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

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

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

In addition, Advance A and Advance B are the two advanced diploma courses. At Star Educational Society, the purpose of advanced classes is to prepare students for university and colleges. Students have to consider these two classes as university success courses. Advance A and Advance B are two consecutive courses with continuous weekly quizzes, assessment test, major assignments, diary writing, and movie assignment. In these courses, students learn how to write an academic essay, how to write summaries, how to paraphrase, how to avoid plagiarism and how to utilize the MLA writing style.

Furthermore, four different kinds of essays are taught in these two courses like the process essay, the comparative summary essay, argumentative essay and academic essay. Star graduates will be familiar with academic writing as well as the different styles of bibliography, similes, metaphors and analogies.

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

Join us for a difference

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

Star Educational Society wishes all of our readers a Happy Nowrooz!

Spring

Written By: William Blake

Little boy, Full of joy;
Little girl, Sweet and small;
Cock does crow, So do you;
Merry voice, Infant noise;
Merrily, Merry, to welcome in the year.

Little lamb, Here I am;
Come and lick My white neck;
Let me pull Your soft wool;
Let me kiss Your soft face;
Merrily, merrily, to welcome in the year.
The City of Hope and Fear

About the author: Waheed Hadeed is a Star alumnus and teacher. He is currently working toward his bachelor's degree in Economics at Kabul University.

It was dark and cold in the early morning. I had to attend Kabul University at 6 o’clock to take the final test of my German class. I was on the bus when a young girl boarded the bus and attracted my attention. She was the only woman among the passengers inasmuch as the early morning passengers in my city are mostly male workers. The girl was wearing a beige hat, a black scarf, and a long old gray jacket. While she was standing up, she took a thick book out of her old bag and started reading it in front of the weak light shining from her mobile screen. She continued reading the book until she exited the bus many stops later. I thought such hardworking people will rebuild our city.

The event reminded me of a similar scene I had witnessed long ago. One day I was walking along the street. Suddenly, I saw a very young boy, maybe ten or eleven years old, studying while he was selling goods from a roadside stall. I went to his small stall and asked him for a pack of gum to find the opportunity to talk to him. I saw there were some notebooks, some school books, ‘Razi Mowaffaqyat’ (The secret to succeed), and ‘Qanon Amin wa Khormoz’ (Amin in front of him on the wooden floor). Then, I asked him, “What do you intend to be in the future?” He answered confidently, “I will rescue my people.” I was very optimistic about the future of my city.

But my hopefulness turned into hopelessness when I was returning from university. Perhaps the young woman I saw on the bus that morning was one of the victims of the blast whose terrifying sound I heard as I left my exam. Some of the people around me were extremely shocked when they heard the blast. However, the reaction of the rest of us wasn’t shock but pity for the people who were killed and injured by the blast, since most people in the city have become accustomed to the voice of these attacks.

In the evening I was listening to the news through the radio on my mobile phone. I heard an old woman saying sadly that one of the victims, Zainab, was her only daughter. She said that Zainab couldn’t be dead, she still had to realize her big dreams. I also heard a young man crying and saying he couldn’t believe his young brother’s death. The, I heard the tearful voice of a young lady who couldn’t be understood. One of her relatives said the woman’s husband had been killed leaving his wife and two babies alone.

After hearing the news, I understood how the blast ended the big dreams of my citizens – dreams of success, development, and construction. My concern deepened when I considered the fact that such events are part of my life now. Such events have become commonplace in my city. I begin to worry about my own dream sellers – the young boy who I met at his roadside stall and the young girl who I saw on the bus this morning.

However, I have also promised that I will help my city to survive. I have made a commitment to be part of the reconstruction of my city. For sure, the threats will continue to create challenges. But I will remain optimistic and will utilize the opportunities to strengthen myself. My city! One day I will be strong enough to overcome the challenges you face today. You will be built. You will be a center of education, brotherhood, peace, and development. I promise.

