

**Beyond Cage and Leash:
Human-Animal Relations in Rural Pakistan**

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Statement of Originality

Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is the result of original work carried out by the author.

Muhammad A. Kavesb

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To you, this thesis and all other things belong.

Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic inquiry into human-animal relations through an examination of three types of activities: pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting. By explaining the life trajectories of the animal keepers, their personal experiences, and social stigmatisation, the thesis explores how human-animal relationships are conceived, developed, and carried out in South Punjab. As a multispecies ethnography, the thesis illustrates diverse modalities of inter-species intimacy, the social worlds of the animal keepers, and their symbolic expectations from the animals. I contend that these three animal activities are not unique and independent phenomena, but a lens through which one can understand different value systems and normative relations in rural Punjab.

Developing the concepts of *anthropology of life* and *more-than-human sociality*, the thesis argues that those who engage in these animal activities regard their animals as a key for exploring, enhancing, and refining their own life needs and ambitions. As such, each pigeon in the flock, and a rooster or a canine, is considered an individual with a distinct personality, needs, and attitude. Through a close examination of how these men care for and conceive of their animals, I argue that this more-than-human relationship enables them to cultivate the self, gain pleasure, accumulate social capital, and engage in the production of masculinity.

The rural South Punjabi men indulge in and adopt these three animal activities as their *shauq*. “*Shauq*” is the local term commonly used to emphasise any activity that is routinely carried out to fulfil a personal passion. The animal keepers’ *shauq*, they maintain, enables them to find great joy, freedom, fulfilment, and a sense of wellbeing to counteract the confines of everyday social and familial obligations. While explaining the different modalities of human-animal relationships, this thesis interrogates the notion of *shauq*, as an ideology and a practice, and one that transforms the men’s lives, re-defines their social relationships, informs their symbolic practice, and shapes their ideological orientation.

By discussing socio-cultural and symbolic implications of human-animal relationships, the thesis raises multiple questions: how do rural men develop a deep attachment to their animals? What motivates the men to fly and fight their animals? How does such inter-species attachment shape and influence the men’s social relationships, including their ties with other enthusiasts, community members, and their own family? Finally, I also explore the symbolic meanings embedded in such activities, with regard to questions of honour and the cultural politics of

masculinity in wider Pakistani society. The thesis is based on year-long ethnographic fieldwork in South Punjab, and draws on participant observation, interviews, and archival material to illuminate the concept of *shauq* and the different modalities of such human-animal relationship.

Notes on Translation and Transliteration

Saraiki is the most common spoken language in South Punjab, while the second largest is Mewati—a dialect of Urdu mainly spoken by those who migrated from India at the time of Partition between India and Pakistan in 1947. In my transliteration, I have tried to write the word as I heard it—sometimes in Saraiki and sometimes in Mewati. All local words are italicised, whereas the diacritic marking follows standard conversions of Urdu. I have decided against the use of diacritics for people’s names. The reader will note that I have used the plural of some local terms by adding *s* at the end (such as *ustāds*, *melas*). I have done so for the ease of general readers. Other than some major consonants, for instance *c* as “ch” in chair, the scheme of transliteration is as follows.

a as *u* in shut

e as in met

i as in sit

n as in nose

u as in pull

ā as in hard

y as in say

ī as in machine

ṇ as in tongue

ū as oo in food

For other consonants, the main differences are:

d is softer as *th* in gather

ḍ is harder as in diary

t is softer as in teeth

ṭ is harder as in true

Similarly, *ṇ* and *ṛ* have a retroflex flap.

For further details on other transliterations used in this thesis, please see The Library of Congress’s Urdu Romanisation method (2013). For more on translation, please see the glossary of local terms provided at the end of the thesis.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
ABSTRACT.....	IX
NOTES ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION.....	XI
LIST OF FIGURES	XVII
LIST OF MAPS.....	XIX
INTRODUCTION.....	1
KNOWING THE ENTHUSIASTS	2
THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS	4
A GENERAL OUTLINE OF SHAUQ	7
LIVING WITH THE ENTHUSIASTS	10
WORKING WITH THE ENTHUSIASTS	15
STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	18
CHAPTER 1: DECOLONIZING PASSIONS	23
SECTION 1: ANIMAL ACTIVITIES IN PRE-COLONIAL INDIA	25
PIGEON FLYING – ADVENTUROUS MUGHAL	25
COCKFIGHTING – PASSIONATE INDIANS AND THE BRITISH	30
DOG FIGHTING – ASSERTING ENGLISH PROWESS	32
SECTION 2: ANIMAL ACTIVITIES IN THE LATE COLONIAL INDIA	35
ANIMAL WELFARE	35
THE VICTORIAN ETHOS	36
ANGLO-PROTESTANT MASCULINITY.....	37
JUDICIAL AUTHORITY: THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT	38
SECTION 3: ANIMALS IN PRESENT-DAY PAKISTAN	39
CONCLUSION.....	40
CHAPTER 2: LIVING WITH PIGEONS: ROOFTOP INTIMACIES.....	43
SECTION 1: FORGING THE HUMAN-PIGEON BOND: CARE, PROTECTION, AND RECIPROCITY	47
ROOFTOP RAPTNES	48
BREEDING	51
IDENTIFICATION AND APPRECIATION OF PIGEONS THROUGH COLOURS	55
TRAINING THE PIGEONS WITH MĀR AND PYĀR	59
AERIAL RIVALRIES	62
ḌARĪ BID—A DAILY COMPETITION OF URBAN AND RURAL AREAS	62
KHOKHĀ BID—A WEEKLY RURAL COMPETITION.....	63

ĀSMĀNĪ BID—A FORTNIGHTLY URBAN COMPETITION	65
DISCUSSION: THE REWARD	66
SECTION 2: EARTHLY DEALINGS	68
RELATIONSHIPS OF INTIMACY AND HOSTILITY	68
MASTERS OF PIGEONS: RESPECTING THE WISDOM OF USTĀDS	70
AN ENTHUSIASM FOR LIFE	72
CONCLUSION.....	73

CHAPTER 3: THE SEDUCTION OF COCKFIGHTING: FORBIDDEN DANGERS 75

SECTION 1: MEN AND GAMECOCKS: INTER-SPECIES INTIMACY	79
BRED TO FIGHT	82
TRAINING AND DIET	85
SECTION 2: FEATHERED CLASHES	89
KHULĀ-KANḌĀ (BARE-HEEL) COCKFIGHTING	91
BAND-KANḌĀ (COVERED-HEEL FIGHTING OR BEAK-TO-BEAK FIGHTING) COCKFIGHTING	96
DISCUSSION: IZZAT AND MARDĀNEAT	100
FRIENDS, BROTHERS, AND GAMBLERS	102
CONCLUSION.....	107

CHAPTER 4: THE SPECTACLE OF DOGFIGHTING: AMPLIFIED MASCULINITY **109**

SECTION 1: PUTTING DOGS IN A HIERARCHY	113
RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATION OF DOGS AND THE SYMBOLIC ORDER	115
SECTION 2: THE SHAUQ OF DOGS	119
BRED TO FIGHT	124
SECTION 3: THE FIGHT OF HONOUR	128
FORGING BONDS	135
CONCLUSION.....	137

CHAPTER 5: THE PERSPECTIVE OF OTHERS: SOCIAL STIGMA AND FAMILIAL RELATIONS..... **139**

SECTION 1: NORMATIVE VIOLATIONS.....	141
1. PURDAH VIOLATION.....	142
2. GAMBLING	143
3. CRUELTY AND CARE	145
4. SQUANDERING	146
5. ADDICTION AND DISEASE	147
RESPONSE FROM THE ANIMAL KEEPERS TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS	149
SECTION 2: FAMILIAL RELATIONS	150
1. PRIORITISING CARE	152
2. DIVISION OF RESOURCES.....	155
3. UNEVEN RESPONSIBILITIES	156
4. FAMILY DISGRACE.....	157

DISCUSSION: WORTHY OR UNWORTHY SHAUQ	158
CONCLUSION.....	159
<u>CHAPTER 6: EXPLORING “GENUINE SHAUQ”.....</u>	<u>161</u>
SECTION 1: WHO IS THE BEST ENTHUSIAST – COMPARING PASSIONS.....	163
SECTION 2: SAFEGUARDING SHAUQ.....	166
BLACK MAGIC	166
THE EVIL EYE: A MALICE GAZE	168
COSMOLOGICAL BELIEFS AND PIGEONS	169
RIAZ’S DOG IS BEWITCHED	169
DO NOT PRAISE IT: NAZAR ON WASO’S ROOSTER.....	171
DISCUSSION.....	172
SECTION 3: TRANSFORMATIONS	174
GENUINE PIGEON-SHAUQEEN AND GREEDY CAPTORS.....	175
COMMODIFICATION OF HUMAN-COCK INTIMACY	177
A GOOD BITCH IS A BLANK CHEQUE	179
DISCUSSION: MODERN TIMES.....	180
CONCLUSION.....	182
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	<u>185</u>
<u>GLOSSARY.....</u>	<u>193</u>
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	<u>197</u>

List of Figures

FIGURE 1. 1: JOHAN ZOFFANY, COLONEL MORDAUNT’S COCK MATCH [c. 1784–86], © TATE.	31
FIGURE 2. 1: QAMO WITH HIS PIGEONS, OCTOBER 2008.	49
FIGURE 2. 2: QAMO WITH HIS PIGEONS, JULY 2017.	49
FIGURE 2. 3: PREFERRED PIGEONS BREEDING CHOICES IN SOUTH PUNJAB.	52
FIGURE 2. 4: RAFIK SHOWING A “PRIVATE KAMRAH,” USED FOR MATING A PAIR.	53
FIGURE 2. 5: A PAIR OF NEWLY HATCHED SQUABS.	54
FIGURE 2. 6: REHAN BAIG SHOWING HIS COLLECTION OF PIGEONS.	57
FIGURE 2. 7: RESEARCHER WITH SAIFAL IN SEEKRAIN VILLAGE.	58
FIGURE 2. 8: SHOWING PIGEONS WITH BEADS OF DIFFERENT PATTERNS AND COLOURS.	59
FIGURE 2. 9: PIGEON FLYERS CARRYING THEIR KHOKHĀ.	64
FIGURE 2. 10: KHOKHĀ BID, 2008.	64
FIGURE 2. 11: SAIFAL WITH HIS YĀR, MUKHTYAR.	69
FIGURE 3. 1: MALIK KHIZAR SHOWING A PAIR OF PRECIOUS BREED CHICKENS..	76
FIGURE 3. 2: AŞİL PELĀ, AND AŞİL LĀKHĀ.	81
FIGURE 3. 3: MASSAGING GAMECOCKS.	86
FIGURE 3. 4: TWO ENTHUSIASTS DRY MASSAGING THEIR ROOSTER.	87
FIGURE 3. 5: BAKSHA SHOWING KHURĀK LAḌO, ONE IS GIVEN TO A ROOSTER EACH DAY.	88
FIGURE 3. 6: LAYOUT OF A SOUTH PUNJABI COCKFIGHT.	91
FIGURE 3. 7: THE PROCESS OF FIXING EXTERNAL SPURS.	92
FIGURE 3. 8: A BARE-HEEL COCKFIGHT IN PROGRESS.	93
FIGURE 3. 9: A HANDLER CLEANING THE WOUNDS OF AN INJURED GAMECOCK DURING THE BREAK.	94
FIGURE 3. 10: TWO MEN FIXING THE BROKEN BEAK OF A GAMECOCK DURING THE BREAK.	94
FIGURE 3. 11: MEN COVERING THE NATURAL SPURS FOR A COVERED-HEEL COCKFIGHT.	97
FIGURE 3. 12: THE FIGHTING COCKS ARE FACILITATED BY THEIR SPECIFIED HANDLER DURING THE COMBAT.	98
FIGURE 3. 13: THE HANDLERS ARE READY TO UNLEASH THE FIGHTERS FOR THE NEXT ROUND.	98
FIGURE 3. 14: A RUNAWAY COCK IS MOCKED AND HUMILIATED ALONG WITH ITS OWNER.	102
FIGURE 3. 15: TWO COCKFIGHTING “BROTHERS,” PIR SAYEN AND GHULAM HUSSAIN.	104
FIGURE 4. 1: DOGFIGHT CELEBRATIONS.	111
FIGURE 4. 2: HIERARCHY OF DOGS IN SOUTH PUNJAB, AS DESCRIBED BY DOGFIGHTERS.	113
FIGURE 4. 3: WASAYA—A DOGFIGHTING ENTHUSIAST—SHOWING THAT DOGS CAN SALAM (SHAKE HANDS).	119
FIGURE 4. 4: MANNA WITH HIS DOG, TANGER.	121
FIGURE 4. 5: RIAZ WITH HIS DOG, PISTOL.	122
FIGURE 4. 6: CUTTING THE EARS AND COLOURING THE BODY WITH HENNA.	123
FIGURE 4. 7: BASHEER LAAR FEEDING HIS DOG.	126
FIGURE 4. 8: MAKHAN’S DOG RETURNING FROM ITS DAILY RUN.	127
FIGURE 4. 9: A SWEET SHOP AT THE MELA BAZAAR.	130
FIGURE 4. 10: A DOGFIGHT IN PROGRESS.	131
FIGURE 4. 11: A DOGFIGHT IN PROGRESS.	132
FIGURE 4. 12: A LARGE CROWD GATHERS TO WATCH DOGFIGHTING COMPETITIONS.	133
FIGURE 4. 13: DOGFIGHT – A STRUGGLE FOR THE ACCUMULATION OF SYMBOLIC GAINS.	135
FIGURE 4. 14: EAGER PARTICIPATION ON THE PART OF FRIENDS IN WINNING CELEBRATIONS.	137

FIGURE 5. 1: PIGEON FLYERS CAPTIVATED BY THE SIGHT OF THEIR AIRBORNE PIGEONS.....	149
FIGURE 5. 2: ASLAM’S CHARPOY WITH HIS PIGEON’S KHOKHĀ, 2008.	152
FIGURE 5. 3: FOUR GENERATIONS.	153
FIGURE 5. 4: SAIFAL’S THREE YEAR-OLD SON, ASPIRES TO BE A PIGEON FLYER ONE DAY	154

List of Maps

MAP 1: SHOWING STUDY AREA IN PAKISTAN.	11
MAP 2: SHOWING PIGEON FLYING, COCKFIGHTING, AND DOGFIGHTING IN SOUTH PUNJAB.	13
MAP 3: SHOWING FESTIVALS AND DOGFIGHTING IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF SOUTH PUNJAB, PAKISTAN.	129

Introduction

In October 2014, I departed for Pakistan to research what I then considered the “wasteful” and “amoral” activities of “backward” people in the poverty-ridden villages of South Punjab. I wanted to uncover the hidden motives behind animal cruelty amongst cockfighters and dogfighters and was equally interested in the more benign activity of keeping pigeons—a bird I had admired for its dervish-like qualities since my childhood. While I planned to highlight the attitude of state and local authorities (police and local councils) to “animal sports,” what I did instead was very different. I found myself learning how to whistle to fly pigeons, prepare the feed for gamecocks, and assist dog-owners in training their dogs. This year-long and eventful fieldwork ultimately shaped my experience and directed me to investigate what the animal keepers¹ referred to as *shauq*—an enthusiastic predilection and personal zest for practising an activity.

Pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting are the chief spectacles (*tamāshe*) of the southern part of Pakistani Punjab that elicit strong reactions from audiences and participants. The latter also include animals that actively fly or fight and animate their owners’ social lives, earn them honour, and reproduce masculinities. The men do not conceive of their flying pigeons, fighting roosters, and fighting dogs as simply “passive objects” of entertainment but take them as “active subjects” who indulge in mutual interaction with their human owners and fulfil their passion (see Knight 2005: 1–12). However, such passions are commonly criticised for purposively involving the birds and canines in activities that result in exhaustion, injury, and sometimes death. There are, in short, two dominant views regarding these three animal activities within South Punjab: first is the outsiders’ point of view, often voiced by educated urban people who condemn these activities. The second is the insiders’ perspective, held by those who practise these activities and for whom they hold meaning.

The first view perceives these three activities as the “backward” interests of uneducated rural men, who keep pigeons hungry and fly them in the unbearable summer heat and incite roosters and dogs to fight to death. The proponents of this view are mostly urban, educated, upper-middle class people, increasingly influenced by Western ideals of animal welfare. They highlight the moral decadence of the animal keepers and the irrational and violent nature of

¹ Throughout this thesis, I use the term “the animal keepers” as a collective expression for all three enthusiasts (pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters), similarly “the animal activities” indicates all three activities (pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting), and “the animals” is used for pigeons, roosters, and dogs.

activities where animals try to amuse their caretakers, sometimes with lethal consequences in attaining this objective. They condemn the daily practices of the animal keepers, and blame their illiteracy, poverty, and backwardness as major reasons for their blind affection towards these immoral activities.

The second view stresses the *meaning* of the animal activities, locates this meaning in a South Punjabi cultural context, and interprets it as enthusiasm, affection, and a way of life. This is the view of the animal keepers who take pigeons, roosters, and dogs as interactive agents, communicating companions, and intimate partners with whom they develop mutual affection. They do not see their animals as mere flying and fighting bodies but regard them as beings with distinctive personalities, elegant fighting skills, and courageous training attitudes. According to this view, every animal is different, identified with its distinct characteristics, such as the will to fly or fight and the ability to outmanoeuvre its opponents either with an aggressive stance or with cunning tactics. This is the insiders' perspective (emic), and it is the focus of this thesis—one which I try to uncover through ethnography.

This dissertation is an ethnographic inquiry into pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting and seeks to explore how human-animal relations are conceived, developed, and carried out in Pakistani South Punjab. For the owners, their animals are not simply flying or fighting objects of human entertainment, but instead they are social beings that animate their everyday lives and cultivate their *shauq*. Hence, I contend that the *shauq* of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting can be seen as a window to explore the social lives of the animal keepers and cultural mores of rural South Punjabi society. This *shauq* of flying or fighting animals, I suggest, shapes the lived experiences of the men and influences their everyday world by (re)defining their social relationships, (re)shaping their symbolic practices, and (re)ordering their ideological orientation.

Knowing the Enthusiasts

I was born and raised in a South Punjabi village. At nine, as I was returning from school on my Sohrab bicycle, I recall being mesmerised by the sight of a strange red pigeon near a tube-well. Initially, I stared, then cautiously approached the pigeon, and then (as we humans do) tried to catch it. Every time it would fly a few feet away from me. Cooing, it would coax me to try again. I never managed to touch it, even after many tries, yet the memory remains strong. From then, I started to notice strange whistling sounds I heard every morning. These whistles, I later realised, were a specialised way of directing the flight of pigeons. I also recall conjuring up an

image of the extraordinary men who were flying their pigeons and communicating with their flock through such multi-pitched whistles. Because of the local stigmas associated with pigeon flyers, my family refused to let me keep pigeons; instead, I was sent 300 kilometres away to attain a “quality” education in a boarding school. Yet, pigeons always stayed in my imagination, and many years later I found myself coming back to these birds in a study I carried out of the phenomena of pigeon flying as a part of my MA (2009), which focused on the flyers’ low status in South Punjab, Pakistan.

A man standing on a rooftop whistling and directing his flock of flying pigeons, or a cock enthusiast carrying his cherished rooster under his arm and gently stroking its head, or two eager men unleashing their fighting dogs to fight in front of thousands of men: these are not rare sights in South Punjab. These animal activities are a popular feature of South Punjab and attract men of all ages from different classes. Throughout the year, the men take their animals and compete for honour and prestige, perform their masculinity, and explore the boundaries of their *shauq*. Drawing on my initial interest in pigeon flying, I expand it to examine cockfighting and dogfighting in this thesis; and explore the meaning they carry, the social sacrifices they require, and the values they present to the enthusiasts.

The animal keepers are bound to their animals through a sensuous connection and a profound relationship. They do not fly or fight animals as a pastime or a side-job; it is their way of looking at and finding meaning in their lives. In this thesis, I examine the life trajectories of the animal keepers, their personal experiences, social stigmatisation, and their public image in the changing South Punjabi society. This study not only focuses on pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting, but as a multispecies ethnography, it illustrates diverse modalities of inter-species intimacy (techniques of mating, breeding, feeding, and training), the world of the animal keepers (social relationships with other enthusiasts, with family, and community), and their symbolic expectations from their animals (to accumulate honour and perform masculinity). I argue that the animal activities in South Punjab are not unique and independent phenomena but are interlaced within the broader society and influence different aspects of the men’s lives.

Overall, this thesis is the examination of the *shauq* of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting. By flying or fighting their animals, the men shape their ordinary lives into an extraordinary space and strive to achieve honour (*izzat*) and masculinity (*mardāneat*). Throughout the thesis, I have elaborated the crucial importance of the animals, and on the

concepts of honour, masculinity, and *shauq* with reference to the relevant literature available in anthropology and in other related disciplines. Below, I highlight some theoretical concepts that guide this thesis, particularly discussions about the increasing importance of non-humans in anthropology, and Punjabi concepts of honour and masculinity. In addition, I present a general outline of the concept of *shauq*, as it not only shapes the lives of my interlocutors; it also underpins much of the discussion in this thesis.

Theoretical Orientations

In the last decade or so, a resurgent interest in the field of human-animal studies has preoccupied scholars. Broadly, the field can be separated into two different interpretations, one that stresses the commodification of animals (see for example Francione 2010; Francione and Garner 2010; Bulliet 2005; Sunstein 2004; Wise 2002; Best 2009; Fraser 2009; Webster 2005), while the other looks at animals' integration into human cultures, the meaning the animals carry, and how they are invested with different attributes and impact on their human caretakers (Geertz 1973; Haraway 2003, 2008; Jerolmack 2009; Cassidy 2002; Herzog 2010; Fijn 2011; Hurn 2012; Ingold 1994). The first approach tends to focus on animals' role through the prism of capitalist exchange and the second explores how humans have shaped their lifeworld around their animals. It is the second interpretation that attracted the majority of anthropological scholarship. Among many, I consider two studies—Kohn's (2007) "anthropology of life" and Tsing's (2013) "more-than-human sociality"—because of their emphasis on the crucial role of non-humans as shaping human life trajectories and relations.

In his discussion of human-dog entanglements in Upper Amazonian Runa, Eduardo Kohn (2007) proposes an "anthropology of life," which he suggests should study the human world "within a larger series of processes and relationships that exceed the humans" (2007: 6). Through careful analysis of the Amazonian interpretations of dog dreams, Kohn proposes cutting across the established nature/culture distinction, and envisions an ethnography that is not solely confined to humans, but concerned with humans' interactions with other life forms and living selves. Similarly, Anna Tsing (2013) in her discussion of "more-than-human sociality" argues that living beings other than humans should be viewed as fully social—with or without humans (2013: 27). She advocates a close examination of interactions between humans and not-humans, where we, as humans, are "participants as well as observes; we recreate interspecies sensibilities in what we do. We don't just identify non-humans as static others, we further learn them and ourselves *in action*, through common activities" (2013: 34

original emphasis). Both Kohn's "anthropology of life" and Tsing's "more-than-human sociality" are crucial for my examination of human-animal engagement in South Punjab, where pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters develop inter-subjective relations with their animals. These studies inform my own analysis with its focus on non-humans as important actors in exploring everyday life patterns, personal choices, and social relationships of the animal keepers.

The *shauq* of keeping animals not only shapes emotional experiences of the men but it also influences their *izzat* among their peers and in the wider community. The Punjabi word *izzat* can be translated as honour (Lyon and Fischer 2006: 48). In Pakistan, *izzat* is of the utmost importance within the wider indigenous value system (Frembgen 2006a: 248) and influences an individual's identity and status (Lefebvre 1999: 264). Anthropologists who have worked in the Pakistani Punjab, such as Stephen Lyon and Michael Fischer, have found the concept of *izzat* to be entangled with ideas about control. For them, a person who controls herself/himself (behaviour, emotions, feelings, bodily practices) is viewed as possessing *izzat* (Lyon 14–21; Fischer 2006: 331). In addition to self-control, according to Fischer, the person should exert control and influence over other members of the community through, for instance, practising proper family and community values such as keeping women in *purdah*, having obedient sons, resolving conflicts, leading committees, and heading political groups (2006: 331; 1991: 108). The animal keepers also exercise control over their animals (by making them fly or fight) and so achieve *izzat*. They spend countless hours in feeding and training their pigeons, cocks, and dogs and display their mastery to their peers in the arena.

In his Field Theory, Pierre Bourdieu has suggested different forms of capital (economic, cultural, and social), which are linked to symbolic capital (1978: 180–181; 1990: 120–121). Symbolic capital, according to Bourdieu, consists of symbolic gains (honour, esteem, renown, and prestige) that an individual accumulates in society (2013: 297). He suggests that symbolic capital functions as a sign of distinction and elevates the social position of an individual by distinguishing her from other members of the same class. I take the South Punjabi concept of *izzat* as animal keepers' symbolic capital, which serves as an effective currency in their particular *field* of flying/fighting animals. By investing in their animals and winning the competition, the men gain more *izzat*, which further leads them to enhance their status and raise their manliness (*mardāngī*).

In South Punjab, masculinity (*mardāneat*) and men's honour (*izzat*) are interwoven. Honour is considered a mean for attaining status and masculinity, which further produces symbolic capital (see Bourdieu 2001: 43–45). In this thesis, I take masculinity as it is broadly defined by Raewyn Connell, as “a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture” (1995: 71). Yet, Connell is equally sensitive to the more nuanced aspects of masculinity, arguing the need to recognise the plurality and multiplicity of masculinities. Taking a lead from Connell's idea of *multiple masculinities*, I seek to analyse how different forms of masculinity are attached to pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting in present-day South Punjab, and what they can tell us about the motivation of the animal keepers in practising their pursuits. What aspects of masculinity are most prominent when the men showcase behavioural, emotional, and bodily control on different occasions? Why do the men cling to some dominant masculine qualities, such as courage (*jur'at*), bravery (*dilerī*), and strength (*zor*)? How are such attributes infused in the seemingly non-masculine activity of pigeon flying?

Masculinity produced through pigeon flying is a non-violent one; neither does it explicitly require “bravery” or physical strength, and yet, within their field, a skilled pigeon-flyer is seen as possessing *izzat* and masculinity. As I show in the thesis, pigeon flying allows the men to escape from the realm of domestic responsibilities, spend time on rooftops, engage their sons in caring for pigeons, and fly their birds to display their mastery over their peers. Unlike pigeon flying, the masculinity associated with cockfighting places far more emphasis on attributes such as courage, strength, and bravery, and at the cockfighting arena, both the fighting cock and its owner are expected to display these traits. Dogfighting encourages an almost pure form of masculinity. Betting, or any other pecuniary rewards, are barred from this activity as dogfighters bring their canines into the fighting arena to display and appreciate the animal's aggression, domination, and valour. In addition to these three types of masculinities associated with pigeons, cocks, and dogs, there is a fourth type: an ideal masculinity. Male members of South Punjabi community and the wives of the animal keepers usually advocate this type and suggest that an ideal male is the one who never squanders time, money, and resources on “wasteful” practices such as flying or fighting animals, but rather remains protector, carer, and provider to one's family. To be sure, the types of masculinity that I detail are not static and are located along a spectrum; yet it is useful for analytical purposes to highlight the multiple elements of South Punjabi masculinity. This thesis describes and explores the interplay

between these different forms of masculinity, as they evolve and transform from pre-colonial to colonial, and then to post-colonial Pakistan.

The very activities I describe in this thesis are restricted to the male domain (the animals, the animal keepers, and the audiences are all male). During my fieldwork, I spent the majority of my time with men, exploring their interpretations of *shauq*, their perception of human-animal relationships, and their ideas about what constitute these masculinities.² In Muslim South Punjabi society (as in other parts of South Asia), a strong gender segregation persists. Men's world is separate from women's world, and the latter is often restricted for males through *purdah* and other forms of social exclusions. I discuss more on this point in Chapter 5. Here it is important to note that such considerations made it difficult for me (as an outsider, and most importantly, as a male) to interview or spend time with women. Nevertheless, in order to gain a more rounded understanding of the issues discussed in the thesis, I found it useful to engage a female Research Assistant who conducted interviews with the wives of the animal keepers to gauge their perspective on the effects of such (male centered) human-animal relations on the household. This was also useful for getting a better appreciation of wider perceptions about the nature of *izzat* and what constitutes *shauq*, a topic I turn to next.

A General Outline of Shauq

Whenever I asked pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters about their interest in the animal activities, they commonly replied, “*yeh sab shauq kī bāt hai*,” or this is all about *shauq*. The word *shauq* derives from the Arabic root word *šāqa*, and English dictionaries translate it as delight and joy; to arouse longing and craving; to awaken a desire; and to long, yearn, crave, and covet ardently (Wehr 1979: 577). With Arab influence, the concept can be found in numerous South Asian (Urdu *shauq*, Hindi *shauk*, Bengali *śakha*, Nepali *sokh*, Dari *šowq*) and other languages (Indonesian *syauk*, Swahili *shauku*, Persian *shouq*, Tajik *shavq*, Turkish *sevki*) [see Rajki 2005].

The word *shauq* is commonly deployed across South Asia and many ethnographies have tried to explain its everyday usage. In sports, it has been described as “hobby or an infatuation” of

² This is one of the limitations of this study, since the usage of the term “human-animal relationship” only includes men's relationship with their animals. Because of South Punjabi norms, where women are barred from speaking with unknown men in public, I was not able to interview community women. I therefore tried to get the views of the wives of the animal keepers through an intermediary, a female researcher (and with the approval of their husbands), which I discuss in Chapter 5. However, keeping in view the cultural and religious sensitivities, the identity of the women, including their names, photographs, and any other identifying features are not given.

amateur North Indian wrestlers (Alter 1992: 155; 1992: 327–328), an “idiosyncratic interest” of buzkaishi aficionados in Northern Afghanistan (1982: 8–11), and “enthusiasm” of Northern Pakistani polo spectators (Parkes 2005: 72). In music, *shauq* has been explained as “zestful predilection” of Kangra’s women singers (Narayan 2016: 99) and the personal delight of Chitralli musicians (Marsden 2005a: 130, 2005b: 13). *Shauq*-driven activities are usually carried out without the expectation of monetary rewards (Baily 1988a: 143, 1988b: 144, and Sakata 1983: 84). This is why in Lucknow, *shauq* is considered indispensable to success in any sphere, whether it is to learn a musical instrument (Kippen 1988: 133), or embroidery (Wilkinson-Weber 1999: 132–134). In Lahore, *shauq* appears to be of a more personal nature; sometimes displayed through the “passion” of keeping and flying pigeons (Frembgen and Rollier 2014: 58), and other times expressed by ritual drummers’ “individual interest” in music (Wolf 2013: 139). *Shauq*, then, includes an element of self-improvement, a way of enhancing the self, whether through cultivating one’s interests and passions or through adorning the self by wearing fancy jewellery or decorated clothes (Shukla 2008: 275–276). In all its different forms, *shauq* shapes individuals’ personal choices, values, and aspirations.

In its diverse array of meanings, *shauq* is usually differentiated from the English word hobby. Mark Liechty emphasises this distinction, and argues that *shauq* is an individual’s “innate inclination...something of more significance” than the English word hobby (2003: 81–82; see also Liechty 2010: 40). Ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin also highlights this point, and suggests that *shauq* lies “somewhere in the zone between a hobby and an obsession and can perhaps best be described as a preoccupation with certain objects or activities, but one that does not constitute the individual’s principal job or determine his station in life” (1976: 24). Nita Kumar, in her seminal socio-historical analysis of the artisans of Banaras, explains *shauq* as an “intense love for an activity for its own sake” (1989: 163). For her, *shauq* is “an inborn thing” (1988: 187) and what “matters ultimately” (1988: 122)—that is, a life project. For the weavers, metal workers, and wood workers of Banaras, Kumar suggests, their *shauq* is not simply a hobby, but a very serious affair, a basic part of their “personality and nature” (Kumar 1988: 136). She describes how despite financial hardships, the poor artisans of Banaras cherish their leisure-time, and experience personal freedom by spending money and energies on various leisure activities to fulfil their *shauq* (1986: 58).

Similarly, South Punjabi pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters take their *shauq* to explore inner joy. Participation in their chosen pursuits is not a mere side hobby; they

completely devote themselves in their activities to experience life at its fullest. Life with their animals is their *shauq*, in which they cultivate the self and experience delight. The animal keepers speak of a near meditative state in which they forget themselves, lose track of time and mundane commitments, and achieve an experience similar to what psychologist Csikszentmihalyi has called *flow*—an optimal and intrinsically rewarding experience generated through deep concentration, altering the subjective experience of time and space, and allowing a person to vividly view and achieve a sense of control over her goals (2014: 215-216; 1990: 49). Csikszentmihalyi developed this notion of “flow” in the course of interviewing inventors, artists, and athletes (among others) and maintained that “flow” in any field develops a deep focus—a meditative-like state—and enables people to go through an enormously enjoyable and enriching experience (see Narayan 2016: 224).³ The *shauq* of the animal keepers is similar in the way it harbours the capacity to develop a flow-like experience. The men suggest that their *shauq* leads them towards a higher mode of being, where they learn, improvise, and innovate new techniques for keeping and fighting animals. It serves as a vehicle for self-improvement and allows them to define and imagine their personality within the wider cultural context.

Shauq has a dominant influence on the South Punjabi animal keepers’ social lives—their status, practices, respect, and recognition. It resembles what anthropologist Michael Herzfeld described as the *meraki* of the Greek artisans towards their occupation, “the total absorption and almost painful obsession of the hobbyist, the artist, the artisan, or anyone engaged in a totally consuming activity” (2004: 78; for more on *meraki* see Tsounis 1995: 96). In South Punjab, *shauq* helps the animal keepers to develop strong attachment to their activity, and attain a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction. Many believe that through their *shauq* they can also achieve respect amongst their peers, develop friendships, and gain “something” intangible that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. That “something” is more embodied and experienced than expressed in words.

