Discipline
-the key to success

A Message from Rajab Ali Ahmadi,
Director of Star’s Program Learning Group

I joined Star eight years ago as a student and have been a teacher for several years since. I was recently promoted to be the Director of the Program Learning Group (PLG). In that role, I am responsible for capacity building programs, training for new teachers, creating class syllabi, teacher promotions, quiz competitions and other tasks. It’s exciting to be involved in so many of the innovative programs that contribute to Star’s fame and success in Kabul.

Discipline has always been a key factor in Star Educational Society’s success. Discipline is a vital factor in every successful person’s life. Like the movement of the sun around the earth, the pathway of orbiting planets, and the change of the dark, starry sky into bright, sunny days, Star reflects the same steady and reliable pattern which is based on the discipline we employ. Star’s comprehensive syllabus, strong timetable and time management, and its prompt teachers have helped Star to be the best among other educational centers. I am so proud to claim that I have had a role in this great achievement. There is much work and many sacrifices that have made Star the fine institution that it is — like, our long-lasting efforts to create a new syllabus in the burning nights of summer; the serious discussions to select the best new teachers during the intolerable cold nights of winter; many hot and bitter cups of coffee to overcome our sleepiness; and long, unexpected meetings in the breazy autumn weather.

As a continuation of Star Educational Society’s innovative programming, success and promises, we will soon launch our video-show class in order to improve students’ visual learning level. I am busy running back and forth to collect great speeches and good visual learning level. I am busy running back and forth to collect great speeches and good stories, and with the help of the PLG team, we will provide them to read more books, magazines and newspapers, and we will use various methods to encourage students’ writing, our students will begin writing in their diaries, which will encourage students’ writing, grammar and exercises. Starting from Level Two, to improve students’ writing, our students will begin writing in their diaries, which will encourage students’ writing, grammar and exercises. Moreover, we are working on Anthologies 1, 2 and 3 so that students of preparatory classes can benefit more and more from updated and stimulating learning materials. These books will help students with their reading, grammar and exercises. As a member of the Star Family, I want to express my appreciation to everybody for continuing to rise past the very peak of its success. Moreover, I add, "Search everywhere for selection, but select the place where you can get quality education."
About the author: Ahmad Murazza Ahmadi graduated from Kabul University with a degree in Political Science in 2011. He studied English at Star from 2006 to 2008 and began teaching for Star in 2009. Currently working at the Ministry of Higher Education, this is the third in a series of stories that he has contributed to the Intertelular Bulletin.

Challenging for a Change!

When I was 14 years old, I was terrified to stand in front of the class. I was extremely shy and timid and could not speak in front of over thirty talkative and outgoing students. My whole body started to shiver and my heart started bouncing so terribly that I could not speak at all. Students laughed at me. Teachers would ask me several questions that were met with my silence because I was never ready to share my story with anyone except my family members. My classmates ridiculed me and gave me the nickname “Fish.”

I was raised in a family of four with my father, mother, and younger sister. My earliest memories are tinged with the feelings of constant inequality in our home. In our traditional family, there were many disagreements. One of the most difficult conflicts in our family was the struggle for my sister and me to attend school despite the disapproval of all my paternal aunts and uncles.

I did not receive much attention or encouragement for my school success. As a result, the anxiety of being a girl in a traditional, male-dominated society was repressive. Girls were not welcomed and the hope for a baby boy was always the parents’ lifelong dream. Gender discrimination disturbed me very much. I had very little self-esteem and was often rejected when thinking about the dark future I imagined for myself, my sister and my parents. Under my parents’ influence, I had become a very shy and timid girl who escaped from crowds and social gatherings.

Fortunately, everything changed when I reached the age of 14. I studied at an English Language Center where students had to deliver lectures on social or political topics. It was very difficult for me to deliver my lecture. I mostly wrote it down but was not able to read it aloud until one day when my teacher took me to his office and talked to me in a very friendly manner. For the first time, I sensed a level of closeness and felt my teacher’s support. He made me feel important and understood my feelings. He forced me to read my topics aloud and not be so silent. Then he gradually asked me to stand in front of the class and encourage me to focus on my attention on him. I refused to look at others and instead looked only at him, standing in the back of the class, nodding his head in support and agreement. Gradually, I felt myself changing and I became more distant from the inner circle that overshadowed me and caused me to be dull, shy and very uncommunicative.