Poem for Woman’s Day

Written by Tooba Rahmati, a Star alumna and teacher. She aims to major in literature in university and to become a professional writer.

I am suffocating
Suffocation with inequality
Domestic violence
Rape
Social bondage
Superstitious behavior of men’s world
Dowry, problem of my country
And several other problems
Which suffocate me!

Where to go
With whom to seek shelter!
Everyone is a wolf
Disguised as men!
I am so confused!
Thinking day and night
I am a creator
Not a creature!
And still so sad what a hypocrisy
Hypocrisy of this world
That makes me feel
So depressed!

I am a creator!
Yes, creator of a new life
But my life is not my own!
I have to sacrifice
Again and again
And taking exams
Passed all these!
But still I am a secondary person!
I am getting tired to present in the society
Again and again
My heart is beating fast!
My soul is crying deeply
I am suffocating!

Rules and new thoughts
Improving greatly
But the thought process
Is still orthodox
I want to eliminate
This ancient mental war,
You know! In some countries!
People kill me in my mom’s womb!
Still you say
I am secure!
Is this a healthy society?
I am doubtful
My trust is decreasing
My faith is minimized
I am suffocating!

Let’s begin a new era
An atmosphere
Of safety
A surrounding
Of people
That are mentally sound
And make me feel
At least a human being
Not any goddess
And not a rejected piece of this world
Not unattended
I want respect
Not your pity
I am complete
And I want peace
The great escape.

Getting the first position for the first time

About the author: Zaker Hussain is a Level Two student at Ustad Mohammad Reza Shariﬁ’s class at Star’s C Branch.

When I was in fourth grade, I had the dream of getting the first position in my class so that my family would be proud of me. I was always studying my lessons and was busy with my books and notes.

books. As a regular student I was always doing my homework after school. I was always practicing my lessons. Finally, our teachers announced the date of our exams. After some days our exams began. I was trying day and night. I used to wake up earlier in the morning and practice my lessons. I was studying to reach my dream.

When I was busy with my books and note-
as always studying my lessons and family would be proud of me. I was had the dream of getting the first position for the first time.
A Month Passed Like a Moment in Daikundi

It is about 6 o’clock in the evening. The home is neat and there are several types of food arranged on the table in the kitchen. The walls of the kitchen and the living room are decorated with different designs of “Happy 2015.” The doorbell rings. It is late. One of the host’s colleagues and his spouse are at the door carrying a box with homemade cake and cookies. Now, other guests are also coming and everyone has brought a meal or a dessert with themselves. The hosts and guests arrange and coordinate everything in advance about what they will bring so that the host does not have to prepare and cook everything for the party. They all sit together and greet each other. They share their concerns, happy news and their status. One is talking about his son’s graduation next year, another is talking about her plans for university, and another one is sharing news about his daughter’s basketball tournament.

In such informal and intimate American parties, everyone will serve themselves. There are no Afghan norms and customs ruling such cozy parties. As they all eat together, they enjoy and praising each other’s cuisines. Like in previous years, the woman from the neighboring home is constantly walking back and forth between the homes to come back with different meals. Her husband always cooks some special meals for New Year’s eve. Among the activities in such gatherings they play family games together which are great fun for them. While eating, playing and laughing, they talk about the best and worst parts of the past year, and their wishes for the new year. Here one of the ordinary things to talk about is losing weight and getting physically fit. It rarely happens in Afghanistan that people gather in one place for New Year’s eve and talk about the past and the future; instead of just talking and enjoying each other’s company, Afghans are commonly competing for the best and fanciest ways in which they can serve the guests. After several rounds of card games and talking for hours, the clock shows 11:30 PM. The TV is showing a live broadcast from the New Year’s eve celebrations in New York City. Everyone is wearing party hats that say “Happy 2015,” playing flutes, and are happy. Such activities are mostly considered ridiculous in Afghanistan, especially when elders do it. Finally, the last seconds of 2014 arrive. We count down the last ten seconds of 2014: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and then there are sounds of clapping and cheering in the home. Everyone is greeting each other and exchanging wishes for a happy new year. After all this excitement and joy, everyone leaves to return to their own homes.