Shauq is intricately embedded in the animal keepers’ habitus. It is an essential part of their character and a system of their tacit dispositions, which are “significant without intending to

³ Under certain circumstances, the concept of *shauq* conforms to the pattern of ritual process outlined by anthropologist Victor Turner (1967: 93–111, 1969 94–96). The animal keepers escape the dull, ordinary, and mundane aspects of daily life, enter into a liminal phase where they develop intimacy with their animals and achieve a degree of freedom. Such freedom, they maintain, is enriching and allow them to come back energised to the realm of everyday life. The liminal phase—the time that the men spend with their animals either on rooftops or in the house—enables the animal keepers to achieve a unique and a deeply fulfilling experience.

signify” (Bourdieu 1978: 80). It generates and organises practices and underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences of the animal keepers’ social lives (Bourdieu 1978: 78, 87; 1990: 53). However, *shauq* is not only implicitly adopted and explicitly inculcated; it also articulates the men’s personal choices, power of freedom, a space in which to exercise agency, and to care for oneself. Arguably, it approximates what Foucault (1988) once termed “technologies of the self.” The men, individually or with other enthusiasts, act on their bodies, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, and transform themselves in order to attain happiness, wisdom, and perfection through regular practice (Foucault 1988: 18).

Above, I have tried to present a general outline of the concept of *shauq*. It is hard to translate it into a single English word.⁴ Sociologist Robert Stebbins has presented a somewhat similar concept as *serious leisure*. Serious leisure, according to him, is made up of perseverance and a deep involvement that requires personal effort (to acquire skills and knowledge), has durable benefits (for instance self-improvement and self-gratification), and is practiced through unique ethos, so that the participants strongly identify themselves with their chosen pursuits (2014: 8–9). *Shauq* similarly develops an emotional experience through which pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters cultivate deep involvement with their activities, follow certain rules, and identify themselves with their enthusiasms. As *shauq* unfolds in this thesis, I examine how it refashions the social lives of the animal keepers in South Punjab. An important variation of the word is *shauqeen*. If *shauq* is personal enthusiasm, avocation, and innate inclination for an activity, *shauqeen* is the person who devotedly and obsessively pursue his/her enthusiasms (see Narayan and Kavesh n.d.). That is why many South Punjabi animal keepers proudly referred to themselves as *shauqeen log* or people with *shauq*.⁵

Living with the Enthusiasts

As I came close to finishing boarding school in Muzaffargarh, I turned up for an entry test at the Military College in the city of Jhelum. After failing the test, my family turned their attention to making me a software engineer, and so I found myself in Sadiq-Egerton College, which the British had founded in the city of Bahawalpur. Unsuccessful, I moved to Multan for my undergraduate degree in sociology, and then pursued an MA degree in anthropology in Islamabad. Throughout those years, I kept identifying with my natal place: South Punjab. Yet,

⁴ Arguably, the notion of *shauq* could be viewed as approximating the idea of vocation, as detailed by Weber (1946), and more recently by Dubois (2016).

⁵ At certain points in this thesis, it may seem that I am over-emphasising the local term “*shauq*”; however, I do this because of the importance of this concept to the people themselves.

I was hardly a “native.” I had lived more in boarding schools, college hostels, and university accommodations than in rural South Punjab. For the local people, I was the son of a mango farmer, but an educated person; born in the village, but lived in cities; attended cultural events like rural festivals, but never regularly; could converse in the local dialect, but had never really “known” the local people. Indeed, after leaving for boarding school at age 10, it was only during my PhD fieldwork that I returned to the area for a substantial period. During this whole year in South Punjab, I started to investigate “the local ways,” expressing a special interest in people and their animals. This unique insider/outsider experience was especially productive for my anthropological imagination and for generating insights about culturally meaningful understandings of life in rural South Punjab.



Map 1: Showing study area in Pakistan.

I carried out fieldwork for this thesis in two South Punjabi districts: Lodhran and Bahawalpur.⁶ Pakistan has four provinces, and Punjab is the largest one in population, agricultural growth, and industrial productivity. Although most of the agricultural products (cotton, sugar cane, and mangoes) come from South Punjab, mainstream development schemes often neglect this area in comparison to the central Punjab.⁷ The land in rural areas is usually owned by landlords who contract their farms to poor farmers in return for half of the annual production. Most of the animal keepers I met during my fieldwork were working as contractors for these landlords. Overall, the majority of people in my locale were illiterate, deprived of clean water, basic health and education facilities, and lived in abject poverty.⁸

Within the districts of Lodhran and Bahawalpur, I narrowed down my focus to three cities and their adjacent villages. These places (as shown in map 2) are considered the epicentres of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting, and proved especially productive sites for gaining an understanding of the different aspects of these practices. The city of Kahrur Pacca—believed by some to exist at the time of Alexander the Great (Ali 2013: 4)—was at the centre of my fieldwork. The structure of square houses and narrow lanes turns the city into a dense interactive place. Even though the massive migration at the time of Partition in 1947 resulted in the exit of the numerically dominant Hindus to India,⁹ the old Hindu temples and other traditional buildings are still prominent landscape markers used by the locals to navigate the city.¹⁰ Towards the west of Kahrur Pacca lies the city of Lodhran, which obtained the status of a district in July 1991. The area is famous for its rich agricultural soil and produces 20 per cent of the country's cotton, and is imported by China and other neighbouring countries. Towards the south of Kahrur Pacca and Lodhran is the famous city of Bahawalpur, a former princely state. Bahawalpur—receiving its name from Nawab Bahawal II in 1802—was in agreement

⁶ Broadly, the area known as “South Punjab” contains almost a dozen districts. However, in this thesis I take the districts of Lodhran and Bahawalpur as “South Punjab.” I do this to emphasise its linguistic and cultural differences from the central Punjab, and to relate the animal activities to the poverty and underdevelopment of this area; see Maps 1 and 2.

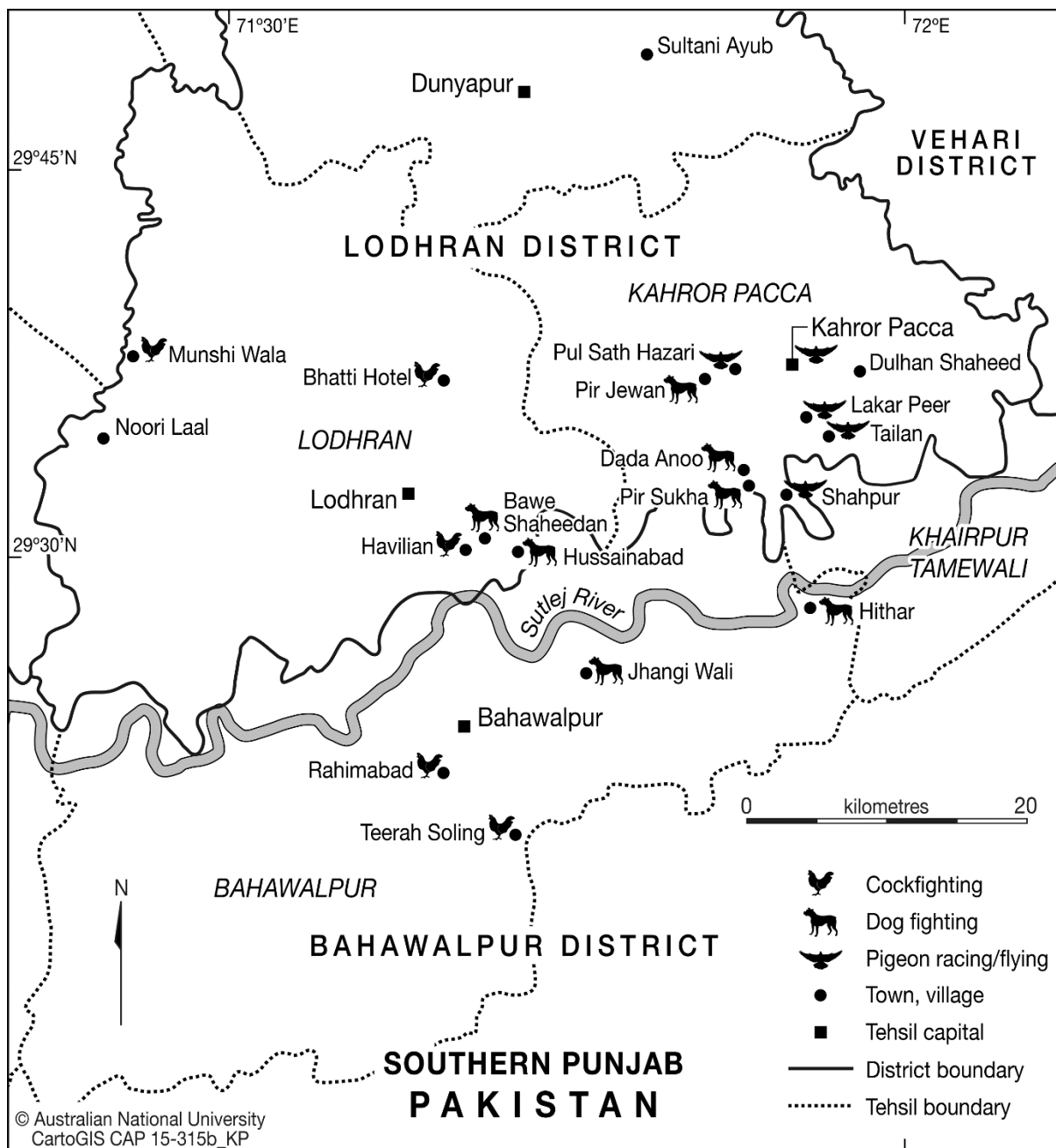
⁷ In national surveys, many South Punjab districts have been identified with high deprivation levels (see Jamal et al. 2003: 97).

⁸ Almost 70 per cent of the people of South Punjab speak Saraiki. According to the people of central Punjab, Saraiki is a dialect of Punjabi; however, most Saraiki speakers consider it a separate language, with a distinct history, literature, influence, and extra alphabetic symbols (Rahman 2007: 175). Some even demand a separate province on this basis (Rahman 2007: 178; Mughal 2014: 80–81).

⁹ After Partition, many Muslim *muhājir* (literally migrant) moved from India and settled in South Punjab. Many of them say they belong to the Rajput caste.

¹⁰ According to the national surveys, 99.4 per cent of the Lodhran district (including Kahrur Pacca city) is Muslim, while the next dominant religious group is Christian Catholics (0.3 per cent) [Government of Pakistan 2000: 19–21].

with the British to have an independent status, while at the time of Partition, the Nawab opted to join Pakistan.¹¹



Map 2: Showing pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting in South Punjab.

The Sutlej River divides the cities of Kahrora Pacca and Lodhran from Bahawalpur. After crossing the sandbar of the river and beyond the terrains of Bahawalpur City lies a vast desert

¹¹ After Partition in 1947, Bahawalpur became an independent province of Pakistan. In 1955, Bahawalpur merged into West Pakistan and remained its part until East Pakistan was formed into Bangladesh in 1971. When all the provinces of West Pakistan regained their independent status, Bahawalpur—after some political manoeuvring—was annexed into the Punjab province (Rahman 2007: 182).

locally known as Rohi or Cholistan (which shares the sand with Indian Rajasthan). The Cholistani men generally wear white in summer (white turbans) and black in winter (black shawls), whereas the women are clad in bright-coloured clothes and decorate themselves with arm-length bangles. Northwest and northeast of the desert lie green patches of cultivated lands and mango groves, usually irrigated by tube wells when water is low in the river and by linked canals. As the activities of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting are very common in the cities of Kahrar Pacca, Lodhran, and Bahawalpur, their nearby villages, and in the area close to Cholistan, I spent most of my time there, meeting the animal keepers and participating in their chosen pursuits.

The extreme weather conditions of the area have implications for the daily life and the nature of human-animal relationship. The scorching midday sun of the summer forces the people to take shelter in their tiny adobe houses. Although the glare of the sun hurts the eyes, many pigeon flyers climb onto the rooftops and fly their pigeons to compete with their opponents, shouting and whistling with gusto. The cockfighters and dogfighters strictly limit their activities in summer, only training their animals in the morning or in the late afternoon. In contrast, the village people maintain their relationship with cattle by keeping them in the shadows of rosewood and banyan trees, giving them baths in canals and rubbing their bodies, and sleeping close to them at night. Summer brings its joys too. The varieties of mangoes—of green, yellow, and red colours, and of delicious tastes and smells—are the summer's feast. The nights are quiet, with only insects and barking village dogs piercing the silence. When the moon is strong on summer nights, as the local saying goes, one can even notice an ant on the ground.

The winter is dry and the months of December and January are cold and foggy, forcing the people to light fires in the morning and evening to keep themselves and their animals warm. During the day, the animal keepers take part in cockfighting and dogfighting, along with numerous pigeon flying competitions, with great energy. It is a common perception that cold conditions are productive for animals to fly or fight with more zeal and energy. As winter is an exciting time, so are the long dark wintery nights, when half a dozen animal keepers squat around the fire outside their abodes, smoke hookahs and share their stories with each other. I regularly participated in these informal meetings, joining the circle to listen to the way in which the men discussed their passion. These meetings allowed me to explore carefully and think critically about the men's passion for flying and fighting animals.

Working with the Enthusiasts

Perhaps because it was my native place that I never had the opportunity to know, South Punjab has always fascinated me. I commenced my fieldwork in the fall of 2014 and witnessed rural life in full swing. Women were picking cotton by wrapping huge cloths around their waists, and men ploughed the field with tractors to plant wheat. In the mornings, children left for school carrying heavy bags. In the afternoons boatmen carried passengers across the monsoon-filled river. As a “local,” I presumed that my South Punjabi background, fluency in the local dialect, and familiarity with the South Punjabi “culture” would ease my way through my research with the animal keepers. However, after a month, an event challenged this presumption.

From the start of my fieldwork, Amin Uttera (also known as Meena Darzi), an avid 40-year-old dogfighter and a tailor by profession, became my friend. Meena was the owner of a dog famous in the area, whose market value Meena claimed was 400,000 rupees (about \$4000).¹² “A man offered me his 1999 model Fiat 480 tractor (valued at 380,000 rupees) in exchange for my dog but I refused,” he once told me. Meena planned to enter his dog in the coming dogfighting competition and invited me to accompany him. On the fighting day, Meena, his two friends, the 33-inch high dog named Rambo, and I reached the arena in the car of one of his friends. Thousands of people surrounded the arena. In the anticipation of the dogfight, Meena proudly introduced me to his friends, “he is my *bhirā* (brother), coming from Australia to write a book on Rambo.” Meena, I later discovered, was an expert in quickly fostering fictive relationships by using kinship idioms. On this occasion, his pride in mentioning my “Australian” connection and my intention to “write a book” about *his* dog seemed to boost his status among his peers.

The organising committee decided that Meena’s dog would fight against Ashiq’s dog on that day. The two dogs fought ferociously until Ashiq’s dog yelped and lost the combat. Meena delightedly picked up his dog on his shoulders and started celebrating the victory. Friends accompanied Meena in dancing; some showered ten-rupee bills on him while others purchased rose garlands. During the 15 minutes of celebration, everyone around him was basking in victory.

¹² Throughout this thesis, I use a dollar sign (\$) for converting local currency into US dollars (which during my fieldwork was roughly 1/100, for example \$1 = 100 rupees).

I was intrigued by the whole “*tamāshā*” (spectacle) and was equally interested in the losing party. I approached Ashiq (who was the father of another friend of mine, Makhan Pehlwan) and asked him about his feelings after the defeat; his views on the competency of the referees; the possibility of foul play; the future of his injured dog; and his plans for avenging this defeat. Following my conversation with Ashiq, I made my way back to Meena’s camp only to find that he had already left the arena and was upset largely because of my “disgraceful act” (*be-ghertī*). One of his friends explained that by not dancing with Meena after Rambo’s victory, I insulted him. Worse, I was speaking to the opponent dogfighter after the fight. “Meena called you brother and you dishonoured him,” his friend concluded. I realised that I had made a dreadful mistake.

Two days later, I visited Meena and gave him a DVD that contained the video footage of Rambo’s fight. The gift proved to be a good compensation for my erroneous act. However, the incident opened up many issues. It highlighted the importance of acting carefully while conducting fieldwork and being mindful of how honour and shame play out in different contexts. It also indicated that fieldwork in an area familiar to the researcher is not always easy and straightforward. Most importantly, it showed that my status as an anthropologist did not necessarily afford me a licence to do what I wished; there were culturally acceptable behaviours I had to learn and abide by, and transgressions were not tolerated. Like the locals, I was also bound by the social norms, values, and customs of the field site. In fact, because of my local background, there were additional expectations that I should know how to behave. The incident proved a turning point, influencing my conduct in the field and refashioning my methodological trajectory. It alerted me to the importance of exchange relations, of status and masculinity, and on the critical role of *izzat*.

In her essay, “How Native Is a ‘Native’ Anthropologist?” (1993) Kirin Narayan argued that anthropologists, both native and non-native, might be viewed in terms of shifting identifications. She suggested that we as researchers possess multiplex identities which are dominated by factors such as education, gender, sexual orientation, class, and race, and they outweigh our insider or outsider cultural identity (1993: 671–672). As I discussed above, the different strands of my identity (such as my education, city affiliation, Australian connection) rendered me an inauthentic insider and questioned my native status. Climbing on rooftops with pigeon flyers, sitting with cockfighters, or walking in the streets with dogfighters, I was reintroduced to South Punjabi norms and values. Like a humble neophyte, I learnt the ethics of

keeping, training, and feeding the animals as these were mediated by a specialised vocabulary that these men would use in their everyday conversations. Terms like *bid*, *pir*, *girdān*, colours and pattern, and breeds of the animals are not plainly intelligible to local South Punjabi people, and usually serve to exclude outsiders from the inner circle (see also Cassidy 2002: 21). I recognised that my active interest in the *shauq* of the animal keepers not only allowed my interlocutors to explain different terms and their associated meanings; it also proved a crucial methodological tool to explore the men's lives.

Because *shauq* is an important constituent of one's life, regardless of one's occupation, gender, or class, expressing interest in learning about articulations of *shauq* was something everyone could relate to in one way or another. It also helped me understand and explore the wider cultural and social landscape of the animal keepers, and their families. I learnt that *shauq* is a passionate endeavour, one that provokes rich commentary on both the very activities themselves and wider cultural and social concerns. As I expressed my *shauq* in studying the activities of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting, it helped me to build a productive relationship with the men, and allowed me to collect life histories and conduct interviews. Our common *shauq* developed a sense of connection between us. Whistling on the rooftops to fly pigeons, chatting with nervous cockfighters prior to the fight, or dancing with the winners after the dogfight helped me to realise that *shauq* had paved a way for me to do what anthropologists often refer to as participant observation.

During my PhD fieldwork, I conducted eight focus group discussions (usually involving eight to ten men), 78 in-depth interviews (audio-recorded face-to-face discussions usually lasting more than two hours), and six life histories (to chart the past and present of the animal activities). There were about 70 pigeon flyers, 50 cockfighters, and 30 dogfighters, with whom I had informal discussions on a regular basis. These conversations and interviews were complemented by field notes and observations, and interpreted in the light of discussions with community members and close kin. I took photographs regularly, and some of the animal keepers even viewed me as their "personal" photographer and stressed that I should include these memorable photos in my "book." In addition, I have found secondary data helpful by reading numerous theses produced on South Punjab (particularly by visiting the library of the

anthropology department at Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad), and actively following Urdu and vernacular newspapers.¹³

Structure of the Thesis

This ethnographic study of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting not only contributes to the increasing literature of human-animal studies focused on South Asia (see for example, Frembgen and Rollier 2014; Locke and Buckingham 2016; Govindrajan 2015; Hart 2005; Campbell 2005; Mathur 2015; Srinivasan 2013; Pandian 2001; Hussain 2010), it also sheds light on popular the culture of rural Pakistan. The anthropology of Pakistan is already an understudied field (Ewing 2010: 531), and the major focus largely revolves around key areas of Islamic mysticism, fundamentalism, governmentality and nationalism (Khan 2012; Ewing 1984; Hull 2012; Ahmed 2007, 2013; Frembgen 2011; Werbner 2003; Nelson 2011; Wolf 2006; Soares and Osella 2009; Philippon 2011; Jamal 2013). Due to security concerns after 9/11 and the dearth of funding agencies willing to support fieldwork in Pakistan, there is a gap in the exploration of Pakistani popular culture. This dissertation addresses that gap and offers new ways to interpret South Punjabi life through the lens of human-animal relationships, while exploring the local concept of *shauq*. As I stated earlier, *shauq* helps the men to take their activities as meaningful pursuits. This very notion may well be applicable to urban people of Pakistani society. In rural South Punjab, the passionate pursuits that are engaged in as *shauq* help inform the enthusiasts' lifeworld, allowing them to withstand hardship, and to cultivate a sense of self-fulfilment in what is a rapidly changing social and physical landscape.

Before presenting ethnographic descriptions, Chapter 1 examines the past of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting in the subcontinent, and explores how these activities evolved, adopted, and transformed from pre-colonial India to modern day South Punjab. The discussion is not simply historical background but aimed at highlighting the ongoing transformations in values and ideals in Pakistani society, conveyed through such popular practices as animal keeping. The chapter looks at how Mughal kings passionately indulged in pigeon flying. The discussion then follows the practice of cockfighting—an activity popular among both the early British officials and the Indian elites. The chapter then examines the introduction of dogfighting by the British as a mean of asserting English prowess and for developing linkages

¹³ My pigeon flying friends explained that some old Sunday magazines of the *Daily Express* (Urdu) newspaper contained sections on pigeon flying. Thus, I searched libraries and found numerous papers containing discussion on the diet and medication of pigeons.

with local chiefs. From the mid-19th century, all three animal activities lost their elite status and transformed into a *shauq* of the common people. The chapter also discusses the rise and fall of the three *shauq*, and explains the different forms of overlapping and contesting masculinities associated with them.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 focus on the “ethnographic present” and describe the activities of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting respectively. Chapter 2 illustrates how pigeons and humans engage in sociable play, through which the birds enchant the flyers’ lives. The men prepare diets and medications for their pigeons with care, decorate them with colourful beads and musical anklets, and fly them to fulfil their *shauq*. It details the methods of pigeons’ breeding, training of the bird, and the spectre of aerial rivalries (pigeon flying competitions). The chapter argues that human-pigeon relationship can be taken as a lens through which one can understand different value pattern in South Punjabi society. It concludes with a discussion of the changing role of *ustāds* (wise and experienced pigeon masters, similar to the Hindi term *guru*), and how this reflects shifting values in South Punjab more broadly.

Chapter 3 examines the relationship between gamecocks and cockfighters. It describes the different life stages of a gamecock: when a cockfighter chooses to mate chickens, cares for the egg, raises the chick, feeds and trains the cockerel through sparring and running exercises, performs dry massages on the gamecock’s body, and finally enters it in a cockfight. There in the arena, the rooster either secures the ultimate prestige of being a champion cock or is cowardly and flees the fight. The chapter also discusses the aftermath of the fight, and suggests that by involving their birds in fights, cockfighters not only fulfil their *shauq* but also strive to achieve honour, masculinity, and status from their peers in the fighting arena.

Chapter 4 argues that dogs are an important expression of the men’s honour and a vehicle for their performance of masculinity. It starts with describing five major categories of South Punjabi dogs and their related status in the local area. The chapter then discusses the religious symbolism of dogs (a *haram* or polluted animal) by discussing literal Islamic traditions and Sufi views (Sufi praise dogs for possessing virtuous qualities).¹⁴ By highlighting different angles of human-canine relationship, the chapter examines the men’s “practices of care”—through which dogs are given evocative names, their bodies are decorated with expensive

¹⁴ *Halal* animals are edible according to Islam only if they are slaughtered while invoking the name of Allah. Inversely, *haram* animals are prohibited and Muslims are not allowed to eat them. Among the animals discussed in this thesis, pigeon and rooster are *halal*, while dog is *haram*. Objects, activities, and practices that are permitted are also *halal*, whereas those that are prohibited by Islam are *haram*.

collars and leashes or coloured with henna. The chapter explains the preparation for battle (breeding, feeding, the training of dogs), dogfighting (process and rules), and symbolic rewards achieved through it (honour and masculinity).

Chapter 5 is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the growing antipathy of the South Punjabi village people towards the animal keepers, as they accuse the men of violating moral codes and social mores such as *purdah*, gambling, fighting animals, and squandering money and time. Rather than taking them as *shauq*, the South Punjabi people I spoke with view pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting as demeaning activities. The second part of this chapter probes such perceptions further. It includes the criticism of the animal keepers' wives, who condemn their husbands for prioritising the animals over family members in terms of their daily investment and a division of resources which favours the animals. These criticisms levelled against the men raise important questions about honour, masculinity, and the ambiguous nature of *shauq*—as passion and addiction.

The last chapter (Chapter 6) examines the category of pure enthusiasm or “genuine *shauq*” that is said to be practiced without the expectation of pecuniary rewards. The first part analyses the views expressed by animal keepers themselves, and describes the struggle to assert their chosen pursuit as “genuine *shauq*.” The second part discusses the cultural meanings of two cosmological beliefs—black magic and the evil eye—and explains how these two afflictive powers cause suspicion and feuds among the men. Some animal keepers also blame these two forces for misfortunes to their animals and to their “genuine *shauq*.” The last part examines the tension between “genuine *shauq*” and the desire for money, and highlights how the animals are being commodified, while the activities are slowly declining, and being labelled as the interests of rural and backward people.

In closing, it is important to point out that this thesis is not an attempt to critique animal baiting or different forms of cruelty which pigeons, roosters, and dogs may be subject to. By purposely mixing ethnographic evocation with critical anthropological analysis, my aim is to uncover the motivation and enthusiastic predilection of the animal keepers and take this to an understanding of their everyday lives within a changing Pakistani society. I explain how the men engage with their animals and find a way to discover personal delight through their *shauq*. Beyond the binary of right and wrong, moral and immoral, cruelty and pity, the men embrace their chosen pursuits to achieve a sense of freedom from the vagaries of everyday life. However, the men's engagement with their animals is often difficult for others to appreciate, leading many to view

their pursuits as self-indulgent, promoting unethical and selfish behaviours. While it is tempting to argue for the decline of the category of “*shauq*” in light of the fast-paced changes taking place in Pakistani society, such view is not entirely warranted. As I argue in the conclusion that even though pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting can be seen as declining, the concept of *shauq* remains attractive to many in various forms. The concept’s flexibility helps it accommodate more modern pursuits, and many people continue to reference “*shauq*” when they describe activities such as dog exhibition shows, decorating animals, or simply keeping animals as companions, which is becoming increasingly popular in urban Pakistan.

CHAPTER 1: Decolonizing Passions

From the 16th to the 18th centuries, pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting were all practised predominantly by the ruling classes in India. Over time, the elites refined these practices and as their popularity grew, commoners took on these pursuits. From their height in the pre-colonial period to their transformation in the late colonial era, such activities also demonstrated different types of masculinities. Masculinity, as Connell (1995) suggested, should not only be defined in relation to men's domination over women but also men's hegemony over other men. As I have stated above, Connell laid emphasis on the plurality of masculinities across a spectrum that includes the hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalised masculinities, ranked hierarchically under the hegemonic model (1995: 76–80).¹⁵ Connell's paradigm of the multiplicity of masculinities is particularly useful for analysing the transformations in pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting over time.

During the pre-colonial period, various animal practices displayed dominant masculine traits, including courage, fearlessness, and strength, and were seen as sources for court recreation and leisure (O'Hanlon 1997: 12; Pandian 2001: 90). Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1912) defined the concept of leisure as “non-productive consumption of time” (1912: 43). Leisure, in his view, was a time that people spent in non-industrial (or labour) work. According to Veblen, this served two functions: (a) to assert the unworthiness of labour, and (b) an evidence of pecuniary ability to afford such a lifestyle (1912: 43). However, an important function of leisure activities that Veblen overlooked (and which is highlighted by Bourdieu 1984) is its ability to acquire symbolic gains, or its capacity to help a person achieve “non-productive” goals, such as honour, prestige, status, and a position of distinction. For instance, the imperial practice of hunting tigers, usually carried out as a recreational pursuit from the early pre-colonial era to the late colonial period, served the Mughal kings and the East India Company sportsmen as a means of displaying their martial qualities as well as to assert a legitimacy of rule by offering protection to the native subjects (see Pandian 2001; cf. Orwell 1958). Similarly, as I will try to show in this chapter, the practices of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting originally appeared as recreational pursuits, largely adopted by the elites to achieve symbolic gains and to reproduce traits of dominant masculinity.

¹⁵ The particular traits of dominant masculinities change over time and across culture, see for example the cases of effeminate Jew of the Diaspora to Zionist new man (Hirsch 2015: 305), martial and literary masculinity in China (Kipnis 2011: 120), or the changing forms of Irish and Serbian masculinities (Banerjee 2005: 9–10).

Historian of South Asia, Rosalind O’Hanlon (1997), expands on the concept of masculinity to highlight the dimension of sociality. She views masculinity as “that aspect of a man’s social being which is gendered: which defines him as a man and links him to other men, and conditions other aspects of his identity, such as class, occupation, race and ethnicity” (1997: 3). In other words, masculinity for O’Hanlon is very much a social fact, linking a man to other men, and shaping his identity in a particular cultural setting. This is a vital insight when looking at what are seemingly “non-masculine” activities (such as pigeon flying). As I will show in the following chapters, the animal keepers of South Punjab strive to perform their masculinity by winning animal competitions and by accumulating status and *izzat*. The masculinity of the animal keepers, therefore, is not only maintained by showing ascendancy over other gendered identities but it also requires the recognition of other men (see O’Hanlon 1973: 3). However, an important feature of studying masculinities, as both O’Hanlon (1973: 3–4) and Connell (1995: 185) have pointed out, is their evolution and transformation through history. This is one of the major concerns of the chapter: to try to explore the historical development of the three practices of animal keeping and explain how they canvas a plurality of masculinities that evolved since pre-colonial times, and in doing so to trace their transformation from a predominantly elite passion to a *shauq* of the common people.

The first section of this chapter discusses the multiple forms of overlapping and contesting masculinities associated with all three animal activities in pre-colonial India. Pigeon flying was a passion of Indian kings, nawabs, and rajas; the Indian elites and early colonial officials both practised cockfighting enthusiastically; dogfighting was introduced by the British to display imperial domination through asserting their masculine traits. All these practices were also effective social lubricants for Indian elites and the British. The second section of this chapter goes on to look at the later transformation of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting from the mid-19th century. This period, particularly after the Great Revolt of 1857,¹⁶ was a point of rapid social change in Indian society. The relations between rulers and ruled were altered, and this had an effect on human-animal relationships in India.¹⁷ The second section discusses how

¹⁶ Also known as the Great Rebellion, or by the colonial terms “the Indian Mutiny,” or “Sepoy Mutiny.”

¹⁷ The Great Revolt of 1857 officially marked the commencement of the British Raj from the Company Raj. The East India Company that operated in India from the early 16th century had a more diffuse impact over the subcontinent than the centralised British power during its rule of less than a century. Once the Company Rule diminished, British interaction with Indians reduced greatly. During the Raj the scientific racism (Risley 1915) and orientalist discourse (Said 1978) prevailing at the time made the British refrain from intermingling with the natives and participating in their leisurely pursuits. At that time, gentlemen’s sporting societies also emerged and their memberships were designed in a way that aimed to discourage the participation of local people (see for example, Sinha’s discussion of Bengalis’ “effeminacy”; they were deemed unfit for shooting tigers, 1996: 86, 42).

the animal activities lost their lustre among the British and Indian elites during the British Raj. This leads to pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting entering the realm of the common people. The chapter concludes with a section that briefly examines the legal history of human-animal relationships in post-colonial Pakistan, where the century-old *Protection of Cruelty to Animals Act* still survives as a relic of colonialism. Throughout, the chapter attempts to show how contemporary practices and ideologies pertaining to human-animal relationships in Pakistan were shaped throughout history. In modern-day South Punjab, animal keepers continue to view and practise the three animal activities in a way similar to those of the Mughals and the British, as vehicles through which to fulfil their enthusiasm (*shauq*), achieve honour (*izzat*), and reproduce masculinity (*mardāneat*).

Section 1: Animal Activities in Pre-Colonial India

In this section, I present a preliminary historical sketch of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting in India from the 16th century until the mid-19th century. I note how these animal activities were adopted by the ruling elites, and how these displayed the different masculine qualities of their practitioners. Pigeon flying was predominantly a South Asian activity, adopted and refined by the ruling elites. Gamecocks, however, were present in both Europe and South Asia, and captivated the attention of the British and Indian elites from pre-colonial time. On many occasions, the Mughals and the British fought their roosters against each other in an effort to emasculate the opponent and win the wager. Dogfighting was different. This was a British activity and early European traders presented bloodhounds and mastiffs to the Mughal kings, and later the British introduced dogfighting to India as part of developing diplomatic linkages and building political relations with local elites.

Pigeon Flying – Adventurous Mughal

Pigeon flying was practised among the people of India before the Mughals; however, the early Mughals elevated its status (Pearson 1984: 339). They exchanged birds to build political alliances and to develop and maintain friendships with the nearby states. The Mughal Emperor Akbar (1542–1605) was particularly famous for keeping and flying pigeons, a passion he cultivated from his childhood. In the book *Ain-i-Akbari* (Akbar's regulations), written by Akbar's court historian Abul Fazl,¹⁸ a whole chapter is devoted to the king's passion for flying

¹⁸ *Ain-i-Akbri* (Akbar's Regulations) is the third volume of the book series "*Akbar-namah*" (The book of Akbar). Other than containing official administrative reports, the book details the life pattern and activities of Akbar, who ruled the empire from 1556 until his death in 1605. Abul Fazl (1551–1602), the writer of *Ain-i-Akbari*, was

pigeons (Fazl 1873: 298–303). From Fazl’s description, we learn that Akbar cherished the company of his birds, and referred to the practice as *‘ishqbāzī* (love-play) rather than *kabūtar bāzī* (pigeon fancying)—the latter is the more common term often used to describe the practice in modern times. The Arabic word *‘ishq* means “to love passionately” or “be passionately in love;” however, it also means to “interjoin closely,” and to “connect” (Wehr 1979: 719). Because of the word’s lexical richness, it is used by many Persian and Indian Sufis to hint their union with God (Lumbard 2007: 373). Akbar, too, took his *‘ishqbāzī* (love for pigeons) to appreciate the wonders of the Divine Creator, as Fazl notes:

The amusement which His Majesty derives from the tumbling and flying of the pigeons reminds of the ecstasy (sic) and transport of enthusiastic dervishes: he praises God for the wonders of creation. It is therefore from higher motives that he pays so much attention to this amusement (1873: 298).