As the classes passed, I volunteered for lectures, quizzes, speech competitions and public speaking occasions that Star Educational Society continually held for its students. My teacher had a great impact on my academic career. I love him as my greatest teacher ever and a treasured and unforgettable friend. After my dramatic and great fundamental change, I was no longer called “Fish.”

Now I was “Miss Freshta,” an English language instructor at the best English language school in Kabul.

The menacing shadow of war

About the author: Freshta Hayatti has been an English teacher at Star Educational Society since 2010. She graduated from Ilm-e Sina University in Kabul with her bachelor’s degree in law.

As the war became more intense, hunger was casting its dangerous shadow over us. The army had fragmented into militias and my father no longer had his job as an officer with the Afghan National Army. My two big brothers had to work in a mechanic shop to help support the family. They were forced to leave school and abandon their plans for education, professional careers and a bright future. My father was not happy sending his sons to work in a mechanic shop. Rocket and bullet attacks were ongoing risks and the environment of Kabul had deteriorated in morality, with children becoming increasingly more vulnerable to abuses.

Society had emerged with a gruesome and treacherous face. My father’s friends and colleagues were increasingly more vulnerable to abuses. The society had emerged with a gruesome and treacherous face. My father’s friends and colleagues were increasingly more vulnerable to abuses. The society had emerged with a gruesome and treacherous face. My father’s friends and colleagues were increasingly more vulnerable to abuses. The society had emerged with a gruesome and treacherous face. My father’s friends and colleagues were increasingly more vulnerable to abuses.

Eventually, the memories became less intense and I became happy with anticipation for Eid al-Qubar. The Jihadist leaders announced a ceasefire one night before Eid. Revelers came out of their houses and fired guns and flares into the sky. Some were shooting rocket-propelled grenades in celebration of the ceasefire. Many people were injured due to the celebratory shootings, but the anarchy was an expression of happiness.

We had a wonderful dinner and even fruit that night. While I ate, I relished the taste of each child-sized morsel. Our Eid celebration was a joyful occasion with traditional Afghan rice, chicken, and salad made with fresh vegetables from our small garden. We slaughtered some of our thirty hens for the special holiday and were able to buy two kilos of rice. Equally exciting for me was the gifts of eidi that elders gave to the younger members of the family. And finally, the opportunity to meet our friends and play the way we used to play before. The joyous and friendly atmosphere with all our family members made us nostalgic for the time before the civil war. There were times that I told my family to find a peaceful Kabul so that we could live there. I wished that we could all live in peace someday soon.

As the war became more intense, hunger was casting its dangerous shadow over us. The army had fragmented into militias and my father no longer had his job as an officer with the Afghan National Army. My two big brothers had to work in a mechanic shop to help support the family. They were forced to leave school and abandon their plans for education, professional careers and a bright future. My father was not happy sending his sons to work in a mechanic shop. Rocket and bullet attacks were ongoing risks and the environment of Kabul had deteriorated in morality, with children becoming increasingly more vulnerable to abuses.
Discrimination - change starts with me

But, unfortunately, this inclination continued at university and has continued even beyond university in my workplace. Discrimination is a challenge all ethnic groups must address. In high school, our class was made of 35 students. When there was no teacher in the class, the students used to gather around tables and chat about different issues. I noticed that Pashtuns charted with other Pashtuns, Tajiks shared jokes with their Tajik friends. And Hazaras, including myself, gathered around a table with other Hazaras. I felt more comfortable with my Hazara friends, speaking in our shared accent, studying our lessons, and saying jokes.

It didn’t seem that the students felt hostile, but had deep hatred for each other. It seemed more that they did not feel the same comforts that they felt with their tribal classmates. However, conflicts quickly erupted when a person from one ethnic group would say a joke about another ethnic group and everyone would burst into laughter except the ethnic group that was being targeted. Small things could ignite a clash among the students as often happened when Hazaras and Tajiks fought. The fights quickly escalated with everyone supporting their own racial peers.

I hoped to leave these conflicts and ethnic divisions behind me when I graduated from Habibia High School. However, the same social behavior was repeated in university. Students gathered in the campus and made racial islands. I mistakenly believed that students would be more mature and would think about our country more holistically. But the mocking and jokes continued. I felt that my classmates would never understand that members of other ethnic groups are human like them, share the same values, and deserve the same respect.