This night, like always, I have been thinking about Afghanistan and how the special days are celebrated there. In the U.S., normally the families and friends gather on special days and just enjoy being together, and are not so extravagant. As soon as you enter the host’s home, you feel relaxed and are not worried about formalities; just enjoy yourselves. I remember the first days when I came to America, one of our advisors told us that when we are guests we should serve ourselves and do not wait for someone else to bring us a meal or tea. Coming from a cultural background full of formalities, it takes time to get used to such informal behaved culture. The major part of our Eid or any other special days is dedicated to our great hospitality and how well we serve our guests. Afghan hosts are then very busy to prepare the food and clean the kitchen. I am so proud of teaching some deprived students in one of the farthest located provinces which was my ambition from the beginning days that I joined Star and joined learning English at Star Educational Society (B) branch. I am content that this dream came true. Despite some hardships I do not hesitate to become a teacher. I have my own reasons and considerations for this, from my early childhood up to now. I have developed a love for the young children. For me they are gentle and beautiful like the petals of a flower.

I feel that as a teacher, I can help the students in widening their outlook by giving them the means to new horizons of enlightenment and true knowledge. I will have the satisfaction of doing an invaluable service to the country by producing better students. Moreover, the company of the young and fresh in thoughts students gives me a new perspective about the future of this war torn country. Besides, rendering all these important services, I want to continue teaching and to be a good server for my people.

The memory of the days spent in Daikundi is still haunting my mind. Although I wish that those days, full of pleasure, having fantastic classes, teaching the intelligent students who have always needed English as the language. The youth have their own dreams in life, many hope to be rich, some dream about becoming leaders, politicians, and social reformers and some like my students wish to learn English so that they could communicate with the counterparts directly in their government offices. But for me, the whole passion was to be able to be connected with some of the most genuine, honest and most beautiful human beings in my life. I am so proud of teaching some deprived students in one of the farthest located provinces which was my ambition from the beginning days that I joined Star and joined learning English at Star Educational Society (B) branch. I am content that this dream came true. Despite some hardships I do not hesitate to become a teacher. I have my own reasons and considerations for this, from my early childhood up to now. I have developed a love for the young children. For me they are gentle and beautiful like the petals of a flower.

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March 26th, 2016

News

37% increase in murders of women

Translated by: Shaeista Langari
Source: BBC Persian

UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) said that mortality rate of women had increased 37 percent in 2015 than the previous year. According to UNAMA’s news agency, in the wide spread violence and killing of civilians in Afghanistan women are also among victims.

This United Nation organization added that violence against women and wrong cultures that are roots of discrimination were still a problem in Afghanistan. In addition, in 2015 there were some threats against women’s normal life especially women rights activist.

Afghanistan defeats Hong Kong by 6 wickets at the Cricket World Cup in India

Translated by: Hadi Shaikhzada
Source: BBC Persian

In today’s play, in Nagpoor city in India, the lottery drawn to the Hong Kong’s team and 117 run stood for target. Afghanistan, with the loss of three players and 17 turns, could complete the target.

Hong Kong’s Team played well at the beginning but Mohammad Nabi, a throwing player of Afghanistan’s Team, could terminate many of the Hong Kong’s players and turned the play to Afghanistan’s pro. He also earned the best player label of this match.

Shahzad Mohammadi could earn 41 point for Afghanistan. His cooperation with Noor Ali Zadran increased the winning chance for Afghanistan. On Tuesday, Afghanistan defeated Scotland on the first match.

Afghanistan’s next play will be with Zimbabwe on Saturday, 12th of March.

Asghar Iskandary is the captain and Inzemamulhaq is the coach of Afghanistan’s team.

Noorestani: probable delay in parliamentary election

Translator: Nadia Qasemi
Source: BBC Persian

The head of the Independent Election Commission has warned that because of lack of funds, parliament elections and local councils would probably be delayed for next year.