The number of pigeons at Akbar’s court was staggering. It is estimated that he had more than 20,000 pigeons and almost 800 kilos of grain required to feed them each day (1873: 302). Many enthusiasts still refer to Akbar’s practice of feeding pigeons with seven types of grain to keep the bird healthy and active. Moreover, there were corps of servants whose sole job was to care for pigeons, and they were paid a salary equivalent to trained soldiers (1873: 303). Such allowances demonstrate the importance of the bird, which was not only kept as a form of enjoyment but also for strategic purposes, a point discussed in detail below.

Throughout his reign, Akbar took personal interest in the birds and used selective breeding. He gave them personalised names and trained the birds to fly at night. He is also said to have been the first to fly a cluster of more than a hundred pigeons at once. In addition, Akbar introduced new methods for evaluating pigeons (for instance, the colour of the bird’s eye, its claws, and sides of its beak), and developed the typology of pigeons based on their 30 colours and 15 patterns (1873: 301). Fazl described Akbar’s 500 selected pigeons, known for performing remarkable manoeuvres, such as performing 70 somersaults in the air. However, these feats were not only designed to amuse the king. Akbar deployed them strategically to facilitate matters of state. According to Fazl, pigeons were commonly used to impress his subjects and foreign visitors. The king would astonish the court spectators, merchants, and diplomats

Akbar’s court historian, advisor, and chief propagandist (Pandian 2001: 91). A section in the book is devoted to Akbar’s amusements and recreations, and one chapter specifically elaborates on pigeon flying.

(coming from Iran and Turan) with the remarkable displays of his pigeons' skills (1873: 289, 299).

As an official court historian, Fazl always found crucial functional justification for the king's pursuits. For instance, while discussing the game of *chaugān* (Indian form of polo). Fazl suggested that it was not merely a form of amusement, but that the king saw it as a training practice for the Mughal heavy cavalry (1873: 297). Again, in his discussion of the king's hunting expeditions, Fazl claimed that for the king it extended well beyond recreation, as it allowed Akbar to increase his knowledge about the state, military, and native subjects (1873: 282). This was equally true of pigeon keeping, which Fazl claimed was an important affair:

This occupation affords the ordinary run of people a dull kind of amusement; but His Majesty, in his wisdom, makes it a *study*. He even uses the occupation as a way of *reducing unsettled, worldly-minded men to obedience*, and avails himself of it as a means productive of harmony and friendship (1873: 298, my emphases).

Keeping an extremely large number of pigeons at court not only displayed Akbar's power and wealth, it also depicted the king's ability to control, tame, and domesticate the wild birds through his care and attention. This symbolic care towards the birds, Fazl's description indicates, was analogous to the king's care towards his subjects and visitors—who, like pigeons, were carefully managed.

Two centuries after Akbar, pigeon flying continued to be associated with the ruling elites of India. Mughal miniaturists illustrated the bird, and different literary works were produced affectionately depicting pigeons. One such artwork, *Kabūtar-nāmah* (The Book of the Pigeon), appeared in the mid-18th century, written by a late Mughal author Vālih Mūsavī, containing colourful illustrations, evocative poetry, and vivid prose about pigeons (Sims-Williams 2013).¹⁹ After its metrical introduction, the prose in the second section of the book detailed breeding, training, and flying techniques, and elaborated on the various colours and patterns, characteristics, and descriptions of the bird.²⁰

¹⁹ James Lyell in his *Fancy Pigeons* (1887: 412) translated the term *Kabūtar-nāmah* as "History of Pigeons." In the conclusion of his book, he added a few pages of Sir Walter Elliot's translation of *Kabūtar-nāmah*. Elliot collected the treatise from Madras and sent it to Charles Darwin to aid his research (1887: 404). Darwin in his *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* (2010) regarded *Kabūtar-nāmah* as a "curious treatise" (2010: 41).

²⁰ We learn more about this book from Charles Storey's bio-bibliographical survey of Persian literature where he mentioned that Mūsavī was born in *Khurāsān* and migrated to Hyderabad, and later to Arcot (Storey 1977: 410–411). It was most likely during Mūsavī's time in Hyderabad that he wrote *Kabūtar-nāmah*. William Dalrymple also mentioned in his book *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* that pigeon keeping

Pigeon flying remained popular among the Indian kings, nawabs, rajas, and elites until the mid-19th century. The last Mughal king, Bahadur Shah (1775–1862), was also said to be fond of pigeons.²¹ Legends have it that when the king went out in procession, almost two hundred pigeons would fly above him and provide shade from the scorching summer sun of Delhi (Sharar 1975: 127). The rulers of Oudh, from Shuja ud Daula (r. 1754–1775) to Nasir ud Din Haidar (r. 1827–1837) were all pigeon enthusiasts, and the passion reached its peak during the reign of the last nawab of Lucknow, Wajid Ali Shah (r. 1847–1856).

There are important similarities worth noticing in the passion of pigeon keeping between Nawab Wajid Ali Shah and Emperor Akbar. Both kept more than 20,000 pigeons at their court and employed almost 300 servants to care for birds. Like Akbar, Wajid Ali Shah had a large and impressive menagerie (Sharar 1975: 128, 75).²² However, unlike Akbar whose enthusiasm for pigeons has been described as a “study,” for achieving “higher motives,” and for reducing “worldly-minded men to obedience”; Wajid Ali Shah’s *shauq* was usually depicted as an extravagance and a wasteful practice. The British accounts notes that he once paid 25,000 rupees for a silk-winged pigeon and spent 2000 rupees on producing a pigeon with one black and one white wing (Oldenburg 1984: 15–16). The shifting status of pigeon keeping—from one a demonstrative of higher status to a mark of wastefulness and extravagance—was in line with many other traditional pursuits, which the British rulers dismissed as frivolous and inefficient. This is poignantly depicted in Satyajit Ray’s critically acclaimed film “The Chess Player” where a British administrator is shown to be extremely impatient and dismissive of the local nawabs’ love of poetry, pigeon flying, and kite flying.

By the first half of the 19th century then, the ideals of imperial rule and notions of masculinity circulated within a wider discourse that championed ideas of productivity, order, and authority. The “waste” of resources, energies, and time by the local elites on activities such as pigeon flying was seen as yet another indication of their indolent and effeminate character. The idea

was a popular pastime among the elites of Hyderabad at the end of the 18th century, and pigeon cotes were an “essential part of the cultivated enjoyment of a gentleman’s pleasure garden” (2002: 264).

²¹ Because of his interest in different *shauq* of the mid-19th century (such as poetry, pigeon flying, kite flying, music, painting), Bahadur Shah chose “Zafar” and “Shauq Rang” as his pen names. He used Zafar (meaning victory) for his poetry and signed his music as Shauq Rang (an enthusiast of colours). See for example Welch 1985: 429, and Pritchett 1994: 5.

²² Abdul Halim Sharar’s book was originally published in Urdu with the title “*Guzishta Lucknow*” (c. 1920), and later translated into English by E. S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain in 1975 as “Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture.” In the Urdu version, Sharar used the word *shauq* on numerous occasions (such as when discussing animal fights, bird fights, kite flying, and pigeon flying). In the English translation, we do not find italicised “*shauq*,” and the word is mostly translated as predilection, desire (1975: 116), interest and founding (1975: 123), and pursuit (1975: 131).

of waste (and more specifically the moral waste), as geographer Vinay Gidwani (1992) has described, served as a metaphor for the idle behaviour of the Indians and to some degree became a political tool for legitimating colonial rule in India (1992: 44).

Nevertheless, keeping and flying pigeons was known to be practised in some parts of England from the 16th century. For example, a small community of the silk weavers of Spitalfields kept and bred pigeons for many generations.²³ However, the passion of this artisan community was never considered a gentleman's activity. Charles Darwin, who used to visit the place to discuss pigeon breeding, described the locals as "little men" and "odd specimens of the Human species" (Feeley-Harnik 2007: 161–162). As the practice was out of step with Georgian gentlemanly traits, it remained marginal, far removed from the newly assumed authority that the British Raj sought to establish in colonies.

In short, unlike the British colonial officials who conceived it as an indolent pursuit, pigeon flying in India was a culturally meaningful activity, associated with elites' masculinity that demonstrated authority, order, and control. It was a refined demonstration of high culture, power, and financial display of pre-colonial rulers. Ashis Nandy (1983:10) has insightfully suggested that the conception of masculinity in pre-colonial India was rather different from the European imagination of gender. What appears to be effeminate to Europeans (such as the self-denying ascetic Brahman, a poet prince, a nawab listening to court music, or a king flying pigeons or kites) was not strictly identified as effeminate in India. Though the forms of creativity (poetry, singing, or dance) hardly involved violence, they were identified as a type of masculinity that was vital for the cultivation of an ideal elite male self. Pigeon keeping similarly presented a notion of masculinity—one that, without the outright pursuit of power and domination, required years of study, care, and attention in mastering the craft—that the British could not understand and usually associated with inefficiency, effeminacy, and idleness.

Cockfighting, however, was an activity that the British were known to attend and practise along with the Indian rajas and nawabs, and even wagered enthusiastically on fighting roosters. Unlike pigeon flying, cockfighting, for both Mughals and the British, was a portrayal of courage, bravery, and strength. The gamecock, like a soldier in the battlefield, was expected to fight with courage, bravery, and strength, and not retreat, surrender, or flee from the battle. In fact, cockfights were purposely shown to soldiers (across history and in different nations)

²³ Charles Dickens also mentioned the traditional practice of breeding, keeping, and fancying pigeons in Spitalfields in his *Household Words* (1851).

before battle to inspire their spirits and serve a lesson that like a fighting cock, a man should fight until his last breath.²⁴

Cockfighting – Passionate Indians and the British

Because of their aggressive spirit and unyielding bravery, cocks occupied a special niche in human history. They were a vital part of mythology and magic, considered a symbol of beauty and power, and usually associated with masculine virility (Donlon 1996: 186; Smith & Daniel 1975: 53). For thousands of years, gamecocks offered a model of behaviour, displaying values of loyalty, courage, and diligence.

The practice of fighting cocks is believed to be one of most ancient forms of animal fight (Dundes 1994: vii). It was first organised almost 3000 years ago in Southeast Asia and then spread to most parts of the world (Smith & Daniel 1975: 69; Donlon 1996: 187; Beebe 1921: 206). In addition to India and other countries in Asia, many Europeans were also fond of fighting roosters. For instance, some British monarchs including Henry VIII, James I, Charles II, William III, and George IV were avid cockfighters (Smith & Daniel 1975: 87). In India, the activity was initially practised both by the common people and by the rulers (Harris 1994: 10). Later, it became a part of Mughal court life, and a *shauq* of nawabs and rajahs of different states. In the mid-18th century, when the passion of cockfighting was at its peak in India, Vālih Mūsavī, the author of *Kabūtar-nāmah* (The Book of the Pigeon), also wrote *Murgh-nāmah* (The Book of the Chicken) [Storey 1977: 410].²⁵

Having developed strong interest in this activity from England, many amongst the early British traders and officers fought their “English Game Fowls” against Mughals’ “*Aṣīl*” breed.²⁶ Historians claimed that by the time the British established themselves in India in the late 18th century, they were usually pitting their cocks against those of local Indian princes (Smith & Daniel 1975: 92). Abdul Halim Sharar, an Indian historian from Lucknow, observed that in

²⁴ This tradition of staging cockfights to inspire the courage of an army goes back to the Athenian general, Themistocles, who before defeating the Persians, emphasised the glory and fighting will of gamecocks in a speech to his soldiers. Later, he made cockfighting a national sport of Greece (see Smith & Daniel 1975: 70–71).

²⁵ The treatise is a poetic work on cockfighting and contains information on the breeds and characteristics of roosters, the birds’ dietary and training regimens, and the medication and fighting practices of cocks. Though Mūsavī wrote *Murgh-nāmah* in Persian, Nawab Yar Muhammad Khan later translated the treatise into Urdu in 1883. From this Urdu translation, Lieutenant-Colonel D. C. Phillott translated *Murgh-nāmah* into English for the Asiatic Society of Bengal. American Ornithologist William Beebe in his *A Monograph of the Pheasants* included some part of Phillott’s translation (1921: 199–203).

²⁶ Early colonial administrator in India, Lord Clive, along with other members of the British aristocracy is believed to have cherished cockfights and practised the activity in England (Smith & Daniel 1975: 87).

Oudh, both the Indian rulers and the British participated in Tuesday's (weekly) cockfighting. "General Martin was an expert at cockfighting and Navab Sadat Ali Khan used to bet his cocks against those of the General" (1975: 123), he noted. Sharar further added that in Matiya Burj cockfights (near Calcutta), English men from Calcutta (the centre of British rule at that time) used to bring their birds to fight (1975: 123). Cockfighting was thus an important site for the negotiation of power and communication for local elites and their British counterparts.



Figure 1. 1: Johan Zoffany, Colonel Mordaunt's cock match [c. 1784–86], © Tate.²⁷

Unlike pigeon flying which was exclusively practised among the Mughals, both the Indian elites and the British favoured cockfighting. It provided them with an opportunity to socialise, integrate, and canvas their masculine traits (such as courage to fight, being fearless and brave, and competing with aggression and strength). However, perhaps the more virile form of establishing masculinities was through the practice of fighting canines. Unlike cockfighting, dogfighting was European in origin, and represented popular masculine qualities, traced back

²⁷ The description of the image on the Tate website reads, "The painting depicts a cock match between Asaf-ud-daula, Nawab Wazir of Oudh (standing in the centre) and Colonel John Mordaunt (standing on the left in white), a keen cockfighter who had brought out from England game-cocks which he was confident would defeat native-bred birds. The outcome of the match is unknown." The painting also shows some women present at the occasion, a sight that in contemporary South Punjabi cockfighting almost never occurs.

to Roman Empire. Although the British introduced the practice to India with the view of building political capital and relations with local elites, it soon thrived and adopted as a hyper-masculine *shauq*.

Dogfighting – Asserting English Prowess

Like gamecocks, fighting dogs have traditionally been appreciated for displaying strong masculine attributes. Scholars believe that the practice of baiting dogs, generally against bears, bulls, or badgers, can be traced to the early period of dog domestication, but attained a formal status in Rome's Coliseum to demonstrate the fierce and aggressive spirit of canines (Gibson 2005: 4, Kalof and Taylor 2007: 321–322). In medieval England, particularly from the 12th century onwards, dogs were considered an emblem of strength, determination, courage, and aggression—characteristics associated with English masculine prowess (Kalof and Taylor 2007: 322). Because of these attributes, the large and ferocious mastiff was usually used as a war-dog (Brownstein 1969: 243).

In the 16th and the 17th centuries, bull baiting and bear baiting in England were considered popular and exciting activities, even more so than the drama of that period (Brownstein 1969: 237). These activities not only displayed the English mastiff's supreme qualities over bulls and bears; it also served an instrumental objective (Evans et al. 1998: 827). The bull was selected for baiting so that before slaughter the baiting exercise tenderised the bull's meat (Evans & Forsyth 1997: 61, Kalof and Taylor 2007: 322). The bear was chosen because of its similarity to humans in form and shape, and the dog's victory over the bear depicted its ascendancy over a more powerful creature (Kalof and Taylor 2007: 322). In addition, there were some instances of ratting where specially bred and trained dogs were left to kill rats, aimed at reducing the population of the rodents in the big cities before the advent of public health and sanitation (Evans & Forsyth 1997: 61). However, the functional reasoning of all these forms of dog baiting was secondary to its entertainment value. In all these baiting activities (whether bull, bear, or rats), the audience was captivated by the mastiff's ferocity, and appreciated its virile qualities (Brownstein 1969: 243).

Dog baiting in that period was not only popular among the lower or middle classes in England; it was also enjoyed by the royalty, appreciated by the monarchs, the aristocracy, the nobility,

and the gentry (Kalof and Taylor 2007: 322, Evans & Forsyth 1997: 61).²⁸ Evidence suggests that King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I enjoyed baiting activities, and presented dogs (mostly English mastiffs) as royal gifts to other heads of state (Brownstein 1969: 243, Evans & Forsyth 1997: 61). Such gifts suggest a politically astute exchange, as the courageous dog embodied the traits of its giver—the courageous and powerful Queen or King, and helped in establishing and reinforcing their royal reputation and standing.

In the 18th century, most of the baiting activities (including bull baiting and bear baiting) were on the decline. Dogfighting (two dogs fighting against each other) replaced these as the popular form of entertainment in England, most likely because of its more fierce and competitive nature (Kalof and Taylor 2007: 323, Evans and Forsyth 1997: 62). In addition to participating in dogfights, some amongst the elites began commercially breeding the fighting dogs and were the chief lobbyists against the increasingly vocal demands by animal welfare groups to ban the practice (Evans and Forsyth 1997: 62). For instance, when in 1800, the House of Commons presented a bill in the British Parliament for abolishing bull baiting, it was defeated on the grounds that this type of amusement inspired courage and produced an elevation of mind (Ritvo 1994: 106).²⁹

So far, I have described the crucial social importance of dogfighting (and other baiting activities) in pre-Victorian England. In India, both Mughal king Akbar and his descendent Jahangir received dogs from European traders as gifts (Fazl 1873: 290). Akbar greatly admired his canines and used them for racing and hunting. Although some dogs were encouraged to attack other animals during the hunt,³⁰ there are no records of dogfighting or bear baiting in the early Mughal era.³¹ The British most likely introduced both dogfighting and bear baiting during the Company Raj. The traces of this legacy persist, as I found during my fieldwork that the outcrosses of the English bull terrier are still the most popular breeds in contemporary dogfighting.

²⁸ In Liza Picard's *Dr. Johnson's London: Everyday Life in London 1740–1770*, we also find some discussion of animal baiting, particularly cockfighting, bull baiting, bear baiting, and badger baiting (2003: 125:126).

²⁹ According to the *Encyclopaedia of Traditional British Rural Sports*, dogfighting remained visible in some parts of England until the end of the 19th century (Lile 2005: 102).

³⁰ In the Mughal amphitheatres, there were regular displays of animal fighting. These activities were staged to demonstrate the mastery, control, and aggression of the king to the audience (Pearson 1984: 340). After the mid-19th century, when royal courts ceased to exist, these activities disappeared. Although we can find elephant fighting, camel fighting, ram fighting, cheetah fighting and others in Mughal India, I have not come across any reference to dogfighting or bear baiting.

³¹ Personal correspondence with Ursula Sims-Williams, Lead Curator of Persian collections at the British Library, UK (20 July 2016).

The perpetuation of animal baiting in India has been seen by some as a British strategy to initiate relations with local *zameñdār* (landlords), who in exchange took these activities not only to develop relations with the British rulers but also to “establish their important status within the rural community” (Joseph 1997: 4, see also Bio-resource Research Centre 2010). Other than developing social relations, dogfighting was an activity and platform that enabled a public performance of British imperial domination and masculinity. The fighting mastiff, like an English soldier, was considered brave, strong, disciplined, and ready to fight at all times.³²

Nevertheless, at the same time dogfighting took hold in India, British sensibilities at home were shifting. Dogfighting and other baiting activities gradually lost their elite patronage in England and were consequently banned under the *Humane Act* of 1835 (Coleman 2009: 88, Kalof and Taylor 2007: 323).³³ There are several reasons generally attributed to the banning of animal fighting activities in England. Firstly, increasing opposition from the Church of England. As most forms of the animal baiting were practised on Sunday, they were seen as compromising church attendance (Evans and Forsyth 1997: 62). Secondly, the rising influence of the Victorian sensibilities—morality, sympathy, suffering, and self-righteousness—were deployed to argue against the continuity of these “barbaric activities.” Lastly, the “English gentleman” was also changing with time and the more competitive sporting activities involving the wilderness and adventure (hunting), stamina and athleticism (cricket, hockey, tennis), and danger and courage (chasing man-eating tigers) started to take hold.

The *Animal Protection Act* was introduced in India in 1890, which enabled the British Government of India to declare dogfighting, cockfighting and other types of baiting illegal. As we see below, various factors contributed towards the banning of different forms of “animal cruelty” in the colony. This ban meant that interaction between the colonial officials and Indian elites was substantially reduced. Yet the popularity of these pursuits continued, only this time taken up by commoners, whose extremely limited contact with the British meant that they could practise these “banned” activities with few repercussions.

³² Bull baiting did not take hold in India because bulls held religious and utilitarian (farming) significance for both Hindus and Muslims. Dogfighting and bear baiting, however, still survive in Pakistan.

³³ The *Ill-treatment of Cattle Act* was the first law of this kind that prevented cruel and improper treatment to animals (cattle), and was passed by both houses of the English parliament in June 1822 (Radford 2001: 39). Later in 1835, the *Animal Protection Act* (focusing on all animals rather than cattle) passed in England.

Section 2: Animal Activities in the late Colonial India

Pigeon flying, cockfighting and dogfighting remained at their peak in India until the mid-19th century. However, some notable developments such as the rise of the animal welfare movement, the introduction of Victorian ideals, the emergence of Anglo-Protestant masculinity, and the development of the *Animal Protection Act* in India gradually influenced the status of these activities. As such, these once elite activities lost their status or patronage and shifted into the realm of a popular form of *shauq*, practised by the common people.

Veblen's trickle-down model pertaining to leisure activities suggested that lower classes seek to emulate the elites (1912: 84). Arguably, as some have suggested, this trickle-down model was rather uni-directional (Trigg 2001:104). Yet for the purpose of my argument, it helps us to chart the manner in which pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting were conceived and practised, and the way they shifted over time. The elites, considering that these animal activities were no longer enhancing status, withdrew their support. The common people, however, enthusiastically embraced and refitted these pursuits to their own social and economic circumstances (see Chapters 2, 3, 4). Below, I focus on how these three popular elite activities lost their status from the mid-19th century and highlight the four major factors that were crucial in this decline.

Animal Welfare

The key role of the animal welfare movement is important to note, as it greatly contributed towards the decline of animal fighting in Europe, and later in India. From the 18th century, many religious and moral philosophical schools initiated debates around the use and abuse of non-human animals. These debates were the precursor to the animal welfare movement. At that time, the streets of London were crowded with animals; some were exhausted livestock used for labour or destined for slaughter, others were being baited for human amusement (Ritvo 1994:106). The core of these debates was the demand for humane treatment and the prevention of cruelty to all animals. Moral philosophers of the 18th century not only discouraged beating or baiting animals, but also insisted on the complete care and protection of non-humans. Among them, the English utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) was a central advocate for raising concerns about animal suffering. Bentham famously argued: “The question is not, Can [animals] *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?” (See Benthall 2007: 2, original emphases). While Bentham and others criticised the inhumane treatment of animals, it was not until 1824 that “The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals” was established

in England. Almost 16 years later in 1840, the society received royal patronage and changed its name to “The *Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*” under the aegis of Queen Victoria (Ritvo 1994: 108, see also Maehle 1994). Such patronage lent considerable political clout to advocate for animal welfare.

Supported by the ideals of the Enlightenment, the animal welfare movement was thus instrumental in shaping human attitudes towards animals. Although the movement discouraged animal baiting and some forms of animal cruelty, it did not attend to all types of animal cruelty in the same manner as the animal rights movement did.

The animal rights movement gathered pace in the latter part of the 20th century and was heavily influenced by Kantian ethics. The animal rights groups reasoned that animals (like humans) must be treated as ends in themselves, and not as means (Sunstein 2004: 5, Francione 2004: 16). Unlike the animal welfare movement that preceded it, animal rights aimed to stop all types of human abuse of non-human animals, whether in the domains of agriculture (farming and food), clothing (wool and silk), entertainment (circus, zoo, or baiting), experiments (in laboratories), or hunting (including fishing).

In this chapter, my concern is to highlight the socio-historical importance of the animal welfare movement and the way it shaped legal and popular perceptions of human and non-human relationships in the subcontinent. The point to note, however, is that animal welfare groups of the 18th and the early 19th century helped in developing laws and halting animal baiting activities in England. These laws were subsequently introduced to the colonies. In India, the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* appeared in 1890, and officially outlawed different forms of animal cruelty, including animal baiting for amusement. Although this law clearly reflected the efforts of animal welfare groups, it was also supported by the ideals of Victorian moralities, which were increasingly shaping the British rule in India from the late 19th century.

The Victorian Ethos

Queen Victoria not only oversaw the transition of the Company Raj to the Empire Raj in India, her reign was characterised by the ideological and moral shift in English society. The Queen’s regime, which came to be known as the Victorian era, was symbolised by the introduction of ethical considerations that sought the extensions of sympathy to all beings, improvement of one’s self, productiveness, the controlling of “natural” impulse, morality, duty, and the expression of gentlemanly character. It is no surprise that under such a new value system, the

impulsive activities of baiting animals lost favour, replaced by more composed activities afforded to the ruling elites, including cricket, or going to theatres, museums, and exhibitions (cf. Bailey 2007, Vorspan 2000).

Among these activities, cricket was especially important. Cricket in England was an expression of the Victorian elite values; it was a quintessential male activity and practised to cultivate masculine behaviour through sportsmanship, fair play, unquestioned loyalty, control, and subordination of one's personal sentiment (Appadurai 1996: 91–92). As Keith Sandiford in his article *Cricket and the Victorian Society* (1983) noted:

Cricket was much more than just another game to the Victorians. They glorified it, indeed, as a perfect system of ethics and morals which embodied all that was most noble in the Anglo-Saxon character. They prized it as a national symbol, perhaps because—so far as they could tell—it was an exclusively English creation unsullied by oriental or European influences. In an extremely xenophobic age, the Victorians came to regard cricket as further proof of their cultural supremacy (1983: 303).

The British took cricket as a vehicle to impart the Victorian ideals of “fitness,” “stamina,” “manliness,” and “vigour” into what they saw as the “effeminate,” “lazy,” “enervated,” and “effete” Indians (Appadurai 1996: 93). The indigenisation of cricket, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai observed, enabled the colonial authorities to discipline the natives, and linked Indian princes with the English aristocracy in novel ways (1996: 94, see also Majumdar 2003: 171). Cricket, in other words, replaced traditional pursuits (including pigeon flying, kite flying, cockfighting, wrestling, and dogfighting), and was enthusiastically promoted and patronised by the princely rulers (Majumdar 2006: 887–909).

Anglo-Protestant Masculinity

As the sport of cricket embodied the Victorian ethos, it also promoted notions of muscular Christianity. Clergymen were convinced that a healthy mind and body were essential for cultivating spiritual qualities, and thus promoted the ideals of discipline and exercise among Victorian youth. Sandiford (1983: 305) noted of that among the Victorians “[G]odliness and manliness, spiritual perfection and physical power, all became inextricably interwoven. It was not likely, in their view, that a feeble body could support a powerful brain.” As many clergymen also served as headmasters of English public schools, the educational institutions implemented the ideals of athletic masculinity to produce civic leaders (Sandiford 1983: 306). The game of cricket, along with other British sports, thus provided a practical arena for the implementation

of the Victorian ethos (control of impulses) and expression of Anglo-Protestant masculinity (discipline the body).

As discussed earlier, in the latter half of the 19th century, physical strength, muscular power, and aggression were hardly the only traits that were valued as the dominant form of masculinity in India. After the establishment of the British Raj, a new colonial masculinity was formed in complex interrelations between residual and emergent traits. The Marxist literary theorist, Raymond Williams, describes such relations in his discussion of “Dominant, Residual, and Emergent,” where he maintains that the “residual” or elements of any culture’s past interact with the “emergent” and new meanings, values, practices, and relationships are formed within a culture (1977: 122–123). The dominant, according to him, constantly influences the residual and the emergent. Applying this line of reasoning, we might say that in 19th century India, the residual traits of masculinity were courage, stamina, power, aggression and so on; and the emergent traits included the new gentleman’s masculine traits such as discipline, loyalty, perseverance, self-control, and governance. The amalgamation of residual and emergent traits formed a new type of colonial masculinity that was shaped by Christian ideals and thus assumed a superior position in the gender order of late 19th century India.

The ascendancy of this new form of masculinity (along with the influence of the Victorian ethos) led the Indian elites to withdraw from practising pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting. Pigeon flying was now considered a waste (of time and resources), and cockfighting and dogfighting were viewed as “barbaric” practices under the dominant Anglo-Protestant value system. At the end of the 19th century, such considerations paved the way for the British Government of India to outlaw different forms of animal cruelty (including cockfighting and dogfighting) by adopting the 1835 version of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* with some changes.

Judicial Authority: The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act

In 1890, the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* officially banned activities such as cockfighting and dogfighting in India. The Act’s section 6(c) read:

If any person— (a) incites any animal to fight, or (b) baits any animal, or (c) aids or abets any such incitement or baiting, he shall be punished with fine which may extend to *fifty rupees*. Exception: It shall not be an offence under this section to incite animals to fight if such fighting is not likely to cause injury or suffering to animals and all reasonable pre-cautions are taken to prevent injury or suffering from being so caused (emphasis added).

Though the section on animal baiting only stated 50 rupees fine, section 3(a) mentioned one month's imprisonment for the one who:

Overdrives, beats, or otherwise treats any animal so as to subject it to unnecessary pain or suffering.

However, it was the ruling class that determined what constituted pain or suffering. That is, while popular activities such as cockfighting and dogfighting were banned; game shooting, pig sticking, and tiger killing continued unchecked. These were not described as “barbaric” pursuits but far more refined gentlemen's recreation. The case of tiger killing is important to point out. For the Mughals, anthropologist Anand Pandian observed, killing tigers helped in displaying their fearful force and win over the obedience of unruly local chiefs (2001: 90). For the British, however, tiger killing served an additional function: it rendered them as the brave rescuer of the native Indian subjects, masters of the wild, worthy rulers, and “caring and responsible sovereigns” (Pandian 2001: 80). Even in the 20th century, “refined” pursuits like tiger killing and other hunting activities were continuously practised by the British officials and military officers through the provision of special hunting licences (Pandian 2001: 83; Hussain 2010: 120). Thus, the law that banned cockfighting and dogfighting did little for the protection of some other species.

Section 3: Animals in Present-Day Pakistan

After Partition, both the newly established countries, India and Pakistan, adopted the 1890 version of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*. Although the Indian Government made amendments to the Act in 1960 (Srinivasan 2013: 108), in Pakistan this more than a century-old law remains intact with very minor changes. The proposed penalty for inciting animals to fight is still a 50 rupee fine (about \$0.5), and a month of imprisonment for those who expose animals to unnecessary suffering.³⁴

In Pakistan, there is little or no enforcement of this Act by police. There are two government departments concerned with animals in the Punjab province: “The Livestock and Dairy Development” department (known as the Livestock Department), and the “Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries” department (known as the Wildlife Department). The animals that are discussed

³⁴ During interviews, some lawyers told me that the Act that was introduced in 1890 could not be enforced anymore because of the very low fine. One lawyer reasoned, “The penalty for inciting animals to fight was a deterrent in 1890, when 50 rupees were equivalent to present-day 10,000 rupees. As now the amount of the fine is nominal, it has resulted in minimal police action as regard to dogfighting.”

in this dissertation (pigeons, chickens, dogs) come under the Livestock Department. However, due to insufficient funds and lack of political will, the Livestock Department is more preoccupied with veterinary affairs and hardly pursues those engaged in cockfighting or dogfighting. It also has minimal human resources available and possesses no power of enforcement. Conversely, the Wildlife Department may have the power to stop animal abuse, but its jurisdiction is limited to that of wild species. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the degree of state intervention in such practices (especially cockfighting and dogfighting) locates these activities along the murky boundaries between the illicit and illegal.

The case of dogfighting, an activity that takes place in a public setting, is important to note. During the course of my fieldwork, I attended almost 80 dogfights and the police raided none. I even noticed on several occasions police officers (in uniform) merged with the large crowd, enthusiastically watching dogs fight. However, unlike dogfighting that was not attracting wagering (see Chapter 4), cockfighting was subject to occasional police raids, with the purpose of stopping betting but not cockfighting per se.

In addition to the moral concern, there is a religious prohibition to the activity of gambling. According to the Qur'ān (2:219 & 5:91) and many sayings from the Prophet, gambling is a grave offense.³⁵ Hence, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has outlawed all forms of gambling, including any type of activity in public or private settings. Such violations incur the minimum penalty of one-year imprisonment and/or a 5000 rupee fine (about \$50).

The lower-middle classes now dominate pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting. Many of these men embrace their activities, while also trying to achieve symbolic gains through a display of dedication, skills, courage, and bravery. Regardless of police presence or legal measures, the *shauqeen* animal keepers of South Punjab continue to engage in such activities with gusto and fulfil their *shauq*.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a brief history of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting, and showed their adaptation and development from elite-based activities to those which have been enthusiastically adopted by the common people of the subcontinent. In doing so I have

³⁵ During my discussion with two Muslim clergies, they explained that the Islamic prohibition on gambling addresses certain moral issues such as taking away someone's money without earning it, ill feelings of jealousy and hatred among gamblers, and the addictive nature of gambling in itself.

suggested that these animal activities were not merely seen as court recreations or indolent leisure, but served important symbols of power, instrumental for securing status, forging diplomatic networks, and articulating different forms of masculinity.

Pigeon flying was adopted and refined by early Mughals like Akbar, who took to it not only for impressing foreign dignitaries, but also for “higher motives,” such as showing artful care and for taming the “disobedient” native subjects. Cockfighting was embraced by both the Indian elites and the British as a political activity, where each sought to display supremacy over the other. Dogfighting was a British practice, introduced to India as part of a wider program to develop relationships with the Indian elites, and to demonstrate the British authority through such spectacles, where imperial courage, bravery, and strength were on display. From the 19th century, as the British began to assert the Victorian ethos, and with the emergence of Anglo-Protestant masculinity alongside the formation of *the Animal Protection Act* in India, there was a marked decline in pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting. However, these activities remained widespread amongst the common people, for whom they were conceived as a form of passion or *shauq*.

In South Punjab now, all these animal activities are considered as *shauq* by the rural men who enthusiastically fly and fight their animals and gain personal pleasure, with some achieving *izzat* and *mardāneat*. They cherish their practices and regard them as a way of cultivating the self, an improvement enabled by what some call a forgetting of the self—an experience only achieved through pleasures that allow a temporary escape from the tribulations of everyday life. This is particularly true among pigeon flyers, many of whom keep, train, and fly pigeons on their rooftops to fulfil their personal passion. The following chapter describes the practice of pigeon flying in South Punjab, with an emphasis on the human-pigeon interaction, and symbolic rewards that the men achieve by flying their birds in various competitions.

