates were presented by the 6th district police commander. Gifts and the certificates of the second position holders were offered by AGFO’s vice president, Murtaza Qasemi. Hadi Amiri gave certificates to the third position holders as well as the entire participants.

After shooting a number of pictures, the police officers were greatly thanked for their peerless assistance, and the young participants were advised to fight against drugs at every stage of their lives, and never to quit sports.
Well, we had all these children out planting trees, see, because we fig- ucred that that was part of their education, to see how, you know, the root systems — and also the sense of responsibility, taking care of things, being individually responsible. You know what I mean. And the trees all died. They were orange trees. I don't know why they died, they just died. Something wrong with the soil possi- bly or maybe the stuff we got from the nursery wasn't the best. We com- plained about it. So we've got thirty kids there, each kid had his or her own little tree to plant and we've got these thirty dead trees. All these kids looking at these little brown sticks, it was depressing.

It wouldn’t have been so bad ex- cept that just a couple of weeks before the thing with the trees, the snakes all died. But I think that the snakes — well, the reason that the snakes kicked off was that you remember, the boiler was shut off for four days because of the strike, and that was explicable. It was something you could explain to the kids because of the strike. I mean, none of their parents would let them cross the picket line and they knew there was a strike going on and what it meant. So when things got started up again and we found the snakes they weren’t too disturbed.

With the herb gardens it was probably a case of overwatering, and at least now they know not to over- water. The children were very con- scious with the herb gardens and some of them probably you know, slipped them a little extra water when we weren’t looking. Or maybe — well, I don’t like to think about sabotage, although it did occur to us. I mean, it was something that crossed our minds. We were thinking that way probably because before that the ger- bils had died, and the white mice had died, and the salamander — well, now they know not to carry them around in plastic bags.

Of course we expected the tropi- cal fish to die, that was no surprise. Those numbers, you look at them crooked and they’re belly-up on the surface. But the lesson plan called for a tropical fish input at that point, there was nothing we could do, it happens every year, you just have to

hurry past it.

We weren’t even supposed to have a puppy.

We weren’t even supposed to have one, it was just a puppy the Mur- doch girl found under a Grisede’s truck one day and she was afraid the truck would run over it when the driv- er had finished making his delivery, so she stuck it in her knapsack and brought it to the school with her. So we had this puppy. As soon as I saw the puppy I thought, Oh Christ, I bet it will live for about two weeks and then... And that’s what it did. It wasn’t supposed to be in the classroom at all, there was some kind of regulatory about it, but you can’t tell them they can’t have a puppy when the puppy is already there, right in front of them, running around on the floor and yap yap yapping. They named it Edgar — that is, they named it after me. They had a lot of fun running after it and yelling. “Here, Edgar! Nice Edgar!” Then they’d laugh like hell. They en- joyed the ambiguity. I enjoyed it my- self. I don’t mind being kidded. They made a little house for it in the supply closet and all that. I don’t know what it died of. Distemper, I guess. It proba- bly hadn’t had any shots. I got it out of there before the kids got to school. I checked the supply closet each morn- ing, routinely, because I knew what was going to happen. I gave it to the custodian.

And then there was this Ko- rean orphan that the class adopted through the Help the Children pro- gram, all the kids brought in a quar- ter a month, that was the idea. It was an unfortunate thing, the kid’s name was Kim and maybe we adopted him too late or something. The cause of death was not stated in the letter we got, they suggested we adopt another child instead and sent us some inter- esting case histories, but we didn’t have the heart. The class took it pretty hard, but I think, nobody ever said anything to me directly) to feel that maybe there was something wrong with the school. But Christ, I don’t think there’s anything wrong with the school, particularly, I’ve seen better and I’ve seen worse. It was just a run of bad luck. We had an extraordinary number of parents passing away, for instance. There were I think two heart attacks and two suicides, one drown- ing, and four killed together in a car accident. One stroke. And we had the usual heavy mortality rate among the grandparents, or maybe it was heav- ier this year, it seemed so. And finally the tragedy.

