



Team Pakistan



Team Sri Lanka

# Connecting the World Through Films

*This year's Locarno Festival was special for many reasons. Although people from all over the world participate in the prestigious film festival, the "Open Doors" initiative made it possible for people from many "unlikely" countries to participate and even have big achievements and awards. Three countries which were focused on this year by the initiative are Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Even though the said countries speak different languages and have somewhat different cultures, fundamentally we are all the same; at least that is what I think.*

The individuals that came through the ranks in this festival have amazing talent, some which transcend the boundaries that are defined by flags. It is indeed difficult to imagine that a country like Afghanistan, where the situation is dire to say the least, would produce such an impressive array of films. Needless to say, their very lives may be in danger by putting forth their ideas against anarchy, injustice and dissonance in their countries. Two films from Afghanistan that were absolutely brilliant and thought-provoking were *Osama* and *A Letter to the President*. I was flabbergasted seeing the quality, effort and topic selection of the young Afghanistani directors.

When we talk about Pakistan and Pakistani films, much of the same can be said. *Khamosh Pani*, the International Award winner featuring the powerful actress Kiron Kher was on display, as well



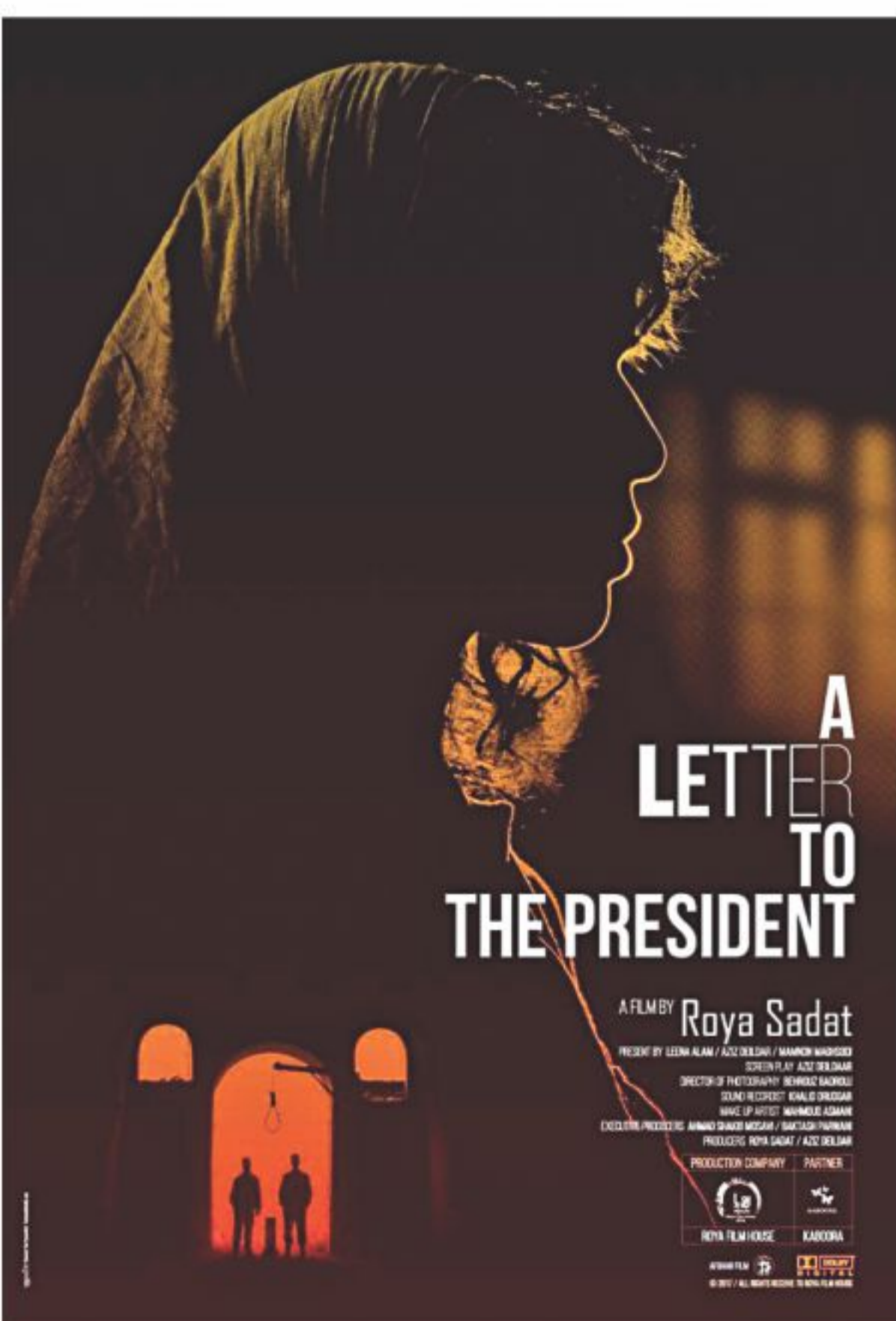
Team Afghanistan

as the thought-provoking *Girl in the River*. Feelings between the people of

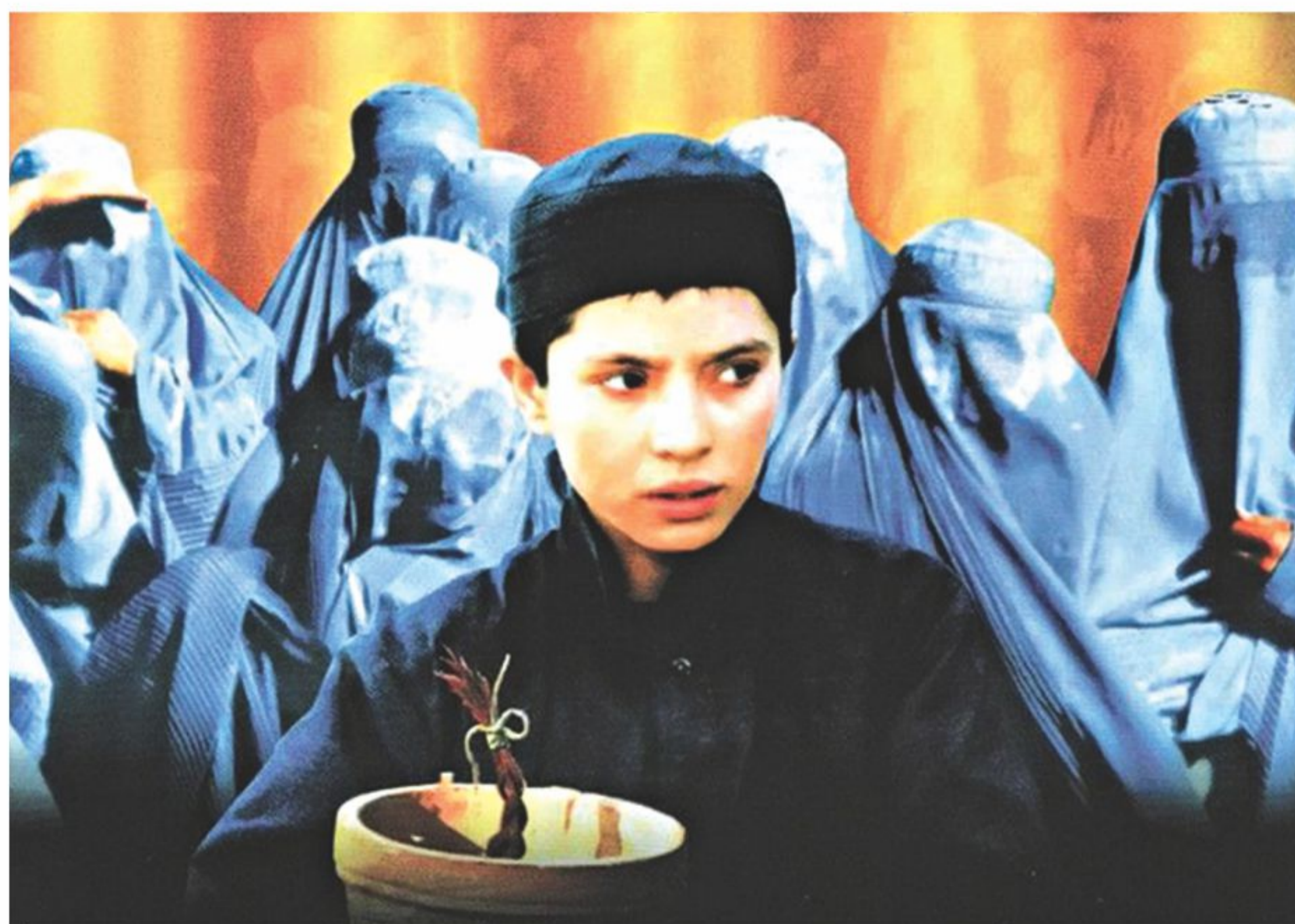
Bangladesh and Pakistan tend to be bitter because of the history we are involved in.

