

## BOOKS

# Love in a Headscarf: Love in the name of Quran

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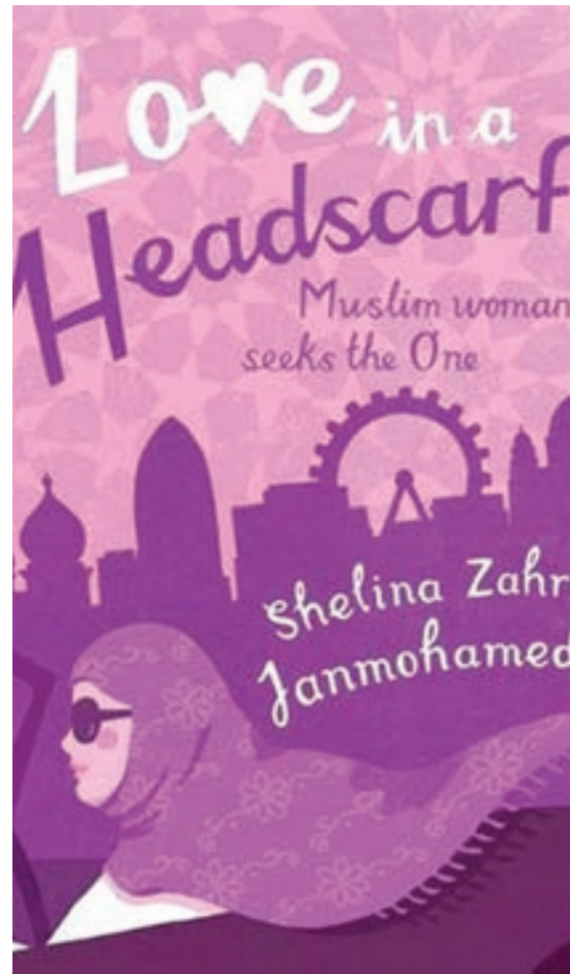
**Title:** *Love in a Headscarf*  
**Author:** Shelina Zahra Janmohamed  
**Publisher:** Aurum Press

**BEIRUT:** The author Shelina Zahra Janmohamed starts her story with a verse from the Quran that says that Allah has created us from one single soul and hence we're all equal. Janmohamed is an oxford educated, Muslim conservative who wrote a book about finding "Love in a Headscarf." The book reflects her personal experience where her traditions that she carries from her family clashes with the country she lives in, British. Yet, she manages to find love and faith along her path. The author begins her book with a vivid description of her scarf and speaks to the reader as a friend in which she would like to share a secret with over a invite for a cup of cappuccino.

In every chapter of the book, Janmohamed manages to summarize the important chapters about Islamic tradition when it comes to dating, Valentine's Day in the eyes of Muslims, and British occasions such as Groundhog Day. She also gives the reader an insight of how it is to love at first sight, preparing for first date, the reaction of parents when their daughter is in love, and arranged marriages. Janmohamed introduced the story of arranged marriage in a very entertaining, yet truthful manner where she described the fears and thoughts a girl goes through from the moment groom knocks on the door till the sound of a Zaghota (traditional action performed by women when expressing happiness) triggers the walls of the house. *Love in Head Scarf* is a personal memoir of a very traditional Muslim woman, whom despite her conservative beliefs toward her religion managed to share her experience in a very liberating manner.

I don't know if the idea of mixed marriage still works with the development of communication matters, and I don't know if a girl now will accept the fact that her picture is getting reviewed by several mothers gathered around one matchmaker, on the contrary what I see is that many women and men want a real love experience where there is dedication and devotion, love letters, valentine gifts, long telephone calls till dawn, honking horns under balconies, several missed calls once a while, and many rose pedals every Wednesday or every anniversary.

Janmohamed's desire to reveal her Muslim-British culture enabled her to create a new dimension for women to talk about their lives freely, or to at least create a secret bond with their scarf.



