

LOVE IN A HEADSCARF: A MUSLIM WOMAN'S JOURNEY \ OF FINDING THE SELF

HalimahMohamed Ali

Universiti Sains Malaysia

halimah@usm.my

Love In A Headscarf (2009) by Shelina Zahra Janmohamed, is a memoir of a British Muslim woman. She follows the traditional marriage culture of many Muslim women and opts to find a husband via the “arranged marriage system” because she is a Muslim woman in hijab who is a practicing Muslim, albeit in a modern way. She and her family choose to search for a practicing Muslim and thus the journey begins. However the journey is not only a journey of looking for a suitable marriage partner but also a journey of finding the self. In the search for the ‘one’ she finds her true self and the memoir ends on a happy note where she is married to a suitable man whom she chose through the system. The memoir will be discussed via excerpts from the Al-Quran in which there are the commands of Allah on Muslim women to don the hijab or headscarf and the tenets on marriage. The sayings of the prophet Muhamad (pbuh), which are called the hadith, will also be used in order to discuss the concept of hijab or the veil as presented in the text and also the laws on marriage and align them to Janmohamed’s quest for a husband. The discussion will reveal and encompass more than the idea of the Muslim woman’s veil and also her choice of a marriage partner . It will also deliberate on her day to day life and public sphere with regards to the Islamic doctrines and compare and contrast them with the Muslim woman that is presented in the text and the Western society that she lives in.

INTRODUCTION

Love In A Headscarf (2009) by Shelina Zahra Janmohamed (2009), is a memoir of a British Muslim woman. She follows the traditional marriage culture of many Muslim women and opts to find a husband via the “arranged marriage system” because she is a Muslim woman in hijab who is a practicing Muslim, albeit in a modern way. She and her family choose to search for a practicing Muslim and thus the journey begins. However the journey is not only a journey of looking for a suitable marriage partner but also a journey of finding the self. In the search for the ‘one’ she finds her true self and the memoir ends on a happy note where she is married to a suitable man whom she chose through the system. The memoir will be discussed via excerpts from the Al-Quran in which there are the commands of Allah on Muslim women to don the hijab or headscarf and the tenets on marriage. The sayings of the prophet Muhamad (pbuh), which are called the hadith, will also be used in order to discuss the concept of hijab or the veil as presented in the memoir and also the laws on marriage and align them to Janmohamed’s quest for a husband. The discussion will reveal and encompass more than the idea of the Muslim woman’s veil and also her choice of a marriage partner . It will also deliberate on her day to day life and public sphere with regards to the Islamic doctrines and compare and contrast them with the Muslim woman that is presented in the novel and the Western society that she lives in.

The Public Sphere That Surrounds The Muslim Woman

The Muslim woman wherever she lives is surrounded by a public sphere. She may live in a Muslim country or in non-Muslim countries, but she is always surrounded by a public sphere that is controlled by her Muslim society and religion, that is Islam. Most of the time religion controls the culture of the society wherever it lives.

There is a research conducted in Canada on Young Shia Muslim women and hijab by NisaraJiwani and Genevieve Rail (2010) titled Islam, Hijab and Young Shia Muslim Constructions of Physical Activity

Canadian Women's Discursive. Although this research has been carried out on Shia Muslim women in Canada and does not discuss Sunni Muslim women in Australia it will be considered here in order to understand the myriad of views on hijab. It is universal knowledge that Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims hold different views on Islam. Shia Muslims descend from Iran, and have spread to the Middle East, and South Asia. However, the majority of the world's Muslims are Sunni Muslims. The major difference between these two Muslim sects is that Sunni Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was the last prophet while the Shia Muslim's believe that Sayidina Ali, whom they refer to as Imam Ali was the last prophet. Sayidina Ali was the son-in-law and cousin of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Discourse on the hijab can be found in many genres and fields. Discourse is power. Thus, discourse on hijab empowers the Muslim woman and society. Therefore, the world at large and the women that have to don the hijab will understand the act of hijab, the laws and culture that surrounds it better. Jiwani and Rail (2010) state,

For Foucault, the exercise of power cannot be possible without discourse and the production of "truth" cannot occur without exercising power. The concept of discourse is tied to another key poststructuralist concept: subjectivity (Butler, 1997). According to Butler (1997), the subject takes form from language, gestures, speech acts, reflective processes, and other performative behaviour. But this subjectivity is constituted through the (gendered, ethicized, and radicalized) discourses to which the subject has access. In addition to mapping the discourses to which young Muslim Canadian women have access when they construct their meanings of physical activity, we investigate how they position themselves in relation to these discourses, how they constitute their subjectivity within such discourses, and how they become subjects of such discourses by "subjecting" themselves to their meanings and power (Hall, 2001). (Jiwani and Rail, pp. 254 - 255).

In this essay I will appropriate dominant discourse on the hijab that is the Al-Quran and the hadith. These two discourses are the doctrines of Islam which are important, and have to be used hand in hand when discussing Islam and passing Islamic laws and judgement. The Al-Quran is a revelation from God whom the Muslims refer to as Allah. The concept of how the Al-Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) for the Muslims, is similar to that of the Bible that was revealed to the Christians through Jesus. The hadith is a collection of the Prophet's sayings and teachings to the Muslims. It explains in detail the laws of Islam that are present in the Al-Quran. Both the texts will be discussed in the next section.

