Twenty million people have, so far, taken the TOEFL test and have found their ways to thousands of colleges, agencies, and universities. Offered in more than 165 countries, the TOEFL test has helped: English as a Second Language students and individuals measure their progress in learning English; universities and colleges make admission decisions from undergraduate to graduate and post-graduate degrees; immigration departments issue residential and work visas; and many medical and licensing agencies provide professional certifications. As reported, colleges and universities (including the World’s 100 Top Universities) which require standardized English language skills scores from their applicants, are more comfortable using the TOEFL test scores to make admission decisions each year thus making it a top prioritized requirement for all students and applicants inspired to thrive academically from around the globe.

On August 28th, 1998, when the foundations of Star Educational Society were laid, a firm decision was made. The first step toward a long journey of success had been taken. “Join Us For a Difference!” held as its motto, Star has endeavored to help thousands of individuals acquire English language skills, enhance their understandings of science subjects and learn multiple computer and networking programs. Star Educational Society has brought together elite groups of participants from across Afghanistan. The society’s everlasting intent and commitment to help these elite groups of students achieve their academic and educational goals, are solid since 1998. Its significant seventeen consecutive years of experience has provided 38,000 students with English language learning skills and educational services. Moreover, Star’s TOEFL department advisory team and successful preparatory courses have helped hundreds of individuals succeed in the test and win scholarships from high schools, colleges and universities across the world among which are numerous scholarships offered by United States educational programs such as the Fulbright.

Star’s TOEFL iBT Preparation Courses and Programs are designed for individuals who are pursuing educational and career goals to hone their abilities. This two-month program provides an intensive introduction to the TOEFL iBT, unfolds the mysteries of test taking strategies, helps students learn the cutting edges and practical skills, provides applicants with required materials, and evaluates applicants’ progress using TOEFL iBT model tests.

The TOEFL iBT Department welcomes applicants applying for scholarships and educational programs in 2016. The intensive TOEFL iBT Preparation Courses and Programs are designed for individuals who are pursuing educational and career goals to hone their abilities. Take the first step toward the long journey of academic success by registering to take the TOEFL iBT, your Academic Passport, and reach the goals you have established.

“...
My father’s courage

I was born in Mashhad, Iran as the fourth child in my family. My father worked in a brick kiln and my mother was a housewife. We had a comfortable life. At the time, we could not return to Afghanistan because the black regime was in power. Returning to Afghanistan was like a suicide for many reasons. As a girl, I would have been deprived of an education. Each moment passed fearfully as we raced toward their target. We heard the cracking of gunfire started. A fierce night of fighting was looming from every side as if all the guns were ready to kill the people. He embraced the danger and went to work for the Taliban. Unfortunately, he faced the same Taliban commander who was in the police station in Rezheshk.

I will never forget the day he left. Silence was looming from every side as if all had assembled to mourn before a sorrowful event. Some men were waiting for my father in our guesthouse. We were in the yard playing hopscotch when my father called my name, “Fatima.” I ran to him smiling. There was no one in the room except my father. He took his face in his hands, kissed me and hugged me. I couldn’t discern why he acted so. He may have known. And it is the only memory that I have of my father.

A couple of days later, when I came home from playing, I saw many people around our house. When I entered the yard, I found my mother was standing in front of the lifeless and bloody body of my father. That day I couldn’t understand what had happened. I didn’t cry. I only understood that after that day I would not have a father. But the passing of time and life circumstances without a guardian showed me how deep the loss of my father has been. When my father left us, there was no one who could take his place for us. I couldn’t feel his love, my mother became a widow when she was very young, and my brothers could no longer study. But after his death, the local people were safe. He went and his immortal memory remained in everyone’s mind.