## NSS College of engineering alumni, GUST University organize 2nd festival of science

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**KUWAIT:** The Shaastrotsav science festival will be held in Kuwait for the second year in a row. In a press conference held Saturday evening at the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), a representative from the NSS College and GUST University explained that the venue for this year's festival will be held on the GUST grounds in Mishref.

The participating organizations will be Kuwait Oil Company, Kuwait institute for Scientific Research, The institute of engineering, JC values, eight engineering and graduate organizations, 14 school and several other professional organizations. The event will be held on April 23 will go on from 10 am until 5:45 pm, beginning with the inauguration ceremony.

There will also be a contest for designing air or gas propelled crafts or cars. Multimedia shows, animation, movies on science and technology will be featured as there will also be medical and technical seminars. A press release stated that the Indian Doctors Forum will be conducting a seminar on "Lifestyle Disorders" as part of the festival.

Dr. Vidula Mhaikar of Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) will also be conducting a science

activity workshop for science teachers and students - the NSS representative further added that "the way in which these professionals will explain their content will be aimed at an audience of non professionals so understanding them will be able to cover most attendees."

The key note speaker at the festival will be the internationally renowned expert in virtual reality Dr. Keshavadas who will be providing a demonstration on virtual reality as well.

The representative from the NSS explained that last year's Shaastrotsav was expecting a turnout of just less than 1000, but was surprised to have around 1500.

He explains that this year's Shaastrotsav was originally intended to host 1500 but expects it might reach 2000. Al Watan Daily asked the NSS representative if any public schools will be participating in this festival, he explained that "due to scheduling issues we were unable to incorporate any schools with a non Indian syllabus into the festival."

However we will take note of this by next year's festival. We did though send an invitation to many of the bilingual schools to visit the festival."

Finally a representative from GUST explained that "since GUST is all about science and technology, we are happy to endorse this science festival."

## ART

## Kuwait's Embassy in Ukraine participates in Arab Culture Day



Kuwait's booth displayed at the Arab Culture Day activity in Ukraine. (KUNA)

**KIEV:** Kuwait's Embassy in the Ukraine participated in the Arab Culture Day which included several cultural and social activities, with a special section highlighting the Kuwaiti heritage.

Charge de' affaires Kholoud Al-Mahroufi supervised the presentation of a Kuwaiti fashion show, an embassy statement said,

pointing out that all participating Arab embassies displayed a host of national dishes.

Arab embassies of Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Palestine, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria took part in the event, organized for the first time here. Ukrainian officials, diplomats and the Ukrainian media attended the event. -KUNA

## Hakawati traditions showcases at Abu Dhabi Festival 2010

**ABU DHABI:** Eager audiences in Abu Dhabi and Fujairah had another opportunity to experience the inspirational oral storytelling techniques of Hakawati performer Ahmed Yousef this weekend, with rescheduled performances as part of the Abu Dhabi Festival 2010, organized by the Abu Dhabi Music & Art Foundation, according to a press release provided to Al Watan Daily.

The events, which had been cancelled as part of the national mourning period, were rescheduled based on unprecedented demand, with more than one thousand people turning up to the three performances held in Sharjah, Umm Al Quwain and Ras Al Khaimah. A central part of the Abu Dhabi Festival 2010, the Hakawati tour sought to revive the practice of storytelling, a tradition rooted in the region's cultural heritage.

Held in Abu Dhabi on Friday April 9 and in Fujairah on Saturday April 10, the final Hakawati performances saw large crowds hearing stories from the 1001 Nights, in which the lady Shahrazad protects herself from the evil king Shahrayar by telling him stories on 1000 consecutive nights. The performances at the Abu Dhabi Festival 2010 Hakawati events were taken from these stories and also included the famous tale of the 'Emperor's New Clothes' by Hans Christian Andersen.

Hakawati performances are based on traditional Arabic storytelling techniques, generally performed in the open air in public, telling fabulous tales, often with moral twists. Loved by children and adults alike, Ahmed Yousef is one of the best-known Hakawatis (storytellers) working today.