One incident during my visit to the Locarno Festival was particularly eye-opening. A young director by the name of Ammar Aziz, who directed *A Walnut Tree* came up to me and said "sorry". When I asked him why he was sorry, he said that he was sorry because the Pakistani government still had not issued an official apology for the heinous genocide in 1971. I was naturally shocked by his kindness and forward thinking, but realized that hatred is not a natural tendency for people, love is. I asked him about how general Pakistani people thought of Bangladeshis, and he replied that the younger generation were much more accepting towards history than the older ones. This is the power of filmmaking, the world is now connected through films, media and such beautiful film festivals such as Locarno.

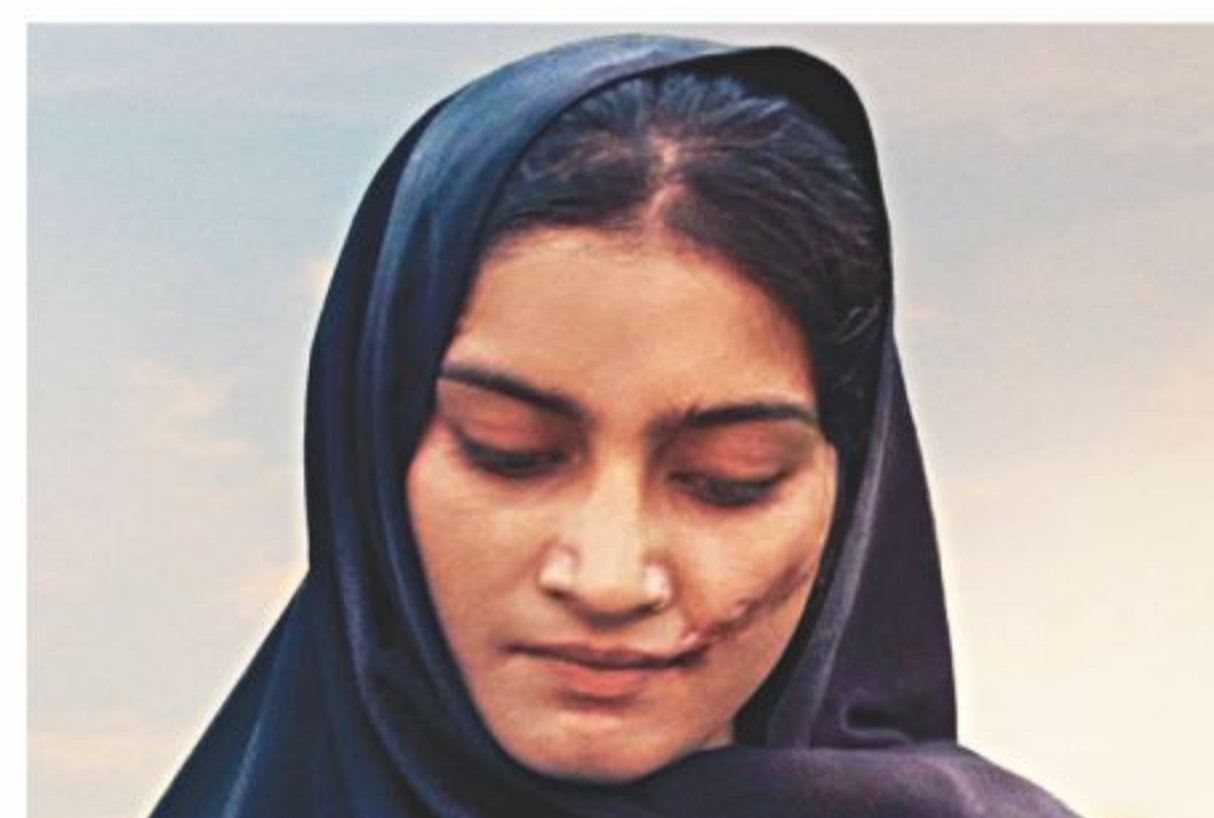
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By Rafi Hossain from the Locarno Festival



A Letter to the President (Afghanistan)



Osama (Afghanistan)



Girl in the River (Pakistan)



Khamosh Pani (Pakistan)