

THE JOURNEY WITHIN

By Mian Adnan Ahmad

Significance of this presentation on Pakistan Studies

My presentation included the screening of *The Journey Within* - an award-winning music docu-film on the origins of Coke Studio Pakistan, which I wrote, directed and produced. A film which brings to light the rich musical history of our region by telling the story of how artists of various backgrounds and genres came together in a post 9/11 Pakistan to start a process of self-discovery and re-learning of their own musical inspirations, in helping create what is now one of the biggest music shows of South Asia. Apart from a successful festival run, the film has also made inroads in scholarly endeavors, having been sought for study by PHD candidates and recently included in the South Asian Cinema program of University of California in Davis

In some way or form we all have our identities connected through music, culture and artistic expression. Over time each coming generation can lose some of their own heritage in this relationship...by force, a lack of interest and internal chaos. In a country such as Pakistan which is challenged by all three, coupled with its people being portrayed negatively by the media and falling victim to an 'Us' vs 'Them' scenario, there is a greater need amongst the people to 'identify'. Not just from outside, but also from within. It is this searching for and embracing of the true essence of who we are, where we come from and the desire to break an unjust existing stereotype of Pakistan as a whole, that gave birth to a music show resonated with the masses. It inspired by bringing to the fore the rich musical heritage of this region and helped ignite a renewed sense of pride amongst the people; uniting all divisions and backgrounds in celebrating the inherited musical expressions that were otherwise long forgotten

We looked back at this inspiring narrative, while focusing on the show's incredible music and those involved with its humble beginnings. Not only did it help dismantle stereotypes and prejudices from outside and within but it also shed light on an ongoing journey of discovery and self-identity that continues to this day. Audiences had the opportunity to learn more about and appreciate Pakistan's people's narrative. *The Journey Within* has been doing this remarkably well, continuing to build on it's success since winning Best of Fest at it's premiere in the US amongst an audience who had never heard about Coke Studio, or the artists/music brought to light in the film. With multiple showings in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and also parts of Europe, the special presentation at this year's Conference on South Asia was a reaffirmation of the powerful impact the film has had on audiences everywhere, and people were allowed to move beyond politics and learn more about Pakistan and its people's through its art, music, culture and cinema