

A woman in a teal dress is in the foreground, holding a red cricket ball. In the background, a group of men in dark clothing, some holding rifles, stand on a dusty street littered with rubble. There are damaged cars and buildings in the distance.

*"On the killing fields of Kabul
she took wickets instead of lives."*

THE PLAYING FIELDS

BASED ON THE NOVEL 'THE TALIBAN CRICKET CLUB' BY TIMERI N. MURARI

IN DEVELOPMENT: A FEATURE FILM FOR INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION



THE PLAYING FIELDS is an inspiring and suspenseful tale set against the beautiful, yet bloody backdrop of Afghanistan from the late 1980s to 2000. It follows Rukhsana, a fiercely intelligent young woman and former journalist, as she navigates a brutal regime, familial obligations and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in the form of a National Cricket Tournament.

Masterfully weaving themes of gender identity and political oppression into a deeply human story, it balances moments of sheer joy, camaraderie and underdog humour, with scenes of real brutality and suspense. It lifts the veil on what life is really like in a society where your identity is both prescribed and ruthlessly administered to you by the State.

At its core, it is a tale of resistance and how not even the strictest regime can extinguish the human spirit and its will to win.

“There is no room for violence on the field of play.”

- MCC Law 42

KABUL 1996

Working as a journalist for the Kabul Daily, Rukhsana (22) is one of a new generation of young women emerging from the shadows of the civil war. They are finding their voice and the freedom to use it. But on September 26 1996, when the Taliban seize control of Kabul, her life changes overnight. She loses her job, her voice and her freedom.

Refusing to be silenced, she continues her journalism, exposing the new regime's brutality through articles published under a pseudonym in the Hindustan Times.

Then, with the announcement of a National Cricket Tournament, Rukhsana sees an opportunity. The winning team will be sent to Karachi to train with the Pakistan National Team - eleven tickets to freedom, for eleven young men. Having played cricket at University in Delhi, she gathers together a ragtag team of male cousins, all broken by war, to coach them in the art of the game. As a woman however, she is forbidden from participating in sports. So, with the help of her friend Nourzia who runs an underground salon, she invents a male alter ego called Babur.

Disguised and free from the shackles of the Burka, she begins training the team, teaching them not just technique, but the strategy and psychology behind the game. Maintaining the disguise becomes a

matter of life and death when Zoraq Wahidi, the local governor, sends his brother Gol Agha with a marriage proposal for Rukhsana. Refusing to see their cousin taken by such a brutal man, the team pool together their meagre savings to pay Junaid, a people smuggler, to get her out of the country. Arrangements are made for the night of the final.

Calling themselves The Kings of Kabul, the team begin winning, growing stronger with every match. But the day before the final, tragedy strikes. Shadeen, a teammate, steps on a landmine during practice. Babur must take his place on the field and steps in as wicketkeeper. To complete the disguise, the boys fashion a prosthetic from a goat's testicles and lamb kofta. Dubious at first, once it is strapped in place Rukhsana finds herself feeling strangely empowered!

In a tense final match against the Taliban's elite State Team, The Lions of Kabul are left chasing 120 runs. On the penultimate ball, Babur is hit in the groin. Her prosthetic ruptures, blood seeping through her white trousers. To the amazement and admiration of the crowd, she stands defiant. The crowd cheers. On the final ball, she connects. They run. Victory!

Their celebration is cut short however when Gol Agha storms the locker room, dragging in Junaid's bloodied body. This is their trophy.

The State Team will go to Pakistan, not them. Rukhsana must be handed over that night.

Just when hope fades, Abdul, the family's watchman, appears. He has drugged the State Team's driver and their escorts with morphine-laced yogurt and locked the team, still celebrating, in the showers. In the next room are white blazers, passports and cash - "Pick one that resembles you," he says. "You have five minutes."