The tragedy occurred when Mat- thew Wein and Tony Mavrogordo were playing over where they’re exca- vating for the new federal office build- ing. There were all these big wooden beams stacked, you know, at the edge of the excavation. There’s a court case coming out of that, the parents are claiming that the beams were poorly stacked. I don’t know what’s true and what’s not. It’s been a strange year.

I forgot to mention Billy Brandt’s father who was knifed fatally when he grappled with a masked intruder in his home.

One day, we had a discussion in class. They asked me, where did they go? The trees, the salamander, the tropical fish, Edgar, the poppas and mommams, Matthew and Tony, where did they go? And I said, I don’t know, I don’t know. And they said, who knows? and I said, nobody knows. And they said, is death which gives meaning to life? And I said no, life is that which gives meaning to life. Then they said, but isn’t death, con- sidered as a fundamental datum, the means by which the taken-for-grant- ed mundanity of the everyday may be transcended in the direction of —

I said, yes, maybe.

They said, we don’t like it.

I said, that’s sound.

They said, it’s a bloody shame!

I said, it is.

They said, will you make love now with Helen (our teaching assistant) so that we can see how it is done? We know you like Helen.

I do like Helen but I said that I would not.

We’ve heard so much about it, they said, but we’ve never seen it.

I said I would be fired and that it was never, or almost never, done as a demonstration. Helen looked out the window.

They said, please, please make love with Helen, we require an asser- tion of value, we are frightened.

I said that they shouldn’t be fright- ened (although I am often frightened) and that there was value everywhere. Helen came and embraced me. I kissed her a few times on the brow. We held each other. The children were excited. Then there was a knock on the door, I opened the door, and the new gerbil walked in. The chil- dren cheered wildly.
We hoped it would be only a short journey and we would return. We never returned. We became refugees. Your father had been the rebel. They first chased him down to the mountains of Rasna; from there they forced him to flee to Pakistan. From Pakistan, he arranged for us to be picked up under the moonlight, leaving everything behind but our family.

Our lives turned upside down when you were approximately two, and Abdul was about five months old. Your father had befriended Nasim, Abbas Karblaye's son. He frequented our house, and he was like a family member to us.

One late evening there was a knock on the door. I asked who it was:

Nakchi, I am Nasim. Open the door.

I opened the door but to my surprise there were two other people with him. He said they were his and your father’s friends. I let them in. They said they had come from Patro.

I instructed your mother to serve them dinner. After tea, they said they were tired and had to leave. They said they had been sent by your father to pick up the weapon.

We have no guns. The looked at Nasim and then said they had clue given to them by your father:

Mamoo said the gun was concealed in the chimney.

I was astounded. That’s where it was. Only a select few knew that. I believed them, and that is how they managed to get the gun from me. I did not know they were commander’s men.

Unbeknown to me, Nasim had betrayed us. Your father had befriended Nasim and entrusted him with the locations of the weapons. It was all Nasim’s handy work… perhaps he had been forced to reveal everything. That beghayrat!

My son-in-law Aatay Ali Jan had been beaten beyond recognition. His skin had turned dark red. He had been forced to hand over your father’s hand-gun. They had also visited Moallem-e-Jaar and had taken away some weapons from them. I thought my baby son would be next. I sent your uncle to Jaar and had him hide for weeks in Ishaq’s winter shed. He was only a child. I made him go away, far away. I sent him over the mountains with Aatay Ali Jan one night, on foot, through the mountains, eventually all the way to Pakistan.

We have no guns.

Your father found out. He sent us a secret message to take the bare minimum of our belongings and flee to Pakistan. That’s what we did; under the moonlight, leaving everything behind, hoping that it would be only a short journey. We never returned. We became refugees.