Ahmad Yussef Noorestani said in a press conference that if government didn’t pay the expenses of election to the commission, the election wouldn’t be held next year on 24 of Mizan. He added that there were some people in the United Nations and some embassies that ignore laws of Afghanistan in order to reach to their goals.

Mr. Noorestani without explaining who they are and how they violate laws and rules of Afghanistan wants President Ashraf Ghazi to stop them. The Election Commission chairman asks this while President Ashraf Ghazi is willing to change authorities of election commission including Mr. Noorestani. According to this command, selecting committee has the authority to recommend 27 people to President Ashraf Ghani with respect to ethnic and gender that, 9 of whom will be selected for the membership in election commission by the president.

When the selecting committee starts its work, the process of changing election officials will be started. In reaction, Mr. Noorestani said that current member of the commission were chosen legally and those who would substitute would be illegal.

On Women affairs in Afghanistan has requested Afghan government that women’s involvement in Peace Negotiations should be certified. Moreover, according to her ideas, women’s participation in next parliamentary and senatorial elections makes the election credible and inclusive.
UN: the situation of Afghan women, frustrating
Source: Open Society Daily
Translation: Parvad Shafayi

Pointing at increasing violence against women in Afghanistan, the UN indicated the situation of Afghan women frustrating and requested the government of Afghanistan to foster the process of implementing national agreements regarding gender equality, including the Convention of Eradicating any kind of discriminations against women.

This year the UN with the motto of “global gender equality up to 2030” is celebrating March 8th the International Women`s Day. Yesterday, (Tuesday, March 8th 2016) the agency of UN in Afghanistan through an official statement regarding celebration of International Women`s Day, declared, “Despite the notable achievements of Afghan women, there are still big challenges for their presence and participation in important political processes. But the UN appreciates the increasing presence of women in ministries, national assemblies, civil societies, and their participation in economic and social development of the country.

In this declaration, it is also mentioned that in the past decade, Afghanistan has had brilliant developments in conforming gender equality, especially through legal assurance in the Constitutional Law for preventing discrimination against women and also passing the law of eradicating violence against women. But this source has also written that increment of the armed conflicts still cause many civilian casualties, especially women. Comparing to 2014, women casualties have increased 37%. In the declaration of this organization, it is also mentioned that: “Enduring of the widespread violence against women which have deep roots in vulnerable traditions, are still assumed a serious concern. In addition, however in the past few years, presence of women in leadership positions have increased, which is not sufficient and is mostly symbolic and limited to the Capital city.

In this declaration, the agency of UN in Afghanistan requests for more diligence in implementing the agreed international conventions and to make these agreements real opportunities for Afghan women. The UN asks the government of Afghanistan to foster and nurture the process of implementing the national pledges regarding gender equality in accordance to the agreements Afghanistan has made, which includes the Convention of Eradicating Any Kind of Violence Against Women, and the new internationally approved agenda of 2030.

The international women’s day is being celebrated in a situation that Afghanistan started this year with tragic death of Farkhunda.

Pakistan: Taliban should participate in peace negotiations without any conditions
Source: Etlaat-e-rooz

Saraj Azez, the foreign affairs adviser to Pakistan’s Prime Minister, says that Taliban should not make any precondition before coming to the peace negotiation table. Instead, they can propound their condition during the negotiation.

Mr. Azez, hopefully declared on Tuesday with Filipe Hammond, Foreign Minister of Britannia, on common news meeting that face to face peace negotiation will be started on next coming days.

He also says that Pakistan persuaded the Afghanistan’s Taliban to participate in peace negotiation without preconditions.

It was agreed to start the face-to-face peace negotiation of Afghanistan, with Taliban in Pakistan in these days. But Taliban announced on Saturday that they would not participate in peace negotiation. Moreover, they emphasized on their preconditions that they declared in an unofficial meeting of Pakwah.