A high-speed chase ensues through the streets of Kabul, Abdul driving the stolen team bus as Wahidi's men pursue. At the airport, the team board the plane, Babur among them, just moments before Gol Agha's order to stop them arrives. As the wheels lift off and the plane soars toward Pakistan, Rukhsana gazes out the window, bruised, battered, but free.

NEW YORK 2024

Rukhsana is now the chief editor for Asian affairs for the New York Times. Happily married, she has reclaimed her voice and the freedom to use it.

***"The two greatest warriors
are time... and patience. And
they are on our side"***

- Gulab

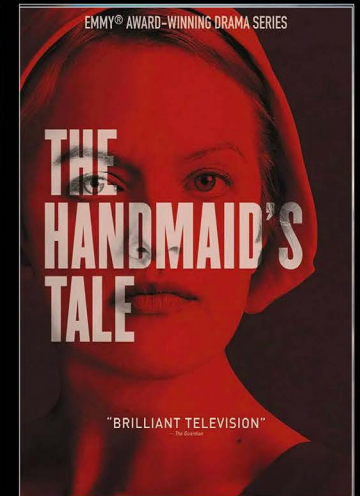
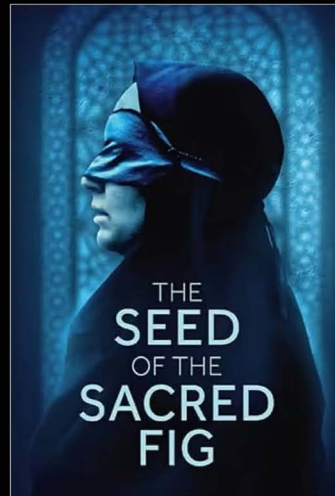
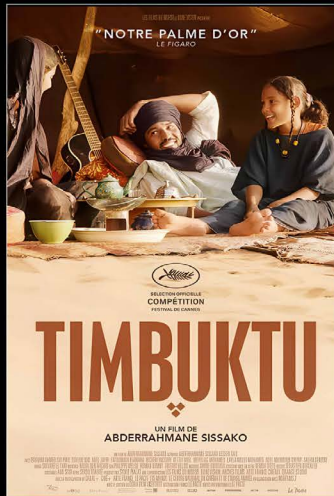
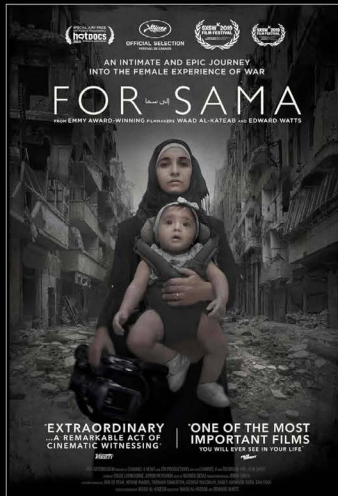
STORYLINE



COMPARABLE FILMS

EPIC SETTING

INTIMATE STORYTELLING



DEFIANT & HEARTBREAKING

LIBERATING & BOLD

THE TEAM

Fadeen

Darab

Parwazee

Bilal

QUBAD

Royan

Rukhsana

Shadeen

Namdar

Omaid

ATTASH

JAHAN





RUKHSANA

Rukhsana is the beating heart of our story. A complex, brave, and intellectually gifted young Afghan woman whose refusal to be silenced under the crushing weight of societal oppression becomes the emotional backbone of the narrative.

Having completed a journalism degree in Delhi she returns to Kabul committed to truth-telling and resistance through writing. The Taliban's rise to power and the brutal theocracy that comes with them only fuels and strengthens her commitment to justice and freedom.

Rukhsana's inner strength is matched only by her deep compassion and loyalty - to her family, her friends and her country. Her relationships reflect her layered emotional world: one defined not only by suffering, but also by courage, humour and defiance.

Rukhsana is not just a protagonist; she is a symbol of the Afghan woman's fight, for voice, agency and freedom, in a world determined to deny her all three.