After my father’s martyrdom, we went to Pakistan enduring much pain and facing many hardships. For nine or ten years, my siblings and I wore carpets while also going to school and studying. Those hardships made me strong and taught me to fight against troubles and discomfort. By helping each other, we passed those hard days and the life became easier. Thirteen years later we came back to our motherland, to the land and people my father died for. I will never forget who my father was. I study with big aims in my mind. I hope one day I can serve my people like my father did.

A fierce night of fighting

It was almost even when we heard the unusual announcement from the Jihadi’s loudspeakers mounted on their cars. However, this message was different. The Jihadi’s wanted everybody that it would be a fierce night of fighting. They told everybody that they shouldn’t sleep and shouldn’t hide themselves in basements. They instructed us to yell out in loud voices, “Allah-u Akbar,” in order to encourage the soldiers who were fighting for our protection.

My mother told me to check the chicken coop for eggs. When I entered the coop, I saw that even the hens were worried about the fighting... waiting fearfully like me. They didn’t cackle but I felt them talking to me with their eyes appealing for help. I wished I could take them into our bunker and keep them safe, but the bunker was already overcrowded. I carefully checked for eggs and found four. I brought them to my mother and was greeted with my family’s laughter, playfully teasing me that now I was a strong man bringing food for the lunch. We were happy for a moment, but quickly began to worry again about the approaching night.

That night we all shouted and in- volked God’s mercy. The night held the promise of a deadly shadow with all sides of war poised to attack the other and all the innocent people in between. Each moment passed fearfully as we anticipated a rocket strike, a bomb launched by a jet, or screaming bullets racing toward their target. We heard the sounds of tanks and cars with mounted loudspeakers coming toward our bunker. The city became like a cemetery as everybody went underground to their basements and the air filled with ominous silence. Even the trees stood silent and motionless with their dusty leaves.

The cracking of gunfire started. A rocket struck a neighbor’s house, the house of the old woman with the kind eyes and pure heart who gave us whey and dried mint and made us laugh with her jokes. She was praying to God when she heard the sound of the rocket. The old woman was covered with dust and barely conscious. She couldn’t move her eyes. She looked at the kids deeply from behind her dusty eyelashes and struggled to keep them open. We wanted for her to joke or smile to make us laugh and know that she was alright, but she didn’t.

I was late and we didn’t eat our dinner. We waited desperately while my mother checked to see if we had enough bread for the kids, but we had very little. We shared a small piece of bread with dried mint and the mothers and fathers didn’t eat anything. That night, all the men went inside a small ballroom because there wasn’t enough space for them in the bunker. They talked and laughed, and sometimes came to chat on the old woman, who nodded her head and said that she was fine. But she didn’t look fine at all.

As time passed, my family listened to the voices of men, women and children outside the bunker and the sound of gunfire and sometimes rockets and bombs too. Our eyes were heavy with sleep until I finally slept. I dreamed of war and deaths. Sometimes I smelled the fresh scent of rainy weather and other times the smoke from gunpowder. When I woke up in the morning I saw my brothers and my little sister inside the bunker and the sun shining through the door. My mother said, “We must prepare the room now” and my father replied, “Yes, right.” I went out of the bunker and saw everything was peaceful and calm, no more gunfire or bombs. I wanted to believe that the civil war was just a nightmare. My mother said, “Good morning, Murtaza.” I asked her if everything was alright and she sadly told me that the old woman was dead. Little parts of my childhood were dying day by day. Later that day, my grandfather said, “My son, the world is like a station. We are here to do something right and then leave here.” I thought about the world and about my responsibilities to do something right and asked my grandfather, “Can I color the sky with kites and remove this red sky of civil war?” My mother replied, “Yes you can.”
Women Who Reign: Sabera Daqiq

Written by Saqi Mehta and originally published on the site for ReigningIt – a blog aimed at creating a #STEM dialogue inclusive of every woman. STEM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math education.