The Hijab in the Al-Quran and Hadith – The Islamic Doctrines

The parts of the body that have to be covered by a Muslim man or woman are called aurat in Malay or aurah in Arabic. The Arabic word aurah will be used in this essay in order to describe the parts that have to be covered by a Muslim. According to Fathlullah Al-Haq Muhammad Asni (2013), in his book *Rahsia Aurat Sempurna*,

Secara zahirnya, ALLAH SWT menyuruh hamba-NYA menutup aurat adalah kerana mahu menjaga kemuliaan manusia. Tidak menjaga adab-adab ketika bersama manusia yang lain akan membawa kerosakan kepada masyarakat (18-19).

(Externally, ALLAH SWT decrees His slaves to cover the parts of their bodies that should be covered (aurah) to safeguard the dignity of human beings. Not safeguarding courtesy when with other human beings will bring disaster to society (18-19)).

Fathlullah Al-Haq Muhammad Asni (2013) also points out the wisdom of covering

the aurah. He outlines 5 wisdoms. According to him:

1. One of the signs that ALLAH SWT has glorified man is that he has created man and given him a good disposition (Fathlullah Al-Haq Muhammad Asni, 2013: 23).

Thus, Allah has decreed hijab on men and women to cover their aurah in order to protect the gift that He has bestowed upon them, that is the gift of beauty.

2. The hijab also represents the man and woman that are pious and believe in Allah SWT. Those who believe in him and his Oneness will follow the message that has been brought down by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and will adhere to the prohibitions that have been decreed by Him (Fathlullah Al-Haq Muhammad Asni, 2013: 23).
3. The hijab will also help them to avoid being attacked by those with wicked hearts and can also protect them from slander (Fathlullah Al-Haq Muhammad Asni, 2013: 23).
4. Society will be able to differentiate between a Muslim woman and a non- Muslim woman. They will be recognized easily (Fathlullah Al-Haq Muhammad Asni, 2013: 23).
5. The hijab is also able to protect women from many skin diseases. This is because Allah has bestowed upon women fine and tender skin. Therefore, it has to be protected and taken care of (Fathlullah Al-Haq Muhammad Asni, 2013: 24).

The hair is also a woman's crowning glory. Its beauty attracts men to a woman. In a strange environment outside her living quarters a woman needs protection especially from strangers, who might take advantage of her beauty. The beauty of a woman does not only attract admirers but also enemies. Helen of Troy is the best example of how a country fell due to a woman's beauty. History teaches us many things if we choose to learn from it. The hijab was decreed by Allah SWT to Muslim women because beauty can destroy. Another example is Cleopatra the Queen of Egypt who was in love with Marc Anthony. Her beauty attracted the Roman nobleman, however their love could not protect Egypt from falling into Rome's hands. Thus, Muslims and Islam were given a solution by Allah SWT. The hijab is that gift from Allah to his worshippers. Although many people think it suppresses a woman, in its essence it liberates her. She does not need to show off her beauty in order to attract men. In many societies including the Western society a woman in hijab gains respect from the members of her society. This is due to the fact that she has taken a very brave step in covering her beauty, since women often thrive upon their beauty. The woman in hijab moves around safely amongst men most of the time and escapes sexual harassment in many societies. When a man falls in love with her it is not so much for her outer beauty, but for her inner beauty – the goodness of her heart.

Below are a few surah's from the Al-Quran in which Allah SWT orders men to guard their vision as well as their private parts. Therefore, it can be deduced that the hijab is not only decreed upon women but also men. Islam guides men to lower their vision when they come across women. Only the first gaze is allowed. It also orders men to dress appropriately. A man is not allowed to show his body from the waist down until below his knees when he is in front of other men as well as women. According to Surah An-Nūr (The Light) (Surah 24: Verse 30) which means,

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: and God is well acquainted with all that they do (24:30).

Another verse from the same surah (Verse 31) states,

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof, that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or those male servants free of physical needs, or small children who

have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! Turn ye all together towards God, that ye may attain bliss. (24:31).

It is clear in the above verse what a Muslim woman can show to the public. Her hair, body and adornments are only for her husband. She can show her hair and certain parts of her body as well as adornments to her immediate family, the ones that have been outlined by Allah SWT in the verse above.

Surah Al-Ahzab (The Combined Forces) Verse 59 is Allah SWT's order to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to tell his wives and daughters as well as wives of the believers and their daughters to lower their garments. They are not to show off their adornments including their hair, which has been stated above is the crowning glory of a woman. This decree was brought down by the angel Gabriel to the Prophet for his fellow Muslims in order to protect the women from abuse and to differentiate them from non-Muslim women. Allah decree's,

O Prophet, tell thy wives and your daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (33:59).

The discussion of hijab can also be found in a hadis narrated by Aishah, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). The hadis states,

The wives of the Prophet used to go to Al-Manasi, a vast open place (near Baqia at Medina) to answer the call of nature at night. Umar used to say to the Prophet "Let your wives be veiled," but Allah's Apostle did not do so. One night Sauda bint Zam'a the wife of the Prophet went out at 'Isha' time and she was a tall lady. Umar addressed her and said, "I have recognized you, O Sauda." He said so, as he desired eagerly that the verses of Al-Hijab (the observing of veils by the Muslim women) may be revealed. So Allah revealed the verses of "Al-Hijab" (A complete body cover excluding the eyes) (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadis: Hadith 1.148, <http://alim.org/library/hadith/SHB/148/1>)

Thus, the decree for women to don the veil came from Allah and the Prophet Muhammad's (saw) wives as well as other Muslim women had to put it on since it is part of the Islamic doctrine. However, the sin of a Muslim who does not adhere to the decree is mostly between him/her and his/her Creator.