These experiences and many more made me believe that the tension between ethnic groups could lead to another civil war. I felt disappointed about our country’s future. People inside and outside Afghanistan felt civil war was a serious risk with the 2014 presidential elections. The election problems and accusations were a mirror of what is commonplace in the wider country. For instance, it is common when a person makes a mistake that they are labeled by their ethnic group to imply that all Pashtuns or Hazaras or Tajiks are the same. Likewise, when a person gets a coveted governmental position or scholarship or other honor, their merit is challenged by those from other ethnic groups with insinuations of corruption and questions like, “Did you really do it?” or “Did you really achieve this?”

Instilling solidarity is very difficult in a war torn country, but it is not impossible. I remember how united Afghans were when Afghanistan the country that Afghans were proud of, our football team beat Pakistan’s football team. Everyone was cheering and shouting, “Long live Afghanistan!” while waving the Afghan flag and celebrating in the streets. Some people shot bullets into the sky which is a sign of happiness in Afghan tradition. All ethnic groups seemed united and friendly with the shared celebration of Afghanistan’s victory.

The question is, “How can we strengthen and perpetuate this tenous solidarity and friendship?” The past fourteen peaceful years have generated a partial trust among our people, yet it is very fragile and delicate. Every now and then, a small argument can spark off a bitter conflict again. We need to make Afghanistan the country that Afghans dream about. We need to develop and implement programs to embrace diversity, promote harmony and create holistic prosperity. I have tried to follow my grandfather’s advice of “secreta beyar” or “Just ignore it.” But it is not possible to ignore my feelings of anger, depression and hopelessness. If we truly want to promote ethnic harmony, we cannot ignore the problems. I have considered my role in removing this challenge. I used to blame others, but I realized I am partially responsible. To change a situation, we need to start from ourselves. I am committed to working toward this change. As Gary W. Goldstein said, “All you can change is yourself, and sometimes that changes everything!”

What quiet people have to say

I am a quiet person. I am quiet but my mind is full of thoughts and words. I don’t talk a lot but I think a lot. Just because a person is quiet does not mean that they have nothing to say. Similarly, I have emotions even if I don’t share them or show them. I can dream even if I am not sleeping.

According to some people’s views, quiet people are either foolish or ignorant. Some people think that being quiet is the result of some bad memories, a lack of confidence, being shy or dumb. You may guess that I have fallen in love, I have failed in something, I am begging oil, or that my parents don’t take care of me. Don’t judge a book by its cover. You will never judge correctly. I have to be misjudged, so it is better for me to entertain people about what is behind my silence.

I am not a social butterfly. I do not have a lot of friends nor do I love to flit from one social event to another. I talk less with people who don’t know me and I don’t persist if people don’t show an interest in knowing me better. I want to have friends forever. I behave honestly as a value – it is like the blood running through my veins. I am afraid of wily and deceptive people. I want to have best friends whose feelings are sincere and who are not seeking to profit from our friendship. I wish people were like money so I could hold them up to the light and see which ones are real and which ones are fake.

Being quiet does not mean I am swerving or don’t think. I do not know something or that I blindly accept what other people say. I always doubt and question my answers and my feelings. It is true that I am a girl and girls’ rights are limited in Afghanistan. However, my parents never let me think about these limitations and these limitations have never been barriers for me. Maybe some people are quiet for this reason, but it is completely different for me.

There are many girls and boys who have a quiet personality but still have great minds and big goals. I ignore people’s views who think that quiet people cannot have the best personalities. Why do people think like this? Talkative people are not the only ones who can be active and participate in things very well. There is great talent behind many quiet personalities, especially in Afghanistan. So give them a chance and let them be with you, encourage them to participate in activities and be genuine with your invitations. For example, if I go to a wedding party, I need somebody to call me.

Other quiet people who are like me prefer to solve problems for themselves. For instance, I like to help other people but I don’t like to talk about my own problems. When I am sad, I want to be alone. I am patient, very tolerant and rarely feel angry. However, if I am confronted by a liar or a two-faced person my mood will quickly change. If you pay attention, you will notice that some talkative people are uncomfortable with silence. They talk a lot and tell many stories and this makes them comfortable. But I am not like this. I am most comfortable by keeping everything to myself.

