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"How Will an International Education Help Me Make a Difference in the World?"

International education helps me gain a better understanding of different cultures and makes me appreciate the differences that exist among them. I will use this understanding to help others to move beyond these differences. My parents gave me a great example of how to do this.

When we moved to Pakistan in 1992 after the collapse of the Soviet Union-backed regime in Afghanistan, one of the challenges of adjustment there was to make a place in the community. It was particularly hard because there was already a division between Afghan refugees and Pakistani communities due to stereotypes and misconceptions. However, it did not take long before my parents were able to adjust to the new environment and gain the respect of both Afghan and Pakistani settlements.

My parents were able to do so because my mother volunteered to tutor students both from Afghan and Pakistani schools. This was welcomed by the community and turned out to have a significant impact on the people. Prior to this program, there was a tense atmosphere between Afghan and Pakistani settlements. Children from these two groups would usually not be allowed by their parents to play with each other. My mother offered a free tutoring program to both Afghan and Pakistani school children, which brought the children together. Because of this tutoring program, all children could now play together. And their parents gradually realized the stereotypes were inaccurate and the two communities became somewhat more accepting of each other.

The experience of being a refugee and observing how my parents, using their education, were able to turn the situation to everyone's satisfaction has been very inspiring to me. I learned to place the highest value on education. During my youth, my parents emphasized that education is an investment in the future for one's self and one's family.

Contrary to the perspective that an individual without significant resources can make no difference in the world, I believe that an individual can do so. I'll try my best to follow the example set by my parents. I plan to pursue post-graduate studies in the fields of computer science and mathematics. I believe that my study in those fields will help me prepare for my goal of teaching and promoting the use of technology in poor countries in more creative and affordable ways.

I have observed during my experience of working for Mercy Corps, an international humanitarian aid agency, the significance of highlighting the harsh realities of people's suffering in poor countries so that their voices can be heard. I hope that one day I will be able to use technology to make more people aware of the extreme hardships that exist in our world and also to make it more accessible and easier for those willing to help to reach those in need.

It takes courage and determination to work toward fulfilling one's goals, especially so, when there are financial challenges. I know that this scholarship will not be a complete solution to all my challenges, but it is an encouragement and a push in the right direction.