CHAPTER 2: Living with Pigeons: Rooftop Intimacies

During my fieldwork, in late May 2015, news about a “spy pigeon” captured the attention of many South Punjabi pigeon enthusiasts. Numerous national and international newspapers reported that the pigeon was arrested by the Indian police for landing in the “enemy” Territory near the Pakistani border (*BBC Newsbeat* 29 May 2015; see also Frembgen and Rollier 2014: 66). On suspicion of carrying a secret message from Pakistani intelligence agencies, the Indian police X-rayed the pigeon and kept it in close observation.³⁶ Some of my respondents ridiculed the news, while others took it seriously and debated the crucial roles pigeons played in battles throughout history, particularly in WWI.³⁷ However, a third group had a different take: they suggested that pigeons do not care for India or Pakistan, Muslim or Hindu, Hindi or Urdu; they are birds of peace who dwell in both the “Masjid” (mosque) and “Mandir” (temple), fed and loved by all. Among them was Rafik, who was adamant that pigeons do not discriminate between religions, nations, or people, yet they are misused for perpetuating tensions between the two countries. In 1947, Rafik’s parents, like many other Muslims, migrated from India and settled in the city of Kahrora. “At the time of Partition, when people were bringing their most cherished belongings, my father carried two pigeons,” Rafik proudly added that pigeon keeping was in his blood for many generations.

Keeping pigeons has long been associated with peace, especially in Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions. This tradition can be traced from the famous tale of Noah’s dove, whose flight signified a new era of hope, peace, and prosperity. In South Punjab too the association between pigeons and peace is spoken of, although rarely in such epic terms. The *shauq* of pigeon keeping (unlike cockfighting or dogfighting) is considered a more benign pursuit, where enthusiasts aim to fulfil their passion by peacefully flying their colourful birds. The very act of keeping pigeons is said to articulate and embody peace and serenity. Nevertheless, for Rafik and some other flyers, especially those who migrated at the time of Partition in 1947, the bird was not an instrument of war between India and Pakistan, but one that could potentially act as a symbol of peace and harmony.

³⁶ A similar case of another “spy pigeon” carrying a warning note for Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, also became a highlight in October 2016. After a preliminary X-ray, the pigeon was caged and a police official told the reporters, “The wings of the pigeon have been clipped to ensure the suspected spy does not fly back to Pakistan” (Siddiqui 2016).

³⁷ More than 100,000 pigeons were used in WWI, and some even won medals, such as Cher Ami (French for “dear friend”) who won the Croix de Guerre with Palm for saving the lives of 194 soldiers by delivering the message for reinforcement to base despite great difficulties (Trueman 2015).

In November 2014, my cockfighting friend, Allah Wasaya or Waso, as he was nicknamed, first introduced me to Rafik. Waso was off put by pigeon flyers who, according to him, were eccentric and so much obsessed with their flocks that they could stay on their rooftops in sweltering summer heat, without thinking about the consequences. However, despite Waso's disdain of pigeon flyers, both Rafik and Waso were friends. The root of this friendship was Rafik's *shami* kebab stall, which Rafik ran in front of his house from evening until midnight, and Waso was an admirer of Rafik's spicy round kebabs, cooked in clarified butter.

Rafik lived his whole life in a tiny Hindu-built house in Chandni Chowk, in the south corner of the city. The area was largely inhabited by Hindus before the Partition of India in 1947. After Partition, Hindus of Chandni Chowk migrated to India and vice versa, Muslims from the Indian Punjab migrated there and occupied the Hindus' houses. Now the area is a famous hub of pigeon flyers, where one can frequently see flocks of colourful pigeons wheeling and swooping with the soft sound of beating wings. Pigeon flyers are not usually visible from the road, but they are audible to the trained ear, as they rend the air by whistling and shouting. The flyers are generally found on their rooftops, where they interact closely with birds and other fanciers.

When I first visited Rafik's rooftop accompanied by Waso, we climbed almost 20 steps, followed by a wooden rung ladder that led us to the terrace through a hatch. Walls all around enclosed the rooftop and three pigeon coops, which were made of wood and wire mesh. Rafik was busy flying his pigeons; waving a blue flag tied to a bamboo stick in one hand, and whistling with the other. He was a thin, small-boned man, not more than 45 years old. His eyes were completely focused on his birds that were flying in groups, their shiny wings stretched out. The pigeons looked submissive under his guidance, and seemed to understand the varied pitches of his whistles. One whistle would send the flock in a straight line; the second made them change direction; and the third whistle signalled them to return and whirl above the rooftop. After sometime, Rafik picked up a rusty tin can of grains and tossed handfuls of seeds onto the coops and started summoning his pigeons, *āoo, āoo* (come, come). All of a sudden, pigeons alighted on the roof with a strong flutter of wings. Tending to his pigeons, Rafik scattered a few more grains and poured water in an earthen pot for the birds to drink. Some birds perched on his arm and pecked grains from his hand, others settled on the top of the enclosing walls, chittering, and cooing with pleasure. As the pigeons finished eating and drinking, Rafik guided his birds into their respective coops and closed the doors.

During our conversation, Rafik seemed amused by my interest in pigeons, and somewhat surprised by my knowledge of pigeon vocabulary (acquired during my Masters fieldwork). Squatting beside me, he emphasised that his pigeons were his most valued property (*malkeat*). They were, he stated, “close to my heart,” and “I raise them like children.” He described pigeon flying passionately; “this is my only recreational activity (*tafreeh*) and a type of exercise that keeps me fit.” Rafik was a poor man who hardly earned \$6–7 a day through his kebab stall, yet he fed and cherished his pigeons—a passion that he inherited from his father and grandfather. Now his two sons assisted him, rendering this pursuit what he termed as a “family’s enthusiasm” (*khāndānī shauq*). The pigeons were, Rafik explained, more than just birds for him, they were beings with distinct personalities, needs, emotions, and attitude. He described his birds as having likes and dislikes, and stated that due to his long-standing *shauq*, he can discern and even foresee his pigeons’ needs.

Pigeon flying was still a class-based pursuit in modern Pakistan. But unlike the past, when this practice was the preserve of the elites, in contemporary South Punjab, many pigeon flyers I met, were mostly poor middle-aged men. The majority were daily labourers, farm workers, milkmen, shopkeepers, coachmen, and rickshaw drivers. Many spoke of their association with the birds from their birth, and viewed this pursuit as one that enhances their health and happiness. For all these men, pigeon flying seemed to afford a respite from the mundane.

How are these “pleasures of life” conceived and how are they defined in relation to this all-consuming practice of pigeon flying? What does it reveal about the status of people who are engaged in it and their relationship with pigeons? And what does this human-pigeon relationship tell us about South Punjabi culture, social relationships, and social values? In this chapter, I attempt to explain the enthusiasm for keeping and flying pigeons with an emphasis on human-animal relations. I argue that this animal practice should not only be seen as a pastime or a hobby, but also as a lens through which one can understand different value systems in South Punjab, such as care, respect, time-management, protection, socialisation, and hard work. Anthropologist Joseph Alter (1992), while studying wrestling in Banaras, made a similar point, arguing that wrestling was far more than a mere entertainment. “Because sport is fun does not in any way mean that it is insignificant. As a cultural system, sport is meaningful to the same extent as systems of production and exchange,” (1992: 19) he observed. A close examination of pigeon flying in South Punjab—rarely described as a sport (*khel* or *kheḍ*)—showcases the values and morals attached to it; explicates the concept of honour and prestige

linked to the wider formulation of masculinity; and explains how it influences everyday social relations among the enthusiasts.³⁸

In the last two decades, scholars have increasingly sought to explore the different modalities of human-pigeon relationship. For instance, historian Jennifer Price (1999) has looked at the extinction of carrier pigeons from American society and its impact on everyday socio-cultural life. Similarly, anthropologist Gillian Feeley-Harnik (2007) has examined the human-pigeon relationship in 19th century England, particularly emphasising Darwin's experimentation on and fondness for pigeons. Travel writer Marius Kociejowski (2010) explored the daily life-struggle in Damascus through the symbolism of pigeons' wars. All these studies highlight the historical and metaphorical significance of pigeons in human cultures. In contrast, American sociologist Colin Jerolmack's work *The Global Pigeon* (2013) has looked at the human-pigeon relationship from a much wider and broader angle. He argues that interaction with pigeons animates people's social lives and their experience of the city. Jerolmack, who carried out his research in different urban spaces, drew on comparative analysis to suggest a more general point about "cross-species encounters," which, he claimed, were a "constitutive feature of social life" (2013: 5). According to him, pigeons played a prominent role in shaping people's everyday experiences, across spaces as diverse as the city squares of London or Venice, the rooftops of New York, the coops of Turkish pigeon fanciers in Berlin, or in formal racing competitions in Sun City. For instance, in Brooklyn and Bronx, Jerolmack suggests that the passion for keeping and flying pigeons helps people to forge close ties and develop communities of interest despite racial and ethical differences. Jerolmack's work has been particularly significant in framing this chapter and guided me in understanding the impacts of human-pigeon relationships on the flyers' conception of the self and others.

The chapter is divided into two sections: the first looks at the human-pigeon relationship and highlights the sentiments and values that underpin it. In explaining this relationship, the chapter conceives of pigeons as active actors that influence the flyers' lifestyles. By making analogies between human and pigeon worlds, it looks at how these birds are conceived, raised, and trained like children (cf. Feeley-Harnik 2007: 161, 2004: 321). The metaphor of children was commonly deployed by pigeon keepers themselves to describe their relationship to their birds. This was reaffirmed by my observations during the feeding and training sessions. The birds,

³⁸ In Lahore, I learned that pigeon flying is sometimes described as sport (personal correspondence with Jürgen Wasim Frembgen). However, in this area of my research, people hardly use the word "*kheḷ*" for these activities. For more on the use of the word "sport" for traditional activities, see Besnier and Brownell (2012: 446-447).

after an intensive training regimen, are involved in different competitions as a means of winning both money and symbolic capital. The second section of this chapter discusses how the practice of pigeon flying is an integral part of the everyday life of the flyers in South Punjab and how it shapes the men's sociality. The chapter concludes by discussing relationships that are shaped and mediated through this activity, such as among pigeon flyers and their peers and mentors—between *ustād* and *shāgird* (master and disciple).

Section 1: Forging the Human-Pigeon Bond: Care, Protection, and Reciprocity

As mentioned earlier, the men employ the recurring term *shauq* to demonstrate their longing, enthusiasm, and dedication to their activity. More specifically with relation to pigeon flying, the word *shauq* holds the meaning of obligation, and responsibility to care for your flock, as well as protecting them from predator animals such as cats and hawks. Discussing their *shauq*, flyers commonly spoke of wearing *shauq deān wangān* or the bangles of *shauq*.

The symbolism of bangles is interesting here. Females—both girls and married women—consider bangles as an object of personal decoration, and multi-coloured bangles are commonly worn across South Punjab (and across Pakistan). When pigeon flyers say that they are wearing the bangles of *shauq*, they suggest a similar kind of adornment, one that marks their lives, and endows it with aesthetic pleasures (Narayan and Kavesh n.d.).

Another “binding” expression for this type of *shauq* is the term *kabūtar bāzī*, commonly used to describe pigeon flying in South Punjab. The word *kabūtar* means “a pigeon,” while the suffix *bāzī* is generally taken to mean “excessive habit”: one that entraps people and blinds them to other aspects of social life. In his study of “Laundebaazi” (sexual fondness for boys), Akhil Katyal (2013: 475) defined the term *bāzī* as “a common expressive idiom of heightening the usual, of playing a game, of cherishing a sociable overindulgence with certain objects (alcohol, *darubaazi*), practices (dancing, *naachbazi*) or people (prostitutes, *randibazi*).” In the context of pigeon flying, the suffix *bāzī* means “flying with obsession and amusement.” Sometimes, it is taken as a term to describe betting element in pigeon flying, (*kabūtar par bāzī lgāna* or to bet on pigeons). However, in the everyday idiom of rural Punjab, the term was generally used to refer to those men who nurture a personal enthusiasm, with the potential to reach the level of obsession (see more in Chapter 5). Among pigeon keepers, the term *kabūtar bāzī* was rarely used in a pejorative sense, but rather more to signify the close attachment between pigeon flyers and their birds, along with a wide range of cultural meanings associated with the activity.

Rooftop Raptness

During my fieldwork, most of my daily routine consisted of visiting the animal keepers in the morning and chatting with the male members of the community in the afternoon. From the outset, local people told me that it was hard to meet pigeon flyers in the morning or afternoon, as these were their personal times (*zātī waqt*), which was exclusively devoted to their birds. I began to notice that during these times many flyers climbed on their rooftops, where they completely immersed themselves in the activity, with little regard for anything else. I had either to assist them in flying pigeons, or wait until they finished and came down from the rooftop. In the best tradition of participant observation, I decided in favour of the first option and took on the role of an apprentice (*shāgird*) of a pigeon flyer named Qamo.

Qamar-ud-Din was a middle-aged man of short height. He always wore a silver amulet tied in black thread around his neck to protect him from the evil eye of jealous pigeon flyers. He had lived all his life in the village of Shahpur, 12 kilometres south of Kahrur Pacca, where people knew him as Qamo. I first met him during my Masters' fieldwork in 2008, when in addition to pigeons he had a horse-cart to carry people from the village to the city. When we met again in 2014, he told me about the tragic death of his horse. He now owned a donkey and used the donkey-cart for transportation of goods and hardly made \$5 a day. Although the horse was replaced by the donkey, his interest in keeping pigeons remained the same over the years. Whereas the horse/donkey cart was a means of livelihood, pigeons were kept for *shauq*. Of his meagre earning, around one-third was spent on his pigeons, especially feeding them expensive herbs and seeds. Qamo's decision to invest a major portion of his earning on his pigeons was crucial because, as he indicated, the birds were the primary source of his personal pleasure. What is equally interesting is the distinction that Qamo made between his work and his *shauq*, both of which involved animals, although the bond with the pigeons was more valued. Pigeon flying was an end that required constant attention and care; the horse and donkey were merely the means for achieving this end.

In my casual pigeon flying lessons, Qamo detailed the reciprocal relationship between a flyer and his pigeons. He emphasised that pigeons fly and amuse their flyer, while in exchange they receive free grains and protection from predators. Protecting pigeons from predators such as cats, mongooses, snakes, and goshawks was critical and Qamo put a lot of effort into securing his rooftop so his birds felt protected and safe.



Figure 2. 1: Qamo with his pigeons, October 2008.



Figure 2. 2: Qamo with his pigeons, July 2017.

In addition to Qamo, many other pigeon flyers noted that their relationship with pigeons is built on reciprocity (*do-tarfah rishtah*). According to these men, pigeons enjoy living in the company of humans as it gives the birds a sense of security. This particular trait of pigeons was unique, as Qamo asked me, “Have you ever seen a person flying flocks of crows or parrots?”³⁹ The general idea was that unlike many other birds, the pigeon is amenable to domestication. For the men the key was reciprocity, as human-pigeon intimacy was never a one-sided (*yak-tarfah*) or a forceful relationship; rather it was built on a sense of trust that both sides were invested in.

Pigeon flyers cultivated a close relationship with their birds. Many said that they cared for pigeons as a mother would care for her children. For instance, they cleaned the pigeon coops, prepared diet for their birds, decorated pigeons with anklets and colourful beads and bells, covered pigeon coops with thick cloaks in chilly nights, and regularly provided fresh water to birds in the blazing heat of June and July. Such ongoing care, many pigeon flyers explained, meant the men were able to understand the bodily and emotional needs of the birds. Over time, flyers developed a wide range of skills and familiarity with each pigeon in their flock. Those I spoke with were ready to detail biographical information at will: the age of the pigeon, the history of its diseases, who is its mating partner, and in which season its flying performance would decline. Such detailed knowledge of the flock assists the men to identify, for instance, which pigeon is robust, or which one is frail and requires more attention.

In South Punjab, men usually do not display what are commonly seen as non-masculine traits such as care and tenderness, expressing affection, sadness, or praising beauty and marvelling at aesthetics. Men are generally expected to maintain bodily and emotional composure. From childhood, transgressions are monitored and an embodied habitus is carefully cultivated. However, in the context of pigeon flying, it appears men can disregard such socialisation to a large extent. On rooftops, men commonly express warmth towards their pigeons, appreciate their colours, movements, and patterns. Some even shed tears over the loss of their prized birds. Perhaps it is the architecture of the roof—the seclusion from the social world that offers a liminal space for such non-normative expression of care—or the total immersion in the flock that enables such transgressions. It seems that the term *shauq* is especially suggestive in this

³⁹ The common belief is that pigeons are faithful whereas parrots are unfaithful. This belief is also expressed through an Urdu idiom “*totā-casham honā*,” (keeping a parrot-eye), which is specifically used for people who do not provide help at the time of need (by turning their eyes away like a parrot). See also Sharar 1975: 266; Frembgen and Rollier 2014: 50.

context, for one of its characteristics is a type of uncontrollable obsession, effectively rendering non-masculine behaviour acceptable.

Shauq of keeping and flying pigeons appeared to allow many pigeon flyers I spoke with to express such feelings of joy, peace, and tranquillity in the company of their pigeons. Speaking about his passion towards his pigeons, Ustad Nadir Abbass once remarked, "...the sound of pigeons' cooing exhilarates me from inside." A retired schoolteacher, Nadir Abbass was in his late 50s and famous as a respected *ustād* among pigeon flyers. According to him, his *shauq* was not only a source of joy and fulfilment for him, "I care for my pigeons like a woman cares for her children." He suggested that it is the company of pigeons that has developed a calm attitude in his life, "I forget tensions when I am with my pigeons." The *shauq* of keeping pigeons, according to Ustad Nadir Abbass, helps a person to maintain a generous personality.

Nevertheless, such expression of sensitivity, care, and poetic love—the realm of seemingly non-masculine attributes—were largely confined to this *shauq*. As Connell reminds us that masculinity is not a fixed personality trait of a man, but there are multiple masculinities that are foregrounded according to contexts (1995: 76–77). She further observed that men could adopt and strategically distance themselves from a single type of masculinity when it was desirable (2005: 841). Similarly, South Punjabi pigeon flyers possessed a range of masculinities; whereas in the context of pigeon-flying, they felt at ease to express what might be considered in other contexts as feminine traits. Outside that milieu, the men adhered to the hegemonic model of masculinity that placed emphasis on the strong, competitive, tough, and inflexible personality. It is vital to note that these are essentialised gender distinctions, and are subscribed to in different degrees as culturally meaningful approximations. Still, the non-masculine attitude the men displayed in the company of pigeons was unique and rarely seen in other public settings. Taking a pigeon in his hand, feeling the softness of its body, gently stretching its wings, and cheerfully releasing it in the air, Ustad Nadir Abbass often said, "In the love of pigeons, I forget everything else."

Breeding

During the early months of my fieldwork, I came to know Khuda Bux, a chiselled-face pigeon flyer in his early 50s. Khudla, as he was locally known, was an amateur singer and a pigeon enthusiast. He worked at the farm of the village landlord and received a monthly salary of 7,000 rupees (about \$70) along with two sacks of wheat during the harvesting season as his bonus.

Like Qamo, Khudla spent one-third of his income on his flock. He found pleasure in mating pigeons. “Breeding pigeons is a great fun, you get to know the birds closely,” he told me.

Through the breeding of pigeons, the human-pigeon relationship manifests itself to a greater degree. Khudla explained that a pigeon is a monogamous bird, so one needs to select the mating pair carefully. Like many other flyers, he takes into consideration a few salient characteristics of a mating pair. First, a female pigeon should be carefully chosen because the squab (a baby pigeon) will possess many of its mother’s characteristics. Second, the generational relationship between male and female pigeons is taken into consideration before pairing. The chart below displays some choices preferred by the pigeon flyers in the “kinship” relations of mating pigeons to ensure that the squab becomes a fine adult. To achieve this, a pigeon flyer needs to have an intimate knowledge of each pigeon in his flock that stretches over years—given that the average life span of a pigeon is about 15 years. Lastly, the physical appearance (colours and patterns) of the mating pair is taken into consideration to craft a unique squab. A fine-bred pigeon is highly valued in the market; it is appreciated by other flyers, and reflects well upon its owner’s status within the pigeon-flying group.

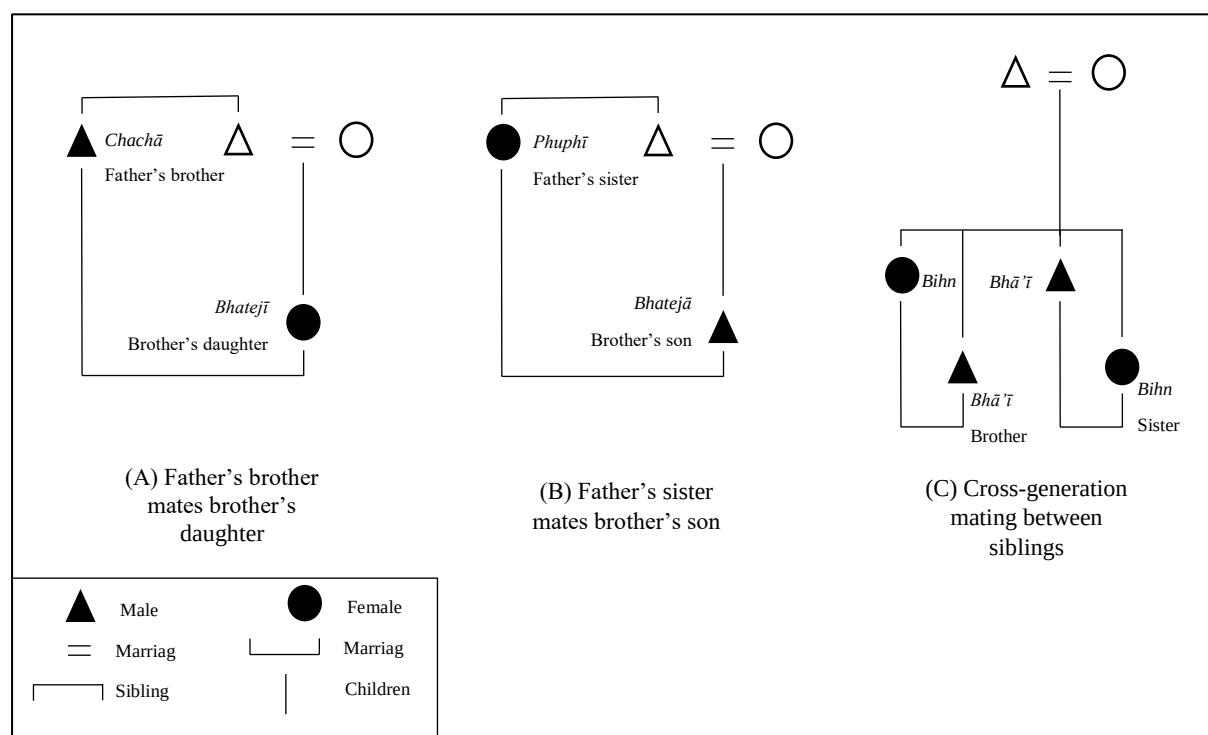


Figure 2. 3: Preferred pigeons breeding choices in South Punjab.

Interestingly, all the preferred mating choices for pigeons as shown in the above chart are incestuous and taboo among people in South Punjab. In figure A, the female pigeon is mating

with her paternal uncle (*chachā*) which is opposite in figure B where a male pigeon is selected to breed with his paternal aunt (*phuphī*). In figure C, there is a cross-generational mating between siblings. In all three alternatives, the preferred choices for pigeons' mating can be seen in binary opposition to human marriage preferences.

Pigeon flyers generally prefer two breeding methods: breeding in a separate cote “private *kamrah*” (or private room), and breeding in a dovecote (*khudā*). The first method is designed for newly caught stray pigeons that enables them to become accustomed to the coop and to the new owner. The second method of breeding is specifically for one's own pigeons with the aim of increasing the flock. In the dovecote, pigeons are bred to get the best squabs and recruit them into the flock of flying pigeons. The stragglers are often sold in the market.



Figure 2. 4: Rafik showing a “private *kamrah*,” used for mating a pair.

The first time I followed Rafik to his dovecote, I felt a stuffy, dark, and dingy environment. Rafik rented the room from his friend at a monthly rate of 1000 rupees (about \$10) specifically to breed his pigeons. This small room was full of a pungent stench and the foul odour of pigeons' dung and hatching. There were almost 30 pairs of pigeons, and they were everywhere, on the ground, in small boxes made of wood, in brick-made shelves, and near the door. The floor was discoloured with the dried-up pigeons' droppings, and it was hard for two of us to

stay there and not to step on the pigeons themselves. I was surprised to hear from Rafik that this is his favourite place, where he spends up to seven or eight hours daily. He told me that this is the best place to closely scrutinise breeding behaviour, observing the pigeons, and checking on the condition of the eggs. In fact, he showed me a logbook he maintains where he notes every pigeon's birth time and date.



Figure 2. 5: A pair of newly hatched squabs.

Once the pair has bred and the eggs have hatched, pigeon flyers keep a close eye on the development of the squab, its nourishment, and any early health problems. If a female pigeon does not feed her squabs, the pigeon keeper will replace her with a foster mother. Sometimes pigeon flyers themselves take the role of a foster mother and raise squabs.

Sitting around a fire on a chilly night in December, another pigeon flyer, Aslam shared his experience of raising a squab. A skinny, dishevelled man in his mid-40s, Aslam ran a shop selling local sweets on the outskirts of Kahrora. I first met him in August 2008, the month when Pakistani military dictator General Pervez Musharraf resigned as president of Pakistan, putting an end to almost nine years in power. I remember how we both digressed from the topic of pigeons to Musharraf's resignation, and spent hours discussing the future of Pakistani politics. When I visited Aslam again in 2014, he recognised me instantly: "Wait! I remember

you. You are the one who used to write down everything.” During those six years many things changed; Aslam tried several businesses; his pigeon keeping master (*ustād*) died; many of his friends migrated to other parts of the country; and two of his sons began school. However, his love for pigeons remained a stable and consistent part of his life. This seems to be a common characteristic of the *shauq* of pigeon flying, and people often spoke of it as a stabilising and nourishing activity which can be sustained despite the vagaries of daily life: a mark of continuity.

On that night in 2015, I asked him about his favourite pigeon, and Aslam enthusiastically recounted:

Once a female pigeon (*kabūtarī*) died, and I raised her squab myself. I raised it while giving it milk with a dropper and fed it chewed grains. To protect it from cold weather, I used to warm the squab at night by placing it in a carton box on my own charpoy (rope cot). It soon became my favourite pigeon. After three years when the pigeon died due to digestive problem (*un-pach*), I did not eat for two days in grief.

Aslam’s story illustrates the intense care and bond created between a flyer and his birds, much like the rearing of a child. People sometimes interpret such care, intimacy, and responsibility as an obsession. For those who cultivate the passion, such pejorative remarks often heard from outsiders are largely ignored. In providing care, affection, and protection to the birds; supervising the breeding process; and appreciating personalities and the aesthetic qualities of pigeons, the men commonly spoke of achieving unmatched satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment. This is not to argue that family life for many of these pigeon flyers (and cockfighters and dogfighters) was not fulfilling, but rather the men voiced complaints about the stress involved in trying to meet their domestic responsibilities, and suggested that their *shauq* offered a much-needed respite from the economic and social pressures of the daily life.

Identification and Appreciation of Pigeons through Colours

Pigeon flyers in South Punjab have a remarkable ability to identify a single pigeon in a flock of 100–150 birds. Not only experienced pigeon flyers, but also young boys (who assist senior pigeon flyers) can single out each pigeon. The animals are identified by reference to their external features such as colours and patterns, and any other physical attributes (cf. Evans Pritchard 1940: 41–46; Galaty 1989: 218; Fijn 2011: 95). Writing about cattle cognition among Maasai pastoralists, anthropologist John Galaty discussed three ways of identifying livestock in accordance with their skin colours and patterns; this knowledge is similar in kind to that of

South Punjabi pigeon flyers. After years of close connection with the birds, flyers develop an ability to (a) identify one's own pigeons in another's flock, (b) identify an others' pigeon in one's own flock, and (c) identify any missing pigeon within one's flock (see Galaty 1989: 225–226). In all three stages, the birds are easily identified because “as people have the ability to recognise humans, so pigeon flyers can recognise pigeons” asserted Khudla.

The flyers value pigeons according to their colours, which they divide into three main categories: *bad-rang* (mixtures of different colours), *bhore kābre* (dappled), and *shirāzī*⁴⁰ or *rang-dār* (colourful). The first two categories are commonly found in every flock and are hardly appreciated, whereas *shirāzī* pigeons are, as Rafik assured, “all about beauty.” The principle colours of *shirāzī* pigeons are six: *lāl* (rusty red), *sunehrī* (rose gold), *kāsnā* (light grey), *pelā* or *zard* (arylide yellow), *sabz* or *sabat* (light green), and *syāh* (black). Among all colours, *lāl* is treasured and the men express their pride in possessing *lāl* pigeons. About the *lāl* pigeon, they say “*rang barā qemtī he*” (this colour is very precious), or “*akheñ ko bhāndā he*” (the eyes fancy it). Ustad Nadir emphasised that:

Lāl pigeons are the most beautiful, with adorable shine in their colour. When we fly our pigeons, *lāl* are easily traceable in the whole flock, and on the ground, they are distinct. One can even appreciate the beauty of a *lāl* pigeon if it is in mud or in the sewer.⁴¹

Lāl and other *shirāzī* pigeons also come in various patterns. The most favoured pattern is *cap*, which means a wing of white colour. If a pigeon is *lāl* and has a white wing, it will be referred to as *lāl-cap* (see Figure 2. 6). The second important pattern is *pāmoz* (hairs on pigeon's ankle), then *coṭī* (a crest), *togah* (a white tail), and followed by many others. Every new pattern adds to the name of pigeons for instance *lāl-cap*, *lāl-cap-togah*, *lāl-cap-togah-pāmoz* and so forth. The point to note here is that the actual numbers of lexemes of *shirāzī* colours are limited; however, when combined with other lexemes of the pigeons' pattern, hundreds of names are produced. These names help the enthusiasts recognise a particular bird and to develop their affection further. In addition, those flyers who command the lexicon are highly respected amongst the community, as this in-depth knowledge is a mark of years of association with pigeons. A pigeon with unique colour and pattern would also have a good market value and

⁴⁰ Some flyers speculated that *shirāzī* pigeons were imported to India from Shiraz, Iran. The word *shirāzī* literally means “from Shiraz.” In *Ain-i-Akbarī*, Abul Fazl suggested that Akbar kept this breed specifically for the beauty of its colour (1873: 302).

⁴¹ Al-Dameeri in his book *Hayat-ul-Haiwan* (The Life of Animals) wrote that the Prophet liked to watch red pigeons (2006: 589). I first knew about this book from Rafik, who went to the library of the local Madrassa and borrowed it for me.

every additional pattern influences its price (for details on market exchange of animals, see Chapter 6). For instance, Aslam remarked that *do-cappah* (two wings of different colours, other than white, such as one red and one yellow wing, or one grey and one black wing) is considered the most valuable *shirāzī* pigeon and the price of this rare type of pigeon can easily reach up to 400,000 rupees (\$4000). Even though many flyers experimented with breeding patterns to produce a *do-cappah*, I never saw one during my fieldwork.

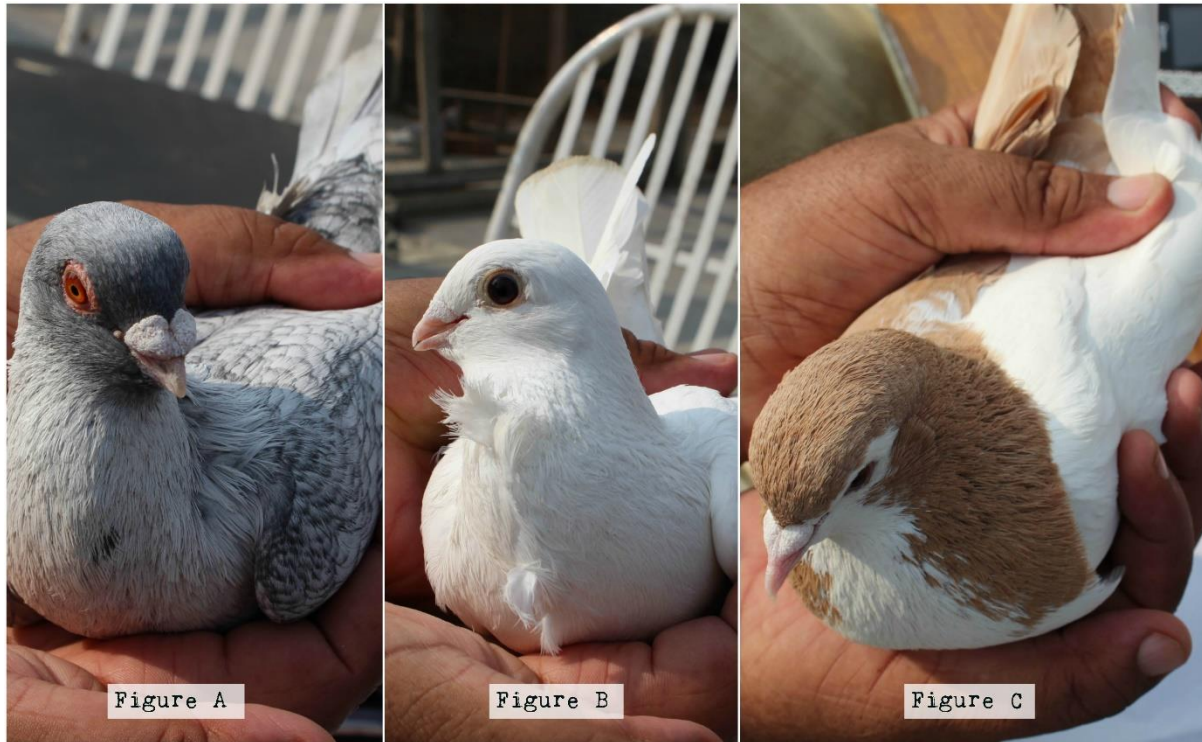


Figure 2. 6: Rehan Baig showing his collection of pigeons. “A” is a kāsna-kawā (a red-eye, grey-colour pigeon), while “B” is a sufaīd kawā tie-walā (white with a tie – symbolically indicating the shape of feathers on the chest). The pigeon in “Figure C” is the most cherished one: a precious lāl-cap (one rusty red and one white wing).