In this post they talk to Star alumna, Sabera Daqiq, a Teacher's Assistant for the Girls Who Code program. Girls Who Code programs work to inspire, educate, and equip girls with the computing skills to pursue 21st century opportunities. Their vision is to reach gender parity in computing fields to ensure the economic prosperity of women, families, and communities across the globe, and to equip citizens with the 21st century tools for innovation and social change. They believe that more girls exposed to computer science at a young age will lead to more women working in the technology and engineering fields.

What hashtag would define your life journey? #LikeAGirl - I have been told "you can’t do it" my whole life. If I just accepted others definition of me, I couldn’t fix the fridge, code or ride a bike. Just because a girl does not mean anybody has a stake on defining who I am and my limits. Nobody knows the limits of where I can reach, not even me. It is a beautiful feeling when you defy their expectations.

Someone who inspires you and knowledge they have imparted (if any): One of the stories that keeps me going and gives me the power to overcome over and over when I face failure is the story of an old man and a beetle. There was an old man who wanted to become educated but couldn’t learn anything. In school everyone would make fun of the old man sitting with the first graders. He tried very hard to learn but kept failing over and over. People around him would discourage him. "You can’t teach an old dog new tricks" they would say. He finally gave up studying, left the school and went home feeling hopeless. He sat on the floor, lying against the wall and staring at a lantern. Soon he noticed a beetle trying to get on the top of the lantern. Each time the beetle was making a place for itself and would fall down. The man saw the beetle fall over and over again and realized that he had to keep on trying until he finally succeeded to make it to the top. That morning the man went back to school. After each failure he tried again and tried harder. He kept trying because he knew that one day—like the beetle—he would rise to the top. Years later he became the most successful philosopher of his time.

My father is my hero because even though I would hear bomb explosions outside, I never stopped reading to us. He is a hero of our lives by showing his extraordinary resilience and hard work, and encouraging us to do the same.

I Am Malala : The Girl Who Stood Up For Education and was Shot by the Taliban

Malala has one of the most compelling personal stories that I’ve ever heard, leaving behind her parents and 6 siblings to come to the US from Afghanistan 5 years ago. She is independent, brave, and a force in and of herself. Read on and you will discover the poise and eloquence that clearly shines through!

Tell us about yourself along with a fun fact!

I tried but never got to like Star Wars. I don’t play video games or watch drama on demand because I will get addicted to it.

I have binge watched a drama for 48 hours without sleeping.

I am a senior at Georgetown College studying Computer Science.

I am from Afghanistan. It has been 5 years since I have been in the US.

I have 7 siblings.

I like traveling and living in other cultures.

In my free time, I drink green tea and read books. It can range from informational books to Sci-Fi novels.

After socializing, I need alone time to recharge and can’t hold discussions about the weather.

I do yoga few times a week.

The only food I don’t like is peanut butter.

Book Review: I Am Malala

I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up For Education and was Shot by the Taliban is a memoir written by Malala You-sofzai, a 15 year old girl, and written by Christina Lamb. Malala was only 15 when the Taliban shot her in the head on October 9th, 2011. Malala is an education advocate, girls’ rights activist and the youngest person ever to receive the Nobel Prize. In her book I Am Malala, she describes her life as a schoolgirl before and after she was shot by the Taliban. This book also tells people how difficult it was for Malala to live under the Taliban rule.

When Malala was shot by the Taliban, she received support and prayers from all over the world. After undergoing many surgeries, Malala finally recovered and is living now with her family in Birmingham, England. Before reading her book I didn’t know how incredibly brave she and her classmates were for continuing their education. Malala was inspired at a very young age and raised her voice for her rights. Her whole family supported her, especially her father who played a very important role in her activism. She wrote blogs for BBC Urdu about her life in Swat Valley under the Taliban rule and wrote about when the Taliban banned girls from going to school.