RUKHSANA'S FAMILY

GULAB (father)

Having studied business and politics at Kabul University, he forged a very successful career as a businessman and diplomat. A progressive liberal thinker, he encourages his daughter to follow her dreams, fuelled by the freedoms of her Bacha Posh upbringing.

FARIDA (mother)

Farida is from the golden generation of Afghan women. Educated, erudite and elegant, she is Rukhsana's rock, her best friend and advisor. Refusing to be silenced, she continues to teach underground English classes to young girls in her basement. Her terminal illness represents the fading of a dream and the passing of a generation that had so much promise and potential.

JAHAN (brother)

Fiercely protective of his older sister, he insists on acting as her Mahram, despite the danger it at times puts him in. Growing up under such a brutal regime has matured him beyond his 16 years of age. Nevertheless, his youthful bravado cannot mask the inner fears for his family, and his feeling of helplessness.



THE COUSINS

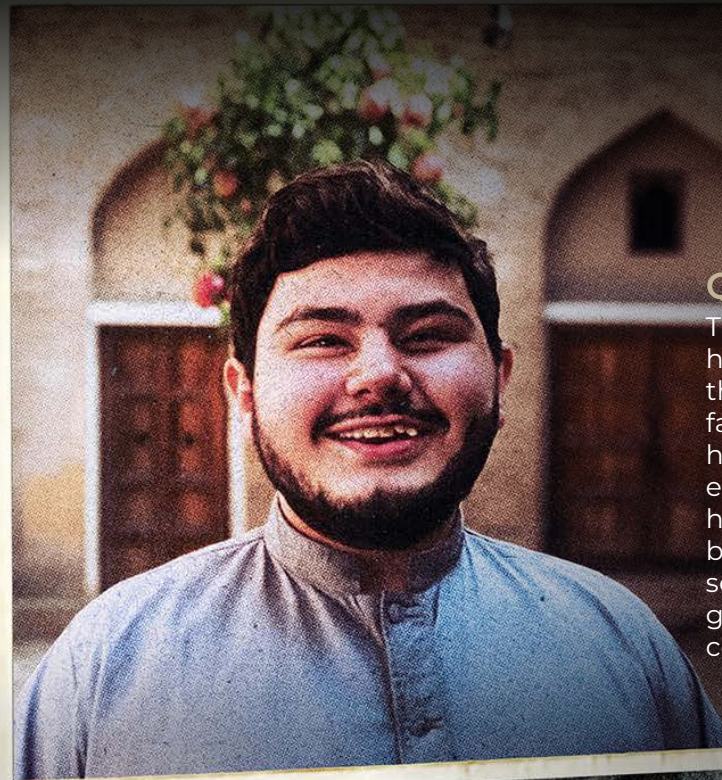
PARWAZEE

Immaculately dressed and handsome, he is the leader of the Cousins. His studies in electronics have been halted. Once a dreamer, he now has a permanent frown, like a warrior scoping out his enemy.



QUBAD

The comedian of the group, he speaks with a stutter, the result of shell shock. His father has been killed and his studies as a mechanical engineer cut short. Although he becomes a decent spin bowler, his batting skills are severely lacking! His only goal is to one day make contact with the ball!



OMAID

He is the youngest and smallest of the group. There is a sadness in his eyes, the result of seeing his mother and sister killed in an explosion and suffering physical abuse at the hands of his alcoholic father. He may come across as shy but he is a fighter waiting for the opportunity to strike.