In addition to distinctive colours and patterns, a pigeons’ features or strong points (*ṣifat*) and mismarks (*‘aeb*) affect their value. For instance, if a *lāl* pigeon has a particular shine in its colour, and possesses features such as a white beak and long neck, the bird will be highly valued. Conversely, the value of a pigeon will decrease due to mismarks such as having a relatively few colourful feathers, or a speckled chest. Speaking about features and mismarks among pigeons, Saifal remarked that good marks determine the value of a pigeon. Saif-ur-Rehman was a small farmer who grew cotton and wheat on his three-acre farm, and fed the major portion of the latter to his pigeons. Nicknamed Saifal, he was a short man with middle-parted hair and lived his whole life of almost 35 years in Village Seekrain. According to him,

all pigeons have imperfections, but over the years he has increasingly been able to identify and keep those with few mismarks. Such skills have implication for his standing amongst other pigeon keepers, who regard him as an expert in selecting good quality pigeons. In this community of pigeon flyers, the careful selection of prized pigeons was greatly admired.



Figure 2. 7: Researcher with Saifal in Seekrain village (Photo by Mahar Akmal).

Colours, patterns, and *ṣifat* are markers of pigeons’ “natural” beauty; however, the men adorn the birds further and fix distinctly coloured beads (*motī*) and anklets (*ghungro*) to pigeons’ feet to enhance their appearance. The beads serve an additional function. Saifal remarked that beads work as his trademark and distinguish his pigeons from others. For instance, all of Saifal’s pigeons had tricolour beads—three rings of orange, black, and green beads—and other flyers in his village and in nearby villages were aware of this. If someone caught his pigeon, or it joined a foreign flock, the bird could be easily identified by its beads. The bird may then be returned or sold back to its owner. The beads were therefore a critical element in the practice of pigeon flying: a mark of care and responsibility of the flyer, and of the distinct identity of his pigeons.



Figure 2. 8: Showing pigeons with beads of different patterns and colours.

Possession of quality pigeons means that a flyer is appreciated among his peers. His selection of unique colour and pattern pigeons, his ability to identify strong features in pigeons, and his mastery in decorating the birds through beads demonstrates his choice, aesthetic values, and his *shauq*. All of this also bolsters a flyer's symbolic capital (*izzat*) among other flyers. However, achieving honour from peers demands that one invest time and resources in this activity. As I have argued, there are different sacrifices required from the flyer, for instance he must adhere to a demanding daily routine, be able to develop skills and strategies associated with breeding practices, possess mastery over a wide lexicon deployed in the craft of rearing pigeons, become competent in the art of whistling, and show an ongoing commitment to the activity. Crucial among these is the technique of training pigeons to fly well within a close cluster. Mastery in training epitomises the flyer's hard work, time spent with pigeons, and his knowledge about the choice of techniques deployed for flying pigeons in different settings. Below, I discuss the arduous process of training pigeons and highlight how it contributes to strengthening the human-pigeon bond in South Punjab.

Training the Pigeons with Mār and Pyār

The training of pigeons is complemented by rewards (*pyār*) and punishment (*mār*). Pigeon flyers kiss their pigeons in affection, feed them diced almonds and pistachio by hand, and stroke their heads softly. This is considered *pyār* (literally, to love something or somebody) of pigeon

flyers to their birds. Pigeon flyers note that this relationship is not limited to *pyār*, but also involves *mār* (literally to beat somebody). For instances, they might stop giving grains to a wayward pigeon, or hit the pigeon (with a stick) “as gently as we hit our children in order to teach them a lesson,” Rafik once related. A similar type of care has been noted by anthropologist Dimitrios Theodossopoulos (2005), who studied the stringent rules of the farm among the Vassilikiot farmers of Greece, where farmers punish their animals for violating the farm’s order or reward them for complying with it (2005: 22). For pigeon flyers, such training is necessary if the bird is to be transformed into a *girdān*: a well-trained pigeon.

The *girdān* pigeons are leaders of a coherently functioning flock. They could be male or female pigeons, and are considered loyal pigeons that understand their flyer’s orders and comply with his instructions. They can fly long distances, dip and rise in response to the flyer’s whistles, fly in various formations, and always remember the location of their coop. Aslam claimed that *girdān* pigeons can recognise the colour of their flyer’s clothes from afar, the colour and shape of their coop, and even the colour of the tin can grain box. Qamo asserted, “a *girdān* is like a captain [hinting towards the cricket captain], every pigeon follows it.” Both, juvenile pigeons and newly caught or purchased pigeons are selected by the flyer with a view to turning them into a *girdān*. The first does not require extensive effort because, as many enthusiasts told me, they are young and less conditioned. However, the latter (often mature birds) require much training to become a *girdān*. Yet, “the real mastery is,” emphasised Chacha Munda, “to catch someone else’s *girdān* pigeon and make it part of your own flock.”

Not many people knew that Chacha Munda’s birth name was Munawar Shah. He was a jolly, broad-shouldered, and short-bearded man in his 60s and always preferred teenagers’ company. His choices of playing cricket with boys, colouring his beard with henna, and wearing embroidered kurtas made him famous as *mundā* (a Punjabi word for a boy). Chacha Munda (literally, uncle boy) was an avid pigeon fancier and shared his training techniques with me. He summarised the purpose of training as teaching the neophyte to fly with the flock and not to be lured by the opponents.

I mostly train my pigeons at noon, when my rival flyers are not active. Once I make sure that the neophyte (*paṭhā*) will not fly to another coop, I feel confident enough to fly it with a flock of *girdān* (trained) pigeons. At this early stage, I provide it plenty of grains. The grains entice the neophyte to return to the coop. After two weeks, I move onto the next stage of training and ask a friend—a pigeon flyer—to try to lure my neophyte. We both fly our flocks at the same time, intermingle them in the air, and then call our pigeons back. If the neophyte flies with the “rival” flock

and lands on his rooftop, my friend will hit it (*mār*) with *dogazā* (a net used for flying pigeons). After the punishment, my friend will release the neophyte to fly back to my coop and I will also provide it punishment by not feeding the bird for that night. This process may be repeated several times to teach the neophyte not to land on a foreign rooftop, and remain loyal to the flock. Some intelligent pigeons after going through these stages become *girdān* and never land on another rooftop.

Punishing the pigeons is not taken as an act of cruelty, but perceived as a necessary process in strengthening the bond between the flyer and his birds. According to Chacha Munda, it is for the greater good of the pigeon (*kabūtar kī bhalāī*), and teaches the basic principle of loyalty. He argued, “Pigeons are very intelligent birds however, they cannot think like humans. When other people show them grains, they sometimes forget their coop.” The concept of *mār* is not only used to turn a pigeon into *girdān*, it also takes place in the human’s world, most prominently during the socialisation of children. Punishment is given to young children by parents in order to instil basic principles and values, and by teachers in madrassas (religious schools) and public schools to discipline children.

In contrast to punishment, the *pyār* or love for pigeons becomes explicit when the flyer prepares the diet of the pigeons with extreme care. In the everyday diet, pearl millet (*bājrah*) is used, which according to many flyers keeps the birds lightweight and is better for their digestive system. An average flock of 150 pigeons eats two kilograms of millet per day (equal to \$1). Many flyers first wash the millet to remove dust, dry it under a sunshade to save its vitality, and then give it to their birds. Aside from providing millet, seeds, nuts, and herbs are fed to pigeons in different seasons.

The diet for the birds is selected based on humans’ dietary principals. People divide food into “cold” and “hot” categories: butter, milk, and wheat grains are categorised as cold, while millet, egg, *ghī* (clarified butter), almonds, pistachio, and honey are regarded as hot diets (see also Alter 1992: 120; Frembgen and Rollier 2014: 54; Shaw 2000: 200–201). In the winter, the men use a combination of hot diets and in the summer, a cold diet is preferred. *Ghī* and almonds are regarded as the most important ingredients of pigeons’ diet, where *ghī* (when mixed with millet) is perceived to increase the general strength while almonds increase the pigeons’ stamina. Writing about the dietary regimens of wrestlers in Banaras, Alter found a similar selection of *ghī* and almonds to increase strength and stamina (1992: 120). The similarity of pigeons’ dietary choices with humans in South Asia indicates the affection of flyers towards their birds, as they provide the best possible diet to pigeons to express their *pyār* and care, and fulfil their *shauq*.

Another expression of the flyer's *pyār*, care, and responsibility towards his pigeons is found in curing the bird from diseases. Very few flyers go to veterinary doctors for treatment of their ailing birds; most of them take their pigeons to their *ustād* or treat them personally by using a combination of both traditional and biomedical therapeutic techniques. The ability to heal a bird displays the skill and competence of the flyer, whose intimate knowledge of the pigeon physiology and common pathologies earns him *izzat* among other flyers. Such knowledge is carefully guarded and passed from *ustāds* to their dedicated disciples. In dire circumstances, when a pigeon cannot recover, it is killed to relieve the bird from further misery. Killing (*hath rakhna*, literally putting a hand) in this situation is considered another responsibility, a last duty (*farz*) from the flyer to his cherished bird.

Such commitment to the birds through feeding, training, curing, or even killing enhances a flyer's connection and intimacy, and helps him to fulfil his responsibility towards his birds. Once intensive training and care is complete, pigeons are considered ready for flying and can now participate in competitions. The hard work and investment in the birds are rewarded when pigeons help the flyer win such competitions, where both economic capital (money) and symbolic capital (*izzat*, prestige, and status) are achieved.

Aerial Rivalries

Pigeon flying competitions (*kabūtar kī/dī bid*) take place between two (or sometimes more) pigeon flyers in both urban areas and the villages of South Punjab. There are three main types of competitions; some take place daily while the others occur on a weekly or fortnightly basis. These competitions differ in terms of number of pigeons, types of the pigeons, the seasonal nature of the events as well as the social and physical setting, and rewards involved. In what follows, I detail the nature of these competitions and reveal their social and cultural meanings.

Ḍarī Bid—A Daily Competition of Urban and Rural Areas

The ubiquitous *Ḍarī* competition is staged on a daily basis in both urban and village settings in all seasons, where flyers try to catch each other's pigeons after mixing their flocks in the air. The flock comprises somewhere between 50–150 pigeons that take off from the rooftop twice daily, in the early morning and late afternoon. This time is preferred, as Ustad Nadir suggested, to avoid the intense heat and glaring sun during the middle of the day. However, the major reason many pigeon flyers choose this time is to ensure they can work during the day.

The process of *darī* competition is simple. The flyer opens his coops and lets the flock wheel over the neighbourhood houses. Almost 20–30 metres above ground, the flock sometimes circles near their coop and sometimes takes a wide detour. To fly *golay* pigeons (a breed of pigeons employed in *darī* and *khokhā* competitions), the flyer uses a pigeon flying net (*dogazā*) and a flag tied with bamboo pole (*jhandī*). The net is made from two mulberry sticks, tied in vertical position, with a loose net placed in the centre. It helps in flying, catching, and training the pigeons. The flag is a thin, four-foot bamboo pole with a piece of cloth tied at the end. Both these tools are waved alongside with whistles and screams to direct the flock to fly in a tight bundle or merge with the opponent flock. After a minute or two, the flyer ceases whistling and starts to call his pigeons back by shaking the tin can of grains, tossing up *kuṭṭī*,⁴² and throwing some grains in the air. Luring the flock, the *kuṭṭī* flutters back to the coop. Before the flock even lands, the flyer identifies any stray pigeons that have joined his flock and captures them instantly upon its landing. However, this does not happen frequently and depends on both skills and luck. Over a month, a flyer may catch up to 12 pigeons from his opponent. The captured pigeons are then evaluated according to their colour and pattern, and the flyer either sells them in the market, exchanges them with another flyer, or (if they are deemed good quality pigeons) mates them with pigeons from his own flock and trains them as a *girdān*.

Khokhā Bid—A Weekly Rural Competition

Khokhā (coop) competition also involves flying and enticing opponent pigeons by tossing up grains. However, this competition does not take place on rooftops but rather on the ground. It is common in rural areas where the competition occurs in front of a small audience, and at about a week’s interval. Prior to the competition, both pigeon flyers agree upon date, time, and venue, as well as the quantity of participating pigeons, and the sum of money deemed appropriate for returning captured pigeons. On the prescribed day, the flyers take their coops (filled with 100–150 pigeons) on a donkey-cart or motorbike-cart to a neutral place (see Figure 2. 9). Selection of this place is considered crucial, not simply because of home-support, but as Aslam noted, “Because the pigeons have the ability to remember the place, direction, and surroundings, we chose neutral place for the competition so no flock gets any advantage over the other.” Both pigeon coops are placed in front of each other at a distance of about 30 metres and the space of a few metres in front of each *khokhā* is cleaned, softened, and showered with water—a practice aimed at keeping the pigeons happy so that they fly better. Showering water

⁴² A pigeon with clipped wings, similar to what Jerolmack 2013: 159–160 notes about “chico” among New York’s pigeon racers.

also prevents dust mixing in the air that might blur the vision of the flyer when he seeks to capture his opponent's pigeons. Both flocks take flight, coalesce in the air, and then flyers summon them back to their coops. This process continues for almost two hours until sunset, as the pigeons keep flying, merging with opponents, and landing, and the flyers keep trying to catch each other's pigeons. The captured pigeons are kept in a holding pen until the competition ends, when both pigeon flyers trade the captured pigeons for the agreed amount of money.



Figure 2. 9: Pigeon flyers carrying their khokhā on a donkey-cart (left, 2009) and motorbike-cart (right, 2015) for pigeon competitions.



Figure 2. 10: Khokhā bid, 2008.

Āsmānī Bid—A Fortnightly Urban Competition

A very different breed of pigeon is used for the *āsmānī* competition. Generally, there are three breeds of pigeons, which are distinguished by their flight patterns. First, *golay* pigeons (used in *khokhā* and *ḍarī* competitions) which are known to fly in the shape of a flock and circle their coop. Second, *āsmānī* pigeons (or tippler) are famous for their endurance and can fly for 16–18 hours (without landing) high up and sometimes out of sight (almost 800 metres high). The ability of these pigeons to reach such heights in a spiral ascent and remain there for an extended period of time renders them an especially attractive and expensive entity, and a good quality *āsmānī* pigeon is sometimes valued at \$5000. Third, homing pigeons (or racer) are known for their speed and their ability to find the way back home across great distances. There are no homing pigeons in South Punjab, and a few enthusiasts keep *āsmānī*, while most pigeon flyers cherish the company of *golay* pigeons.

Āsmānī (sky) competition is a popular feature of the cities of central Punjab, such as Lahore, Sialkot, Kasur, and Faisalabad. Anthropologists Jürgen Wasim Frembgen and Paul Rollier in their recent study of three popular pastimes—wrestling, pigeon fancying, and kite flying—estimated that more than 100,000 people of all classes are actively involved in the practice of keeping and flying pigeon in Lahore (Frembgen and Rollier 2014: 58). The authors devoted a chapter to pigeon flying in their work, examining the sacred status of the bird in Islam, the performative element of pigeon flying, as well as the effect of this activity on the lives of the practitioners, and the relationship between a master and a disciple. In Lahore, the annual *āsmānī* pigeon flying competitions are advertised through posters, involve an entry fee, and offer tangible prizes, including money (sometimes reaching up to 400,000 rupees or \$4000), televisions, fans, motorbikes, as well as trophies (Frembgen and Rollier 2014: 69, 72). Despite pecuniary rewards, a major purpose of keeping and flying pigeons in Lahore (as in South Punjab) is to win honour and prestige from peers and to fulfil personal passion.

Almost 500 kilometres away from Lahore, in South Punjab, *āsmānī* competitions have a different aura. The poor pigeon flyers can only afford a few *āsmānī* pigeons (worth \$10–\$50). The competition is far less commercialised and takes place in the early mornings of blazing summer months (May–July). The seasonal importance of the competition is crucial, as Ustad Jameel explains, “In winter, *āsmānī* pigeons do not feel thirst; they fly for days and many times become a prey for the raptors.” A clean-shaven old-timer in his late 60s with a benign appearance, Ustad Jameel was often accompanied by his disciples (*shāgird*) to whom he

offered his expert advice about preparing special concoctions to enhance the birds' performance. According to him, the summer heat works in the favour of flyers; "it makes the bird land before nightfall and prevents us from losing our pigeons."

An *āsmānī* competition is typically planned a month beforehand when interested flyers gather together at the place of a respected *ustād* to discuss terms and conditions (including time, date, and amount of betting money). This is the only pigeon competition where betting is explicitly involved, and bets are lodged in advance (usually \$30–\$50 from each participant). Once all the participating flyers (usually four or five men) submit the betting money to the *ustād*, the competition starts in early next morning. All flyers release their birds at the same time, and no one is allowed to whistle or shout. A referee (*munṣif*), who marks every pigeon with a stamp, notes the time of the pigeons' flight and any foul play (such as whistling or any other human interventions). In the late afternoon, the pigeons begin to return from their daylong aerial tour, and the referee carefully calculates their flight time. As long as the pigeons land in their house before sunset, their time is added up and the birds with more flight time win the competition.

Although monetary gains are present in the *āsmānī* competition, the amounts being wagered are relatively low. In the rural context, it seems the real competition is over symbolic gains (*izzat*), which is the underlying motive for such an arduous day of waiting. The men compete against their fellow flyers and display superior skills and expertise through the performance of their pigeons. The flyers consult with their *ustāds* and work tirelessly on their birds for days before the competition. They provide special diets for their pigeons and give them daily exercise to increase their stamina and endurance. When the competition is staged, many men take their binoculars and stay on their rooftops for the whole day, disregarding the intense heat.

Discussion: The Reward

The allure of all three pigeon competitions is about more than just amusement or financial gains; the men fly their birds as a way of enhancing their *izzat* (honour) among peers. As discussed earlier, *izzat* is considered highly important in the Punjabi value system. Pigeon flyers compete for their *izzat* with other enthusiasts through the *shauq* of flying pigeons. The sky becomes an arena where a flyer is evaluated, praised, and sometimes insulted by his peers for his choice of birds, the overall performance of his pigeons as a flock, and his strategies in flying pigeons. Thus, pigeons are not only an extension of the flyer's personality as an

embodiment of his hard work, passion, and commitment, they are also surrogates of their keeper's honour, and actively influence his status.

However, struggle for symbolic gains (honour and status) does not mean that money is not important. Many South Punjabi areas are poverty-stricken; people hardly earn six to seven dollars a day. As discussed earlier, flyers commonly spend one-third of their daily wage on their pigeons—buying millet, almonds, pistachio, and herbs. They hope that pigeon competitions will bring some financial rewards to compensate for these high costs. However, according to my calculation, it is rare that monetary gains match the expenses spent on purchasing the diet and medication for the pigeons. Speaking about these expenses—which, as we will see in Chapter 5, seem irrational to many people including the wives of pigeon flyers—the men rationalised monetary rewards as peripheral to this activity. As Khulda keenly put it: “A man can sleep with an empty stomach but cannot sleep with shame.” For Khudla, Rafik, Aslam, Ustad Nadir, Saifal, Chacha Munda, and many others, pigeons were not a means for livelihood, rather, they were cherished companions through which the men could fulfil their *shauq* and demonstrate their skills and expertise to their peers.

Although success in pigeon competitions does not alter a flyer's economic standing, it does enhance his status among his peers. This is very much in line with Bourdieu's (1993) observations about the efficacy of forms of capital within different fields. Each field, he maintains, has its distinct rules through which individuals are evaluated and ascribed social position (1993: 48–49). In other words, it seems that when flying their pigeons, the men establish a form of capital, aimed at accumulating *izzat* and other symbolic rewards in the field of pigeon flying. The birds can therefore be viewed as both currency and symbolic expression of their honour, prestige, and respect. South Punjabi pigeon flying can also be analysed from an interpretive perspective, akin to Clifford Geertz's study of Balinese cockfighting. Geertz famously claimed, “For it is only apparently cocks that are fighting there. Actually, it is men” (1973: 417). For him, such practices were a form of symbolic action that expressed different forms of valuation. Adopting this approach would emphasise that pigeon flying is a social, economic, and symbolic practice that exceeds the act of flying pigeons. However, this does not mean that pigeons are passive vehicles for their owners to satisfy prestige and pride. Rather, as we have seen, each pigeon carries traces of the owner's flying style and history, and represents a testament to his emotional, economic, and physical investment. In fact, the birds play a pivotal

role in influencing the men's sociality and actively shape their interaction with their peers, a point that I discuss in detail below.

Section 2: Earthly Dealings

So far, I have examined the intimacy between a flyer and his pigeons, which is developed through providing care, protection, nourishing diet, and training to the birds. I have also discussed how pigeons are bred, selected, decorated, trained, and involved in pigeon competitions to earn monetary and symbolic rewards. Below, I explain how the affective relationship among humans and pigeons influences the flyers' values of friendship, hostility, and respect.

Relationships of Intimacy and Hostility

The relationship between two pigeon flyers is either that of hostility (*mukhālfat*) or friendship (*yārī*). Pigeon flyers of the same city or village are, as Rafik explained, either in a state of war (*jang*) or peace (*sulah*). The symbolism of war associated with pigeons is not new in South Punjab; Kociejewski, in his book *The Pigeon Wars of Damascus*, noted that Syrian fanciers also employ this symbolism of war (2010: 37). In South Punjab, hostility and friendship can begin from pigeon rivalry. Every week, flyers lose their birds to the opponent. If the opponent returns the pigeons without any payment, the relationship has the potential to transform into what is known as *yārī*, and a relation of reciprocal exchange will develop. If the opponent refuses to return the pigeon or returns it for payment, he soon becomes a rival (*mukhālif*), and both go into a state of "war." In such pigeon wars, both flyers compete against each other on a daily basis, trying to capture as many pigeons from the rival party as possible. This hostility often transforms into humiliation and mocking, where one fancier will assert himself as the skilful one, superior to his competitor.

But even such bitter relations can turn sweet, for instance, when the flyers start changing the tone of the interaction and engage in more reciprocal arrangements: returning each other's pigeons. The men use the word *yār* (friend) instead of *dost* (also meaning friend) to signal a close tie with the other flyer. To explain the value of such friendships, many flyers refer to the local saying: "*yārī ty sab qurbān*" (all to be sacrificed in friendship). This kind of friendship is often characterised by affective support, such as cooperation and teamwork, or helping each other at the time of breeding and training pigeons, and advising on the pigeons' dietary and medical needs. Friends may offer moral and even financial support at the time of need, and

emphasise the importance of remaining sincere and trustworthy through thick and thin. A pigeon flyer's success reflects his friend's success; when he wins his trusted circle of friends rejoice, just as they sympathise following a loss.

Informal gatherings play an important role in fostering this friendly relationship. The enthusiasts visit each other's rooftops, play cards or dice together, and have tea at local tea stalls and talk about pigeons for hours. Similar observations were made by anthropologist Geoffrey Gowlland about ceramic artisans in China, who use the cultural idiom of *lai baixiang* (or passing time with friends) to exchange knowledge and learn from each other about their craft in informal settings, such as drinking tea, playing cards, or gossiping (2012: 365). South Punjabi pigeon flyers enjoy these informal gatherings, as it is an inherent element in *shauq*, or as Saifal summarised, “when I am with my friends, my *shauq* is fulfilled (*shauq mit-dā he*).”



Figure 2. 11: Saifal with his *yār*, Mukhtyar.

An important function of such friendships is to spend the time in a good way, accomplish one's *shauq*, and find a sense of wellbeing. Flyers cherish the company of their co-enthusiasts and learn about new pigeon breeds, success stories of pigeon flyers around the country, and news about innovative training and feeding methods. These companionships allow everyone to feel alive and productive. The men say that in their *shauq* they treat each other equally, and no one is prioritised through his social belongings such as class, position, or sectarian affiliation. In this subculture, every flyer is measured by his investment, skills, and expertise in the art of

pigeon flying rather than anything outside of it. Of course, this subculture does not operate in a vacuum and, as mentioned, the capacity to cultivate a *shauq* like pigeon flying depends on multiple factors, including financial means and support networks.

Within this closely-knit community, the most consequential hierarchy is that of master-disciple. Masters are those men who have repeatedly proven themselves as committed flyers and genuine enthusiasts. These masters have long-standing knowledge about the pigeon's physiology and flying techniques, and achieve honour and fame as *ustāds*. Young flyers often come to the *ustād* for advice and to learn the intricacies of practice.

Masters of Pigeons: Respecting the Wisdom of Ustāds

Because of their mastery and experience in pigeon flying, *ustāds* are accorded a respectful position among the enthusiasts. Many disciples completely devote themselves to their *ustāds* to learn about the *shauq* of flying pigeons. This relationship of master-apprentice has been documented extensively, especially in societies where the tradition of personalised schooling remains important. For instance, while working with tabla players in Lucknow, James Kippen (1988) has argued that a good tutor helps his pupil by expanding the capacity of his mind and encouraging the pupil's *shauq* of music (1988: 133). Trevor Marchand, who worked among minaret-builders in Yemen (2001) and mud-brick masons in Mali (2009), reaffirms such observations, highlighting that the master's blessings among his respondents are considered key to success. Similarly, Alter (1992) noted that among wrestlers of North India, a *guru* is treated with the utmost respect and his authority is unambiguous and absolute among his disciples (1992: 60). In Lahore, disciples are expected to surrender themselves completely to the service of their master-wrestler (Frembgen and Rollier 2014: 18).⁴³ As in all these ethnographies, South Punjabi pigeon masters are likewise revered for their wisdom and knowledge of pairing pigeons to ensure the best offspring, of selecting pigeons' diet according to different seasons, of healing injured pigeons, and of identifying a good pigeon from a flock.

The knowledge of masters comes with years of experience and intimacy with pigeons. All *ustāds* I met during my fieldwork were older than 45 years (and a few were close to their 70s), some had left pigeon flying and only assisted their disciples, while others were still flying their birds. Once trust and respect was established between a disciple and a master, the latter then

⁴³ In Lahore and other areas of the Punjab, there is an additional figure to *ustāds*: *khalīfā* (literally, a successor). In some areas, *khalīfā* is a senior apprentice who can become *ustād* with experience. In other places, *khalīfā* is more respected than *ustād*.

shared his secrets of dietary and healing formulas, and continued to provide advice and guidance before and during pigeon flying competitions.

One of the more famous pigeon flying masters I met during fieldwork was Ustad Shakoor. He was a lean, short-bearded, and wrinkled-face man who worked as a milkman, and was in his late 60s at the time of my fieldwork. “I was born a year before the creation of Pakistan (1947)” he said when we first met. He went on to detail how the last 30 years of his life were mostly spent carrying milk-cans from different villages to Kahrur Pacca city on his bicycle. Perhaps this persistent physical activity is what made him look much younger than his years. He had many disciples across the area, who visited him almost every day to learn and, as one of his disciples told me, “to absorb some portion of his vast knowledge [about pigeons].” Ustad Shakoor proclaimed to know about some secret formulas (by mixing an exact amount of different herbs) to prepare a *goli* (a pill) that was an all-rounder: it could increase pigeons’ stamina and endurance, make them fly in rain, enhance their attention span, and even make them forget their thirst in June’s unbearable heat. He emphasised that he never charged money for his advice and services, “I do this because of my love for this bird.” Recognising this dedication, his disciples (most of whom were better off than their master) gave him the utmost respect and supported him in other ways.

Over time, I observed that many of Shakoor’s disciples invited him repeatedly to their homes, providing great hospitality. When he fell ill with malaria in 2015, one of his disciples bore the expenses of his medical treatment. Other disciples contributed by purchasing fruits, vegetables, and packs of wheat flour for the master’s household, until he recovered. Such relationships between masters and disciples are common and indeed there is an implicit expectation across South Asia that, in return for the knowledge given by the master, disciples reciprocate with care and material goods in times of need (see Frembgen and Rollier 2014: 18, Alter 1992: 59).

However, there is also an implicit lament about the changing times, where such relationships are increasingly compromised under the onslaught of modernity. A new generation of pigeon flyers (usually known as *chirī mār*, see Chapter 6) seems less interested in nurturing this type of relationship of respect and obedience to masters. Some young flyers opined that true *ustāds* are dead now, and if there are some, finding them is very difficult. Others argued that *ustāds* tend to keep their knowledge a secret and rarely share with their disciples, as Khudla recounted, “I offered a cow (worth \$1000) to my *ustād* in exchange for his *ustādī* (mastery), but he refused.” The disciples were displaying their impatience with their masters who were,

supposedly, obliged to reciprocate by imparting rare knowledge. A Similar claim was voiced by Aslam who sneered when speaking of his late *ustād*, “He never shared his wisdom with any of his disciples and now he is dead; who will get benefit from his knowledge.” During my fieldwork, I also met a few young pigeon flyers who did not have a master—when I asked them, “who is your master?” they replied, “we are our own masters.”

The waning of this relationship of reciprocity and respect is not only evident in South Asian societies. For instance, speaking about artisans in Greece, Herzfeld (2004) commented:

In the years gone by, before World War II, apprentices would kiss the right hands of their masters as a greeting, just as they would those of their fathers, uncles, and godparents. Today, such formalities—which bespeak a potential intimacy grounded in respectful affection—have all but disappeared... (Herzfeld 2004: 67)

In South Punjab, practices that displayed respectful affection towards masters were held in high esteem. For instance, a disciple used to tie a white turban (a symbol of respect) around his *ustād*’s head to announce him as his “master for life” (*zindgī bhar ka ustād*). However, in the last decade or so such practices have faded. In the past, the relationship between a master and a disciple was founded on reciprocal exchange, where the disciple submitted himself to his *ustād* and provided gifts in exchange for the master’s knowledge and advice. As we have seen above, this relationship was marked by care, commitment, and devotion. The decline of this tradition in present day South Punjab can be seen as part of a wider transformation of Punjabi society, pointing towards a fast-paced lifestyle and changing value system that places a premium on material goods and consumption rather than traditional practices built on culturally valued principles and social relations.

An Enthusiasm for Life

Traditions (*riwāyāt*) mattered. Throughout my fieldwork, I asked many men about the reason behind their choice of pigeon flying *shauq*. A common answer was that this enthusiasm keeps them away from the troubles of everyday life. As I have noted, pigeon flying is far more than a pastime. It is a way of life in which the enthusiasts cultivate their *shauq*, develop inter-species intimacy, attain a sense of fulfilment with their birds, and participate in a community of likeminded *shauqeen*. For many, pigeon flying had a strong sense of continuity. It was their generational *shauq* which they inherited from their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers. They regularly spoke of keeping this tradition alive by passing on the family enthusiasm (*khāndānī shauq*) to subsequent generations.

Many pigeon flyers argued that their love for pigeons was actually supported by Islam. They believed that pigeons carry beatitude because of their association with shrines and mosques. Some saw a pigeon cooing as a form of the bird's worship,⁴⁴ while others translated the pigeons' sound "hu" as Allah Hu—a Sufi chant for remembrance of God (*zikr*).⁴⁵ Rafik (and others) often spoke of a story in which pigeons played a pivotal role in saving the life of the Prophet. The story told was that some nonbelievers followed the Prophet when he was migrating from Mecca to Medina in 621 CE. He took refuge in the cave of Thawr, and at the entrance, the spiders made a web and the pigeons made a nest. Upon arriving at the cave, the Prophet's foes found the pigeons sitting on the nest while the spiders' web was unbroken. Thereupon, they left the cave and continued pursuit in the opposite direction. This story, according to pigeon flyers, is a testimony to the bird's devotion and has since made Muslims recognise its benevolence and loyalty. They added that the story highlights that keeping pigeons is a spiritual quest rather than a frivolous hobby.

Pigeons also held a unique status and were seen as an epitome of devotion and love. Pigeon flyers spoke passionately about both male and female pigeons, as they brood over the eggs and collectively nurse squabs with pigeon-milk. The birds were also exemplars because they paired for life and represented fidelity. The flyers appreciated this quality in pigeons and believed that the bird's faithful and affectionate disposition extended to their human caretakers. Pigeons were also seen as the embodiment of peace and love, often described in carrying messages between lovers—about which there were many film songs in South Asia.⁴⁶

In short, pigeon enthusiasts felt a sense of pride and belonging, which they shared with peers. This common *shauq* allowed the men to go beyond their social distinctions and feel important, worthy, and respected. They cherished the company of their fellow enthusiasts, with many expressing deep pride in their association with pigeons and pigeon keeping.

Conclusion

When New York Times' reporters asked the inventor and electrical engineer Nikola Tesla about his thoughts on marriage and his celibacy, the inventor narrated the story of a white

⁴⁴ Al-Dameeri in his book *Hayat-ul-Haiwan* (The Life of Animals) noted that the Prophet advised to his cousin and son-in-law, Ali to keep a pair of pigeon in his house and when the pigeons start cooing, he should start *zikr* (2006: 589).

⁴⁵ Charles Darwin (2010) mentioned a pigeon (Laughing Dove) with a very peculiar voice. This pigeon breed, according to Darwin, is the same as the one that is mentioned in *Ain-i-Akbari*. Darwin noted that the pigeon is revered by Muslims of India as it says Ya-Hu Ya-Hu (Oh God, Oh God).

⁴⁶ For details, see Hiren Kotwani's piece in Times of India, 14 February 2015.

female pigeon with whom he fell in love. “She understood me and I understood her...Yes, I loved her as a man loves a woman, and she loved me.” Tesla stated, “That pigeon was the joy of my life. If she needed me, nothing else mattered. As long as I had her, there was a purpose in my life” (Cheney 1981: 228). Tesla was not the only notable figure. Queen Elizabeth II is the current patron of the Royal Racing Pigeon Association and regularly places her pigeons in racing competitions across the world (Jerolmack 2013: 213). From an early age, Pablo Picasso was an admirer of pigeons, and the bird figured prominently in his early paintings. He had a favourite pigeon that he used to carry to school (Podoksik 2011: 10). Charles Darwin bred pigeons and took the bird as his conceptual and methodological tool for understanding the analogy between artificial and natural selection (Feeley-Harnik 2007: 150). The point to note here is that humans’ intimacy with pigeons is not a unique feature of South Punjabi culture; it exists in different cultures, past and present, and among the people of all social classes.

I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter that cross-species interaction influences the South Punjabi flyers’ social lives in multiple ways. It generates an intimacy with pigeons, and develops an understanding of the non-human through careful domestication and close association. As such, it also drives the men’s *shauq*, and shapes their relationships with other flyers. This implies that the *shauq* of pigeon keeping is not an activity external to one’s life. Rather, it informs the flyers’ value system, one which is marked by the duty of care, protection, socialisation, diligence, and time keeping, and invests meaning and purpose in their lives.

