‘Men with dark skins and turbans didn’t look foreign to me at all; we were connected; they were a part of my heritage’

Hanifa Deen uncovers a tribe of men with a hidden history – men whose stories are rarely told: the ‘Ghans’, cameleers, ‘sepoys’, hawkers, herbalists, and pearl divers, known collectively as ‘Mohammedans’ in early Australian history.

Mahomet Allum, wonder herbalist and ladies’ man, bush battler Ali Abdul, the feisty Afghan Rock men, and Sam the republican pearl diver, are some of Deen’s ‘men from the archives’. To others they are troublemakers and ‘lustful aliens’. Unwelcome and a threat to Australian workers, these are the dark strangers in the days of the White Australia Policy, when race was used to classify people and bar them from entering the country.

This fascinating collection of narratives combines storytelling with history and nostalgia as Deen takes the reader back into Australia’s past. These stories may even help explain some of the moral ambiguities and strange ironies that trouble us today.

Hanifa Deen is an award-winning author of Pakistani-Muslim background who specialises in writing narrative non-fiction. She has held a number of high-profile positions in ethnic affairs and equal opportunity and maintains a strong interest in international human rights. Her first book Caravanserai won a NSW Premier’s Literary Award in 1996; her second book Broken Bangles was short-listed for the 1998 Western Australian Premier’s Book Awards; her last book The Jihad Seminar was short-listed for the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Literature Non-Fiction Award 2008. She is currently an Honorary Fellow at the Asia Institute’s National Centre of Excellence in Islamic Studies, University of Melbourne and Editor of www.sultanasdream.com.au

More at: www.hanifadeen.com

For media queries, images, or to arrange an author interview, please contact Benython Oldfield at Zeitgeist Media Group for UWA Publishing on (02) 8060 9715 or 0410 355790 or email: benython@zeitgeistmediagroup.com