MARRIAGE AND LOVE IN THE AL QURAN AND HADITH

Marriage is an integral part of every human being lives. In Islam especially, marriage is an important institution because Muslims do not believe in the modern day feminist movements or similar kind of movements that believe in a free life style or equal rights between men and women. Muslims believe that God has given both men and women their rights, and these rights are stated in the Islamic doctrines, the Al Quran and the Hadith.

There are many verses in the al Quran that decree marriage and the rights of both men and women. Allah decree in Surah 24,

Marry the single people from among you and the righteous slaves and slave-girls. If you are poor, Allah (SWT) will make you rich through His favour; and Allah (SWT) is Bountiful, All-Knowing (Surah 24, Verse 32).

Thus, mankind is encouraged to marry even if it is to a slave girl if he cannot afford a free woman. However, if a man cannot afford to marry he is decreed to maintain his chastity,

And let those who cannot find someone to marry maintain chastity until Allah (SwT) makes them rich through His favours ...(Surah 24, Verse 33).

A Muslim man is required to provide for his wife. He has to be able to provide food, clothing, a home, education as well as sexual relations for his wife. If he cannot afford to give his wife all those things he is forbidden to marry, unless he cannot control his sexual libido. Then marriage becomes a necessity for him. Allah also decrees in the al quran that a chaste man should marry a chaste woman and an

unchaste man is made for an unchaste woman. Thus chastity is important in Islam. Allah decrees in one of the surahs that discusses marriage and chastity,

... and besides these, it is lawful for you to marry other women if you pay them their dowry, maintain chastity and do not commit indecency. So those (women) whom you marry for an appointed time, you must give them their agreed upon dowries. There is no harm if you reach an understanding among yourselves about the dowry, Allah (SWT) is All-Knowing and All-Wise (Surah 4, Verse 24).

The relationship between a husband and a wife is very intimate that each of them are likened to each other's clothing. He decrees,

They (your wives) are a clothing (covering) for you and you too are a clothing (covering) for them (Surah 2, Verse 187).

This also means that a wife is her husband's dignity and her husband is her dignity.

When Adam was first created he was lonely in heaven. He asked Allah for a companion and He created Hawa (Eve) from Adam's rib bone as his companion.

"O' mankind! Have consciousness of your Lord who has created you from a single soul. From it He created your spouse and through them He populated the land with many men and women. Have spiritual awareness of the One by whose Name you swear to settle your differences and have respect for the wombs that bore you. Without doubt, Allah (SWT) keeps watch over you all." (Surah 4, Verse 1)

A woman is not only a wife but also her husband's companion. Allah decrees,

And one of His signs is that He has created for you, spouses from amongst yourselves so that you might take comfort in them and He has placed between you, love and mercy. In this there is surely evidence (of the truth) for the people who carefully think (Surah 30, Verse 21).

Thus, a husband and wife have to have love and mercy between them, because Allah has

decreed it in the Al Quran. A Muslim marriage is not like modern marriages. It is built on religious tenets and the al quran and the Hadith are the guides for Muslim couples throughout their marital lives.

In fact marriage is an integral part of a Muslim's life. It is narrated in a Hadith,

A group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet asking how the Prophet worshipped (Allah), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient and said, "Where are we from the Prophet as his past and future sins have been forgiven." Then one of them said, "I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever." The other said, "I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast." The third said, "I will keep away from the women and will not marry forever." Allah's Apostle came to them and said, "Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me (not one of my followers)." (Narrated by Anas bin Malik: Volume 7, Book 62, Number 1 retrieved https://www.sahih-bukhari.com/Pages/Bukhari_7_62.php online 28/02/2017)

Marriage is a must in every Muslims life. The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did not allow his followers to overdo things. It is clearly written in the above Hadith. Unlike Roman Catholic priests and nuns who are not allowed to marry after they go into the order, Muslims whether they are trained to be Imams or religious teachers are not allowed to live a life out of wedlock. A Muslim man or woman is only allowed to practice sexual intercourse after marriage. The prophet wanted his people to prosper, thus Muslims are very much discouraged to shun married life and once married they have to procreate.

However, Islam also understands that there might be financial restraints or other type of restraints on a man for him not to marry. The Hadith below describes this the best,

While I was with Abdullah, 'Uthman met him at Mina and said, "O Abu 'Abdur-Rahman ! I have something to say to you." So both of them went aside and 'Uthman said, "O Abu 'Abdur-Rah. man! Shall we marry you to a virgin who will make you remember your past days?" When 'Abdullah felt that he was not in need of that, he beckoned me (to join him) saying, "O 'Alqama!" Then I heard him saying (in reply to 'Uthman), "As you have said that, (I tell you that) the Prophet once said to us, 'O young people! Whoever among you is able to marry, should marry, and whoever is not able to marry, is recommended to fast, as fasting diminishes his sexual power. (Narrated by 'Alqama: Vol. 7, Book 62, Number 3).