If you want to know what a quiet person has to say, you have to listen very carefully because quiet people don’t like to talk when people are not listening. Things that are less plentiful are more valuable. So treasure the words of a quiet person, they are worth more than gold.
Why didn’t President Ghani Participate in the UN General Assembly?

Opinion piece originally written by: Jawad Naji
Translated by: Jumakhan Rahyab
Source: Etilaatrooz Daily

During Eid, Ghani said that the reason for his absence from the UN General Assembly to see the head of the NUG by their own eyes and to be sure that he is well. Cancellation of Ghani’s trip made Hanif Atmar, the National Security Council Advisor, and Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer, bargain for who should attend the conference, and finally by mediation of foreign diplomats in Kabul, the flight ticket was issued in the name of Abdullah and he went to New York.

After Ghani canceled his travel to New York, the health status of Ghani became the most controversial and discussed issue in political summits and media. Rumors about Ghani’s illness started to spread and the people who is he well and ready for political summits and media. Rumors about Ghani’s illness started to spread and the people who is he well and ready for political summits and media.

The annual United Nations General Assembly which is held in New York, is the world’s most important event in the year. The important point is that heads of states come together under one roof. The importance of participating in this meeting is to sit and listen to meaningful speeches but the main point is to go to New York to see one of the world’s most powerful presidents. And, Ghani in his first year of presidency, for a full set of meetings with Obama, couldn’t find a chance to see and take pictures with the president of America and didn’t go to New York.

After Ghani’s words and America’s annual high rate of assistance to Afghanistan, America is one of the top international allies of Afghanistan. So, when Obama is not accepting Ghani, Obama, couldn’t find a chance to see and take pictures with the president of America and didn’t go to New York.

The most important American official whom Abdullah met was Joe Biden, Obama’s deputy. The rest of the people who met the chief executive officer, were low-ranking government officials like Deputy Secretary of State in charge of immigration affairs and Obama’s national security deputy adviser.

Pakistan is the key to solve Afghanistan’s issues

Opinion piece originally written by: Tahya Sarpoli
Translated by: Mohammad Asef
Source: Hashshi-e-Sobh

With the last disgraces in Afghanistan, from the fall of Kunduz to the mistaken U.S. bombing of a hospital in Kunduz, the question arises, “Why after 14 years of American military actions is the condition of Afghanistan still critical?”. Afghanistan has an elected government which is widely believed legitimate. Holding elections shows the lack of control of Taliban. However, even though the Afghan military is the biggest in the region and the Taliban keeps coming. The solution to these issues can be found in the biography of the newly elected Taliban commander, Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor. It looks like Mansoor lives part-time in Quetta. According to a report by the New York Times, “It is a district where Mansoor and some other Taliban leaders have built a house.” As we know, his predecessor, Mohammad Omar, died in Karachi a period ago. And we remember that Osama Bin Laden went to Pakistan filled the gap. This country raised the flood of support to the deadliest enemies. American militaries of the world. Sometimes this issue has been demonstrated in and out of American Government but so far no one knows what Obama’s plan is definitely. Consequently, this issue is still hidden and the American policy has never changed. This is a basic fact, until we deal with this, Taliban will never be defeated. There is a proverb which says, “None of the battles have been successful as long as the rebels had a shelter.” And in this regard the rebels are supported by an Atomic Bomb.

Pakistan is pretending to help America, on the other hand, it has been supportive to the deadliest enemies. American officials have been working hard to start peace talks with the Taliban. It seemed we have been talking to souls. It is two years since Mullah Omar died whereas Pakistani Officials have facilitated the “Calls” and “Talks” with him. The former President Musharraf and other presidents after him have been denying that Pakistan supported the Taliban. However, the former President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, repeatedly and openly mentioned this issue. In 2007, Musharraf said, “I don’t think that Taliban ever came to Pakistan.”

Pakistan’s Military has been labelled the Godfather of Taliban and is fighting America’s supervision to fight against Russia in 1980s. After the Russians left Afghanistan in 1989, Americans as stepped aside from Afghanistan’s issue and Pakistan filled the gap. This country raised the Taliban and trained young Pakistanis who were studying Islamic teachings in Pakistan. America is trying to decrease the troops from Afghanistan while on the other side, Pakistan in trying to widen its influences of heads of states. The Chief Executive Officer could only look at Obama in an unofficial party which was provided by Obama and Michelle for the heads of the states.