Malala explains how whenever she would see some street children digging through the garbage she wanted to secure interesting details like how she learned English by watching "Ugly Betty." Malala is a true inspiration not just for the people of her own country but for everyone in the world. She continues to fight for the right of education and keeps inspiring people by her speeches. It is worth reading Malala’s book and I would recommend it for everyone. For some middle school students it might seem very difficult and lengthy to read, but you can also read the "Young Readers Version."
Chief Executive Abdullah meets Khamenei over frontier water discrepancies

(Khamenei to Abdullah: discrepancies over frontier water should be solved)

In his second day in Tehran, Abdullah Abdullah, the Chief Executive of Afghanistan, met with the Iranian leader, Ali Khamenei and Iran’s foreign affairs minister, Javad Zarif.

With regard to the frontier water discrepancies between Kabul and Tehran, Chief Executive Abdullah said that those are ample ground for Iran and Afghanistan to establish mutual cooperation which can be further discussed and strengthened through negotiations with the leaders of the counterpart nation. The Chief Executive of Afghanistan referred to security concerns and the activities of several terrorists’ groups as the main and most important challenges. He also asserted that he would endeavor to tackle these challenges by uniting the Afghans as well as seeking aids of the neighboring nations especially Iran and the world community so that justice prevails in different areas.

In response to Iran’s brand new policy in respect of the provision of education to Afghan migrants, Abdullah Abdullah praised Iranian leaders, terming their efforts as “momentous vindications” which will ultimately bring the two nations closer.

In the first reaction, Iran tried to stop the activities of the group in Farah, and the delegation from the Afghan and Iran border met on this issue. This is the first time that Iran is negotiating on exchanging information on high-level delegations.

Abraham opens consulate in Shiraz

The meeting between Dr. Abdullah and Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Jahangiri two sides also agreed to open consulate of Afghanistan in Shiraz. Afghanistan has currently consulates in Mashhad, Isfahan, and Zahedan. According to this agreement, due to the large presence of Afghan immigrants in this province, Shiraz, Iran, Afghanistan and its consulate in the province is established and provide services to immigrants in these areas.

Also, Iranian Vice-President announced the 7-fold increase of visa for Afghan job seekers. Iran: work of KHAF- Herat railway to be completed.

Also, Vice President of Iran said that the Herat-Khaf railway very soon. Herat railway has 5 pieces, two of which located in Iran and the two of them located in Afghanistan. Afghanistan’s vice president also announced his country’s readiness for the construction of the railway in northern Afghanistan. According to Jahangiri, the railway is not only an alternative for the Silk Road, Iran’s Prime Minister also stressed that his country is ready to provide the energy (electricity) required, especially in the west of Afghanistan. Vice President of Iran also represents the Iranian government to participate in auctions and biddings in Afghanistan. Discounts of 70 to 100 percent of loading at Chabahar Port for Afghan traders, Iran’s vice president also welcomed the transit of goods to Afghanistan through Chabahar Port and said that Afghan traders are now discounted 70% to 100% of the area used for loading. Mr. Jahangiri said that Iran is happy to transport goods from this port to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan opens consulate in Shiraz

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Afghan Government to encourage these facilities to 16 thousand Afghan refugees in Iran and the two sides agreed to open consulate of Afghanistan in Shiraz. Afghanistan has currently consulates in Mashhad, Isfahan, and Zahedan. According to this agreement, due to the large presence of Afghan immigrants in this province, Shiraz, Iran, Afghanistan and its consulate in the province is established and provides services to immigrants in these areas.

At the meeting, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah and the First Vice President of Iran, Jahangiri, on the exchange of security information came to an agreement for a joint fight against ISIS. According to the two sides, Afghanistan and Iran can jointly fight against terrorism by sharing of security information to each other. Iran, especial
Ninda Modi, first prime minister of India came to Kabul on Friday, and has inaugurated new parliament building which was built with the sponsor of India. Modi’s speech had a huge broadcast in social networks in both countries.