Islam understands that mankind is born with a sexual libido. Marriage is encouraged for him to fulfill his sexual needs. However, when he is unable to do so he is encouraged to fast so that it can diminish his sexual power.

There are ways and means for a Muslim to determine his marriage partner. According to the Prophet (pbuh) a Muslim should marry based on these criteria: beauty, wealth, biology and religion. He or she has to choose all or one of them and the best choice according to the prophet is the woman or man who is chosen because of his or her religion. According to a hadith,

The Prophet said, "A woman is married for four things, i.e., her wealth, her family status, her beauty and her religion. So you should marry the religious woman (otherwise) you will be a losers (Narrated by Abu Huraira, Vol 7, Book 62, Number 27).

One of the prophets (pbuh) advice to his followers was to pray the istikharah prayers before asking for a woman's hand in marriage. Then he has to sleep and the next morning to wake up and read his dream or ask an imam or religious person to read his dream. A Hadith states,

Allah's Apostle said (to me), "You have been shown to me twice in (my) dreams. A man was carrying you in a silken cloth and said to me, 'This is your wife.' I uncovered it; and behold, it was you. I said to myself, 'If this dream is from Allah, He will cause it to come true.' (Narrated by Aisha: Volume 7, Book 62, Number 15).

The prophet said to his followers that I am leaving to you 1/40 of my prophethood, and it is dreams. Another hadith states,

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "A good dream (that comes true) of a righteous man is one of forty-six parts of prophetism." (Narrated by Anas bin Malik: Book 91, Hadith 2, Vol. 9, Book 87, Hadith 112).

Thus, dreams in Islam can be used to determine one's marriage partner.

According to Islam and many Muslim thinkers once a Muslim performs an Istikharah prayers and sees his or her future spouse in his/her dream it is very difficult to break the marriage because it is a marriage that has been fated and has been determined by Allah for that person,

"The Messenger of Allah used to teach his Companions to perform Istikharah in all matters, just as he used to teach them Surahs from the Qur'an. He said: 'If any one of you is deliberating about a decision he has to make, then let him pray two Rak'ahs of non-obligatory prayer, then say: Allahumma inni astakhiruka bi 'ilmika wa astaqriruka bi qudratika wa

as'aluka min fadlika, fa innaka taqdiru wa la aqdir, wa ta'lamu wa la a'lam, wa anta 'allam al-ghuyub. Allahumma in kunta ta'lamu anna hadhal-amra khayrun li fi dini wa ma'ashi wa aqibati amri faqdurhu li wa yassirhu li thumma barik li fihi. Allahumma, wa in kunta ta'lamu annahu sharrun li fi dini wa ma'ashi wa 'aqibati amri fasrifhu 'anni wasrifni 'anhu waqdur li al-khayr haythu kana, thumma radini bihi. (O Allah, I seek Your guidance (in making a choice) by virtue of Your knowledge, and I seek ability by virtue of Your power, and I ask You of Your great bounty. You have power, I have none. And You know, I know not. You are the Knower of hidden things. O Allah, if in Your knowledge, this matter (then it should be mentioned by name) is good for me in my religion, my livelihood and my affairs (or: both in this world and in the Hereafter), then ordain it for me, make it easy for me, and bless it for me. And if in Your knowledge it is bad for me and for my religion, my livelihood and my affairs (or: for me both in this world and the next), then turn it away from me and turn me away from it, and ordain for me the good wherever it may be and make me pleased with it.)"

(Narrated by Jabair bin 'Abdullah :Book 26, Hadith 58, Vol. 4, Book 26, Hadith 3255)

Modern thinkers believe that a Muslim woman does not have rights. According to a Hadith,

The Prophet said, "A matron should not be given in marriage except after consulting her; and a virgin should not be given in marriage except after her permission." The people asked, "O Allah's Apostle! How can we know her permission?" He said, "Her silence (indicates her permission) (Narrated by Abu Huraira, Vol. 7, Book 62, number 67).

A Muslim woman has to consent to her marriage. During the prophets time a woman could divorce her husband just for the mere fact that she did not like his face or his looks. These are the rights that Islam has given women in Islam. That is why most Muslim men and women believe that they do not have to fight for their rights, because they have been decreed in the Al-Quran and the Hadith. The only things that Muslims have to challenge are how Islam is practiced and whether the doctrines have been misread and misinterpreted by the learned and people in power. However, for a virgin, if the man challenges her decision, and her father does too, and if the man is capable of providing for his wife as a Muslim husband should then she cannot say no to her father's decision of marrying her to her husband.

Other such hadiths and way of thought can be found in many other verse of the Al-Quran. The discussion above will be carried on in the analysis section and will be used in the analysis of the text.

Western Style Love: Courtly

This section will discuss the Western style love that is quite different from the love that is propounded by Allah (God) in the Al Quran. According to C.S. Lewis, "The lover is always abject. Obedience to his lady's lightest wish, however unjust, are the only virtues he dares to claim. There is a service of love closely modelled on the service which a feudal vassal owes to his lord" (Lewis. C.S. 1936, p.2). The quote by C. S. Lewis is a description of a lover from the courtly love era. He describes the courtly lover as a dejected man who is ever willing to do his lady's bidding.