I have also discussed the symbolic gains that flyers may achieve through their activity. Though this human-pigeon relationship starts with providing care to pigeons by feeding the birds by hand, cleaning their coops, and decorating them, achieving *izzat* is equally important, where skilful pigeons fly well and strengthen their owner’s symbolic capital among his peers. Accumulation of *izzat* is considered far more important than the potential monetary rewards. It also helps the flyers to maintain a respectful relationship with fellow enthusiasts, gain the recognition of *ustāds*, and form a community of shared interests. This affective interaction with pigeons aimed at generating symbolic rewards is not a unique example in the lives of South Punjabi men, since, as the following chapter demonstrates, cockfighters develop similarly strong relations with their gamecocks, and try to fulfil their *shauq*.

CHAPTER 3: The Seduction of Cockfighting: Forbidden Dangers

As much of America surfaces in a ball park, on a golf links, at a race track, or around a poker table, much of Bali surfaces in a cock ring.

Clifford Geertz 1973: 417

The question seems to be whether it is less cruel for a cock to be killed by a man rather than by another cock.

Giles Tippet 1994: 63

“If Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif asks me to give him my rooster, I will not,” remarked Malik Khizar Bohar while showing me his prized hen and gamecock. Like many other landlords of the area, he inherited 100 acres of agricultural land from his father. Yet he sold half of it because of his passion for cockfighting, which involved large sums spent on purchasing, fighting, and gambling on roosters. Once he realised my interest in cockfighting, Malik Khizar sent out his chauffeur to fetch me to his place, where a full table breakfast welcomed me. Malik Khizar was an averaged height, middle-aged man with black eyes. His brown Peshawari sandals were well polished, and his sky-blue kurta shalwar was neatly ironed. As he filled up my glass with Coca-Cola, Malik Khizar began describing his *shauq* of gamecocks.

“Gamecocks are the bravest creature on the earth; they will fight until the last breath,” he confidently stated. Admiring the cocks’ bravery, he asked, “Have you seen any bird that takes a hit on its face and can still fly?” to which I replied “no.” “This is the only bird who fights with kicks, even sometimes receiving 200 kicks on the face, but still keeps fighting.” He added that almost 15 years ago when a friend brought him to a cockfight, he watched this kind of courage for the first time in his life, and thus “fell in love” with this bird. For years, he spent countless hours feeding, training, and massaging his gamecocks. This was, as he explained, a precious time for him: a source of personal satisfaction.

The *shauq* of cockfighting, according to Malik Khizar, is accompanied by *tharuk* (a kind of deviant attraction), which involves a series of acts including gambling, participating in cockfighting organised at remote (and sometimes secretive) arenas, watching the competition with thrill and frenzy, and mocking and humiliating the loser after the fight. Both *shauq* and *tharuk* allowed Malik Khizar and other *shauqueen* cockfighters to appreciate what were seen as

paramount masculine qualities of gamecocks that had their direct parallel in the human world. These included fighting with courage (*jur'at*), staying fearless and carrying on with bravery (*dilerī*), possessing strength to dominate the opponent (*zor*), and never surrendering even when facing difficult situations.



Figure 3. 1: Malik Khizar (left) showing a pair of precious breed chickens. His servant (right)—who was not a cockfighting enthusiast—accompanied him.

Unlike pigeon flying that is predominantly a lower-middle class activity, cockfighting attracts enthusiasts from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, such as landlords, village notables, government officials, school teachers, police officers, small farmers, shopkeepers, bus-stand managers, fruit vendors, and daily wage labourers. In present-day South Punjab, cockfighting is a rural pastime. There are almost 200 cockfighting enthusiasts in my chosen field site who develop a strong attachment with their gamecocks and shape their lives and social relationships by avidly engaging in cockfighting. This chapter discusses the *shauq* of cockfighting, focusing on multiple social and economic arrangements that drive and frame this activity. By explaining the impacts of cockfighting on shaping relationships between humans and between humans and gamecocks, the chapter suggests that the South Punjabi cockfighting arena becomes a space where dominant traits of Punjabi masculinity—courage, bravery, and strength—are performed, reproduced, and reaffirmed through the fighting of the birds. Rather than to view it

as a futile passion—as often described by the South Punjabi people—the chapter suggests that this *shauq* enables the men to animate their social universe, win *izzat* (honour) and *mardāneat* (masculinity), transcend statuses, and cultivate lifelong intimacies.

Clifford Geertz's seminal essay on the Balinese cockfight has been extremely influential across anthropology, not least in scholarship on animal competitions. Geertz viewed the cockfight as an expressive social event, a cultural text that allows a "Balinese reading of Balinese experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves" (1973: 448). Geertz centred his analysis of cockfights on two different forms of betting: deep fights involved high stakes and took place between "the solid citizenry around whom local life revolves," and shallow fights involved smaller amounts of betting and were favoured by the poor (1973: 435). According to Geertz, deep fights held special significance for Balinese because through these "the really substantial members of the community" vied for status (1973: 435). However, this status gambling, as Geertz pointed out, does not affect the social hierarchy in Balinese society because from the outset high stakes excludes poor gamblers.

Though the loser is humiliated and the winner is applauded in the cockpit, Geertz stressed, "no one's status is actually altered by the outcome of a cockfight; it is only, and that momentarily, affirmed or insulted" (1973: 433). He further emphasised:

The cockfight is "really real" only to the cocks—it does not kill any one, castrate anyone, reduce anyone to animal status, alter the hierarchical relations among people, or refashion the hierarchy; it does not even redistribute income in any significant way (1973: 443).

Geertz's analysis of cockfighting is instructive to my own study and greatly assisted me in exploring the cultural meaning of cockfighting (along with pigeon flying and dogfighting) in South Punjab; yet there are a few unresolved problems with his interpretation. Firstly, Geertz overlooked the views of women, which could have further enriched our understanding of the different aspects of cockfighting beyond the male domain. He focused on the men's world of cockfight, and the reader does not hear about the perspectives of the women who live and share their lives with cockfighters. This has led some scholars to question how an activity can be regarded as a "cultural text" when it privileges male's interpretations (see Roseberry 1982: 1019–1020).⁴⁷ Secondly, Geertz hardly provides any historical transformation of the Balinese

⁴⁷ I am keenly aware that a fine-grained ethnography of women's perspective would offer an even richer appreciation of cockfighting. However, because of reasons discussed in the Introduction of this thesis, I had

cockfight, and only focused on the ethnographic present (see Howe 2005: 31).⁴⁸ Thirdly, Geertz attributes very little importance to roosters and human-rooster relations (such as how they are bred, fed, trained), and does not explain the series of activities involved in the lead up to the climatic fights. Human-animal intimacy, if observed closely, can provide us with numerous details about the social structure and everyday cultural patterns of human lives, as studies examining the bullfight (Marvin 1988; Brandes 2009), horse racing (Cassidy 2002), camel racing (Sulayman 2000), elephant encounters (Locke and Buckingham 2016), bear or monkey training (Berland 1982) or domesticating animals (Knight 2012) have repeatedly demonstrated. Lastly, according to some critiques, Geertz's tendency was to rely on his own subjective interpretation rather than engaging in dialogue with the Balinese. "*They remain cardboard figures*" (Crapanzano 1986: 71, original emphasis). Hence, Geertz's interpretive approach came at a cost, where claims were asserted and investigated but "without providing data that substantiates them" (Jacobson 1991: 53).

Such criticisms are pertinent to my own effort at providing a much wider view of cockfighting, rendering it more as a series of activities and ideologies than an isolated event. The chapter is therefore an attempt to understand how cockfighting *shauqueen* develop strong emotional ties with their roosters during breeding, feeding, and training, and how this affective relationship is put to the test in the bid to gain or lose honour in the masculine arena of cockfighting.

While fighting in the arena, the gamecock helps its owner to earn *izzat* in front of other men, to receive their applause, and to attain status from the peers. Earning honour is not limited to the arena of cockfighting. Sociologist Loïc Wacquant also noted that in Chicago, the fight in the ring enables the boxers to achieve what they might not be able to achieve outside of the boxing arena—money, fame, respect. Speaking about the boxers' predilection, Wacquant defined boxing as an "affection," an "organic connection...akin to a religious allegiance," and as "a form of possession" (1995: 507). He noted:

Fighting is not simply something that they *do*, an instrumental activity, a pastime and a side job separable from their persona. Because it demands and effects a far-reaching restructuring of the self as well as an integral colonization of one's

limited access to gather the views of the wives (see Chapter 5), and had to rely on interviews conducted by a female Research Assistant.

⁴⁸ Australian historian Adrian Vickers in his famous work *Bali: A Paradise Created* explained that in pre-colonial Bali, cockfights helped in recruiting human slaves. He noted that kings usually staged cockfights and poor peasants passionately wagered more than they could afford. When "the last spur had sunk into the chest of the last rooster, many peasants had no home and family to return to. They, and their wives and children, would be sold to Java" (Vickers 1996: 61).

lifeworld, boxing is what they *are*: it defines at once their innermost identity, their practical attachments, and everyday doings, and their access to and place in the public realm (1995: 507, original emphasis).

Similarly, cockfighting (locally known as *kukar-bāzī* or *murgh-bāzī*)⁴⁹ also demands a complete re-fashioning of the self and deeply influences the men's social life. It allows cockfighters to cultivate friendly and instrumental relationships with their peers and develop their passion through breeding, raising, feeding, and training cocks. In what follows, I examine the human-cock relationship by explaining the men's affection towards their roosters that starts before the hatching of the egg and takes different shapes throughout the cock's lifespan.

Section 1: Men and Gamecocks: Inter-species Intimacy

Chicken is a *halal* animal and a male chicken is considered holy by Muslims. According to a hadith (the Prophet's accounts), the roosters crow when they see an angel (Al-Bukhari 59: 111), and in another hadith, the Prophet has forbidden Muslims from reviling the rooster as its crow rouses Muslims for the dawn prayer (Abu-Dawud 18: 220). Roberto Tottoli (1999) in his article *At Cock-Crow: Some Muslim Traditions about the Rooster* claimed that the rooster (and especially the white rooster) is held in high esteem in the Muslim world and revered for its cockcrow. However, these are not merely textual traditions; they are alive and practised in daily life. Local South Punjabi people commonly value the bird for its unflinching ability and commitment to crow at dawn and herald a new day. In fact, the bird is figured in everyday speech, for instance the Saraiki language word for cockcrow—*bāng* or *āzān*—is also a term commonly used to describe the five daily “calls for prayers,” recited through the loudspeakers to summon Muslims to mosque.⁵⁰

Punjabi Muslims also cherish the meat of this holy bird: a tasty ingestion of the “sacred.” Yet cockfighters generally avoid eating their gamebirds. They make a distinction between the common chicken and their prized fighting birds. “The one I eat (farm chickens) are different from the one I love (gamecocks),” opined Waso while draining the tea in the saucer. Waso was a six-foot cockfighting enthusiast in his early 50s, and with his thick sole boots and grey turban, he seemed even taller. Sitting at the veranda of his old house, Waso took a slurp of the tea from the saucer and continued, “Fighting cocks are not even tasty like broiler.” He argued that daily

⁴⁹ The word *kukar* or *murgh* means a “cock,” while the suffix *bāzī* in cockfighting is strictly used for gambling.

⁵⁰ The five prayers are: *Fajr* (dawn), *Dhuhr* (noon), *‘Aṣr* (afternoon), *Maḡrib* (sunset), *Isha’a* (night). Among all these, *Fajr* is the most trying prayer, as it requires waking from sleep. The rooster's cockcrow at dawn helps in waking the faithful. Therefore, the textual traditions in Islam and folk traditions of South Punjab admire the bird for this quality.

exercise and massages make the gamecocks hard like stone and if cooked they do not taste good. However, Waso suggested, those who do not cultivate a *shauq* of cockfighting may fancy eating gamecocks, thinking the bird is “hot” (*garam*) and its meat good as a male aphrodisiac. As the fighting cocks consume a large quantity of almonds, pistachio and other high protein diets, traditional healers (*hakīm*) often recommend *desī* cock to be cooked in *desī ghī* for increasing general physical strength, and to restore vitality.

If, like pigeons, the intimacy with the cocks was established through care and feeding, the *shauqueen* cockfighters added another layer: naming the birds. The men named each cock according to its attributes. This was another reason why Waso and other cockfighters were reluctant to consume their roosters. Gamecocks were given personalised names such as Mithā (sweet), Kābrā (cobra), Thānedar (police constable), Dilbar (close to heart),⁵¹ Suhrāb (hero), Jānbāz (fearless adventurer) and so on. These names drew the animal into the human domain, animated human-animal ties (c.f. Fijn 2011: 101), and showed the bird’s fighting character, its history and abilities (Affergan 1994: 202–204). For instance, Kābrā was famous for its attacking skills, much like a cobra, and its ability to raise its neck in the course of a fight. Thānedar possessed a rowdy personality, like a police officer; Suhrāb’s heroic character rendered it a winning cock; Jānbāz was seen by its owner as fearless; while Mithā and Dilbar were cherished by their owners for their unique physical traits. Each of these distinctive names allowed the men to develop a personalised connection. With a unique name, every cock was considered as a distinct being, and evaluated and praised on its particular personality and qualities.

There are two rooster breeds available in South Punjab: *aṣīl*⁵² and *rezā*. *Rezā* is famous for its speed and agility but less in height and stamina compared to *aṣīl*. *Aṣīl* is said to be all about power, stamina, and stature—a truly masculine gamecock. Both *aṣīl* and *rezā* come in different colours such as *jāwā* (off white plumage and black body), *lākhā* (dark brown and shiny green plumage and black body), *kāle mushkī* (complete black), *chitṭe* (complete white), *pele* (yellow

⁵¹ The name Dilbar became particularly famous in the area after the release of a comedy Saraiki telefilm “*Khoṛe Sikke*” (2009). The cockfighter in the film, Faizo *kukar bāz*, provides his rooster expensive diet and the best care; however, during the fight the cock runs away from the combat.

⁵² The word *aṣīl* comes from *aṣlī* or *aṣal*, which means “original,” or “authentic.” This traditional name, according to my interlocutors, reflects the fact that the breed is still in its original form—unsullied by the introduction of crossbreeding by humans—and is therefore the most “authentic” fighting breed in the world.

neck and tail with brown plumage), *lāl* (rusty-red), *kāsnā* (light-grey) and *sāwā* (shiny green). In all these colours of roosters, the first two, *jāwā* and *lākhā* are the most treasured.



Figure 3. 2: Aṣīl pelā (left), and aṣīl lākhā (right).

As shown in the above figure, a separate cage is provided to each gamecock to keep it from fighting against another. This means that the roosters must be separately fed and trained. The massage, different forms of training, preparation of diet, and feeding of each bird requires up to two hours of its keeper's attention in one day, and given that many cockfighters possess two or three roosters, these demands on their time are considerable. Readyng a rooster is a time-consuming activity that reflects well upon the owner in the arena. It is also a kind of symbolic investment, in line with Bourdieu's observations, that "*time* must be invested, for the value of symbolic labour cannot be defined without reference to the time devoted to it" (1978: 180, original emphasis). By spending time in feeding and training, cockfighters create a bond that assures them of the rooster's capabilities and prowess. In Bali too, Geertz emphasised, cockfighters invested hours in training and feeding their gamecocks. As he noted:

A man who has a passion for cocks, an enthusiast in the literal sense of the term, can spend most of his life with them, and even those, the overwhelming majority, whose passion though intense has not entirely run away with them, can and do spend what seems not only to an outsider, but also to themselves, an inordinate amount of time with them (1973: 419).

South Punjabi cockfighters often justify the time investment with reference to *shauq*. This *shauq* of roosters starts from the time of breeding, develops through many stages, and reaches its climax in the cockfighting arena. The different elements of this *shauq* are discussed below, where I explain various strategies that cockfighters deploy for stimulating the aggressive spirit of their gamecocks with a view to winning *izzat* and *mardāneat* in the arena.

Bred to Fight

Possession of a good breed (*nasal*) is considered highly significant in South Punjabi cockfighting. Cockfighters cherish their breeds and rarely share them with opponents. “A good breed is a key to success in cockfighting,” claimed Ustad Ramzan Mochi. A cobbler by profession, Ustad Ramzan was a retired cockfighter, a worn man in his 70s with a benign appearance. From the 1970s to 1990s, he developed an interest in keeping and fighting partridges, participated in competitions all over Pakistan, won about two dozen trophies, and became famous as an *ustād* (master). When in the last decade of the 20th century the interest in partridge fighting faded in Pakistan, he shifted to cockfighting, “I joined cockfighting because of my good breed hen (*naslī murghī*), when she died I left cockfighting.” Widely popular as an avian *hakīm* (a traditional healer), Ustad Ramzan now provided advice to many cockfighters, and among them was Imran Niazi.

Imran Niazi was in his early 30s and worked as a bus-stand manager. His friends called him Mani for short. His father, a police constable and a famous cockfighter of his time, migrated from Mianwali district to Kahrur Pacca in 1980s. Mani was born and raised in Kahrur Pacca, and later met Ustad Ramzan and became a devout disciple. Unlike pigeon flying, there is no systematic and long-standing tradition for the master/disciple relationship in South Punjabi cockfighting. This is perhaps because every cockfighting enthusiast keeps a small number of roosters and uses his own mastery (*ustādī*) to breed, train, and ready the bird to fight well. Nevertheless, Mani showed respect for Ustad Ramzan, and fulfilled each request from the increasingly frail master. When I first met Ustad Ramzan in January 2015, he called Mani and we three settled cross-legged on a carpet at Ustad Ramzan’s place. Amused by my interest, they both started explaining different feeding and training methods for gamecocks, however, their focus was on breeds. “*Aṣīl* is an honourable chicken, it is a thousand times better than *rezā*,” remarked Ustad Ramzan. “Yes, *rezā* cocks are very quick in attacking, but they cannot bear a good single blow,” corroborated Mani. Though *aṣīl* was a favourite choice for cockfighting, they both suggested that not all *aṣīl* possessed equal courage in a fight.

Courage to fight among gamecocks, according to Ustad Ramzan, comes through the hen rather than the cock. In the Philippines, Scott Guggenheim noted, cockfighters pen a proven winner rooster to an “exceptionally pretty hen, regardless of gene types” (1994: 144); in South Punjab, the hen is not selected because of its “beauty,” but rather the men select a hen on its breed and its history of producing fearsome cocks. Ustad Ramzan averred that in two-legged animals, the breed goes from the mother to younglings, and four-legged animals mostly possess the qualities of their father. However, this does not mean that the role of a cock is insignificant in mating; “A champion’s son will become a champion,” remarked Mani. Yet both Ustad Ramzan and Mani stressed the vital role of the hen, “Because a good breed [or blood from hen] means the cock will not flee from a fight.” A fleeing (coward) cock, as we will see below, is usually labelled as *bad-naslah* (mixed breed or bad blood). Such discussions about breeds, genes, and aesthetic attributes of the cocks reflect the deep interests and debates that surround this activity, and the degree of knowledge and expertise some people are said to possess.

Because grooming a winning cock requires years of personal and monetary investment, sharing this “winning formula” with others is rare. Many cockfighters would be reluctant to breed a bird with the opponent even if a large sum of money is offered. Ustad Ramzan narrated a fable about a farmer who did not give his pedigree birds to the Nawab (ruler) of the State of Bahawalpur. The narration goes:

The Nawab once visited a farmer’s house to get his superior breed hen and cock. The cock was 20 inches high with shiny feathers and long spurs, and never lost a single cockfight. The hen was also tall and beautiful with a shiny red comb. Upon the Nawab’s arrival, the poor man noticed his hidden intent and asked whether he could cook something in honour of his visit. When the Nawab agreed, the farmer slaughtered his treasured chickens, and asked his wife to cook. When the Nawab finished eating, he told the poor man the purpose of his visit and asked for the farmer’s pedigree hen and cock. The poor farmer smiled and replied, “Nawab sahib, you have just eaten those.”

The fable illustrates several points: it is about the ethos of hospitality; hierarchy; and subordination, especially of the lower class by their rulers. Yet it also highlights the subversive and cunning surrender of those expected to abide by demands made upon them. The poor farmer was clever enough to deploy the cultural expectations associated with hospitality and exchange to his advantage, and presented his chickens to the Nawab as a form of gift that ultimately undermined the latter’s objectives. Arguably, one could view the cock and hen as inalienable possessions of the poor farmer because they were self-cultivated, self-won, and self-made. Even when consumed by the Nawab, the birds remained as such: a gift attached to

the farmer, and an embodiment of his honour and intimate relationship. As the birds were a cooked “gift,” this therefore indicated a transformation that not only saved the farmer’s status and displayed his values of hospitality, but also re-affirmed his position without damaging his commitment to his chicken or to his *shauq*. For South Punjabi cockfighters, stories like this reiterate the importance of preserving the breed and bloodline of the fowls, and highlight the value of the more-than-human relationship.

Rana Ehsan also narrated this story when explaining different characteristics of a good breed. He was a middle-aged cockfighting enthusiast with a jovial demeanour from Dhanote Town, near Lodhran City. A good breed, according to him, can be identified from its physical features, “A genuine cockfighter can recognise a good breed from a distance, while the other cannot differentiate a bad chicken from a good one.” The points of a good cock, he later explained, are shine in its colour like a snake, long tail like a parrot, long shaped mouth like a mongoose, folded wings, big thighs and small shanks, and sharp beak. Similarly, a good hen must have a white beak, white eyes, white shanks, short neck, small neck bone, medium-sized cheeks and jaws, and small comb. “A perfect cock and hen are extremely difficult to find, but the pair who has more of these qualities, should be considered best for mating,” he argued.

Spring, usually the month of March, is favoured for mating. This time is chosen for two reasons: first, “this is a natural time for birds to mate,” reasoned Rana Ehsan. Second, cockfighting season ends in spring and cocks are left for mating. Cockfights in South Punjab are only held in winter; they start in mid-November and last until mid-March when the weather becomes too hot for the cocks to be able to fight. The belief goes that by mating, the cock loses its power, “A single drop of semen is equal to 100 drops of blood among both men and cocks,” observed Malik Khizar. Alter (1992) made similar observations, as he noted that the wrestlers of Banaras hold semen as a crucial container of power and stamina (1992: 129, 149). Because of this reason, South Punjabi cockfighters do not let their gamecocks mate during the fighting months. Even in spring, the cock is allowed to mate with the hen for 20 minutes in the early morning and 20 minutes in the afternoon for a single day. After that day, the rooster is left in open fields to play on the ground and develop its power in the wild. The hen lays and hatches eggs, and remains with the chicks for four to five months. In the summer (mostly from April–early September), cockfighters oversee the cock, the hen, and the chicks and provide them millet to eat twice a day. However, the actual feeding and training regimens starts from mid-September, when the cockerel is fed a special diet to build a strong and disciplined physique.

So far, I have described the fundamental importance of breeding for improving the quality of the cock. This highlights the choice and preferences cockfighters make as well as their beliefs about preserving the breed of chickens: a purity of breed indicates superior features. Maintaining such breeds reflects well on the cockfighters and enhances their potential to gain honour and glory in the arena. However, as we see below, the human-cock relationship is not limited to producing a pure breed cock. A good breed is sculpted through balanced diet and daily exercise. To display his “genuine *shauq*,” the cockfighter spends months feeding and training his gamecock with the expectation that when it fights in the arena, it will fight with courage and display formidable qualities.

Training and Diet

I first met Pir Syed Qutab Shah in December 2014 at a cockfighting competition near Bahawalpur City. His short white beard, a maroon embroidered Sindhi cap, and an agate ring in his right hand’s middle finger depicted what was obvious to many South Punjabi people, a sign of spirituality and noble ancestry. Referred to in short as Pir Sayen, he was in his early 50s and had kept his enthusiasm for fighting cocks for almost the last 20 years. Pir Sayen pointed out that not all gamecocks have the same fighting styles: some fight with their beak, others with spurs; some attack instantly while others wait for a good moment; some attack by flying high and others fight entirely from the ground; some are slow but strong while others are fast but cannot bear a single blow. According to him, the mastery of cockfighters lies in recognising these different capacities in a cockerel and feeding, training, and massaging the bird accordingly. He acknowledged that a good breed is very important, “fighting is always in the blood of cocks,” but stressed the process of crafting a champion rooster through extensive regimens of diet and exercise. For that purpose, not only Pir Sayen but many other men selected the cockerel’s feed carefully, spent enormous time in preparing it, and after feeding, invested hours in training and massaging the bird.

After a cockerel is chosen, it is conditioned to become a strong and fierce fighter. The first phase is to judge the full potential of the cockerel; if it is good in a covered-heel fight, then it is trained to improve its stamina, endurance, and power, or if the cockerel is good at spurs fighting, it is trained to strengthen its ability for quick and sharp attacks. At this stage, the cockerel is given a name that reflects its attributes and characteristics.

The training of the cockerel starts with 15–20 minutes of a morning running exercise where the trainer jogs with the cockerel. Then there is a jumping exercise (*bhari*) which, according to

Pir Sayen, is a type of push-up for roosters, “as wrestlers do push-ups to increase stamina, likewise we give jumping exercise to the cockerel to keep it in best physical shape.” Most cockfighters employ a jumping exercise that involves taking the cockerel one metre above ground and then dropping it on soft sand. According to most cockfighters, this exercise (that takes half an hour) increases the stamina and power of the cockerel, and improves its ability to make flying-attacks during cockfights.



Figure 3. 3: Through massaging and training, the men develop a strong bond with their gamecocks.

Many cockfighters believe that massage is equally critical for training and an exercise regimen must be complimented by a massage to be effective. Pir Sayen recommended that after the exercise, the cockerel should be dry massaged on its wings, thighs, and neck for 30 minutes. “The massage prevents fat from covering the cockerel’s body, and makes it strong like iron,” he declared. After the massage, many cockfighters choose to spray cold water through their

mouth onto the cockerel's face with a belief that this will prevent swelling during combat. Also, some foment the head, the wings, and the thighs of the rooster with a pad wet with salt water to make the animal's flesh hard. In the afternoon, the cockerel is massaged again as the man kneads (*ghuṭnā*) the bird's calves and legs for half an hour.



Figure 3. 4: Two enthusiasts dry massaging their rooster.

This process of extensive training and massaging means, as I suggested earlier, that the cockfighter spends a good part of his day with his roosters. Given that many enthusiasts are not people of means and need to work for their livelihood, some choose to take their roosters with them to work. For instance, a police constable will take his rooster to the police station, a vegetable vendor will keep his rooster underneath his vegetable cart, a schoolteacher will take a bird to school, and the bus conductor will hold it under his arms while haggling with passengers over daily fare rates. These are not rarities. Of course, there are cockfighters who for some reason cannot take their roosters to work and try to return home as early as possible during the winter months, and spend the remainder of the day with their animal. The birds are a crucial part of their owners' daily lives, and strongly guide their activities, priorities, and choices.

In the evening, after the rooster is given some water to drink, it is fed on a special diet called *khurāk* (a dietary supplement to pearl millet or wheat). Baksha emphasised that this special diet

makes the rooster strong and powerful. Baksha's birth name was Allah Bux, and he was a cockfighting expert in his 60s with a full-length silver beard. He told me that he peels almost 40 water-dipped almond kernels and grinds them with 15 pistachio kernels in mortar and pestle by adding some crystallised rock sugar, 10 grams of butter, and one gram of black pepper. After five minutes, he adds ingredients that aid digestion, such as two green cardamoms and a few fennel seeds. At the last stage, he adds a small amount of candied apple jam, and forms the mixture into small balls (*laḍo*, see Figure 3. 5). The quantity of almonds is increased when the cockerel matures; as he said, "I start with 25 almond kernels and go up to 100 kernels per day."



Figure 3. 5: Baksha showing khurāk laḍo, one is given to a rooster each day.

The *shauq* of training and fighting cocks is not simply an investment of time but also involves a considerable financial commitment. For instance, the ingredients discussed above are not cheap. Such a diet can amount up to 500 rupees per day (\$5). When discussing the significant financial outlay involved, Baksha and others resorted to the saying, "*shauq da ko'ī mul nhīn*" (*shauq* is priceless), denoting an affective dimension that cannot be simply monetised. These

men did not see their money as wasted, but as an investment whose returns are not measured by rational calculation but through achieving far wider social objectives: fulfilment of *shauq*, gaining honour, and demonstration of masculinity. Indeed, according to Bakhsh, a cock cannot be deemed ready to fight after consuming an expensive diet only; it should go through strong regimens of training to develop its stamina and sharpen its abilities. Financial investment in diet, in other words, is only part of a wider program for ensuring a competitive cock.

Once the cockerel reaches a year of age, its training is intensified with sparring exercises (*tapānah*, *kashnā*). These exercises are a crucial rite-de-passage, where the bird is tried out against some senior roosters. Baksha explained that he spars his cockerel with a mature rooster for 10 minutes on the first day, 15 minutes the next day, and 20 minutes on the third day, “so to give the cockerel a taste of cockfight.” During these training sessions, both roosters have their spurs covered with a cloth to protect them from any serious injury. Cockfighters at this time closely observe whether their cockerel has increased in strength and stamina, and alter its dietary and training regimens accordingly.

As the day of the cockfight gets closer, the feeding and training methods of the cock are changed. Some men prefer to cease the special diet and instead feed the gamecocks on pieces of bread (*roṭī ke ṭukre*). It is believed that pieces of bread prepare the cock for digesting a strong *gālah*—a dietary supplement given to gamecocks between the rounds. Two or three days before the bout, the training stops and the bird is given only regular massage. The night before the cockfight, I was told, is a tense one and many men say they cannot sleep. “It is like you are worried a night before important exams,” described Waso, “We are very nervous before fighting our cocks.” This nervousness is indeed to be expected, as we have seen that through breeding, training, massaging, and feeding, the men form an intimacy with the rooster and this attachment is tested during the competition. Secondly, in the arena, the gamecock comes under scrutiny, and is required to demonstrate courage, bravery, and strength—all of which reflect on its owner. Through their bird’s performance, the men are judged, evaluated, and either praised or insulted by their peers. The cockfighting arena is thus a stage where human-cock relationship is on public display, with careful evaluation of their expertise and commitment to this activity.

Section 2: Feathered Clashes

“There are two types of cockfighting,” explained Ghulam Hussain, “*khulā-kandā* [bare-heel fighting or spurs fighting] is like a sword battle and hardly lasts for 20–25 minutes, and *band-kandā* [covered-heel fighting or beak-to-beak fighting] is more like boxing where both roosters

fight for almost 40–50 minutes.” Ghulam Hussain, locally known as Ghamo, was a broad-shouldered man in his mid-40s with a thick moustache, and lived in Munshi Wala village near Lodhran City where he had a small mango farm. Driving his old Suzuki Mehran, he took me to a bare-heel cockfighting competition at Teerah Soling village, near the city of Bahawalpur. I was excited and somewhat frightened to see the “sword fight” where roosters were expected to fight with their natural sharp spurs to defeat (or kill) the opponent bird and humiliate its owner.

It is important to note that both type of cockfighting, “sword fight” (or bare-heel) and “boxing” (or covered-heel), are organised on Sundays in rural areas, either in the courtyard of a village school or in a village hospital to avoid police raids. “These days, the police are getting worse; after the arrival of the new District Police Officer, there are many raids,” Ghamo remarked. Rural areas are therefore relatively safe and selected because firstly, the police rarely raid in villages, and secondly; on the rare occasion when the police do raid, the men can flee into the fields easily. Often the courtyard of a hospital or a school (government buildings) is chosen to hold the event, as Ghamo pointed out, “If a cockfighting is organised at a Government place, the police will never know about the organiser.” Whereas, if the competition is held at a private residence, he suggested, the police can launch an investigation against the owner of that property. On Sundays, as rural hospitals (usually Basic Health Units) and schools are shut, the cockfighters usually enjoy the fight without worrying about any external interference. It took us almost an hour and half to reach the village school where the spurs fight was being organised. Enthusiasts, carrying their birds under their arms, greeted each other warmly. The cockfighting community is not a group of scattered men who only get together to fight their birds. Outside the arena, the men are on friendly terms, and form close bonds with each other, often meeting to chat about their birds. At the arena, they discuss the preparation of their roosters, their plans for lodging the bets, and introduce each other to their friends. On that day, however, most of the men debated the intensity of increased police raids. After greeting some cockfighters, we lounged on chairs arranged around a rectangular cockfighting arena. The audience soon surrounded the pit from every side, and the “sword battle” began.



Figure 3. 6: Layout of a South Punjabi cockfight.

Khulā-Kanḍā (bare-heel) Cockfighting

Razor-sharp metal spurs, pointed swords, blades, or spikes are not used in South Punjabi cockfighting. Rather, the natural spurs (*kanḍā*) are considered the birds' "swords." They can be lethal too and are filed to needle-like sharpness. Watching the first bout, Ghamo added that if the rooster is yet to develop its spurs to full length (usually a two year-old cock develops its spurs to full length), external spurs from a dead cock can be fitted on its heels with scotch tape. One of the participating cocks had external spurs fitted to its ankles. The process of fitting the spur is done with extreme caution because during the battle, no one is permitted to retie a falling spur. There is no rule over the length of the spur (usually spurs from 2½ to 3½ inches long are chosen); however, extra-long spurs are generally avoided because they can injure the bird itself.

A cockfight involves facilitation from various people. Unlike in other parts of the world (see for instance Marvin 1984: 64), South Punjabi cockfights (both "sword fight" and "boxing") are never declared draws. No matter how many rounds the competition lasts, the roosters keep fighting until the winner is decided. A round (*pānī*) lasts minutes, and only the handlers (*mahāwat*) are allowed to touch and facilitate the fighting roosters. There are two *ustāds* in the cockfighting arena (one from each party), who provide a specialised mixture (*gālah*) to the gamebirds to enhance their stamina.⁵³ Both *ustāds* and handlers are given some money by the

⁵³ Unlike pigeon flying, *ustāds* in cockfighting have a minimal role. At the cockfighting arena, people pay them for their services. As they do not assist at the time of feeding or training the cocks, they are not respected like the *ustāds* of pigeon flying.

owner of the fighting cock at the end of each fight as a token of their services. The average fee is around 300 rupees (\$3) for the *ustād*, and handlers receive 500 rupees (\$5) per fight. In other words, the outlay for the activity is relatively low, at around 1600 rupees (\$16).



Figure 3. 7: The process of fixing external spurs.

As Ghamo and I were watching the first bout of this “sword battle,” he extolled the beauty of the fight: how the cocks were dodging attacks, looking for a good move, hitting with the beaks, jumping high, and hitting with the spurs. As one of the cocks attacked with its spurs, a roar erupted from the people backing it and the excitement grew. “*Bahut ache*,” (very good) “*shābāsh*,” (well done) “*zabardast*,” (superb) and other admiring superlatives were shouted from audience, which was deeply absorbed. The birds continued to plunge and tried to plant their spurs on the adversary’s head, mingling their rustling wings, and dodging the blows, until the referee (*munṣif*)⁵⁴ announced the break (after six minutes of fighting) and the panting warriors were taken away by their handlers.