Historically, India is a country that has always supported Afghanistan official government systems. During cold war, the west supported from a militant group of Mujahidin with support of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia against left wing party in Afghanistan; but India had announced its support of the Afghanistan government during that time. When Taliban occupied 90% of Afghan soil, the Indian government supported Mujahidin government against Taliban. After Taliban collapsed, India was one of the biggest partners of Afghanistan counter-terrorism. The prime minister once more emphasized his countries’ strategic support missions of Afghanistan.

The PM’s speech on Friday had many political contexts, likewise; had specific audiences. Modi in his speech specifically had two audiences: his major audience in Afghanistan was Pushtun elites. Therefore, the PM in his speech used Pushtun’s political symbol to refer to his polit-ical objectives, and alike in same frame he explained the cooperation between Afghanistan and India. For instance, his referring to Abdul Ghafar Khan was inappropriate and unnecessary and nothing to do with Afghanistan. Abdul Ghafar Khan was in India who fought against Afghanistan and India. For instance, his presence in Afghanistan was Pushtun elites. For instance, Abdul Ghafar Khan was in Afghanistan and India. His explanation the cooperation between Pushtun’s political symbol to refer his political context, Modi have given a speech that is appealing and fascinating to Afghanistan elites.

For answering the question we have two probable answers:

First probability: Think that Afghanistan wants to be the winner in historical war against Pakistan. But the dimension of this war is complicated and chaotic. Afghanistan has land claim against Pakistan. Afghanistan has deep historical hatred and many people have been killed in this battle. On the other hand, Pakistan has the role of being the supporter of Afghanistan and as a result, Pakistan remains unresolved. Furthermore, Pushtun intelligence and military wholly support Taliban. Pakistan in an organized manner for decades sent combatant, suicide bomber, as a result, thousands have been killed in Afghanistan. In this situation, Modi have given a speech that is appealing and fascinating to Afghanistan elites.

Second probability: the second probability can be described as if Afghanistan don’t have bigger problems if it expects peace. On the other hand, Pakistan doesn’t want an Afghan victory in the war against India. Pakistan doesn’t want Afghanistan as its defending zone against India’s problem with Pakistan is explained, but the fate of several generations can’t be explained, but the fate of several generations in the near future, therefore the main probability would be good, then friendship with India against Pakistan is a total failure scenario. And in the long term it is not true that Afghanistan can’t have bigger problems if it expects peace in the near future, therefore the main policy is that we have to find solutions.

Consequently, from the Modi’s speech and India’s friendship with Afghanistan, we can say different point of views. My understanding is that from 18 century onwards Afghanistan has always been the square of antagonism regionally and internationally. Since the rivalry between Great Britain and Tsarist Russia to the competition between America and the Soviet Union, Afghanistan was the main square of rivalry war, proxy wars, buffer state. After that, Afghanistan has become the competition ground between India and Pakistan as a result Taliban has emerged. This history has been repeated over and over again and has been always repeated but still Afghanistan elites don’t learn how to control the rivalry between great powers. So, rather than getting emotionally unmindful from the emotional tone of political leader or PM speech, before anything Afghan elites need to learn from history. In all these competitions Pushtun community has been used as an instrument. Britain and America and Soviet Russia has targeted Pushtun society to reach their aims. Pakistan and India are now targeting Pushtun community to reach their goals too. So, on the one hand, Modi’s speech is a historical and a political speech, but on the other hand, Modi’s speech did not resolve the mismatch among the two countries. The two powerful countries nuclear war heads are pointed against each other and south Asia is expecting a nuclear war.

On the other hand, Afghanistan still does not acknowledge Durand Border Line with Pakistan. Historically the Afghanistan government because of Pushtun nationalism has intervened in Pakistan. The dimensions of this conflict is complicated no. In this conflict Afghanistan was the main loser in the history and has lost lot. Not only the cities have been devastated, but the fate of several generations of Afghanistan has been destroyed. In the current situation between Afghanistan and Pakistan were unresolvable. Furthermore, Pushtun intelligence and military wholly support Taliban. Pakistan in an organized manner for decades sent combatant, suicide bomber, as a result, thousands have been killed in Afghanistan. In this situation, Modi have given a speech that is appealing and fascinating to Afghanistan elites.