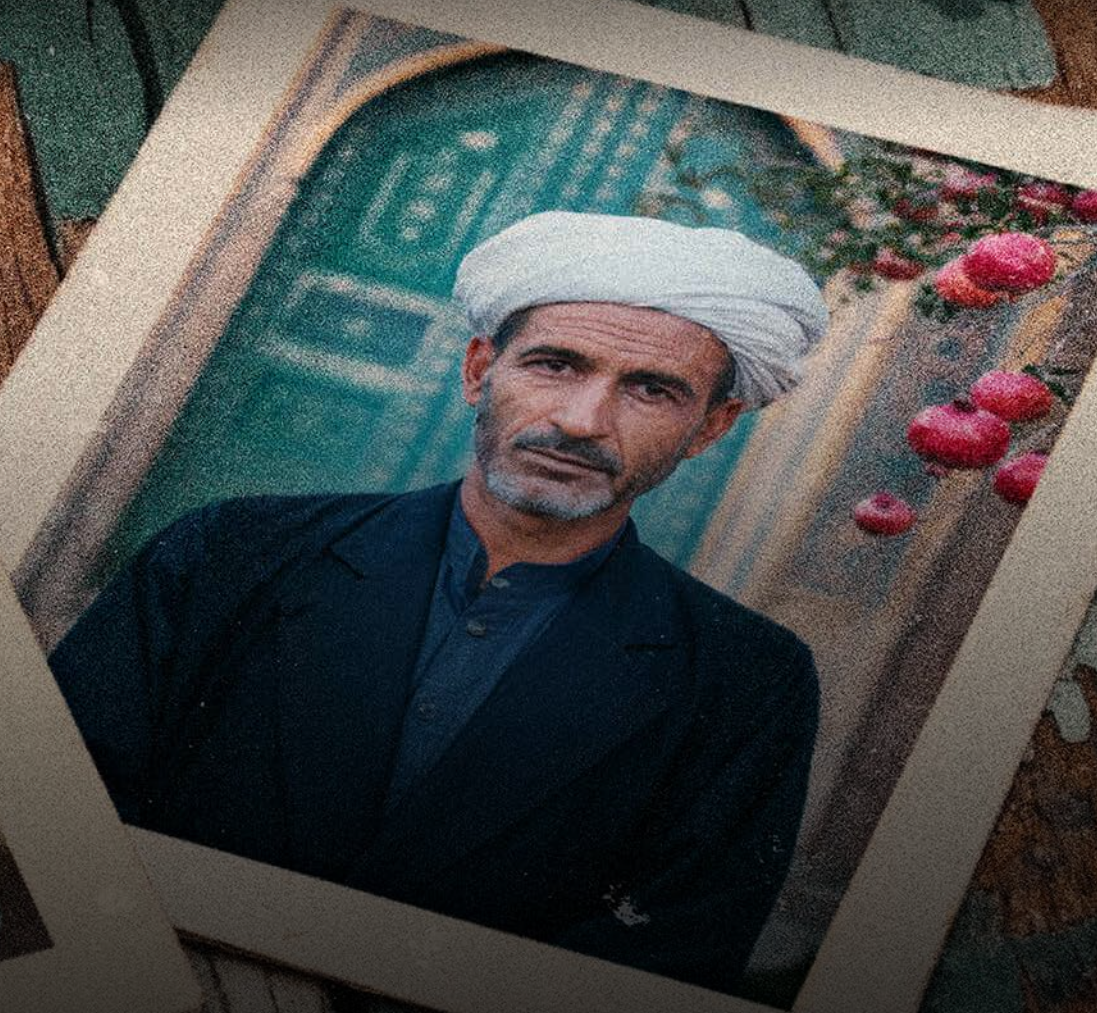


FAMILY FRIENDS



DR HANIFA

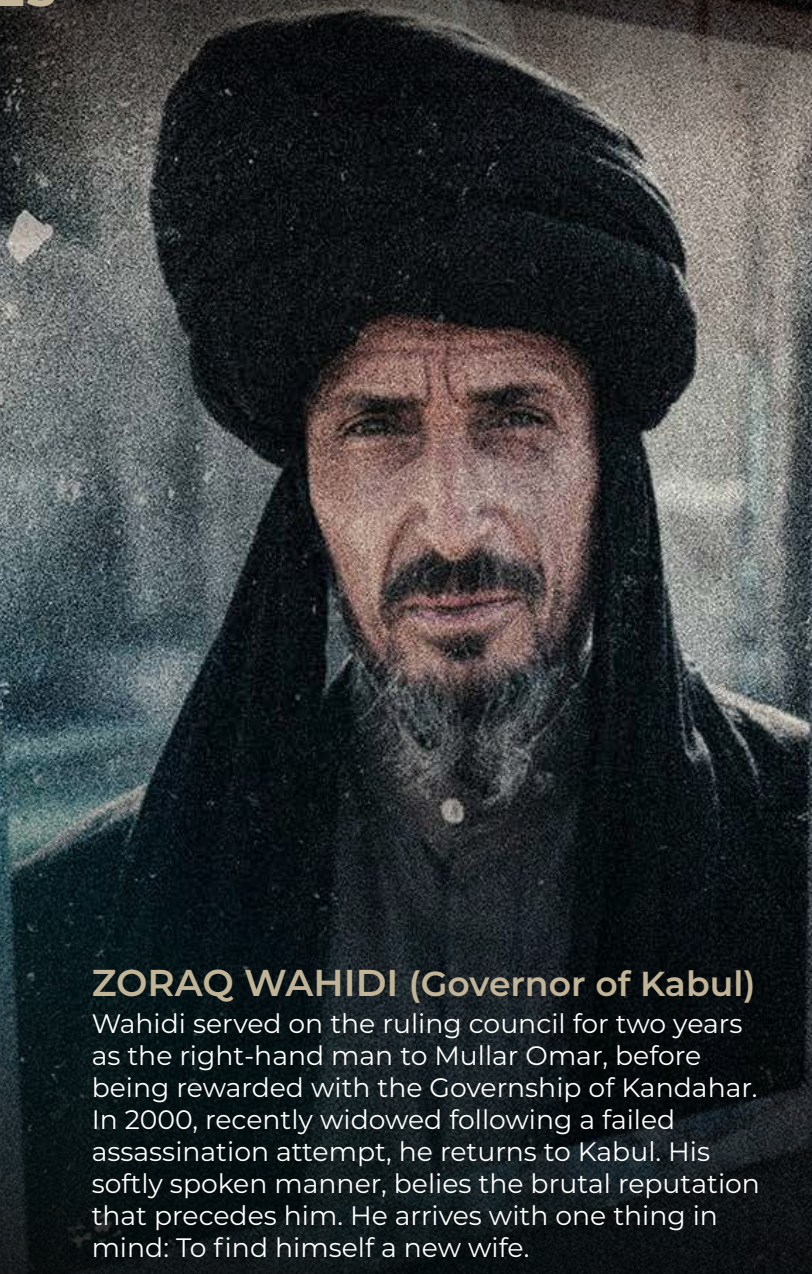
The family doctor and best friend to Farida. She stays by her friend's bedside day and night, nursing her and keeping her company. Widowed several years ago she is lonely and needs the company just as much as Farida. She is no pushover however and refuses to allow Farida to feel sorry for herself.



ABDUL

The family watchman. A crafty old devil, whose transformation over the years represents the changing face of Afghanistan. He becomes the paternal protector after Gulab dies, and although he is a cynical curmudgeon on the surface, deep down he cares for the family as if they were his own.

ENEMIES



ZORAQ WAHIDI (Governor of Kabul)

Wahidi served on the ruling council for two years as the right-hand man to Mullar Omar, before being rewarded with the Governorship of Kandahar. In 2000, recently widowed following a failed assassination attempt, he returns to Kabul. His softly spoken manner, belies the brutal reputation that precedes him. He arrives with one thing in mind: To find himself a new wife.



GOL AGHA

Brother of and deputy to Wahidi, he is a sadistic theocrat, whose unearned position of power has gone to his head. His bite is worse than his bark. A smell of sweat and blood accompanies him wherever he goes.