He is performing as part of the Abu Dhabi Festival 2010's community program, which extends the benefit of this world-class festival



Hakawati performance in Abu Dhabi

throughout the UAE's communities, by reaching out to community groups within the UAE and providing a platform for the advancement of young national artists and traditional cultural practices alike.

The Festival's community program this year featured diverse events, including musical performances, storytelling, photography,

film, workshops and community cultural groups across the seven Emirates. These events helped establish partnerships with local community organizations as a reflection of the Festival's commitment to embedding the arts in the UAE and celebrating the spirit of "Bilad Al Khayr," "The Land of Blessings," through grassroots involvement in music, arts and culture.

## Madrid's Teatro Real seeks place among Europe's top operas

**MADRID:** When Spain's Teatro Real opera reopened in 1997 after a costly renovation, it hoped to become one of Europe's top opera houses - though there was skepticism about its ability to make that dream come true.

More than a decade later, the Madrid opera's new Belgian artistic director is promising to finally deliver the goods by turning the 160-year-old Teatro Real into a "laboratory of 21st century opera."

"The only thing I want to do is to awaken emotions," said Gerard Mortier, 66, a former head of the Paris National Opera and the Salzburg Festival who is known as one of the infants terrible of European cultural life.

Opera is basically an "existential art" based on melodrama and emotions, which needs artists capable of exploring "love, death and power," Mortier said recently upon presenting the program for his first season after taking up the post early this year. The Teatro Real, which was inaugurated by Queen Isabel II in 1850, is an inseparable part of Spanish cultural history.

Some of the world's most famous artists have performed there, but its history has also been plagued by problems ranging from fires and decay to financial strains, power struggles and temporary closures. After the 1991-97 renovation, the Teatro Real was hailed as one of Europe's most advanced opera buildings, combining sumptuous neo-classical architecture with the latest stage technology. Yet despite the renovation costing more than 100 million euros (134 million dollars), the opera located opposite Madrid's royal palace still has a relatively modest international ranking, far from the league of Milan's La Scala or the Royal Opera House in London's Covent



Madrid Opera's new Belgian artistic director is promising to finally deliver the goods by turning the 160-year-old Teatro Real into a 'Laboratory of 21st Century Opera.'

Garden. Mortier has taken immediate action to dynamize what some see as a stagnant artistic atmosphere at the Teatro Real in an attempt to allow it to finally make the hoped-for international breakthrough.

"Of course it is possible," the artistic director said while presenting the 2010-11 program, a mix of modern and classical works which he described as a transition towards a new Teatro Real.

As one of his first measures, Mortier has abolished the post of a permanent conductor, replacing it with rotating ones in a system which he expects to attract more top names. Mortier has also revamped and trimmed the choir, and is planning to upgrade the Teatro Real's international status by increasing European co-productions and exchanges with Latin America.

"It would be very important for Spain to act as Europe's bridge towards everything Hispanic," Mortier said. His plans include importing Latin American artists and exporting Teatro Real operas, such as the 1998 production of Giuseppe Verdi's Aida to Buenos Aires and the 2000 production of Cristobal Halffter's El Quijote to Manaus in Brazil. The 2010-2011 program features Montezuma by Carl Heinrich Graun, which will mark the bicentennial of Latin American countries' independence from the colonial power Spain.

Mortier is pledging to bring the best conductors and directors to Madrid - something that will obviously cost money. The Teatro Real's budget has been slashed by 2 million euros to 53 million euros in 2010, but Mortier said the cuts are not nearly as drastic as those at the New York Opera, where he previously turned down a post over the reduced budget. The Belgian, known for his bold stage work and focus on modern opera, wants to lower the average age of the Teatro Real audience buying seasonal tickets from 51 to 40 years.

Admitting that opera-goers anywhere are usually conservative, Mortier nevertheless believes that the Teatro Real can draw new audiences without alienating its traditional public. -dpa