The difference between official and unofficial meetings is that in the official meetings both sides sit at a table with a pre-prepared agenda and specific issues to discuss but unofficial meetings are accompanied by drinking a glass of coffee and joking and usually these meetings are very short and fleeting. According to Asif Ashna, deputy spokesman of the executive office, Obama insisted and spoke of supporting the NUG and political reforms ( Electoral System Reform ) which is a guarantee for political stability of Afghanistan. Managing the “Resolute Support” of NATO in Afghanistan was a part of the discussions between Obama and Abdullah.

On the most important American official whom Abdullah met was Joe Biden, Obama’s deputy. The rest of the people who met the chief executive officer, were low-ranking government officials like Deputy Secretary of State in charge of immigration affairs and Obama’s national security deputy adviser.
On Tuesday, Homayoon Mohtrad was talking among journalists and civil society activists once again and reemphasized that this administration has full preparation to distribute tentative ID cards. He said, “The lack of distribution of electronic ID Cards is not due to technical problems and this administration has full preparation to begin this national process.”

He also said that some concerns about technology and logistics existed but were solved by the reports of Ministry of Communication and Information Technology on 16th of August. As a result, it is not believed that a technological problem is the cause of delays. He added, “This process to identify and remedy the problems in the system will take ninety days.” As he said, “we cannot prove the efficiency of the system unless we enter the information in the system.” According to Mohtrad, all the problems will be identified in 90 days and attempts will be made to recognize and remedy them. On the other hand, the tentative process for the ninety day distribution of ID Cards enables them to decide on distribution, budget planning, and the human resources required across Afghanistan.

Armazyat Bahr, the director of Electronic National ID Cards registration, emphasized for full preparation of this administration. Also he said the high officials of Afghanistan should explain the reasons for not distributing the electronic national ID Cards to people. He said, “We have spent a lot of money for this process, and delaying this national process is a disappointment to the people of Afghanistan.” According to his words, many opportunities will be missed and this process will cause our people to lose faith in the government.

Members of civil society pressured the ministry to start this process and claimed that where there is no obstacle in front of Afghan government for distributing the ID Cards, time should not be wasted and the national process should begin.
Habiba Sadeqi, Star’s Director of Education and Cultural Development, recently attended a three-day regional conference of the first South Asia Economic Conclave in New Delhi, India as a representative of the Afghan businesswomen’s community. Ms. Sadeqi is the President of Afghanistan’s PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS® Network, an association of female entrepreneurs.

The South Asia Economic Conclave is a joint initiative to foster shared growth and prosperity through regional economic integration. The objective of last month’s forum was to stimulate informed dialogue between the private sector and governments to promote regional trade and investment, which would in turn help catalyze higher growth and new job opportunities for all countries in South Asia. Other countries participating in the conference included India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka.

Ms. Sadeqi was a panel member of the 7th session of the forum which was entitled “Writing a New Chapter through People-to-People Contacts.” The session looked at ways to enhance people-to-people contacts for greater peace and prosperity and addressed the following issues.

• Current restrictions on visas for security reasons are an active deterrent to travel. What can be done to enable themed tourism – educational exchanges; cultural events; religious pilgrimages or sporting events, etc.? • How can the private sector, governments and other stakeholders collaborate in supporting the largest youth cohort in the world to reach their full potential as skilled members of society?
• What are practical ways to develop tourism including specialized areas such as eco-tourism, cultural tourism, and so on?
• The high cost of tertiary education and the difficulty in recognizing degrees from other countries points to the need for more South Asian universities and regional skill development centers. How can we do this?
• How can we make it easier to issue work visas and advertise employment opportunities in neighboring countries so that skilled workers and entrepreneurs can contribute to regional prosperity with a long term perspective?
• How can we change the narrative with a younger generation so that historic events and received perceptions can be changed in the next generation?