Ministry of Foreign: Absence of Taliban from Negotiation was tactic
In this condition, Ministry of Foreign of Pakistan announced their declaration with tactic that they will not participate in a face-to-face peace negotiation. However, Afghanistan is hopeful to start the face-to-face negotiation. Therefore, the four side coordination Council is trying to commence the face-to-face peace negotiation.

Hekmat Khalil Karzai, the Politic Vice Chancellor of Ministry of Foreign, told on Monday, on a common news meeting with Filipe Hammond, Foreign Minister of Britannia, “Afghanistan wished that Taliban’s representatives from different branches participate in face-to-face peace negotiation”, and their office in Qatar should also have negotiation, which was not agreed upon by Taliban. Mr. Karzai says that Afghanistan’s negotiator group is ready to participate in a face-to-face peace negotiation. The quadrilateral coordination Council is also trying to commence the face-to-face peace negotiation.

Afghanistan and India sign 12 MOUs
Source: Iam daily

India’s ambassador to Kabul, Manpreet Vohra and Afghan officials, have signed 12 (MOU) memorandum of understanding for funding of more than 90 development projects to support Afghans.

The memorandums signed by Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Manpreet Vohra on Wednesday March 02, 2016, in an especial ceremony with cabinet members in Kabul. Chief Executive Officer, named India as “strategico friend” and said: “The funded projects are very significant and have big influence on people’s lives; therefore, related ministries should identify the necessities and consider the principles of transparency, efficiency, and balance in implementation of the development projects.”

Meanwhile, Manpreet Vohra, Indian ambassador in Kabul, emphasizing on constructive and friendly relations between the two countries, added: “India has helped Afghanistan more than 2 billion dollars since 2001 in various sectors such as construction and development in three different phases.”

Mr. Vohra hoped that the funded projects would be implemented accurately and precisely. Projects, which are to be funded with 20 million dollars by India, include various areas, and will be completed by 2017.

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Lesson 12: Unleashing Your Creativity
Lesson 13: Repurposing for Writers
Lesson 14: Publishing Your Writing

Note: The eligibility will be determined in an entry exam...
When people often ask why I write about or advocate for women, I simply choose to be silent rather than to explain the deep pain behind the motivation for my women’s rights activism. As is common in Afghan culture, I don’t know anyone ever calling my mother by her real name. However, I remember clearly the last time she was beaten by my father. I still can imagine the blood flowing from her forehead and the sound of bones cracking begging for help. “Let go of my arm and, for God’s sake, stop beating me!” screamed my mother. No matter what she said, my father kept yelling and beating her with his fist, a stick and stones.

It was a Sunday morning in 2003 when my mother was told to borrow a cow to till the land in front of our house. She returned only 20 minutes later. My father started yelling and cursing as if she had intentionally come late. The yelling did not satisfy him. My father prepared a stick a meter long and held an exhibition of violence and beating which was a customary practice in our village.

He was yelling louder and louder and continued beating her whenever my mother tried to speak or protest. He clenched his fist and pounded her head. He used a stick until the stick broke and then he grabbed a stone which was what, eventually, broke her head. I looked at her face and saw the tears in her eyes. I was trembling in fear and my heart beat wildly with panic. The half kilo stone crushed my mother’s head and she fell to the tilled land as though she was dead. The scene I witnessed broke me down. It was the worst time in my life and left me feeling utterly helpless because of my young age.

My mother was always blamed for everything - whether she made a mistake or not, whether she argued or not. My father had the ultimate authority to judge her on every issue. The culture of victim-blaming enabled my father to challenge her abilities and accuse her of being naqisul aql (incomplete minded) and assign all blame to my mother. A feeling of hatred and vindictiveness grew in my childish mind with each passing day. The older I grew, the more hateful I felt toward my father. I resolved to take my mother’s revenge and to make my father suffer the pain he imposed upon my mother. Years passed and I understood that the violence I witnessed goes far beyond my family. It affects many families in my village and spreads to every corner of Afghanistan and the world. No matter what causes this ignominious practice, it is the most inhumane practice of all.