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Second probability: the second probability can be described as if Afghanistan doesn’t have bigger problems if it expects peace. On the other hand, Pakistan doesn’t want an Afghan victory in the war against India. Pakistan doesn’t want Afghanistan as its defending zone against India. Pakistan sends terrorists to Afghanistan and defines Afghanistan as its defending zone against India. Pakistan doesn’t want an independent democratic government in Afghanistan. This scenario seems bloody and we do not have any solution. So if Afghanistan’s depiction from Pakistan is like that, so any friendship with India seems right and logical in all seasons, which seems right. The outcome of this battle is either death or victory. No choice. But the problem with this scenario is that logi- cally Afghanistan is the regional loser.

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Global language acts as a lingua franca, a common language that enables people from diverse ethnic groups to communicate with each other on more/less equitable manner. Also, it refers to a language that is spoken and learned globally, and is characterized not only by its native and second language speakers, but also by its geographical distribution, and its usage in international organizations and diplomatic relations (Mustin, 2011). According to Crystal (2003), there is a close relationship between dominant language and economic, technological, and cultural power. A language cannot be used as an international medium of communication without a power base. A Language does not exist independently, it exists in the brains, mouths, ears, hands, and eyes of its speakers. The English Language is spoken everywhere, most of people state that it is clear that English acts as a global language. The major problems are discussed in this paper respectively. Firstly, English acts as a linguistic imperialism and removes minority languages from the media and educational system. Secondly, it creates inequities among people based on English Proficiency. The first major problem is that English acts as a linguistic imperialism and removes minority languages from the media and educational system. English has a cruel, violent history with colonialism and war, and recognizing English as the global language may be a threat to foreign language. A global language can make people unwilling to learn other language and neglect other languages (Mustin, 2011). This paper shows that people may lose their identity because of the dominance of English. As a language is a vital part of a person’s identity, it must be kept for remembering his roots. Also it may remove minority languages. According to Smolander (2013), many languages have died because of the spread of English, and many other languages have lost their speakers. Language is more than just a medium of instruction. There is a close relationship between language and culture, cultural similarity may lead to a shift in language where native speakers use another language, and the old language may gradually die out. There has been some “English Only” movement in the US. For example, French was banned among Louisiana in 1803. Later, some attempts were made to remove Spanish and French, and also English was declared as the official language of several states, however, this movement was rejected by linguistics. They believed that use of single language does not guarantee the social harmony and mutual understanding among people (cited in Smolander, 2013). The second major problem is that it creates inequities among people based on English proficiency. According to British Council report, poor people are using Bahasa in Indonesia, and English is just the language of rich people. Moreover, Anne Johnson shows that people are learning English in China to be able to work in global market, have access to modern life, and use a computer. However, English is the language of elites and it has created language gap among people (p.133).

Solutions
To protect minority languages from vanishing, it is better to see Iran policy for protecting Persian language. Iran seeks to protect Persian language against foreign words. This academy also promotes research on Persian literature, Persian language, Iranian studies and Iranian culture. Also it finds equivalent words for new scientific terms. In addition government impose high taxes on using English words. Persian texting is cheaper than English texting (Zanikhi, 2010). Although people claim that English is the language of technology, we see Japan is using Japanese language while making its software (Masahide, 2007). To remove social inequality created by English as global language, a country should transfer the world knowledge to its population into major indigenous language instead of forcing its population to learn foreign language as society develops. This policy will help fragile states to develop (Kaplan, 2012). They can apply more flexible policy as Hong Kong is doing today. Hong Kong teaches its students both in English and Chinese at all of its schools in order to protect Chinese and creating a facility that everyone can learn English or Pakistani language in their schools (Dearden, 2014).