South Asians share a common history, culture and traditions which have flourished despite religious and linguistic differences. Families can still trace relationships and the difficulty in recognizing degrees from human resources cannot be fully realized unless its large youth cohort, representing 45% of the population, has the skills and the opportunity to realize their aspirations. Education is also important to dispel ignorance, mistrust and perceptions that keep the countries distant, despite their regional proximity.

Ms. Sadeqi spoke to participants about Afghan businesswomen’s problems and solutions through regional networking and was applauded by the participants. Moreover, she answered above questions from the perspective of Afghan women entrepreneurs. Her speech was encouraged by people of other countries, especially business people from Bangladesh and Nepal. They welcomed starting business with Afghans despite the problems between Afghanistan and Pakistan. She mentioned that if the business ways of Chabahar could be solved between Afghanistan and Iran, our country would have a new way to link to the other South Asian countries. Another solution she presented in the session was to conduct matchmaking events and business-to-business meetings between women in the same fields to exchange their experiences with each other and increase the level of exports between countries. At the conclusion of the first South Asian Economic conclave, participants are committed to find new ways and new solutions to have #OneSouthAsia.

Mohammad Jawed Nazari, a former Star student, is currently working on a project called “The Assessment of Learning Outcome and Social Effect of Community Based Education” (ALSE) funded by US-AID and administered by New York University. The research is intended to provide evidence regarding the effectiveness of different models of community-based education in order to guide funding and inform community-based education policy in Afghanistan. ALSE is a randomized controlled trial of a community-based education (CBE) program being implemented in more than 200 villages in six provinces of Afghanistan.

Mr. Nazari, in the dark suit below, has been travelling to villages across Afghanistan as part of the ALSE research team and provided us with these photos taken in the Sangi Taldar District of Daikondi. He said, “We are here, in the heart of the mountains, with the brave, magnificent, honorable, generous, hospitable and gracious people of Daikondi who work hard to bring a better and brighter tomorrow for their future generation.” Based on Mr. Nazar’s observations, he believes that CBE is one of the best approaches to educate children in the remote valleys of Daikondi where people are located very far from the government schools. He thinks that CBE encourages higher enrollment, especially for girls and other disadvantaged children in such remote and ignored society and, therefore, promotes learning for all (which is one of the Millennium Development Goals). He considers education fundamental to development and asks all Afghans to end their children to.
About the author:

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

Your father fled first. He went into the mountains on the outskirts of Jaghori before making his way to Pakistan. We were left behind.

After your father fled, the commander’s men picked up Aatay Ali Jan. Your father had left his gun with him to hide. Someone had informed the commander of that. He was detained and interrogated. When he returned, his face was barely recognizable. He took off his shirt and showed me the marks. His skin had turned purple, there were bruises and scars all over his back. His skin looked like leather. He had been beaten beyond recognition, to the point that he had fainted, and given them the location of the gun:

“I was blindfolded. The commander’s men took turns to beat me up. They brought in bundles of fresh tree branches and broke them all on my back. One would get tired and call over the other to continue.”

They managed to get the gun but your auntie hid the bullets on a belt around her waist. They would get tired and call over the other to continue.

“This conversation made him feel better. He stopped crying.

I had no time to hate, because
The grave would hinder me,
And life was not so ample I
Could finish enmity.

Nor had I time to love, but since
Some industry must be,
The little toil of love, I thought,
Was large enough for me.

Emily Dickinson
December 10, 1830 - May 15, 1886

Emily Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830, in Amherst, Massachusetts. She attended Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, but only for one year. Throughout her life, she seldom left her home and visitors were few. The people with whom she did come in contact, however, had an enormous impact on her poetry. She was particularly stirred by the Reverend Charles Wadsworth, whom she first met on a trip to Philadelphia. He left for the West Coast shortly after a visit to her home in 1860, and some critics believe his departure gave rise to the heartbreak of verse from Dickinson in the years that followed. While it is certain that he was an important figure in her life, it is not clear that their relationship was romantic—she called him “my closest earthly friend.” Other possibilities for the unrequited love that was the subject of many of Dickinson’s poems include Orest P. Lord, a Massachusetts Supreme Court judge, and Samuel Bowles, editor of the Springfield Republican.
Tell me a little about yourself. I plan to be a doctor in the future and I am also interested in studying philosophy and politics. I like to read in my free time, especially biographies of famous people, philosophy and self-development books. I play volleyball and basketball. I also really like swimming, although I don’t do it as a competitive sport. I am a dorm proctor and a student government representative. I belong to the chess club and the Spectrum Club - where we talk about diversity and minorities in the world. I am a writer for the Afghan Women’s Writing Project. I am also a human rights intern for the Hudson Valley Chapter of the United Nations Association.