Courtly love originated in Languedoc at the end of the eleventh century (Denomy 1965, p.20). According to Lewis, the emotion, "of course is love, but love of a highly specialised sort, whose characteristics may be enumerated as Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love"(1936, p. 2). However, it did not have a specific name until 1883 when a French medievalist, Gaston Paris labelled it as courtly love. "Under his influence scholars began to talk about a 'system' of courtly love, a 'code', a 'body of rules', and even a 'way of life'" (Lewis 1936, p.2).

What is courtly love? It denotes the absence of the love object. The image of the courtier, which is portrayed through the love poems of the Renaissance, is virtually always of an abject and melancholic lover who pines for his love (Denomy 1965, pp. 20-21). The love that he yearns for is most of the time absent and unattainable. The courtly lover worships and pines after a woman who is beyond his reach. Normally the

woman is already married or is above the lover's status, which makes it impossible for the love to be consummated.

The genesis of courtly love can be traced to the First Crusade (1099), and it originated in the castles of four regions: ducal Burgundy, Provence, Aquitaine and Champagne, which are all situated in France. The troubadours wrote lyric poems, which manifested courtly love. According to Elizabeth Thompson (2011) the Troubadours,

...flourished between 1100 and 1350 and were attached to various courts in the south of France. The troubadours wrote almost entirely about sexual love and developed the concept and practice of courtly love. There was no tradition of passionate love literature in the European middle ages before the twelfth century, although there was such a tradition in Arabic-speaking Spain and Sicily. This Arab love poetry was readily accessible to Europeans living in Italy and Spain and was a major source of the Troubadour-developed cult of courtly love. Troubadour love poetry, although conceptually adulterous, inspired the man (and perhaps the woman) and ennobled the lover's character.

<http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/eng251/amourstudy.htm#troubadour>.

Apart from the Troubadours, Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) should also be mentioned because he was one of the most eminent English poets before the Renaissance period and Shakespearian age. His work *Troilus and Criseyde* that was written between 1374-1386 discusses the idea of love. However, his work is aligned by critics not to the courtly love tradition, but more to the idea of Christian love as discussed by James Lyndon Shanley (1939) in *The Troilus and Christian Love*.

Many thinkers, past and present have discussed courtly love. Denomy describes courtly love as a novelty and says that, "The novelty of Courtly Love lies in three basic elements: first, in the ennobling force of human love; second, in the elevation of the beloved to a place of superiority above the lover; third, in the conception of love as ever unsatiated, ever increasing desire" (1965, p. 20). Lewis points out that "...this love, though neither playful nor licentious in its expression, is always what the nineteenth century called 'dishonourable' love" (1965, p. 2). Lewis's thoughts represent the view of the nineteenth century thinkers who opposed it because it was seen as immoral for a man to be pining after another man's wife and this idea of love clashed with the Christian doctrines. Lacan argues that courtly love is only an excuse used to fill the gap of a non-existent sexual relationship "by pretending that it is we who put an obstacle to it"; he also argues that courtly love is a fraud, therefore it should be exposed (Mitchell 1982, p. 9). Lacan is critical towards it because to him it exists only in order to compensate a lack.

Courtly love is defined by Andreas Capellanus as "...a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation of the opposite sex" (*Harvard Classics* 1910, p. 3). The idea that love constitutes suffering strengthens the thesis that the courtly lover is always abject. Abjection is a representation of that suffering which a lover feels.

Julia Kristeva defines abjection to be something that has been rejected, but which is still a part of the subject, and he or she will not guard themselves against it as they would guard themselves from an object (Kristeva 1982, p. 4). Furthermore, abjection is much more than just unhappiness. It is a threat, which surrounds us, but we do not know how to deal with it because it is invisible, it is not as concrete as an object is. The earlier meanings of abjection according to John Lechte (2003) are "'wretchedness' and extreme debasement" (p. 10). Abject as Lechte has pointed out means something that is not desired (2003, p. 10). Thus, the courtly abject lover that is discussed in this essay can be defined as someone that is not desired by the woman that he admires.

Love can be paralleled to abjection because both share the same features: suffering and invisibility. That is why love is difficult to fathom much less describe although throughout the centuries there has been so much written on love. Kristeva finds it difficult to relate her memories of love, no matter how far back they go. She equates the language of love to literature because she believes it is difficult to relate the language of love in a "straightforward" manner (Kristeva 1987, p. 1). Poetry is part of literature, and this is the genre that a courtier has used throughout the centuries to woo his love object.

Western style love in today's modern world is a little different from that that has been discussed above. With technology and modernity we have discarded poetry in order to court women. Today's technology has given us the internet, chat groups, the facebook and other tools as means of courting a potential spouse. However, the essence of the past is still there in the acts of love performed towards a love object even today.

LOVE IN A HEADSCARF: THE AMALGAMATION OF THE EAST AND THE WEST

Love in a Headscarf has been written by a Muslim woman. It is a memoir of a woman who practices her faith and has taken up both cultures the East and the West as well as live as a practicing Muslim woman. This text will be read to show how a Muslim woman finds love, without sacrificing her religious belief and practice.