⁵⁴ *Munṣif* (literally, a referee) is a timekeeper in cockfighting. They are respected cockfighters whose authority or decisions are rarely questioned.



Figure 3. 8: A bare-heel cockfight in progress.

During the break, the handlers worked frantically to stimulate the gamecocks and keep them in good shape for the next round. They did so by deploying a range of techniques, from sucking their beak and face to removing blood-spots and spraying their faces with fresh water. Vitamin injections were given, and cotton dipped in kerosene oil (*battī*) inserted into their anus to “raise” the birds’ spirit. One contestant injured its eyes and beak during the combat, and the handlers performed a minor surgical operation to get it on its feet for the coming round (see Figure 3. 9). During this whole process, the handlers’ clothes were drenched in the roosters’ blood. Supplementing the handlers, the *ustāds* at this stage provided a special mixture (*gālah*) to the roosters to revitalise their energies, and the eager fighters were left again at the centre of the arena for the fight to recommence.



Figure 3. 9: A handler cleaning the wounds of an injured gamecock during the break.



Figure 3. 10: Two men fixing the broken beak of a gamecock during the break.

The next round was far shorter: once the half-blind rooster with a broken beak received a fatal blow, it was all over. Like others, Ghamo jumped with joy, throwing his shawl skywards, hands in my hands, and mimicking the final blow. The winner proudly kissed his battered rooster while the loser quietly collected the carcass and left. After about 10 minutes, the handlers fixed the spurs on the next fighting pair, and the second cockfight started. An average cockfighting competition involves eight cockfights per day, of 20-25 minutes duration for each.

It was during the third cockfight that the intensity and focus of the competition was suddenly disrupted, when a man came shouting “*polīs āndī pa’ī he*” (Police are coming). Almost 200 men were caught surprised in the school courtyard and a pandemonium followed. Half of them scattered in all directions, some on foot, other running towards their motorbikes and fleeing in all directions. The other half (including Ghamo and I) were paralysed by indecision. At the sight of three black police vans entering the school’s main gate, we managed to get our courage together and ran towards the western exit, jumping over the short school walls, crossing wheat fields, and finding refuge in a mosque, hoping the police would not search the “house of Allah.”

As I fled, I could only think about two things: the Punjab police and Clifford Geertz. Running was the only option: as a Pakistani, I knew that no matter how many documents I presented about my proof as a student and researcher, my presence at the cockfight meant I was implicated and would need to pay a bribe—a normal practice in South Punjab—to ensure my release. I also ran because I felt compelled to do so alongside my friends and informants, like Ghamo and other cockfighting enthusiasts. Later, I realised that my action reinforced their trust in me and many became more open about their life following the police chase, sharing their stories, and regularly inviting me to cockfighting competitions. Geertz’s police chase at a Balinese cockfight reflects a similar experience:

Getting caught, or almost caught, in a vice raid is perhaps not a very generalizable recipe for achieving that mysterious necessity of anthropological field work, rapport, but for me it worked very well. It led to a sudden and unusually complete acceptance into a society extremely difficult for outsiders to penetrate. It gave me the kind of immediate, insider-view grasp of an aspect of “peasant mentality” that anthropologists not fortunate enough to flee headlong with their subjects from armed authorities normally do not get (1973: 416).

Ghamo and I remained in the mosque for half an hour and then walked out warily. We joined other cockfighters across the road. The police remained at the arena for two hours, capturing a dozen cockfighters and confiscating five roosters. Travelling back, Ghamo said, “The purpose of police raids is to halt betting, not to stop cockfighting.” He said this was a matter of great

disrespect for the organiser that the police raided the event. According to Ghamo, participating in *khulā-kanḍā* (sword battle) was not safe anymore. As we will see in the gambling section, people bet more in “sword battles” than in covered-heel or “boxing” cockfight, hence the police tended to raid these more often. After the police incident, very few “sword battles” were organised that year. I attended about a dozen more “boxing” competitions (*baṇḍ-kanḍā*) during my fieldwork, and tried to identify, as my cockfighting friends did, some crucial differences between these two types of cockfighting.

Although roosters fight in both, “sword battle” and “boxing” cockfights are not same. The “sword battle,” as I have discussed above, is more about appreciating the speed, agility, and attacking manoeuvres of gamecocks. The “boxing” cockfight, as we will see below, is more focused on stamina, power, defence, and endurance. This is why light-weight roosters are selected for the “sword battle,” since they can continuously jump and attack the opponent with their spurs, while in the “boxing” cockfights, heavy weight roosters are chosen for their ability to hit with kicks rather than deploy spurs. “Covered-heel cockfights are a true test of a rooster’s abilities,” Mooda explained. He was a middle-age vegetable vendor from Kahrur Pacca. His birth name was Mehmood but among cockfighters, he was known as Mooda. According to him, the “sword battle” was more about luck (*qismat*) whereas the “boxing” fight was designed to test the breed and true potential of a cock. Like many other “boxing” cockfight fanciers, he rarely participated in “sword battles,” because the latter was, according to him, a *shauq* of impatient people.

Baṇḍ-Kanḍā (covered-heel fighting or beak-to-beak fighting) Cockfighting

The “boxing” cockfighting competition is also organised on Sundays at the courtyard of a government building. It usually starts at 10 o’clock in the morning and about six pairs fight on one day, each combating for about 40–50 minutes. Though the gamecocks are sometimes severely injured, I have not witnessed any fighting cock dying in a covered-heel cockfight. The reason was simple: like boxers wear gloves in the bout, gamecocks in this type of cockfighting have their natural spurs covered (see Figure 3. 11).



Figure 3. 11: Men covering the natural spurs for a covered-heel cockfight.

When Mooda had his rooster ready to fight, we participated in a “boxing” cockfight. This competition was organised in the *derah* (a spare place for men to sit, outside of the household) of Asif Khan Baloch, a landlord and relative of the Member National Assembly (MNA) of Lodhran district. Carpets and chairs were arranged at the centre of the *derah*. Mooda’s rooster, Jānbāz, was selected to fight against Javeed’s rooster as the third pair. When the first two pairs finished fighting, Mooda and Javeed were asked to bring their fighters into the cockfighting arena. Both roosters were dry-massaged by handlers, and then given to the handlers for combat.

It was half past one, the boisterous audience of almost 100 men fell silent, and the fight commenced. Both roosters started pecking each other’s face and head and attacked aggressively by leaping in the air. When the birds finished the first round, Mooda instantly grabbed Jānbāz, and started sucking the bloody head and neck of the animal with his mouth.⁵⁵ Later he sprayed salted water on Jānbāz’s face and body and placed a warm pad on the cock’s face. The special dietary mixture was offered to the bird in the hope that it would save Mooda from the humiliation of loss.

⁵⁵ Smith and Daniel (1975: 86) have called this “beak-to-mouth resuscitation.” It is believed that this practice is found everywhere among cockfighters.



Figure 3. 12: The fighting cocks are facilitated by their specified handler during the combat.



Figure 3. 13: After the break, the handlers are ready to unleash the fighters for the next round.

Almost 10 minutes later, Jānbāz was again left in the arena to face its adversary for the next round. After two more rounds, Jānbāz lost the contest by fleeing from the fight, and this, as

people later explained, was considered the most shameful way of losing. The other (less shameful) ways of losing a battle are when a bird surrenders (ceases to fight) or is picked up by the owner himself (when severely injured). However, if any runaway incident happens, the owner of the rooster and his supporters are blamed, and suffer humiliation and disgrace. The whole purpose of staging cockfighting, some argue, is to appreciate the unique quality of cocks to keep fighting despite injuries, so when a bird flees from the fight, it undermines the whole idea behind the cockfight. This act of escaping displays cowardice and non-masculine qualities of the gamecock. Such views seem to have universal appeal, as Jim Harris (1994) also noted, “a runaway chicken is hated by all cockfighters, and a runaway can never be a winner” (1994: 13).

As Jānbāz fled from the fight, we were all implicated in the loss, feeling disappointment and shame as its supporters. The opponent party dashed out into the arena, men shouting with joy, hugging each other, clapping, cheering, and mocking Jānbāz, and us by extension. A person from the crowd approached us, blaming the cock, “*aṣīl* cocks should never run away from the fight, no matter if they are kicked 100 times.” He and some other men from the opponent party argued that Jānbāz was not a true *aṣīl* but a bad breed (*bad-naslah*). Another man recalled the final blow, mimicking how Jānbāz fled with “120km/hour” speed to avoid death.

In South Punjab, the honour and prestige of an enthusiast lies with the performance of his gamecock rather than the end-result of the fight. A rooster that fights a hard battle and loses the combat (but does not run away) is still acknowledged by the audience for its courage and bravery. Losing or winning a single fight does not significantly alter the man’s status among his peers, what counts is the manner in which these successes or defeats are achieved. Even though temporary humiliation always follows a defeat, past successes are valued amongst peers, who acknowledge the mastery of the man in training and preparing roosters for the fight. This loss was a bitter one. As I stayed with Mooda to support him in his humiliation and listening to insulting jokes, I understood what it felt like to be involved in a cockfight where one’s *izzat* is at stake. It became increasingly clear that the cockfight is not merely a fight between two birds or a competition to win money through wagering; it was a public display of values, where honour and prestige could be gained or lost.

The cockfighting arena was a rare opportunity for the enthusiasts to compete against men of different classes and win *izzat*. In spite of the risk of losing the contest or the fighting bird, the cockfighting arena provided a sense of camaraderie, and a stage for receiving applause and

recognition from peers. If Jāṇbāz had won, the script of the story would have been different. There would have been ten minutes of celebration, people would have showered praise on Jāṇbāz and Mooda, and I would have shared with him the joys of status-elevation – even if temporarily. This was not the case, and following a shameful defeat, two silent men and one injured rooster were heading back east, leaving the dusty arena and orange sky behind.

Discussion: Izzat and Mardāneat

Several scholars have described the association of the cockfight with masculinity by drawing on psychological approaches. For instance, folklorist Alan Dundes explained the cockfight as “a thinly disguised symbolic homoerotic masturbatory phallic duel, with the winner emasculating the loser through castration or feminization” (1994: 251). In trying to explore the underlying meaning of the cockfight, Dundes argued that the participants of cockfights are not consciously aware of the symbolic structure of this activity; “if the participants consciously realised what they were doing, they would in all probability not be willing to participate” (1994: 275). Such an approach seems to me to be focused on individual traits, favouring the unconscious, with little consideration of the ethnographic context, symbolic actions, and social relations. My own account of South Punjabi cockfights avoids the Freudian and other psychological approaches. Rather, I seek to foreground how culturally meaningful ideas about what constitutes masculinity and honour are exchanged and displayed in the arena. This interpretive approach (to follow Geertz) relies on a thick description of both processes and events to foreground a way of life and practices. What I found important (and what was emphasised by my respondents) was the role of the cockfight in the continuous struggle of men and their bid to accumulate honour and display their masculinity. My analysis is not concerned with uncovering a sub-consciousness or suggesting an implicit psychological universe that underpins cockfighting. Rather, I contend, cockfighting in South Punjab is a gendered activity, largely contained to the male domain, and is continuously reproduced and modified through practices.

The process surrounding the fight, with the organisers, audience, gamblers, handlers, and fighters (the cocks) is an all-male affair. In the cockfighting pit, if a gamecock, after getting severely injured (sometimes blind from one eye), keeps fighting and eventually notches a victory, it is praised and admired for possessing masculine qualities. Inversely, if the rooster flees from the fight or surrenders (stops fighting), it is humiliated and blamed. The fighting

cock in the arena is expected to represent its owner, and should fight with courage and bravery, and carry on with strength.

Such traits are also valued in how men in South Punjab are expected to act in an assertive and demonstrative manner, while being cautious not to display behaviours associated with female traits, such as being passive, or by avoiding public gatherings. The “true” male (*juañ mard*) in South Punjab is expected to have three major characteristics: courage (*jur’at*), bravery (*dilerī*), and strength (*zor*). These attributes are said to be crucial for a man to surmount life’s many challenges, such as being able to provide and protect for one’s family, display courage in times of hardship, and defend the family honour. Similarly, a cock is expected to stay true to its nature and never leave its fighting ground during the cockfight. If a gamecock opts to run away from the fight, it is believed to have behaved like a hen. In the fighting arena, the cocks are surrogates of their owners and expected to embody and display male qualities. That is, when a cock fights with courage (*jur’at*) and without any fear (*dilerī*), and remains strong (*zordār*) despite having setbacks or injuries, its owner is acknowledged for his hard work in the training and feeding of the bird. However, if the cock fails to attack, fights without passion, or flees from the arena, this reflects poorly on the owner, who is subjected to humiliation from the audience. To an extent then, I argue, the cockfight arena is itself a site for the reproduction and assertion of masculine traits, where the symbolic capital associated with *izzat* can be obtained or lost.

In the specific context of the arena, the owner of the fighting cock is also expected to display characteristics of a “true” male. This means that he should participate fearlessly in the competition, stay calm in critical times, and encourage the rooster to attack despite serious injuries. If the man shows hesitation or reluctance (in presenting his cock to fight, decides to withdraw from the contest, or keeps complaining about the greater height and weight of the opponent cock), he is not only blamed momentarily but this insult is remembered for days and recalled repeatedly. Therefore, cockfighting can be seen as an activity that can leave its mark on the enthusiast’s *izzat* and *mardāneat*. Cockfighters told me that this *shauq* is for “true” men rather than the faint-hearted.



Figure 3. 14: A runaway cock is mocked and humiliated along with its owner.

To summarise, the activity of cockfighting is a performance where crucial masculine traits are reproduced and rehearsed. The arena becomes a stage where the human-cock relationship is tested and scrutinised, and both the gamecock and its owner are evaluated on their manly behaviours. The activity also defines and reiterates the qualities of *mardāneat* and encourages the rooster and the man to demonstrate courage, bravery, and strength. Such considerations lead to the next section where I examine the development of friendship through the masculine performance of cockfighting, and explain how this contributes to and influences the men's practice of gambling.

Friends, Brothers, and Gamblers

Malik Khizar Bohar, the person whose words opened this chapter, told me that he would not give his pedigree chicken to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, however; he said, "If a poor cockfighting brother requests, I will give it without thinking." As discussed earlier, Malik Khizar was an affluent man and belonged to *ashrāf* (noble) of the village Khan-da-Kho, yet he never hesitated to form friendships with lower class enthusiasts through his *shauq*. For him,

the *shauq* of cockfighting should not be undermined by the external considerations of class, sectarian, ethnic, or other social divisions. Rather, he stressed the egalitarian nature of this *shauq*, where one's economic and social status was irrelevant. "I would prefer the company of a poor cockfighter than the MNA (Member National Assembly) of district Lodhran," he stated. Such statements were common from cockfighting enthusiasts of the area and were reflective of a shared ethos that bonded them first and foremost as *shauqeen*. Claims like this also suggest that sharing similar passion overrides the everyday social cleavages. Indeed, that is the nature of *shauq*, as I argue throughout, it transcends everyday life.

To signal such transcendence, South Punjabi cockfighters refer to each other as *bhirā* (brother). Within this brotherhood (*bhirapī*) of cockfighters, class and other social differences are seen as meaningless, and the purity of *shauq* is considered crucial. The men usually get together to form a community of shared interest, and exchange ideas about the feeding or training techniques. At the arena, this relationship of brotherhood becomes more explicit. The enthusiasts, irrespective of their social and economic differences, affectionately greet each other and sit down together on the ground to watch the alluring fight. Other scholars have also observed the egalitarian nature of such communities of interests. Narayan (2016) during her study of the women singers of Kangra noted that because of their *sukinni* (or *shauq*) of singing, many "sisters" sit together in spite of their caste and other social differences (2016: 98, 102). Anthropologist Wilkinson-Weber (1999) also described how *shauq* allows people to form lifelong intimacies despite rigid social distinctions. While working with Lucknow embroiderers, she noted that both Muslim and Hindu women engage in the *shauq* of embroidery, and religious differences are hardly pronounced (1999: 133). Such observations reaffirm that sharing of a common *shauq* allows people to form relationships that go beyond established social categories, even in class, caste, and religiously conscious societies.

However, if the *shauq* of keeping and fighting cocks is generally seen as a pure enthusiasm—requiring long-term commitment and genuine passion for the activity—then the pursuit of money is seen as one bearing tensions. If a person participates in a cockfight only for the money, he is believed to lack "genuine *shauq*." For instance, Imran Niazi accused another cockfighter, Baksha, of being money oriented, saying that "he only participates in cockfight for the love of money (through betting), and does not have a real *shauq* of cockfighting." Waso similarly scoffed at Malik Khizar, detailing that "he keeps chickens in order to sell their chicks, and has not the courage to fight his roosters." Profiting from the *shauq* is thus frowned upon. I

will have more to say about the role of money in Chapter 6, where I examine in detail the criticism and tensions that arise when money and *shauq* are intermingled. But here this complex interrelationship begs the question: if profiting from *shauq* is criticised then how can the explicitly monetary and morally derided activity of betting (*jowā*) be so central to the practice of cockfighting?



Figure 3. 15: Two cockfighting “brothers,” Pir Sayen (left) and Ghulam Hussain (right).

The answer lies in the “rules” of cockfighting. Like in most places of the world, a cockfight in South Punjab proceeds with betting. According to my interlocutors, betting serves two functions. First, it increases seriousness in the fight. When a man bets on fighting cocks, he bets a part of himself and thus takes the whole bout as a serious pursuit rather than mere fun. Second, betting allows friends to display their loyalties and support the cockfighter. Therefore, betting is a carefully considered, supervised within the context of cockfighting and underpinned by cultural ideas about seriousness of “play” and the continuity of social relations. Similar to Geertz’s account of cockfighting in Bali, we find two types of wagering involved in cockfighting in South Punjab; a *central bet*, which is made before the combat and an *outside bet* that is made during the cockfight.

The temporal dimension of betting—before and during—is significant. No cockfight commences without the “central bet,” arranged prior to the fight. Such a bet provides an opportunity to the audience to wager money and show their allegiance to the participating cockfighters. Both cockfighters collect money from their friends at the arena and submit it to the referee. As per my calculations from a sample of almost 80 cockfights, the average central bet on a single pair in a covered-heel (boxing) cockfight was 10,000 rupees (about \$100) and in bare-heel (sword battle) cockfights, it was 25,000 rupees (about \$250). The difference in the betting amount in both types of cockfighting was marked by the duration of the combat. In bare-heel, the rooster fought for less time and attracted more wagers, while in covered-heel the contest went on for many rounds and inspired the audience’s attention towards the fight rather than the result (or money).

The monetary backing by the cockfighter’s friends is said to show their support of the man and their confidence in the fighting bird. Betting is done collectively, combining small amounts of money from many friends. A man cannot simply appear in the arena with his gamecock and money and demand to participate in a fight. To participate, one should have the support of one’s friends who can back him up and wager on the fighting rooster. In other words, money cannot buy an entry ticket into the arena, nor can a prized cock; it is a necessary but not sufficient condition of participation. The bets are there as a public demonstration of one’s social relations and endorsement of fellow *shauqeen*.

What is equally intriguing is the cap on the amount generally considered for such bets. People are discouraged to place more than 1000 rupees (about \$10) on a cock, as Waso told me, “Cockfighting is not about making money; money is there only to boost the thrill and to enjoy the fight.” This may also be related to the egalitarian nature of this *shauq*, where men are praised for not displaying wealth and power, or rendering the event as overly commercial. In other words, the rules around wagering ensure that the potentially corrupting influence of money is curtailed and does not impinge on genuine passion associated with *shauq*. Indeed, this regulated form of betting reinforces the notion of *shauq* by showing restraint and consideration, rendering money as more of a prop than an end in itself. Hence, people constantly reaffirm that one should never be motivated by profit when engaging in *shauq*.

The “outside bet” takes place during the combat and can be lodged at any time over the duration of the fight, that is, as discussed earlier, on average 20 minutes in bare-heel and 40 minutes in covered-heel fights. The lengthy duration of combat allows the participants to bet on the

winning cock during the battle, shouting the odds by indicating the colour of the favourite cock “*jāwā 1000 per 2000 māry?*” (1000 for 2000 if the *jāwā* colour rooster wins?). If someone from the opponent’s party is willing to accept the challenge, he will respond and the bet is placed.

To my surprise, there were no dishonoured bets. The reason for this, as detailed by my respondents, was that all the audience were cockfighters and everyone policed and honoured the rules of engagement. “If a person accepts a bet, he would pay it in any case,” remarked Malik Khizar. This was in line with the local norms and values: a man should honour his words. If a man refuses to pay his bets, he not only risks losing his “membership” in the cockfighting group, he can be socially excluded and derided as unreliable, dishonest, and ultimately not a “real” man. In other words, cockfighting and betting reinforce the values that underpin masculinity in South Punjabi society.

For Geertz (1973), betting around cockfighting in Bali was divided into large bets that generated much interest from the audience; and shallow bets that were less dramatic. In South Punjab, the amount of betting does not necessarily define the fight. Every fight is important, and every cock is different. As discussed earlier, bets serve as a token of participation in the cockfight, to raise stakes in the battle, to show commitment of friends, and to display the audience’s confidence in a participating cock’s fighting abilities. Rana Ehsan commented, “when you have your money involved, no matter how small it is, you will enjoy the pleasure more (*dheer mazā cheso*), and carefully watch the fight.” Similarly, Pir Sayen, while massaging his winner rooster concluded, “cockfighting is not about winning or losing money; it is to see how your hard work is paid off, and how an *aṣṭīl* can fight like a real man.” There is a consensus among the enthusiasts that bets are only to spice the fight further, not a means of getting pecuniary benefits.

The support shown by friends at the time of betting extends outside the arena, informing the domains of exchange and reciprocity that *shauqeen* cockfighters cultivate and maintain. Friends and “brothers” keep close contact in everyday life, and support each other. For instance, when the police arrested a dozen men during the raid (discussed above), a wealthy cockfighter managed to secure their release by using his political connections. During my fieldwork, I noticed that many cockfighters rely on each other for help and support during important phases of their lives, extending well beyond the realm of their cockfighting *shauq*. They would help each other in opening a bank account, hiring a lawyer, suggesting a doctor, purchasing seeds

and fertilisers for their crops, transferring land ownership, getting a visa, enrolling one's child into school, or even solving issues with one's in-laws.

The cockfighting community is comprised of men belonging to different classes, who usually come under societal criticism because of their association with the practice of gambling, cruelty to a holy bird, and waste of money and time (see Chapter 5). However, these criticisms help the men develop a strong bond and form a subculture or community of interest. This subculture relies on some fundamental principles that are on display in the performance of the fight: diligence, honesty, morality, and commitment. True enthusiasts are expected to act in accordance with these values.

Conclusion

Taking its lead from Geertz's seminal study on the Balinese cockfight (1973), this chapter expands on different modalities of the human-cock relationship in South Punjab. I have shown that South Punjabi cockfighting enthusiasts usually see gamecocks as endowed with distinct personalities, combat styles, and histories of success or defeat. The men breed their best pedigree birds, raise cockerels, and feed and train them for combat. In order to win the fight, they spend many hours and invest resources. When a man brings his cherished gamecock into the arena to win or die, this inter-species relationship is tested. There the cockfighter and the rooster perform and gain *izzat* and *mardāneat*. In the masculine arena of Punjabi cockfighting, the audience, supporters, and friends also congregate to praise the combative spirit of the winner gamecock, and humiliate the coward chicken that flees from the fight.

South Punjabi male enthusiasts take the *shauq* of cockfighting to accumulate symbolic capital. The men invest days, weeks, months, and even years to prepare their chicken for the fight. They encourage the rooster to fight with courage (*jur'at*), bravery (*dilerī*), and strength (*zor*)—three basic qualities associated with “true” male in South Punjab. When successful, the cock not only increases the status of its owner, it also helps him to build solid friendships that can transcend class and other social differences. The community of cockfighters then becomes affective and instrumental on different occasions and provides help to each other in different settings.

As the *shauq* of cockfighting allows South Punjabi enthusiasts to increase their *izzat* and *mardāneat*, these symbolic gains are also achieved through other avenues, such as dogfighting. Unlike cockfighting, dogfights are organised as public events, usually held near festivals where

a very large audience can watch the activity. The next chapter examines the human-dog relationship in South Punjab, and discusses how the canine is regularly fed and trained, and fought in the arena with the expectation of performing like a human wrestler.

CHAPTER 4: The Spectacle of Dogfighting: Amplified Masculinity⁵⁶

In 2014, I met Makhan Pehlwan, who told me about a dogfighting competition that was going to be organised on 24 October in Hussainabad. Makhan was a muscular man in his early 30s with a gregarious demeanour. His name had an interesting story. His birth name was Iqbal, and from his childhood, he was a healthy boy. His father Ashiq decided to make him a wrestler (*pehlwān*) and named him Makhan (literally butter). As the wrestlers in South Punjab consume large quantities of butter (*makhan*), *ghī* (a form of clarified butter), almonds, milk, and other “strong” diets; his name reflected his soon-to-be status. However, despite his protein-rich diet and laborious training regimens, burly Makhan Pehlwan never won a competition in his wrestling career. Considering his persistent cold streak, his father ceased giving him butter, and diverted effort and resources to his younger son Abid. Unlike Makhan, his brother Abid became a successful wrestler and won many bouts. Apart from wrestling, many men of the family had a long-standing interest in dogfighting. Most men of the family, including the father and two sons were dogfighting enthusiasts and busied themselves feeding and training their fighting dog, and making it ready for upcoming dogfights.

The parallel between dogfighting and men’s wrestling is common in South Punjab. Fighting dogs are compared with human wrestlers; first, because they are both fed and trained in similar fashion, and secondly because both dogfighting and wrestling are avenues where one can accumulate symbolic capital (honour, esteem, and prestige) and reproduce the traits of dominant masculinity—courage to fight, unyielding bravery, and display of absolute strength. Makhan might have been unimpressive as a potential wrestler, but his extensive knowledge of dogfighting was extraordinary, and he became my guide. When he learned that I am “writing a book” on dogfighting, he told me about a famous dogfighting competition at Hussainabad, which I should visit.

As the date of the competition drew closer, I found an aura of enthusiasm enveloping dogfighting aficionados. The event was announced on local radio, and the news of the fight circulated through rural networks. On the given day, I accompanied Makhan and we travelled almost 30 kilometres on his motorbike to reach the dogfighting arena. Makhan’s family dog was not participating in the competition, yet he was excited to watch and scout (*daikhan sambhālan*) others’ dogs, “how they have been trained and how they are going to perform.”

⁵⁶ An earlier version of this chapter is being published by the journal, *Society & Animals*, Brill.

The dogfighting was being organised as part of a local festival (*mela*) and the arena was almost two acres wide circled by the crowd of almost 5000 men. The male audience seemed to cover all ages and all social classes, and were avidly watching two bloody, tall and fierce dogs fighting. Elbowing our way forward, we soon reached the front row and cast our eyes on the fighting canines.

Makhan took his mobile phone out and observed the time; this was, as he later explained to me, “to note the duration of the fight, and evaluate the stamina and endurance of the dogs.” To my surprise, Makhan was familiar with the winning history of both fighting dogs, and even indicated a dog who, according to him, has raised the hairs on his back and was close to losing the contest (see also Matz 1984: 3). After almost two more minutes of fighting, the dog that Makhan identified as the loser, yelped and lost the fight.

All of a sudden, the silent crowd became boisterous, the winning dogfighter picked up his dog on his shoulders, and drummers (*dhol* players) along with other local minstrels played “joyous” melodies. About 15 men from the winning group started dancing by raising arms and synchronising legs (see Figures 4. 1). The loudspeakers were bursting with praise for the winner dogfighter, “dog of Sajjad Joya has won the combat (*Janāb Sajjād Joy’ā dā kuttāh muqābalaḥ jit gyā*). Friends of the winner gave money (*veyl*) to the announcer, drummers, and minstrels as a reward.⁵⁷ Some even bought rose garlands for their winner friend. Holding the leash of the winner animal, the dogfighter and his 10 years old son proudly walked around the arena and received applause from the audience. All this performance was directed towards the defeated dogfighter and his friends, who quietly carried their canine and left the arena. After almost 10 minutes, the winning party left the dogfighting arena and the next dogfight began.

⁵⁷ *Veyl*, Hamza Alavi (1972: 15) has suggested, is a type of “debt” that is provided to local minstrels (*mirāsī*) by the members of one’s *birāderī* (descendants of a common known male ancestor). The host to the donor reciprocates this “debt” when the latter celebrates an occasion. Among dogfighters, friends pay *veyl* on behalf of the dogfighter, and the latter reciprocates when any of his friends fight his canine.



Figure 4. 1: Dogfight celebrations.

Dogfighting aficionados belong to diverse social classes, ranging from politicians, landlords, and village chiefs to police officers, school teachers, and veterinary doctors, to those who are tailors, small farmers, and livestock keepers. Like pigeon flying and cockfighting, dogfighting is an all-male activity; organised by men, watched by men, and participated in by male canines. Yet dogfighting is different from pigeon flying and cockfighting in several key ways; first it does not involve gambling (or prizes), second the dogs are not assisted in the fight by handlers, third the activity is organised at a local festivals (*melas*). Dogfighting is a fight of honour and prestige, organised formally, and watched by a crowd of thousands. Similar to cockfighting, the dogfighting arena is a site for enacting South Punjabi masculinities, where traits like courage (*jur'at*), bravery (*dilerī*), and strength (*zor*) are celebrated whereas retreat, surrender, and hesitation are mocked as cowardice. In this chapter, I contend that human-dog interactions in South Punjab—during breeding, feeding, training, and fighting the animal—become explicit as a type of *shauq* that expresses and validates the dominant masculine traits (*mardāngī*) and helps a man to accumulate honour and prestige (*izzat*).

Dogfighting is not only the fight of canines but is also a man's struggle to compete for status and reproduce masculinities through practice (cf. Ortner 1984: 144–157). Dogfighting is a conspicuous performance aimed at entertaining the audience, and at instilling hegemonic masculine traits in the crowd (see Schechner 1993: 20). By participating in dogfighting, people admire the courage of canines, their bravery in the fight, and the strength that allows them to

keep fighting despite injuries. The large audience expects the dogs to be fearless, brave, and strong like a “true” man. As discussed in the previous chapter, these three dominant masculine attributes are highly valued in rural South Punjab, and are on display in competitive events, including men’s wrestling. In fact, dogs are commonly compared to local wrestlers, whose skills and techniques are designed to disempower the opponent in physical combat. By drawing comparison with wrestling, I focus on dogfighting in rural South Punjab, and take this activity as a productive lens through which I examine how such masculine attributes are rehearsed, reproduced, and reaffirmed.

The chapter further explicates how the passion for dog keeping influences the social lives of dogfighters and reinforces a value system marked by care, hard work, discipline, and domestication. I discuss the *shauq* of dogfighting, with an emphasis on the human-animal relationship that develops while breeding, feeding and training dogs. One of the key differences between this *shauq* and the other two discussed above, is that it is centred around a *haram* (polluted) animal. By examining the canine’s material and cultural status—as a polluted, impure, and unholy animal—in South Punjabi Muslim society, I argue that the practice of keeping and fighting dogs allows the men to compete against their peers for *izzat* and status, with the aim of demonstrating their mastery, skills, and expertise to a large crowd in the dogfighting arena. Like pigeon flying and cockfighting, dogfighting is not understood as a “sporting activity”; rather, it is a *shauq* that articulates honour and prestige through a performance of masculinity (*mardāneat*). However, unlike pigeon keeping or cockfighting, it involves the active participation of spectators, who not only judge the merits of fighting canines but also affirm the winner’s status and appreciate his hard work with the dog.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first discusses the status of different types of dogs in South Punjab, their hierarchy as detailed by dogfighters, and their positioning as elaborated through Islamic discourse. The second section explores the *shauq* of keeping dogs. It explains the human-dog intimacy by focusing on ways in which the dogs are named or decorated. This inter-species attachment becomes more obvious through breeding, vaccination, feeding, and training the canine, as the man invests his energies, time, and resources to prepare the animal for fighting. The last section discusses the activity of dogfighting, and explicates how the men achieve various symbolic and economic rewards through this practice. Finally, the chapter discusses how the *shauq* of dogfighting (like pigeon flying and cockfighting) allows enthusiasts to form a subculture and foster long-lasting social bonds.

Section 1: Putting Dogs in a Hierarchy

Dogs in South Punjab (and in most of Pakistan) are subject to contradictory forms of care: sometimes they are loved, petted, and even cuddled, but for most of the time they are kicked, beaten with sticks, and are victims of abuse. At the start of my fieldwork, dogfighters clarified that there are different types of dogs through which their status is determined. They offered a typology where fighting dogs (*larāke kutte*) perched on top of the hierarchy, followed by hunting dogs (*shikārī kutte*), guarding dogs (*rakhwālā kutte*), dogs for bear baiting (*rechāke kutte*), short dogs (*piste kutte*), and stray dogs (*losī* or *rol kutte*).