Millions of women and girls worldwide face the same violence as Saltanat, my mother. They are deprived of their inalienable rights by men. Millions of women do not have access to justice or rule of law. Even women with access to a system of justice are reluctant to file a report due to cultural restrictions and informal consequences. There are hundreds of women and girls who choose to commit suicide as a last resort. If this situation continues, gender-based violence will be perpetuated and transferred to the next generations.

Too many women and girls experience gender-based violence in Afghanistan. Some are brutally beaten, beheaded and strangled. Some submissively accept violence as a natural part of their lives. Some are innocently murdered in mob attacks. There are only a few committed women who stand against the challenges of this violence and fight to overcome these obstacles and traditions. More women are needed to fight against an institutionalized tradition practiced for centuries. And men are also needed. Women alone cannot be successful in this fight if the men in our society do not join the cause. In order to reach a turning point and protect the equal rights of women, we must defend their security to voice their needs and demands.

If every human being could understand these facts, they would be convinced to fight against this shameful tradition. Therefore, my advocacy for women’s rights is the advocacy I could not practice when I was a small boy watching my mother being beaten. I am engaged in this fight to make positive changes for other Saltanats in the world. I am fighting to protect other mothers so that their rights are not breached all around the country. I cannot forgive my father for what he did, but I am committed to making efforts to change the mindset of other Afghan men regarding the treatment of women and their rights.

The culture of victim-blaming enabled my father to challenge her abilities and attitudes and accuse her of being naqisul aql (incomplete minded) and assign all blame to my mother.
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

Your mother’s family lived in Kabul. We lived in the village in Watan. The Soviets ruled the country. We had to go to Kabul to bring over your mother for the wedding. The elders wouldn’t let us travel. They feared we would be harmed by the Soviets, or the Mujahideen or get caught in the crossfire. We could not take the young men with us because we feared they would be conscripted by the Soviets and the government, and sent to the war-front. My son-in-law Aatay Ali Jan had already completed his military service. He accompanied us. We had to go to Kabul, and we did.

My sister’s husband, the Qareedar saw us off at the Shilbitu crossing:
What should we do with your kids if the Soviets come?
I really did not know what to say:
Take them wherever you go. Hide them somewhere.

We left for Kabul. There were four of us in the car: I, My youngest child, Aatay Ali Jan and the driver. As we reached the main road, I noticed there were other, many other cars on the road ahead of us, and behind us.

At a place just past Ghazni, the cars diverged off the main road, and stopped. Turns out there was a Soviet military convoy passing that area. All other traffic had to move out of the way. They convoy came. There were soldiers, and trucks, and cars, and tanks, and more trucks, and more tanks, and more soldiers. There were tanks everywhere. They also had dogs on leach. Then they stopped. Some of the soldiers pointed the guns at the cars, and the soldiers with the dogs approached us. We were terrified. The dogs sniffed around car to car, and then they all returned to their trucks. The were looking for mines or bombs or guns. They didn’t find anything. As fast as they had come, they left, may be with more tanks, and more soldiers. There were tanks everywhere.

We got to Kabul, stayed a few days, and then drove onwards to Kabul but did not see any tanks or any more Soviets. We continued on. A short drive later our group of cars were waved at and stopped by a man on the road:
There are Soviet tanks ahead. The Soviets will kill you.
Come with me and I will protect you in my village.
The passengers in the other vehicles refused to go. The driver said the man might be a bandit, who would take us to his place, kill us all, and take all our belongings. We refused his invitation. He wasn’t very happy about it. He cursed us. We drove onwards to Kabul but did not see any tanks or any more Soviets.

We got to Kabul, stayed a few days, and began the trip to bring your mother home. We came across another convoy of tanks on the way back. We were terrified, but thankfully nothing happened. Despite our fears, the Soviet didn’t hurt us. We returned home safely. We had a small party, and that was that, your parents were married.