Evaluation
The Iranian policy to protect the Persian language seems an effective policy. It doesn’t allow any foreign words to enter in Persian language. But the reality is different. In Iran, people just try to use an equivalent word. The inclusive policy that is undertaken by some countries is widely open language in all aspects of life including education, business and media seems an appropriate way to prevent social inequality and also to use own national language because it gives the opportunity to learn well and make development. Even better to be more flexible and teach its students both in English and their national language at all of schools equally that make a balance between local language and global language.

Conclusion
English as a global language is on the rise, though it created some problems to non-native speakers. The rise of English leads to disappearing of the minority languages and creates social inequality among social groups. But there are some ways that countries can avoid facing these problems. Like: making inclusive policy for protecting its language and promoting its language along its border. Although these policies are not the only solution for solving the problems, countries can make stronger policies based on their own values and conditions.

References

Personal Essays

The rise of English as a global language – problems and solutions

About the author: Fatima Arifi is a highly motivated Star alumnus. She is currently a senior at Kabul Medical University majoring in public health and a sophomore at the American University of Afghanistan majoring in political science.
There was an old weapons depot at Qash-Oshtr (the Camel Slope) just above the village. The commander and his party kept stored their weapons there. The Pashi tribesmen interrogated the locals and found out about it. What they didn’t find out was that the depot was surrounded by a minefield. There was a narrow pathway there but only a select few, who had already fled, knew about it. Armed Pashi men approached the depot location. They walked on looking for signs on the ground. One of them stepped on a mine. In a bang and a plume of smoke, he was left in pieces and dead. The rest of their men stopped in their steps, and retreated back into the village. Among them was Ghulam Reza, who told me his story many years later when they too, became refugees in Pakistan. The Pashi forced a group of us to Qash-Oshtr. They had their guns pointed at us, and threatened to shoot us if we didn’t do as instructed. I was forced on to the minefield to drag out the body. Among them was Ghulam Reza, who told me his story many years later when they too, became refugees in Pakistan. Among them was Ghulam Reza, who told me his story many years later when they too, became refugees in Pakistan.

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 and is currently a post-graduate student at the University of New South Wales.

The Man of Life Upright
By Thomas Campion

The man of life upright,
Whose guileless heart is free
From all dishonest deeds,
Or thought of vanitie,
The man whose silent dayes,
In harmles joyes are spent,
Whom hopes cannot delude,
Nor sorrow discontent;
That man needs neither towers
Nor armour for defence,
Nor secret vaults to fly
From thunders violence.

Hee onely can behold
With unafrighted eyes
The horrours of the deepe
And terrours of the Skies.

Thus, scorning all the cares
That fate, or fortune brings,
He makes the heau’n his booke,
His wisedome heu’nly things,
Good thoughts his onely friends,
His wealth a well-spent age,
The earth his sober Inne
And quiet Pilgrimage.

Thomas Campion (1567-1620)

Thomas Campion was born in London on February 12, 1567. He was a law student, a physician, a composer, a writer of masques, and a poet. Campion’s parents died when he was still a boy, but they left enough money to send him to Peterhouse College, Cambridge. He left Cambridge in 1584, apparently without taking a degree, and in 1586 was admitted to Gray’s Inn in London to study law. He participated in the Gray’s Inn revels of 1588 and contributed songs to the M.D. degree from the University of Caen in 1605. After returning to England, Campion was practising as a doctor in London from 1606. During that time, he wrote several masques which were performed at the court of James I. Perhaps the best of them was the Lords’ Masque (1613). In 1613 he also published A New Way of Making Foure Parts in Counterpoint, a book on music theory. In 1615 Campion was questioned about the murder of, but was found innocent and released. Campion died in London, probably of the plague, on March 1, 1620, and was buried at St. Dunstan’s-in-the-West.
Speaking for women through art

An interview with Jahan Ara Rafi, artist and co-founder of Shamama Gallery

Ms. Jahan Ara Rafi received her bachelor’s degree from the Fine Art Faculty of Kabul University. She is one of the co-founders of Shamama Gallery and also director of the Art Department in Mehr Kindergarten.