TIM MURRAY: WRITER AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



THE “STORY” BEHIND THE STORY

When I first picked up a copy of “The Taliban Cricket Club” in Waterstones all those years ago, I was immediately gripped. It had everything! Beauty mixed with brutality, tranquility with terror and heartache with humour. It provoked in me every emotion under the sun, from one extreme to another and I knew immediately I had to adapt it for the screen. I was under no illusion however what a challenge that would be. The story it had inspired in me would require far more information about the country, its history and its people, than the book provided.

With the help of Khoshhal Taib and his encyclopaedic knowledge of his homeland, I began a 6 month period of research to discover the world in which our characters would live. It was not only Khoshhal’s journalistic integrity that proved invaluable to me, but also his contacts back in Afghanistan. It is impossible to put into words the feeling one has when discussing life, via a shaky video link from the comfort of my own living room, with a 12 year old Afghan girl, hiding in a basement somewhere in Kabul, in fear for her life. Humbling doesn’t come close. But this was the privileged position I found myself in on numerous occasions. To hear the gratitude in their voices, simply because someone wanted to listen to their stories, filled me with both pride and shame at the same time. Pride because I could help to get their voices heard, and shame because we live in a world where, for these young girls, simply having a voice is a privilege.



KHOSHHAL TAIB - Production Consultant

Khoshhal was born in 1971 in the Logar province, south of Kabul, Afghanistan. He started his journalistic career with "good morning Afghanistan" in 2001, the country's first ever free radio programme, before moving to China where he worked as a presenter and language expert on China Radio International. In 2007 he was asked to consult on the production of the Kite Runner, where he worked closely with the Film makers on the development of the script, and to ensure cultural accuracies were observed. In 2009 he started working with the BBC World Service, a job he still does today. After the collapse of the Afghan government In 2021 he relocated with his family to London, where he now resides.

SHKULA

Shkula is 12 years old and lives in Kabul with her parents, two sisters and younger brother. When I first met her 2 years ago, Jon, as she was known then, was a confident, curious and ambitious young boy. He had dreams of completing his education, becoming a doctor and travelling the world. He loved playing cricket, and idolised his hero Rashid Khan. While the dreams she had as a young boy seem so far away since her recent transition into womanhood, Shkula's ambition and determination to achieve them have not changed one bit, driven as they are by her unbreakable love for her country and a belief that, with time, things will change. She has played a huge role in helping me find and shape the character of young Babur. When asked what we could do in return for her speaking so candidly with us, her only request was for English lessons. We naturally obliged, and to hear how well she has progressed over such a short space of time just shows how a little help can go a long way. If this project can in any way fuel a conversation around the plight of women's education in Afghanistan and keep the spotlight on it, then many more young women like Shkula can be heard.

MADINA

Madina was born in Kabul in 2003 and grew up in a relatively free Afghanistan. The 2004 constitution granted women significant but fragile rights. It recognized gender equality, enabling women to attend school, work, and participate in politics. Millions of girls enrolled in education, and women held parliamentary seats, judicial roles, and leadership positions. In this environment Madina had dreams of becoming the Minister for Finance and in 2021 she passed the Kankor (entrance exam) to study economics at Kabul University. Nearly 5 years later and you might expect her to be filled with anger at having her future stolen from her. But she is not. Like a lot of the women I spoke with, her stoicism and the dignity with which she carries herself is quite remarkable. Do not mistake this for weakness however. They quietly resist and defy their oppressors every day, with an unshakable belief that one day their voices will be heard and the future theirs to command. My conversations with Madina were invaluable to me in finding the heart and soul of our heroine Rukhsana.

KHOSHHAL TAIB



SHKULA



MADINA





THE HUMANITY BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Afghanistan remains one of the world's most complex and misunderstood regions. Too often, its stories are told through the lens of war, and Western intervention. This film proposes a shift: an intimate, character-centered narrative that offers a rare window into Afghan life from the perspective of a woman navigating a society fraught with systemic inequality. Her character serves as both a mirror for audiences to reflect on their own questions of identity and agency, and a window into a society too often defined by headlines rather than human stories.