You recently attended the Girls Leadership Worldwide conference in New York. What can you tell us about your experience there? Representatives of GLW came to our school and gave us information about their program. I was recommended to attend the conference by my school college counselor so I filled out their application and was selected. There were two different sessions. My session had 42 high school age participants from more than 10 countries.

What were your best lessons at GLW? Personally I learned many life lessons. For example, in one of the workshops I understood how both sides of a conflict suffer. I met and talked with a girl from Israel and heard how the war also affects people on the Israeli side of the conflict. She told me the story of when a rocket hit her neighbor’s yard. They were all at home and she had her younger brother with her. She told me that they had no hope to survive. Her tears were falling when she was telling me the story. She told me that she and her brother hid in their basement and she was trying to give hope to her brother even though she had no hope herself. After that incident her family moved to Zambia, Africa where they still live. Humans are the same everywhere and pain hurts everyone no matter where they are from.

What kind of feelings did you have when she shared this story? The same feelings I have when a family struggles to survive in Afghanistan, maybe even a little bit closer. I felt that it could have been me. I imagined my younger brother in my arms and trying to survive. My mom might get angry for saying this, but I really felt that I was that girl and her brother was my brother.

What was one of your favorite memories or experiences during the Girls Leadership program? I am a big dreamer and most of the time I don’t share my dreams with other people, I just work toward them. In one of the meetings the executive director of the program asked me what I wanted to be in the future. She is a really nice woman and always respected me a lot, so I told her that I wanted to be a doctor. Immediately I added, “I know I seem a bit idealistic, but I do not see any problem that could stand in my way.” Then she said, “What did you say?” and I repeated it. Then she told me, “Nooooo, never think like that! You do not seem idealistic. You are being yourself and I believe you already have the power to be what you want to be.” That was one of the happiest moments of my life.

Tell me about the Women2Women (W2W) program that you attended in Boston, Massachusetts. W2W was an international leadership program. There were more than 100 participants from more than 20 countries – all girls in high school and university. Since the participants were from different countries, we spent a major part of our free time getting to know each other. We also visited some universities to listen to speakers and attend workshops. For example, we went to Harvard and had a workshop with a professor about how to negotiate and the skills of an effective negotiator.

What were the goals of the conference? In my idea, it was to empower girls from around the world, let them know each other, and build a network with their collective strength. It is one of the programs of an organization called Empower Peace. People from different countries have views about people in different societies which are not necessarily true. This sometimes is the root of major conflicts among societies. So another theme of this kind of program is to empower peace by bringing people from different backgrounds together and allow them to build connections with each other.

Which of the W2W workshops had the most impact on you? We had a workshop with an imam, a rabbi and a priest representing each of the three major religions. They talked about how religions can live together in peace and that none of the religions encourage war but rather peace and humanity. Before that workshop, I really did not like when people preached about any religion. But afterward, I was wishing I could carry these religious leaders all over the world with me and let them talk to all those people who fight over religion.

Tell me more about your plans for conducting a leadership program in Afghanistan. When I attended the Girls’ Leadership Worldwide program in New York, I got the inspiration to organize a similar leadership workshop in Afghanistan. It will be a six day program in the summer of 2016 in Kabul. I met six other young Afghan women at the leadership conference in Boston who are working with me to implement it. We will invite keynote speakers and trainers and will hold different workshops with topics such as communication, “the leader in you,” and more. As our project plan states, “[it] is an attempt to give Afghan girls a chance to explore themselves and discover their potential. In a third world country, like Afghanistan, we know many people, and especially girls, do not have the opportunity of realizing their individual and collective powers. By holding this workshop, we hope to inspire Afghan young women leaders to discover their purpose in life, and to use this sense of purpose to give back their community.” In the summer of 2017, I hope to include boys in the program.

What is your favorite quote? My favorite quote is “Work hard in silence, let your success be your noise.”

What final words of wisdom would you like to share with our readers? It is never too late to begin working towards what you want to achieve.