*Nakchi = Auntie
*Beghayrat = Dishonourable

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Orhan Pamuk

Orhan Pamuk (born on June 7, 1952 in Istanbul) is a Nobel Prize-winning Turkish novelist and professor of comparative literature at Columbia University. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature on October 12, 2006, becoming the first Turkish person to receive a Nobel Prize. Pamuk has been persecuted and prosecuted for his criticism of some episodes in the Turkish past, including genocide against the Kurds and Armenians. At the same time, he has been critical of Western arrogance over their achievements, such as the Enlightenment and Modernism. Pamuk has sought to bridge the cultural difference between traditional society and modernity.

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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 New South Wales. He is currently a post-graduate student at the University of New South Wales.
Hello Qamar Jan, please introduce yourself to the readers of Interstellar.

Hello my name is Qamar Nisa Ayoshi and I am one of the alumni of Star. Currently I am enrolled at Wagner College in New York here I will be attending in the fall of 2016 majoring in pre-health. I graduated high school from Saint Margaret’s School in Virginia.

Why did you choose to begin your English studies at Star Educational Society? I joined Star in 2012 and the reason I joined Star is because of its quality education. Specifically, I was more encouraged to join Star because when I got to know the students who were prepared and studied at Star, they mastered English language and they used this skill and their knowledge to obtain more opportunities for their further studies such as scholarships and jobs that they could acquire with English language.

I heard that you were given a scholarship to attend Star. Yes, I received scholarship from Star. Star was very generous to give discount and scholarships to students who were on Honor roll and I was one of them.

Tell us how Star and Star teachers were influential in your opportunity to study abroad. I started studying in the U.S. in 2013 as a sophomore, 10th grader, and Star played a huge role in my success to get a scholarship from Saint Margaret’s because I learned English at Star and all my teachers from Star helped me with my essays and portfolios and applications in order to get this scholarship.

Were there any teachers or staff members at Star who were particularly influential in your success? It is kind of you to call me successful. I still have so much to do and obtain, but I think I am on the right track. A number of Star staff and teachers were part of my success: Hussain Yousofi, Ali Reza Yasa, Ahmad Murtaza Ahmadi, and Murtaza Farjad played key roles in getting me to where I am now – especially when I was Hussain Yousofi’s student. I started from scratch learning English, computer and many other things. But he was so patient with me and guided me as I needed. Also, Hussain Yousofi’s encouragement was very crucial for me because it helped me to believe in myself and my abilities in the midst of all the obstacles and problems around me. That helped me to overcome them.

When did you first realize you wanted to study abroad and what were the reasons? I wanted to study abroad because it was my dream since childhood. I wanted to acquire the needed knowledge and skills in order to come back to Afghanistan and serve. And that was only possible to study abroad at a school or college that I could get quality education and learn enough knowledge and skills in order to be successful in my field of study.

What were some of the hardest things you encountered in the U.S.? I felt cultural shock when I first reached the USA because I had never traveled before, and it took me a while to get used to American culture. Although I was ready to start an independent life away from home, I got homesick and I was missing everything in Afghanistan especially my family and the bread (Naan). But as I made good friends, life got easier and more fun for me over there.

A number of Star staff and teachers were part of my success: Hussain Yousofi, Ali Reza Yasa, Ahmad Murtaza Ahmadi, and Murtaza Farjad played key roles in getting me to where I am now. In particular, Hussain Yousofi is my absolute role model and my favorite teacher and friend, and he is my role model as well because he possesses all the qualities of a well-achieved and successful person yet he is very humble and friendly. Hussain Yousofi’s encouragement was very crucial for me because it helped me to believe in myself and my abilities in the midst of all the obstacles and problems around me. That helped me to overcome them.

Who is one of your role models and why? Hussain Yousofi is my absolute favorite teacher and friend, and he is my role model as well because he possesses all the qualities of a well-achieved and successful person yet he is very humble and friendly. Hussain Yousofi is my absolute role model and my favorite teacher and friend, and he is my role model as well because he possesses all the qualities of a well-achieved and successful person yet he is very humble and friendly.