Visually rich and emotionally layered, the Afghan landscape provides an evocative backdrop, full of stark beauty and symbolic contrast. Against this setting, the protagonist's internal journey - her struggle with identity, freedom, and voice - unfolds in a way that is both deeply personal and powerfully political. The narrative becomes not just about one woman, but about all women forced to navigate systems that suppress their potential.

GLOBAL APPEAL, LOCAL AUTHENTICITY

For this project to work, it is vital we have a female director at the helm, whose style and personal experiences can give the project the authenticity and credibility it both needs and deserves. With the sudden growth in production in Middle Eastern and Arab countries over the last 15 years, a quite remarkable generation of local female talent has emerged from the shadows. Nadine Labaki, Haifaa Al Mansour, and Waad Al Kateab are three of the strongest voices out there. It would be a huge privilege to work with any one of them.





STARTING A CONVERSATION

In an increasingly globalized content landscape, audiences are no longer passive; they actively seek female led stories that challenge, inform, and inspire, that not only entertain, but also generate conversation. In markets across Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa audiences are eager to see their own realities reflected on screen, while those across Europe and America continue to respond strongly to prestige international content, especially when it centres on compelling characters and high-stakes drama. With themes of identity, gender, and human rights at its core, this film speaks directly to global audiences, while also aligning with the missions of forward-looking distributors to champion diverse and socially impactful content.

CALIPHATE

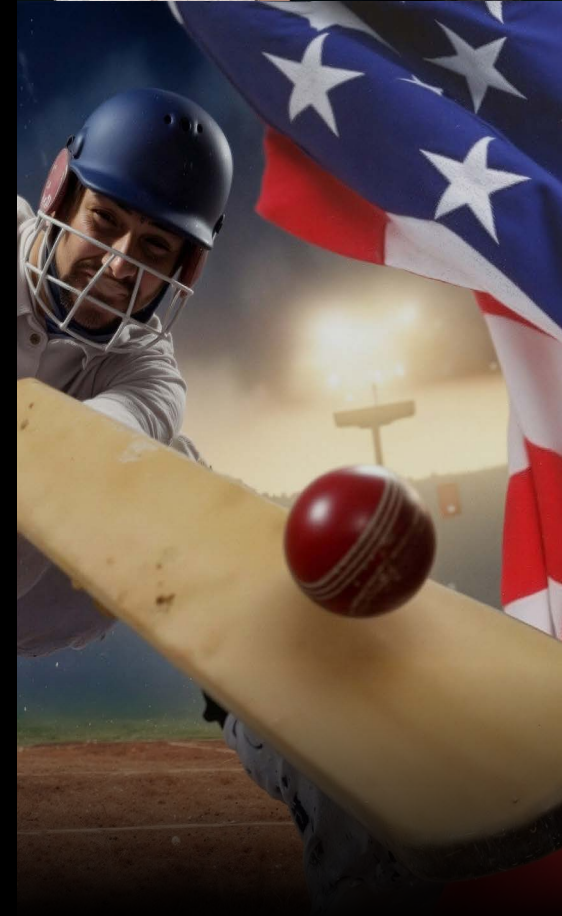


THE GENTLEMEN'S GAME

As for the game of Cricket, the introduction of the T20 short format has seen an explosion in the game's global popularity. Over 1.25 billion people tuned in to watch the last ODI Cricket World Cup (2023), in which Afghanistan delivered a historic hat-trick of victories over England, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka! In 2024 they went from being the world's favourite underdogs to serious contenders, with victories over their biggest rivals India and Australia!

In the United States in particular, cricket is experiencing notable growth, driven by immigrant communities, youth programs and professional initiatives like Major League Cricket. The country's co-hosting of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in 2024 further boosted visibility. With rising participation, improved facilities and global star power, cricket is steadily becoming the world's favourite sport and Afghanistan the world's favourite Team!

Now is the time to tell this story. And the world is ready to watch.





WRITER / EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
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“If you risk nothing, you risk everything.”
- Rukhsana