Janmohamed discusses love and marriage in this text from both the Western and Muslim point of view. The author begins the text in this way,

Love, Amour, ishq, hub, amor, pyar. All these are words in my lexicon to describe something delicious and mundane, irresistible and sublime. Love inspires great actions, absurd choices and inexplicable consequences. It directs lives and it makes or breaks hearts. It can arbitrate between life and death, and it can connect the body to the soul and join them with lightning. It is essence of the human condition. (Author's Introduction: xi).

She ponders on what love is. She gives a very simple definition of love. In the next section Janmohamed she discusses what love is to Muslims. The narrative states,

The likelihood of a Muslim talking about Love in public is small. But like most societies and cultures, Muslims are obsessed with it. In fact, Muslim men and women spend a large proportion of their time wondering where on earth to find a partner. Finding that special someone is so critical to the fabric of muslim existence, that almost everyone is involved – parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, imams, even neighbours (xii).

The above excerpt shows that Muslims not only believe in love, but they believe in the marriage institution too. The way a Muslim man and woman treats romantic love is very different from their Western counterparts. A Muslim marriage is based on matchmaking, since Muslims are not allowed to mix with the opposite sex without chaperones. Most muslim marriages happen through introductions by a family member and courtship is carried out with chaperones involved in the whole process.

The author goes on to discuss the Muslim women. She tells her readers that Muslim women are like any other woman in the world,

Beneath the translucent veils of Muslim women lie beating hearts, dreams of love, imagination replete with fairy tales and princes, of happily ever after. Hidden behind the often misleading headlines of terror and destruction that are said to be the name of Islam are Muslims: ordinary normal people who share the one thing that exalts human beings and connects the sublime within us to our mundane lives – that thing called Love (xii).

They too dream of love like other women although most of them live under headscarfs and veils. In the Prologue of the book Janmohamed introduces herself to us. She states,

"I am keeping a very surprising story under my headscarf...My hijab is pink, the colour of an April sunset or a dusky summer rose. It is a long flowing piece of silk fading into a bold purple that reminds me of royal brocades and sacred discoveries" (2009: 1). Via this excerpt she introduces to us that she is a Muslim woman and she uses the headscarf.

The chapter titled Good Headscarf Day introduces us to Janmohamed and her family. She is being introduced to a suitor and she takes us along on the Muslim woman's journey of finding her future husband. She states, "This is the first time that my family and I are to be formally introduced to a suitor. Choosing

what to wear has been a struggle. I have to be attractive enough for the man in question, yet modest and demure enough for the family his family” (2009: p. 4).

Janmohamed tells us what she feels about viewing her bridegroom. According to her,

This might be a girl’s one chance to view the prospective bride-groom. The boy must also capitalise on this opportunity. This is not the moment to be out of the room using the facilities. Along with his whole family, he may have travelled many miles for this single brief moment, perhaps his only opportunity to see the woman with whom he will share the rest of life (2009: 11).

She shows us how Muslim women and men go through the bride viewing and bridegroom viewing ceremony. This culture is very different from the Western culture of the society that Janmohamed lives with in London.

After the meeting Janmohamed is distressed. She is advised by her family to get to know the boy since he is a decent boy. After all this discussion Janmohamed wonders, “It all came down to the same question: Is he the one?” (2009: p. 22). Thus, the Muslim woman though she is willing to go through the traditional style courtship, although she lives in the West, has her doubts about her choice of bridegroom even when he is carefully selected and chosen by her parents and family members for her.

The next morning the matchmaker calls Janmohamed’s family. It is stated in the memoir,

Marriage is a communal matter, and those who volunteer to be matchmakers play an essential part in protecting the existence of the family unit. In Islamic thinking, someone who brings two people together in marriage gains an immense spiritual reward for their good deed. The matchmaker pointed out to my mother that since I was now at university, it was a very suitable time to start on the search for a husband. It was accepted that a young woman would complete her education, if she chose to, before she got married. ‘These things take time,’ she had advised my mother learnedly. ‘And if you find the right person, then Shelina can get married and continue studying, or they can get engaged and then marry after Shelina finishes her degree.’ (2009: 23).

An arranged marriage does not occur within a short period of time. The groom is chosen carefully by both the matchmaker and the bride’s family. He goes through thorough scrutiny. In contemporary practice even private investigators and the police are involved in the screening of the potential bridegroom and the potential bride.

Under Islamic law a woman cannot be forced, tricked or coerced into a marriage. This Islamic tenet resonates clearly in the memoir. According to the text, “My family took their Islamic responsibilities very seriously. I had to agree to my future partner willingly and happily. What they were offering was an arranged marriage – something very different from a forced marriage” (2009: 28). It cannot be denied that within the Muslim society forced marriages do exist, but they cannot happen without the father’s consent. If the father of the bride deems that the groom fits all the criteria of a future husband that has been outlined by the Al-Quran and the hadith and after conducting the istikharah prayers the father finds the future husband to be suitable for his daughter, she cannot oppose to her father’s choice of a husband. This has been discussed in the theoretical framework above. On the other hand a woman has a right to ask for the marriage to be annulled due to the smallest matter of the fact that she does not like her husband’s looks, much less his personality and financial capability of supporting her, or lack of religious compatibility. The marriage has to be annulled before the bride and bridegroom consummate their marriage. Otherwise, they will have to go through a divorce process. Thus, the argument that a Muslim woman does not have a right to choose her marriage partner and does not have a right to divorce is false.