*Watan = Homeland, Countryside
*Aatay = Father
*Qareedar = Village chief

Spring Carol

When loud by landside streamlets gush,
And clear in the greenwood quires the thrush,
With sun on the meadows
And songs in the shadows
Comes again to me
The gift of the tongues of the lea,
The gift of the tongues of meadows.

Straightway my olden heart returns
And dances with the dancing burns;
It sings with the sparrows;
To the rain and the (grimy) barrows
Sings my heart aloud -
To the silver-bellied cloud,
To the silver rainy arrows.

It bears the song of the skylark down,
And it hears the singing of the town;
And youth on the highways
And lovers in byways
Follows and sees:
And hearkens the song of the leas
And sings the songs of the highways.

So when the earth is alive with gods,
And the lusty ploughman breaks the sod,
And the grass sings in the meadows,
And the flowers smile in the shadows,
Sits my heart at ease,
Hearing the song of the leas,
Singing the songs of the meadows.

Robert Louis Stevenson
(1850–1894)

Robert Louis Stevenson was a 19th century Scottish writer notable for such novels as Treasure Island, Kidnapped, and Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Born on November 13, 1850, in Edinburgh, Scotland, Robert Louis Stevenson traveled often, and his global wanderings lent themselves well to his brand of fiction. Stevenson developed a desire to write early in life, having no interest in the family business of lighthouse engineering. He was often abroad, usually for health reasons, and his journeys led to some of his early literary works. Publishing his first volume at the age of 28, Stevenson became a literary celebrity during his life when works such as Treasure Island, Kidnapped, and Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde were released to eager audiences. Robert Louis Stevenson died of a stroke on December 3, 1894, at his home in Vailima, Samoa. He was buried at the top of Mount Vaea, overlooking the sea.
Creating a bridge with language between China and Afghanistan

An interview with Hamid Ghulami, Chinese instructor at Star Educational Society

Could you please tell us about yourself?
I am Hamid Ghulami. I was born on June 6th 1992 in Iran and I lived there until I was twelve. I returned to Afghanistan and grew up in a middle class family. I graduated from Abdul Rahim Shahed High School and successfully made my way to the Department of Literature of Kabul University. As I was interested in Chinese, I chose Chinese Language as my field of study. After obtaining a scholarship, I spent two years of my undergraduate studies in China. After four years of teaching, I entered the teaching board of university, because they do not trust that I am a teacher of this language. But I have to say that people learn Chinese Language in different institutes and centers, and not Kabul University, because they do not trust that University. Confucius Institute is the only educational academy which is actively functioning in Afghanistan. It has been 10 years since the establishment of this institute in China and it has its 400 branches in more than 120 countries.

What is your experience of Chinese language in Kabul? As I have the experience of some years in Chinese Language, it has found its position and the good news is that I am a teacher of this language. But I have to say that people learn Chinese Language in different institutions and centers, and not Kabul University, because they do not trust that University. Confucius Institute is the only educational academy which is actively functioning in Afghanistan. It has been 10 years since the establishment of this institute in China and it has its 400 branches in more than 120 countries. Regarding policies associated with the progress of Chinese Language, China has been struggling more to expand it. As I read in one of the speeches, China wants to increase it’s the speakers of its language up to 2 million in 2020. According to me, this institute is investing and providing scholarships to make it develop more and more.

How has the Confucius Institute cooperated? Chinese Scholarships are divided into many categories. The scholarships are announced in different government websites, and people living abroad can apply for thousands of scholarships in different programs such as Bachelor's, Masters and Doctorate levels. The second category includes university websites. Thirdly, China provides around a hundred scholarships annually to the Afghan government, and to many other countries in different numbers. The Confucius Institute cooperates with the interested Chinese language learners from around the world.

How are scholarships and study opportunities in Chinese language? Keeping in mind the investments of China in Afghanistan, different scholarships are given to learners in Afghanistan and other neighboring countries, and most of the people are interested in Chinese products. Star Educational Society by creating Chinese classes is trying to provide a better environment for the interested students. Learning Chinese Language is another window for a bright future. We can help the students learn Chinese Language better.