Hello Ms. Rafi, tell us about your artwork and when you began painting. I have been painting since 2002 when I was in Pakistan. Besides, I am a photographer and sometimes I write poetry which is all about my hidden soul and feelings. As we now, every artist is touched by a society faced with lots of social, cultural and political inequality. Therefore, my artwork comes from the hidden feelings inside of me. My first contemporary artwork was an unclear face of an old woman whose face was hidden with dark lines.

What message does your art convey? My artwork always conveys women’s lives and violence. I always want to be a voice for women who are silent. In addition, Afghanistan is a country which has seen much violence with many different cases of violence against women. So that is why there is always a woman in my paintings and gender equality. The deranged colors in my paintings are rooted from my feelings, my hidden voice and the life’s truth that is always silent.

How many exhibitions have you participated in and tell us about your first exhibition. Every artist wants to have an exhibition for his or her artwork. Therefore, I want my artwork to be a bridge between me and people. I have participated in more than twenty internal and external exhibitions. In August, I exhibited sixteen of my art pieces were related to the heart-rending incidents of violence in Paghman and with Far Kunda. My first exhibition was in Pakistan in 2002 with a group of Afghan painters and I got an appreciation letter from the hands of my art teacher Ghulam Mahiden Shabnam. Therefore, I always remember those special moments when I found myself on the stairs of success.

When did Shamama Gallery open and what are its visions? Around one and half years ago when there was insecurity, the presidential election process and negotiations among politicians, a group of five young female artists created a gallery by the name of Shamama which works by introducing artists and showing their artwork in a peaceful and calm area. It is the only contemporary art gallery which is established by young women in Afghanistan. In addition, I am lucky that I am one of those five women activists.

Tell us about your activities in the Center for Contemporary Arts Afghanian (CCAA). I worked in CCAA since 2006 which was established for young female artists. In addition, we had the first contemporary art exhibition after the dark Taliban regime in 2008 which included the artwork of 23 young women including five of my pieces of art. They were exhibited first in Kabul and then showed in one of the museums in Berlin.

I understand you teach art to kids. How do you feel when you work with them? I teach art to kids in Mehr Kindergarten. Painting is the language of children. They play with lines and colors and draw irregular shapes which are stories that compel me to know about children’s thoughts and guide them through their creativities and feelings. They always draw their unknown character, a dreamy house or their wishes. Therefore, working with children, colors and creativity are the joyful moments of my life.

What is your biggest wish in the world? My greatest wish is peace in all the world when there are no suicide attacks, no violence against women, no killing human by human, no women being killed by stoning, no women being burned. I wish there were no colors or views of violence on my canvases. I wish everyone learned to love each other.

Tell us about contemporary art in Afghanistan? I am optimistic about improving contemporary art in Afghanistan. As we all know, there are many contemporary art organizations which are set by the young generation. In fact, by understanding the structure, features and objectives of conceptual art, including the art of minimalism, we can find the hidden secret in it. In addition, in recent years there have been many exchange programs between Afghan artists and foreign artists that directly improve art, new ideas and new experiences.

In which school of art are you interested? I am mostly interested in expressionism. Color is used in a shiny and clear way that gives a feeling of calmness and peace. For instance, Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin are the stars of this style and I mostly like Van Gogh’s artwork which makes me feel fresh and calm. Moreover, when I see Picasso’s artworks, I feel more relaxed.

What is your favorite artwork? My favorite artwork is a hidden face of a woman which I named “In the Extremity of Looks,” sized 90×65 and I completed this work in less than one hour in 2008. The painting represents violence and sorrow in Afghan woman.