Janmohamed rejects her first suitor because she does not feel attracted to him. Her parents especially her mother allows her the luxury of saying no. According to the text,

“So my mum fell back on a thoroughly modern phrase: ‘She says that she just didn’t feel the “click”’ (2009: 29). Janmohamed then states,

In the process of making a decision to turn down one suitor, I had set in motion a greater journey: to look for the love of my life. The precedent was set: Finding the One was my mission, and in

looking for love, I would find myself, my faith and Divine Love along the way. I had the Search officially open (2009: 30).

We learn from her statement above that a Muslim woman yearns for love too in her marriage and a choice in choosing her marriage partner. Janmohamed represents the millions of Muslim women in the West and in the East that go through similar courtship processes in order to find a suitable husband. The search for a husband leads Janmohamed to find her faith and her love for God, because marriage faith and God are all intertwined. In Islam marriage and faith cannot stand on their own without one's belief and love for God..

Janmohamed finds herself and the Muslim woman's true identity when she performs her haj. According to her,

As well as the clear message that women had extraordinarily high spiritual status, Hagar inspired something specific in me that I had found hard to balance: an understanding that looking for food and shelter were just as much a part of worship as prayer. Circulating round the Kaba established that the Divine was the focus of being a Muslim, round and round each day as the sun rose and the sun set. The universe was a repetition of cycles, each one following its set orbit and finding its place in the Divine order. But Hagar's run, backwards and forwards, was the day-to-day race, to work, from work, to work, literally mapping out my life. The two parts balanced each other perfectly and I realized that both the sublime and the mundane fitted together (2009: 247).

She aligns her experience with that of Hagar's, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and

mother of Prophet Ismael (Ishmael). Hagar ran to and fro in a place called Safa and Marwa

in Mecca to find water for her newborn baby Ismael. The sacrifice of a woman for her child, resonated today in the day to day life of the modern woman who goes out to work because of the cost of living that hampers contemporary society. She normally wakes up very early in the morning prepares her children for school or the babysitter, prepares the family's breakfast and leaves the home with her children. She drops them in school and goes on to her work place. In the evenings she comes back to her family to be mother and wife again, and to cook for them. It is thousands of years since Hagar looked for water for her son, but the woman and her instincts have not changed throughout the centuries. Very few women even in this contemporary society that advocates feminism and equal rights to men would abandon their children to starvation.

When Janmohamed finds her future husband she is thankful to God. Her experience in Mecca has mellowed her down and she accepts the man that comes into her life. In the

Epilogue it is stated,

I step into the car, about to begin the journey, and say as I always do at the beginning of my action: *Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem*. In the name of Allah, the Lovingly Compassionate, the Kind. This is the journey that each human being makes, from being one, to being part of a pair. The promised experience of being part of a pair is peace contentment and love. Will I find these things? The journey itself to seek these things may be rewarding, or perhaps it will be the reward in itself. I turn to close the door of the car. I look back at my home, and then forward to the road that lies ahead (2009: 263).

Janmohamed is going to the mosque for her wedding ceremony. She completes her search for a marriage partner that is described in the beginning of the memoir. Along the way she finds her love for God and completes her religion by way of marriage.

CONCLUSION

This essay has discussed *Love In A Headscarf* (2009) by Shelina Zahra Janmohamed with the Islamic marriage framework in mind. However it also explains that arranged marriages did occur during the Western renaissance age. The western type of modern love only began during the 11th century in Languedoc, France. This happened after the fall of the Spanish Muslim empire. Most probably it was due to the fact that Europe wanted to distance itself from the Arab and Spanish Muslim influence in their tradition and culture. The memoir portrays a woman who follows the traditional marriage culture of many Muslim women and opts to find a husband via the “arranged marriage system” because she is a Muslim woman in hijab who is a practicing Muslim, albeit in a modern way. By the end of the text we find that the journey is not only a journey of looking for a suitable marriage partner but also a journey of finding the self. In the search for the ‘one’ she finds her true self and the memoir ends on a happy note where she is married to a suitable man whom she chose through the system set by her society. The text has been discussed with the Al-Quran in which there are the commands of Allah on Muslim women to don the hijab or headscarf and the tenets on marriage. The sayings of the prophet Muhammad (pbuh), which are called the hadith have also been used in order to discuss the concept of hijab or the veil as presented in the novel and also the laws on marriage and align them to Janmohamed’s quest for a husband. The discussion shows the idea of the Muslim woman’s veil and her choice of a marriage partner. It deliberates on her day to day life and public sphere with regards to the Islamic doctrines and compares and contrasts them with the Muslim woman that is presented in the text and the Western society that she lives in.

