

» EVENTS

Classes for free offered

Free ESOL classes are being held in the coming months at the St Michael with St John School, Blackburn.

ESOL classes (From 12 Nov 1-3pm); Ladies keep fit (From 12 Nov 5pm-6pm £1:20 per session); Ladies Keep fit (From 18 Nov 9:15am-10:15am £1:00 per session). Contact Miss Wingad on 01254 695509 for further information.

Jumble sale for charity

A charity jumble sale will take place at the Al-Asr School.

The event is on Sunday, 22 November, at 58-60 St Silas Road, Blackburn between 10am and 4pm.

If you have anything to donate please call the school on 01254 696933 or simply pop into the school between 9am and 3pm.

Islam effect on gardens

'The influence of Islamic Gardens on European Garden design' is the topic of a get together.

The informal and informative evening with Bob Hughes, of Myerscough College, is at the invitation of The Achievement Forum. It will take place at Randal Street Study Centre on Saturday, 15 November, 7pm. Free event. Places limited.

Please book by calling Waqar Hussain 0781 458 9090.

Enterprise for all event

Enterprise4allLtd will be promoting the Shin-Gi-Ruh Muay Thai Boxing Club - one of it's clients.

The event takes place on Tuesday 18 Nov (4pm-8pm) at Unit 8 Whalley Range Business Park, Blackburn. It will include: a children's demonstration of the martial arts.

'There is no such thing as Mr Perfect'

Ever tried to find love on a Muslim matrimonial website? Meet the woman who knows exactly how you feel



QUEST: Author Nasreen Akhtar. Our full interview with Nasreen can be found on asianimage.co.uk

Abandon your quest for finding Mr perfect he doesn't exist and neither does Mrs Perfect'

Nasreen Akhtar spent five years trying to find Mr Right on Muslim matrimonial websites and her experiences are captured in a wonderful new book 'Catch a Fish from the Sea (Using the Internet)'.

This month, the book made it on to the list for the World Book Day Award with the overall winner being announced in March next year.

As much as she hates to admit it Nasreen's experience has actually made her a bit of expert on how Muslim men think.

"I am quite flattered to hear that," she says, "Although there is a gulf between men and women I found there many things we have in common. I think men will find this book as interesting as women. Do men not want to be loved? I'm sure they do."

Her book begins with her rather naively diving into cyberspace with little knowledge of the etiquettes of dating and relationships. It ends with a rather deep and fulfilling insight into the habits of Muslim men.

But this was never the intention of the book.

"I wanted to make sense of my life and of my reality."

"When I started going on to the websites I never thought I would end up writing a book about my experiences. It was only later when someone suggested I do that I put my experiences down."

Along the way she meets a series of characters. Some good, some bad and some just strange.

From the Pakistani Hugh Hefner to the Slick Pythons, Nasreen explores the diverse traits in human beings.

She writes, "One of my great litmus tests was to see if any guy would ask me to ring him back. As soon as I would hear, 'Which network are you on? I would instantly know that the guy was not for me'."

If finding the right man wasn't hard enough for a thirtysomething Muslim woman she contends with a whole host of 'minor issues'. The hijab, education, language, family and whether it is okay for a woman to have male friends all make for

some absorbing reading.

Culture and religion are factors that come up again and again but the book is more than just an insight into how Muslim men think.

She is intent on making a stand for anyone who has tried and in some respects failed to find someone who they could call their soul mate.

"I found there are no general ways of describing people. There are a plethora of men out there. I found that we as a community have a certain way of thinking but this is not necessarily how people out there think."

"One of the major issues I came across was that of caste. But again it was not the people I met who had these hang-ups but more their parents."

She describes how Muslim internet matrimonial sites themselves have evolved and become a social system within a system.

"Would you describe yourself as good-looking?" has got to be one of the worst questions you can expect to answer' she writes. She dedicates a whole chapter to this hang-up entitled 'Send me a pic?'

"You can paint a picture of people through their writings. I was always taken aback by someone's personality and charm rather than how they looked. I wanted to meet the person face to face as quick as possible because that way you can instantly tell whether they are are for you," she says.

"Ultimately looks come and go but personality lasts for ever."

"The initial e-mail can tell you a lot about a person... but for me the initial meeting was important."

For those on this, at times arduous task of finding their perfect soulmate, Nasreen has some pretty compelling advice.

"You have to believe in yourself and know yourself. More importantly you have to respect yourself. When I began logging on to the websites I was never looking for Mr Right or Perfect because I guess I knew I would never find him."

● Catch A Fish From The Sea (Using the Internet) is published by Greenbirds. For a copy see www.greenbirds.co.uk or amazon.co.uk or any good bookshop.

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Thought of the month

After hardship comes ease

I sat alone in my shell of pain,
cried over some past suffering,
never the less the truth remains,
and that inside I am still suffering.

My father died whilst I was young,
I always wondered the meaning of life
but never could I ever decide,
sitting there wrapped in a mantle
wondering how life could I handle.

No need for gold or silver I'd rather
be here near the river, gazing
across the waves, with

confusion wondering how I plan
to continue this delusion.

Why worry about tomorrow
when today is uncertain.

The world seems to be pointless
so I decide to remain voiceless,
a life watered by tears at tragedy
and suffering, the candle is still
yet burning, as I remain silent
sat on the burning sand.

A verse struck my mind,
after hardship there is ease,
after hardship there is ease.

A verse from the Holy Quran
touched my mind. I felt alive;
vibrant with life, the black cloud
will disappear the morning sun
will appear.

That sparked my moment of
despair. I held my hand up
to prayer.

I'll sail through the test to come
with patience and preserver,
my lord has pointed victory
over hardship.

By Soolet Yasin

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