Bibliography

- (Ed.). *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Abdel-Fattah, Randa. 2006. *Does My Head Look Big In This?* London: Marion Lloyd Books.
- Abdullah, Ahmad Badri, Ramli, MohdAnuar, Jamaludin, Mohammad Aizat, Marinsah, SyamsulAzizul, Mohd. Nor, MohdRoslan. 2013. Postmodernism Approach. In *Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh) Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 13 (1): 33-40.
- Akhtar, Tanzeel. 2006. Does my head look big in this? Retrieved from <http://www.asiansinmedia.org/news/article.php/publishing/1344> online 12/08/2013
- Ali, Abdullah Yusof. (Trans.) 2013 (1998). *The Holy Quran: Original Arabic Text*. Kuala Lumpur: Saba Islamic Media.
- Atkins, J. (1978). *Sex in Literature: 3. The Medieval Experience*. London: John Calder.
- Barret, Sarah. 2013. Does My Head Look Big In This? Retrieved from <http://suite101.com/article/does-my-head-look-big-in-this-a220369> online 12/08/2013
- Benvenuto, B. (1994). *Concerning the Rites of Psychoanalysis or the Villa of the Mysteries*. Cambridge: Polity Company.
- Confession. *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Vol. 53, No. 4, pp. 437-459.
- Claussen, Tor. 2011. The hijab – secularity and beyond: Analysing debates on cultural diversity (hijab) through classical social science theory. *2011 2nd International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Science IPEDR vol.17 (2011) © (2011) IACSIT Press, Singapore. 190-194*
- Craik, K. A. (2002). *Shakespeare's A Lover's Complaint and Early Modern Criminal*
- Denomy, A. J. (1965). *The Heresy of Courtly Love*. Gloucester: Peter Smith.

Eliot, C. W. (1910). *Harvard Classics*, Vol 39. New York: P. F. Collier.

Elliott, A. (1994). *Psychoanalytic Theory. An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Goldin, F. (1967). *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Eliot, C. W. (1910). *Harvard Classics*, Vol 39. New York: P. F. Collier.

Guide to English Literature 2. The Age of Shakespeare. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Kearns, G. (1984). *English and Western Literature. Macmillan Literature Series*. California: Glencoe Publishing

Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* trans. Roudiez, Leon S. New York: Columbia

Kristeva, J. (1987). *Tales of Love* trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hammami, Rema. 1990. Women, the Hijab and the Intifada . Middle East Report, No. 164/165, Intifada Year Three (May - Aug., 1990), pp. 24- 28Published by: Middle East Research and Information Project Stable. Retrieved <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3012687>. Online 16/10/2014

Hanzaee, KambizHeidarzadeh, Chitsaz, Sharzad. 2011. A review of influencing factors and constructs on the Iranian women's Islamic fashion market. In *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research in Business* Vol. 1, Issue. 4, April 2011 (94-100).

Janmohamed, Shelina Zahra. 2009. *Love In A Headscarf: Muslim Woman Seeks The One*. London: Aurum Press Ltd.

Jiwani, Nisara. Rail, Genevieve, Rail. 2010. Islam, Hijab and Young Shia Muslim
Constructions of Physical Activity Canadian Women's Discursive *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 2010, 27, 251-267.

Laborde, Cécile. 2006. Female Autonomy, Education and the /hijab. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*. Vol. 9, No. 3, 351–377, September 2006.

Lechte, J. (2003). *Key Contemporary Concepts: From Abjection to Zeno's Paradox*. London:Sage Publications

Lever, J.W. (1966). Preface. In J.W. Lever, *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet*. London: Methuen Co. Ltd.

Lewis, C.S. (1936). *The Allegory of Love*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mentefiore, J. (1987). *Feminism and Poetry. Language, Experience, Identity in Women's Writing*. London;

Mitchell, J. R. J. (1982). (ed. and trans) *Jacques Lacan and the ecole freudience: Feminine sexuality*. London:

Moi, T. (1986). *Desire in Language: Andreas Capellanus and the Controversy of Courtly*

Love. In D. Aers New York: Pandora Press.

Muhammad Asni. 2013. *Rahsia Aurat Sempurna*. Selangor: Grup Buku Karangkrasdn. Bhd.

O'Donoghue, B. (1910). *Harvard Classics*, vol.39. New York: P.F. Collier.

Ousby, I. (1993). *The Cambridge Guide To Literature in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shanley, J. L. (1939). The Troilus and Christian Love. *ELH*. Vol. 6, No.4, pp. 271-281

Singer, I. (1984). *The Nature of Love 2. Courtly and Romantic*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago.

Sunan.Com at <https://sunnah.com/nasairetrieved> 06/03/2017

Ruby, Tabassum F. 2006. Listening to the voices of hijab. In *Women's Studies International Forum* 29 (2006) 54–66. Retrieved from www.elsevier.com/locate/wsif. Online 13/11/2014

Sandell, Lisa Ann. Does My Head Look Big In This? Book Focus. Retrieved from <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/does-my-head-look-big-book-focus> online 12/08/2013

Source : *Alim.org-Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith-148.1*. retrieved from <http://alim.org/library/hadith/SHB/148/1> on 24/12/2014

Thompson, D. (2011). World Literature 1 (ENG251) Courtly Love Study Guide. <http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/eng251/amourstudy.htm#troubadour> Retrieved 15/7/2013.

Usman, Mufti Muhammad Taqi. 2010. The Hijab of Women and its Boundaries. In Dress, Featured, Hadith Commentary, Women's Issues June 10, 2010 Retrieved <http://www.deoband.org/2010/06/hadith/hadith-commentary/the-hijab-of-women-and-its-boundaries/> online 16/10/2014.

Ure, P. (1955). Two Elizabethan Poets: Samuel Daniel and Sir Walter Raleigh. In B. Ford (Ed.). *The Pelican Guide to The Age of Shakespeare: Volume 2 of the Pelican Guide to English Literature*. London: Penguin Books.