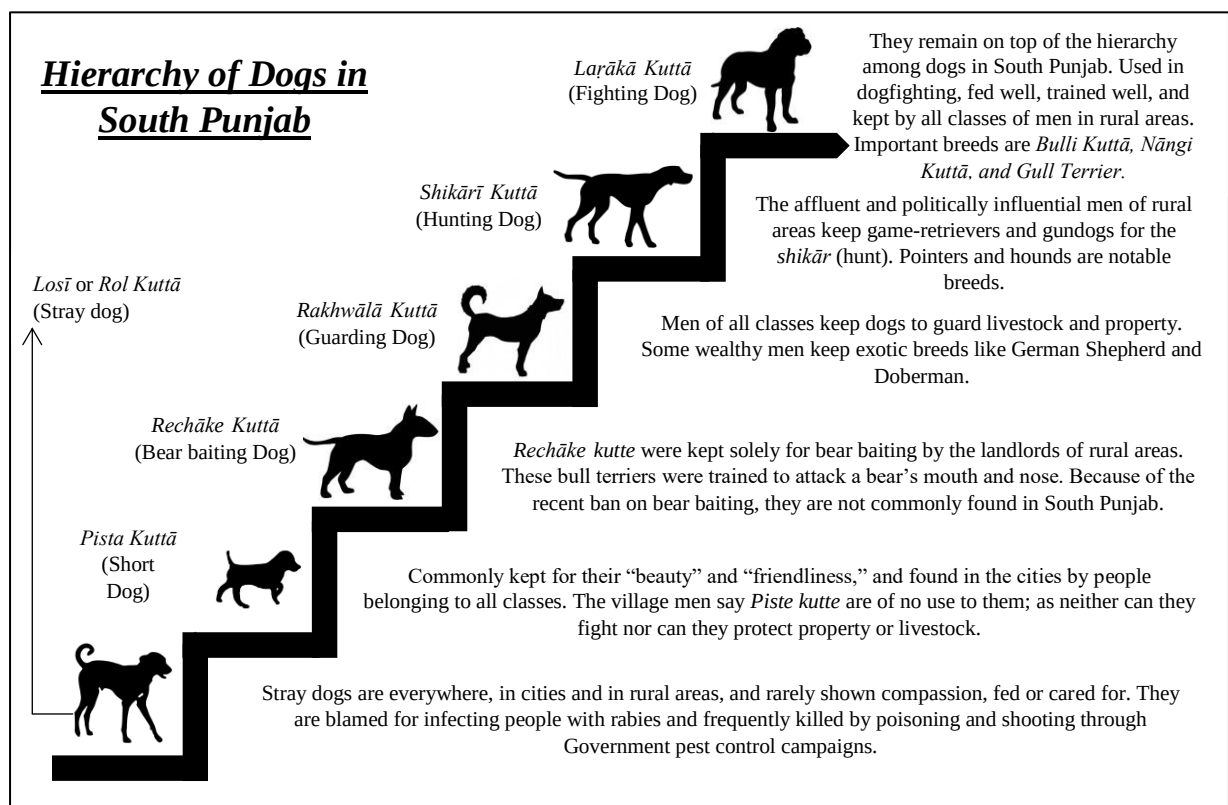


Figure 4. 2: Hierarchy of dogs in South Punjab, as described by dogfighters.

According to this hierarchy, fighting dogs are highly valued whereas stray dogs are despicable creatures. Packs of stray dogs are usually found on the outskirts of villages and considered a threat. They roam the streets at night and scavenge waste from the dump heaps. In the past, they were killed in large numbers on the orders of the Municipal Government by strychnine poisoning and shooting. This large-scale elimination was aimed at pest control, tackling the increasing cases of rabies, and to maintain order in public space.

When village people do keep dogs, it is usually to guard property and livestock. Although these guarding dogs are allowed in the household, they keep a distance from their human caretakers. They are retained for instrumental reasons only and trained to avoid contact with objects or foodstuffs used or consumed by humans. According to a famous local saying, when a dog takes away bread, it loses its privilege to enter the house (*kutti tukar cā gaī, apnī pat vanjā gaī*). Accordingly, a village man proudly stated in a focus group discussion organised at Manna's house, "I have trained my dog in a way that it will never touch bread until I ask it to do so." The popular belief is that if a dog even sniffs food, the food becomes unclean, contaminated, polluted, and should never be consumed. Reasons may vary, but most people resort to a "germ" type of explanation, stating that a dog's saliva is dirty and carries diseases. I will explain later in the chapter how dogs are perceived more broadly, for now I want to emphasise that a well-trained dog, which refrains from touching things used by humans, reflects well on its owner.

The hunting dog, bear baiting dog, and dogs of short height are not common in South Punjab. The affluent and those who have political contacts that enable them to practice illegal game hunting with impunity mostly keep hunting dogs. Similarly, a few landlords keep bull terriers for bear baiting. In Chapter 1, I have discussed how the British introduced bear baiting and dogfighting into the subcontinent as part of their efforts to develop relationships with the local elites. However, after the ban on bear baiting by the Wildlife Department for protecting the endangered Asiatic black bear, bull terriers in general became hard to find in South Punjab. They are now replaced with gull terriers that are specifically used for dogfighting. Lastly, the short dogs (*piste*) are the least favoured in rural South Punjab as they protect neither property nor livestock, and cannot fight bears or other dogs. However, given the rise of companion dog culture in some urban areas, a few families do keep *piste* (mostly with white fur) as both a status symbol and for what they consider to be their "beauty" and "friendliness."

The hierarchy of dogs presented above reflects the opinion of rural South Punjabi dogfighters. However, a contrast with the urban middle and upper-middle classes of central Punjab (Lahore, Sialkot, Faisalabad, and so forth) paint a very different picture. For instance, the Kennel Club of Pakistan (established in Lahore in 1947) organises numerous dog shows in different urban centres on an annual basis.⁵⁸ The purpose of these dog shows is to judge the purebred and reward the dog owner with internationally recognised certificates. Both urban women and men

⁵⁸ These dog shows are organised in association with Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) and sponsored by popular brands of pet food (such as Royal Canin). FCI is a Belgium based representative organisation of Kennel Clubs from 91 countries. The organisation aims to promote, set standards, and keep records of purebred dogs.

who own foreign dog breeds take part in these shows. Most of these people not only have the resources to keep purebred Huskies, Pointers, Poodles, Labradors, or Cocker Spaniels, but they also hire servants who care for the dogs, feed them, and take them on daily walks. Dog shows like these receive substantial media coverage, and function as a sign of *distinction* for rich dog owners (Bourdieu 1984).⁵⁹ However, this can all be seen as a modern form of *shauq* where canines are not used for fighting but are raised to accumulate status and other symbolic gains. In this *shauq*, the dog is not expected to display courage, bravery, and strength, but is praised for its friendly behaviour towards other dogs and humans, and for its composure and flexibility in being handled by the judges. In this context, where the evaluation is based on aesthetic measures, the value system shifts from masculine attributes towards material concerns in order to spotlight the class difference.

Religious Consideration of Dogs and the Symbolic Order

While in the cities of central Punjab, having a dog is to keep the pace with the newly emerging middle-class sensibilities, the case in the rural areas is very different. In rural South Punjab, keeping a dog—as a pet or otherwise—is far from common. During my fieldwork, I noticed that hardly 10 per cent of people keep dogs.⁶⁰ The most common reason for not keeping a dog is its tension with local Islamic interpretations. The idea of developing an intimate relationship with a dog, for instance petting or cuddling it, feeding it dairy products (or “pure” things such as milk, butter, *ghī*), and spending time with it is considered against South Punjabi values.

While pigeons and roosters are *halal*, and keeping them in one’s abode and feeding them is considered a virtue (Tottoli 1999: 144), the dog is a *haram* animal and ritually impure. Two modes of understanding the world are aligned here: the culturally constituted understanding of purity and pollution as per Islam with a modern system of hygiene and health.

This is in line with the symbolic order, which Mary Douglas maintained was critical for understanding how cultures organise their worlds. Douglas was especially concerned with discovering an overarching order of things that could explain why some “things” (objects, foods, animals, people, and places) are considered polluting while others are regarded as pure. By providing the taxonomic schema of kosher and non-kosher animals discussed in Leviticus,

⁵⁹ From 2008, some famous English-language newspapers (*Express Tribune*, *The News*, and *Dawn*) and popular television news channels (Geo News and Dunya News) have provided substantial coverage of these dogs shows and are reshaping the discourse on human-dog relationships in Pakistan.

⁶⁰ The number is much lower in comparison with other countries. For instance, in Australia, according to the Animal Health Alliance (2013: 5), about 39 per cent of households own a dog and 29 per cent own a cat.

she contended that those objects that do not fit into the symbolic order of any cultural system were considered “matter out of place,” and thus become unholy (1966: 36). She argued that cloven-hoofed animals that chew the cud (such as cattle, goat, and sheep) and fishes with fins and scales were described as kosher because they fall under the symbolic order of pure, proper, and are thus considered holy. In contrast, those animals that were neither cloven hoofed nor chew the cud (or do not have one of these characteristics, such as the pig, camel, hare, and badger), and fishes without fins and scales did not fall under the cherished order and were regarded as impure, improper and thus unholy. The symbolic order of *halal* and *haram* animals in Islam is different from what has been discussed in Leviticus or interpreted by Douglas. The major Islamic texts (the Qur’ān and Hadith) forbade the meat of dead animals, predators, and pigs, cats, dogs, and donkeys. There are diverse interpretations of the status of other animals in *Shia* and *Sunni* schools of thought and other jurisdictions, where, for example some consider rabbit and horse as *halal* while others take them as *haram*. However, in order to avoid digression, my discussion will remain focused on dogs, primarily in the South Punjabi context.

Unlike other *haram* animals that are not polluted (such as cat or parrots), canines are considered the absolute embodiment of pollution and dirt. During an interview, Mufti Ahmed, an Islamic scholar based at a Madrassa in Kahrur Pacca city, explained that Islam forbids keeping a dog, but Muslims can keep a dog for instrumental reasons such as for hunting or guarding. He narrated a hadith, according to which if anyone keeps a dog, aside from hunting or guarding purposes, a *qirāt* (a unit of value) of his reward will be deducted daily (Dawud, 2844). In addition, he insisted that if a dog sniffs or licks any pot or vessel, the utensil becomes unclean and need to be washed with water for seven times before using it again. A functionalist explanation is useful here in interpreting Mufti Ahmed’s version of Islamic interpretation of dogs. The dog in traditional Arab society performed two crucial functions, hunting and guarding, and so it was allowed to be domesticated. Whereas dogs’ saliva (and bite) was believed to contain diseases (such as rabies), and again for the health-related reasons it was discouraged to keep in the house or to lick the utensils. In other words, the canine’s association with dirt and disease meant it was viewed as a contagious creature, and placed at the margins of the social system except when the animal was deemed worthy in performing certain tasks.

Historian Alan Mikhail argued that Muslims have not always considered dogs as polluted. Citing some accounts from Al-Ajhuri (an Egyptian religious scholar of the mid-16th to 17th century), Mikhail highlighted that the Prophet prayed in the presence of dogs and many of his

companions owned and raised puppies (2015: 79–80). Other than their use for herding, hunting, and protection, dogs consumed garbage and kept city streets clean (2015: 82). Because of this function, dogs were provided food and protection in many Muslim cities, and those found guilty of violence against canines were strongly punished (2015: 81). However, in the early 19th century, as garbage started to be considered a threat to public hygiene in urbanising societies, so were dogs. The animal was no longer seen as productive but as a noise polluter, a source of filth, a potential vector for diseases, and a menace to social order (2015: 85–88). Mikhail argues that this relatively recent change in Muslims’ attitude towards dogs is now dominant amongst Muslims and others who believe that the dog was always considered polluted in Islam (Mikhail 2017).

Mikhail’s analysis is supported by the status of dogs in the Qur’ān itself. In the Qur’ān, dogs have been discussed six times in total (5:4, 7:176, 18:18, 18:22 [three times in the last verse]), and we find no mention of their dirty or polluted status. In fact, dogs’ positive attributes are mentioned (like loyalty and companionship), which are featured in a well-known discussion of “The People of The Cave” (Chapter 18). The story describes a group of young believers who fled to save their lives from an evil king and took shelter in a cave where they fell into deep sleep for more than 300 years. Their companion dog lay stretched out at the entrance of the cave and guarded the men. The story celebrates the loyalty and fidelity of the dog and its guarding skills. It also depicts the dog as a trustful companion and focuses on the human-animal attachment. In other words, while the dog is commonly considered a polluting animal that is best kept away from the home, there are important religious stories that give it a more elevated position because of its unique qualities to befriend humans and display loyalty.

In addition to the Qur’ān’s positive depiction of dogs, many accounts from the Prophet encourage compassion towards the animal. Basheer Laar, a farmer and a dogfighting enthusiast in his mid-40s, narrated a fable from the Prophet’s accounts that depicts the virtue of kindness towards dogs.⁶¹ He told me a story about a prostitute who was forgiven her sins because she felt compassion for a panting dog whose tongue was lolling from thirst. The woman made a rope of her scarf, tied it to her shoe, and drew out some water from the well and quenched the canine’s thirst. Because of this act, she was promised a place in paradise. Basheer Laar concluded that there is reward for practicing compassion to all animals whether they are *halal* or *haram*. The symbolic parallel between the prostitute and the dog is important here. The

⁶¹ A similar version of this fable can be found in some *hadiths*, such as Al-Bukhari 3467, and Al-Muslim 2245b.

prostitute herself a symbol of impurity, and an embodiment of moral, physical, and occupational pollution, was able to show compassion to the vilest of creatures. Perhaps it is her marginal position that made her experience the disdain and negligence of others, and put her in a better position to understand the sufferings of the panting dog. As such, she was expunged of all sins and elevated from her status; and presented as a model of compassion. Sufis narrate this fable to highlight that the prostitute was given ample reward for her selfless act as she saw “humanity” in the non-human and nourished the thirsty dog (Nurbakhsh 1989: 28–29; Fakhar-i-Abbas 2009: 38).

Other than this fable, there are 56 more narrations described by Iranian Sufi writer Javad Nurbakhsh in his book *Dogs: From a Sufi Point of View* (1989) where he highlights the Sufis’ benevolence towards canines. Nurbakhsh pointed out that “The first group of people to react against society’s injustice towards the dog were the Sufis, who strove to show people that the dog possessed virtuous qualities, qualities which many human beings, regarding themselves as the noblest of God’s creatures, lacked” (1989: 4). Like others, the Punjabi Sufis in their writings appreciated the loyalty and fidelity as well as the selfless characteristics of dogs. Many directed their attention towards the superhuman dedication of dogs and held the animal as a symbol of devotion. Perhaps, a good example is the famous short poem by a Punjabi Sufi poet Bulleh Shah (1680–1757), who held the status of dogs in high esteem.⁶²

You stay up at night, and pray	راتیں جاگیں، کریں عبادت
Dogs (also) remain awake at night, (however) higher than you	راتیں جاگن گئے، تیتھوں اُتے
They (dogs) never cease barking (all night)	بھونکنوں بند مول نہ بندے
(And) sleep on a pile of trash, (yet) higher than you	جاروڑی تے سٹے، تیتھوں اُتے
(Dogs) never leave their beloved’s doorstep	خضم اپنے دا در نہ چھڈدے
Even if beaten by shoes, (so) higher than you	بھاویں وچن جُتے، تیتھوں اُتے
Bulleh Shah! Grab some spiritual wealth	بُلھے شاہ کوئی رخت و باج لے
Or dogs supersede you	نہیں تے بازی لے گئے گئے
Higher than you	تیتھوں اُتے

The different shades of Islamic beliefs about dogs reflect the everyday attitudes of rural Punjabi people. Many hold the belief that the canine is an unholy creature, a polluted and dirty animal, and so it should be reprimanded and kept outside the house. There are a few who express views similar to Sufis and suggest that the dog, like all of God’s creatures, deserves compassion, love and benevolence, and must be humanely treated. Some people (especially urban middle-class and urban elites) adopt dogs as pets and provide them care and protection; the majority still

⁶² Punjabi text adopted from Barkat (2009: 76–77), with my own English translation.

view the animal as impure and discourage any type of contact with it. Dogfighters, however, seemed far less concerned with the question of dogs being a *haram* animal. They justify this on the basis of their *shauq*. A dogfighter, Munawar Chaklyar, argued:

Some people have *shauq* of keeping *halal* animals such as cattle, rooster, quail, pigeon, and partridge while others like the company of *haram* animals like dog, bear, or monkey. This is all about *shauq* and personal preference (*apnī apnī pasand*).

For dogfighters, a dog is no ordinary animal; it is a fighter that deserves training and care similar to that offered to wrestlers. The sections below explain inter-species attachment between men and canine, the feeding and training of dogs, as well as the activity of dogfighting and its symbolic rewards.



Figure 4. 3: Wasaya—a dogfighting enthusiast—showing that dogs can salam (shake hands).

Section 2: The Shauq of Dogs

When I first visited Munawar Chaklyar, a dishevelled man in his early 50s, he looked at his 31-inch high, large headed dog with admiration and stated, “keeping and fighting dogs is my *shauq*.” Nicknamed Manna, he was a poor farmer and grew sunflower and cotton on a rented

farmland near his house. He also kept two cows and a half-dozen buffalo, but his fighting dog was the centre of his attention. For him, keeping and fighting dogs was something even loftier than *shauq*. After taking a long drag of a hookah, he smiled and stated, “dogfighting is my *muḥabbat*” (literally love or the activity you adore). He cupped the mouthpiece, took another pull on the hookah, and added, “There are no rewards or betting, we participate in dogfighting because it is our *muḥabbat*.” With time, this became clear to me as dogfighters were addressing each other as *muḥabbattī* (a lover) and *shikārī* (a hunter). The terms used are revealing. The first denotes an un-mediated experience of devotion and love. The reason for using the second expression (*shikārī*), according to many dogfighters, concerned the historic association of dogs with the hunt. Hunting was a popular pastime for the British during the time of the Raj (Pandian 2001, Hussain 2010). Later the activity was adopted by rural landlords, who accompanied dogs to retrieve killed game. Because of its illegal nature, affluent and politically influential men, who obtained hunting permission easily by using their connections with the wildlife authorities, carry out the hunting activities in South Punjab. Arguably then, dogfighters use the term *shikārī* when addressing their fellow men to symbolically give them higher status and respect. Another possible reason for using the term *shikārī* is the overlapping roles of dogs in the hunt and in the dogfight: on both occasions, a man trains his dog for a quest, carries it on a vehicle (jeep or light truck), provides a task for the animal, expects the dog to succeed in this quest, and bring reward to its owner (whether honour or recently shot game). Both terms mark a community of belonging, that is inclusive and unique.

To belong, one needs to make sacrifices, both social and economic. Dogfighting is a very expensive *shauq* (*mhāngā shauq*), and not all people can afford it. Manna explained that a dog commonly consumes milk, butter, *ghī*, and meat in almost equal quantity to a wrestler’s daily dietary needs. Though Manna could feed his dog with the dairy products, for some, keeping the dog was a serious financial sacrifice. Amin Uttera, a tailor and an avid dogfighter claimed that “preparing a dog for fighting is either a *shauq* of *amīr* (a rich man’s enthusiasm), or of *faqīr* (a beggar’s enthusiasm). Because of his profession, Amin Uttera was nicknamed Meena Darzi (or Meena Tailor) by people in his village, Havilian Naseer Khan. He explained this puzzle: a rich man has money and can feed his dog, while the beggar can rely on begging to get wheat flour, local bread (*roṭī*), milk, and other things that are surplus to his needs, so he can give them to his dog. Although Meena was neither a rich person nor a beggar, he managed his *shauq* by working as a casual labourer on farms, in addition to tailoring, and usually made \$200-250 a month.



Figure 4. 4: Manna with his dog, Tanger.



Figure 4. 5: Riaz with his dog, Pistol.

As noted above, dogfighting was not adopted by any particular class but men from different socio-economic backgrounds are attracted to it. The financial investment for some is a significant one, and I noticed that to fulfil their *shauq*, many worked extra time: laboring as farm hands, selling dairy products, helping in shops, and driving rickshaws. Most of what they earned, they spent on feeding, training, and fighting their dogs.

In their *shauq*, many enthusiasts give evocative names to their canines. Most of these names depict characteristics that the dog is believed to possess. The name of Manna's dog was Tanger (Saraiki pronunciation of tiger), because he hoped his dog would fight like a fearless tiger. Makhan's dogs' names were Rustam (the title of some famous wrestlers of India) and One-Two-Five (referencing a powerful Honda Atlas 125cc motorbike). Some dogs are called after legendary fighters of the screen, for example, Bruce Li and Rambo. Other names followed certain incidents, for example, Riaz, a dogfighter in his early 30s who worked as a cattle trader and a milkman, named his dog Pistol, because he exchanged his pistol to buy the dog. Female dogs that are only used for breeding are given "feminine" names that demonstrate their value and beauty, such as Bilo (female cat) and Motī (Pearl). In South Punjab, male dogs are prized, but a person who possesses a tall and furious bitch is also highly sought after. Anthropologist

Rebecca Cassidy in her study of horse racing in Britain, noted that yearlings are given personalised names by their owners to make them part of human (racing) society (2002: 91, see also Armstrong 2018). Similarly, in South Punjab, dogs that are not referred to by distinctive names (such as stray dogs) are considered part of the animal world.



Figure 4. 6: Cutting the ears and colouring the body with henna are common decoration practices of South Punjabi dogfighters. This kind of marking is also indicative of wild animal traits, particularly the dark spotted pattern and the eel stripe down the back. Most of the dogfighters have an underlying desire to make the dogs look wild.

Another highlight of the men's *shauq* which they seem to enjoy is their choice of adorning the dog to enhance its personality and appeal. The men place expensive leather collars (*paṭā*, or *paiṭī*) and various kinds of leashes to decorate their canines. These decorative objects are usually bought from temporary markets at seasonal festivals. Moreover, some dogfighters colour their dog's coat with henna, drawing patterns and sometimes writing the canine's name (see Figure 4. 6). Some men even prefer to crop the dog's ears for both decorative and strategic purposes. Basheer Laar said that "I crop the ears of the dog for two reasons: one is beauty (*khobṣortī*) as I do not like floppy ears (*lapre kan*), and the other is for fighting, so the rival dog does not get hold of the ears during a fight." The inter-species attachment that develops through decorating dogs or giving them personalised names evolves through different stages,

such as through breeding, vaccination, feeding, and training. In the following section, I detail these stages, and examine the men's investment of time and resources to turn a dog into a fierce fighter, so it can help to generate *izzat* in the arena.

Bred to Fight

It is a popular belief among dogfighters that a victorious dog will breed prize-winning puppies, just as a champion wrestler's son will become a successful wrestler. The quality, it is believed, lies within the semen of the dog, which is considered the locus of all strength and power. Fighting dogs are thus kept under a strict regime of celibacy: they are not allowed to go near a female dog for the duration of their fighting life (dogs usually fight from 2–8 years of their age). Using the idiom familiar to rural South Punjab, Meena explained, “a fighting dog that keeps losing semen is identical to a granary (*kalhoṭī*) that has a hole underneath; no matter how many grains (or food given to the dog) you pour into it, all is wasted.” However, successful fighting dogs are allowed, and even encouraged to mate once they finish their fighting career, so as to produce excellent progeny. Unlike cockfighters, dogfighters do not try to preserve the breed; rather they find a champion dog and a bitch of good height, and outcross them. The common breeds employed in dogfighting are Bulli Kuttā, Jhogi Kuttā, Nangī Kuttā, Tulhy, and Gull Dongs, and almost all of these are outcrossed with the aim of producing a tall fierce dog that displays courage, bravery, and strength in the fighting arena.

Once the pups are born, they are scrutinised and vaccinated by dogfighters. Most of the men say that they keep the healthiest and most energetic puppy for themselves while selling remaining puppies to other dogfighters. Some freely share their puppies with their friends. The chosen (male) puppy is then provided with a vaccine to keep it safe from different diseases such as rabies (*chitā-pan* or *halkā-pan*), leptospirosis (*phetā*) and cough (*khang*). For the vaccination, most dogfighters usually consult Doctor Atta, an almost 90 year-old vet from the city of Bahawalpur. During an interview, the vet explained that the vaccination he usually sells to dog keepers is Hexadog, which is locally known as “*France walā tekā*” (injection imported from France). This vaccination, according to Atta, is effective for zoonotic viruses such as rabies, leptospirosis, and other diseases such as chronic cough, distemper, and canine hepatitis. He charges 1000 rupees (\$10) for vaccination to many dog keepers and has a special discount for his regular customers. Provision of expensive vaccination to dogs—the animal that is *haram*, culturally impure, and usually neglected by the vast majority of people—reflects the dogfighter's attention towards his canine. Such beginnings are followed by a sustained

investment in the animal over a long period, from a protein-rich diet to regular training sessions with a view to build strength and stamina.

The “powerful” diet—consisting of dairy products, local bread, and meat—is believed to make the dog physically strong. For the first twelve months, the puppy is provided milk, *ghī*, raw meat, and *roṭī* (local wheat bread) twice a day. Ashiq, father of Makhan Pehlwan, stressed the value of *roṭī*, “an important source of dog’s nourishment is *roṭī*, and it is vital for the growth for all: humans or animals.” He grows cotton and wheat on his small agricultural farm, just across the river Sutlej. He explained that when the pup reaches one year, he provides it with goat intestine (purchased from the city butcher), a ¼ kilogram of butter, two kilograms of milk, and ¼ kilograms of *ghī* each day. As the dog reaches the second year and is prepared for fighting, Ashiq provides it with an additional variety of foods such as apple *murabbah* (candied apples preserve), cooked meat (with as much care as if it is being cooked for humans), *ṭhaḍa’ī* (almonds mashed in a mortar and pestle and diluted with milk), *lassī* (a yogurt type drink), butter, unboiled milk, and *ghī*. About the importance of *ghī*, he stressed, “Dogs that are raised on pure (*khalis*) *ghī* and pure hard work (*khalis mehnat*) can fight with valour in the arena.” Pure *ghī* is vital, he added, and cannot be substituted by Dlada (a hydrogenated oil): the latter replaced *ghī* in South Punjabi villages in the past two decades. For many dogfighters of Ashiq’s generation, homemade *ghī* stands as a source of “power” and “purity” while market-based Dalda is seen as “artificial,” “less-powerful,” and “less-effective” (see also Alter 2002: 86).

Whether it is the churning of the milk into butter, distillation of the butter into *ghī*, or blending yogurt with the milk to make *lassī*, it is usually milk that holds the central place for the local wrestlers and fighting dogs’ dietary regimen. Milk (sometimes boiled, but mostly raw) is considered the source of physical strength and vitality, which in the form of *ghī* produces wind and stamina and in the form of butter and *lassī* develops muscles. Such diets are expensive to maintain. Dairy products and other dietary items given to a fighting dog can cost up to 1000 rupees (about \$10) daily, and the canine requires constant attention on the part of the owner during feeding and training.



Figure 4. 7: Basheer Laar feeding his dog.

Before the dog appears in the arena, it goes through a rigorous program of long distance running (*tora*), and is involved in occasional sparring exercises (*tapānah*) to test its ability, fierceness, and aggression. I often accompanied Riaz when he took his dog running. Usually a friend or relative drove the motorbike and he, sitting on the rear seat, held the leash of the dog. During these sessions, the driver proceeds at a slow pace for some distance (usually 8–10 kilometres) to develop endurance in the dog. Riaz explained, “if the dog runs on the soft earth (preferably sand), its claws get stronger; whereas concrete road will damage its paws.” Moreover, running is complimented by conditioning the dog through sparring exercises to help sharpen its fighting skills. For these exercises, dogfighters are strict about choosing a neutral place, as Mehboob, a dog breeder in his mid-50s, observed, “A dog at home is like a lion (*ghar ty kuttā sher honda he*); if you want to check [the fighting abilities of] your dog, then it needs to fight away from its home.” During sparring exercises, dogfighters develop a close understanding of the different fighting styles of their canines. The men told me that some dogs prefer to lock their teeth on the shank of the opponent while others bite on the neck; some grab any part of the opponent and hold tight, while others always look for an advantageous position; some can breathe while biting; others get easily exhausted and cannot keep hold. The men pitch their dog against those that have different fighting styles, so the canine can develop a number of coping strategies.



Figure 4. 8: Makhan’s dog returning from its daily run.

According to many dogfighters, the dietary and training regimen of a fighting dog resembles that of a local wrestler. Both require a “powerful” diet containing butter, *ghī*, milk, almonds, and meat. Then they both go through stamina and strength exercises, which are followed by a daily dry massage.⁶³ Lastly, both are encouraged to sleep for more than eight hours a day for optimum results. Explaining this similarity, Basheer Laar argued, “to ready a dog for a fight (*kuttā pālṇā*) is similar to ready a wrestler (*pehlwān pālṇā*); both require surplus time and money.” Ashiq knows this parallel better as his son is a wrestler and he is a devotee of dogfighting himself. However, such comparison is not absolute, as he noted, “A dog requires far more effort than a wrestler does, since the wrestler can prepare his own diet, eat, massage and do exercise by himself, whereas the dog requires assistance from its owner all the time.” The comparison between dogs and wrestlers also holds good in the fighting arena, as we will see below, the success of the dog in a fight is not simply considered the victory of its owner, it also means a triumph for all those involved: friends, relatives, and supporters.

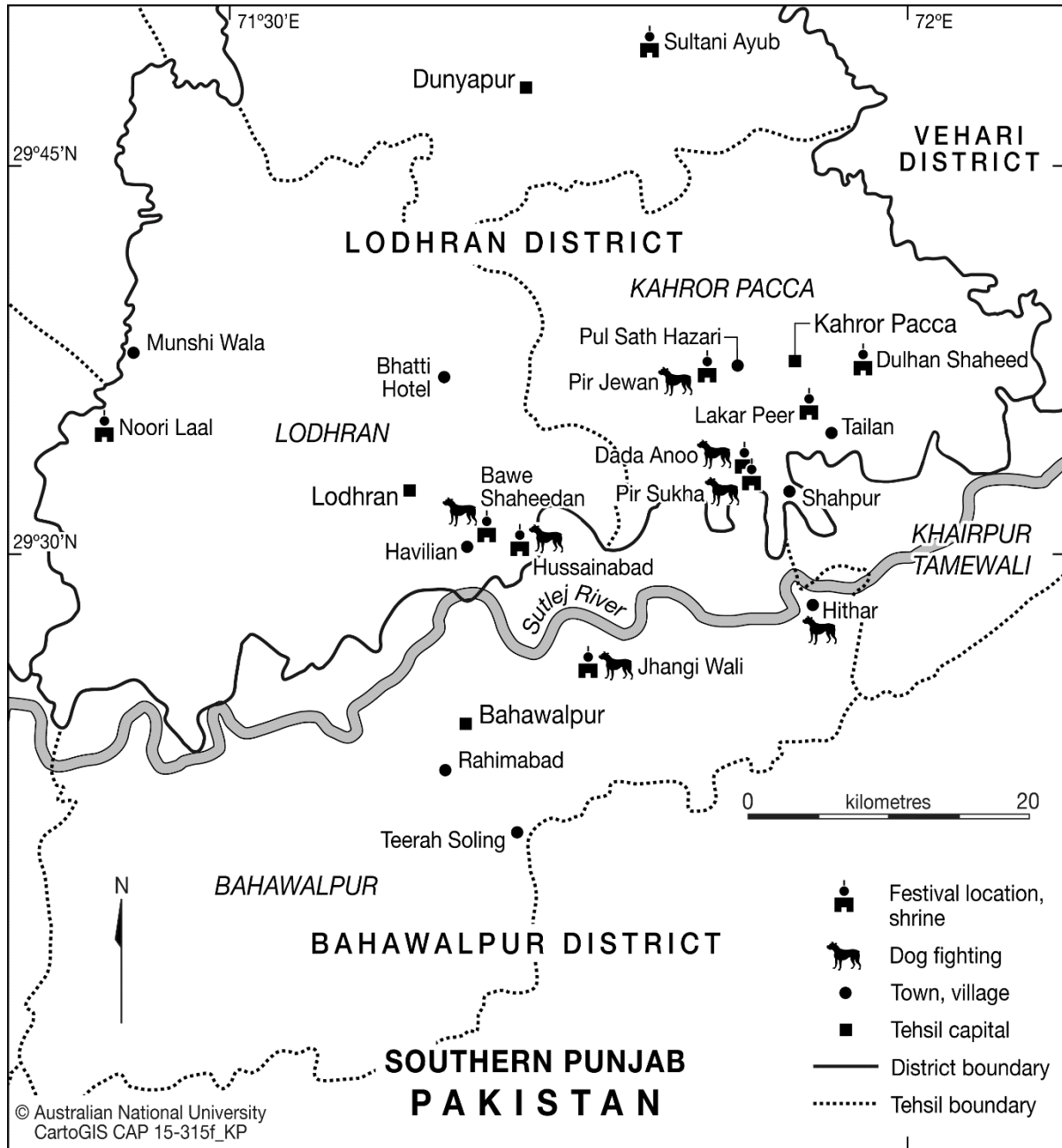
Section 3: The Fight of Honour

Both dogfighting and wrestling are held as part of local festivals (*melas*) for the entertainment of rural men. The word *mela* originates from the Sanskrit word *mel*, usually with reference to a religious fair where great number congregate. In South Punjab, most of the *melas* are organised in spring, near a shrine to celebrate the anniversary of the saint engraved at the site. Elsewhere (Kavesh 2018), I have discussed in detail the politics behind the organisation of South Punjabi *melas*, examining the history of colonial manoeuvres for banning massive gatherings, and the more recent adoption of these tactics by the current rural politicians and district bureaucrats for demonstrating power and authority in the area.

Traditionally in South Asia, *melas* attract people for pilgrimage, recreation, and economic exchange (Chakrabarty 1992: 543). A great number of people now congregate to purchase goods, eat food, and observe and take part in different spectacles (*tamāshe*). The *mela bazaar* in South Punjab provides people with an opportunity to buy things such as toys and balloons for children; trinkets; clay, metal and wooden vessels and utensils; and other inexpensive knick-knacks. People bring their children for amusement rides and to enjoy the food and refreshments available (Malik 2006: 156–157). In the past, *melas* were also frequented by snake charmers, acrobats, and monkey trainers who captivated the crowds with their

⁶³ Massage has technical functions such as pressure, vibration, and friction. For both the wrestler and the dog, massage helps in developing strength and suppleness (see Frembgen 2008: 7).

performance. However, the key attractions of these festivals are now spectacles such as wrestling, horse dancing, camel fighting, and dogfighting. These activities are organised on open ground in front of a large crowd, near the *mela* bazaar.



Map 3: Showing festivals and dogfighting in different areas of South Punjab, Pakistan.

A *mela* is a festive place, a liminal space and time when one's *shauq* of dogfighting can be performed. During my fieldwork, I participated in 10 festivals, six of which featured dogfighting (see Map 3). Like the festivals, the respective dogfights are held annually. The dogfights generally take place on the second (and busiest) day of the festivals. The activity is

usually organised under the patronage of festival organisers, who provide the funds to two veteran and experienced dogfighters to manage the event and attract a crowd to the festival. The men use the money to hire light trucks to provide transportation to interested dogfighters and their dogs. Though organisers commonly sponsor the transportation, dogfighters rarely receive monetary reward regardless of the outcomes (dogs rarely die). Unlike cockfighting, where betting is crucial for generating interest in the activity, the practice of fighting dogs does not involve any wager, either from the organisers, the dogfighters, or the crowd. Spectators congregate to praise the “true” masculine qualities of the canines and their owners. Even though monetary rewards are absent, competition is fierce. The ability to bring forward a dog that commands the popular traits of courage, bravery, and strength are what’s at stake. When victorious, these traits along with prestige and honour, flow towards the dog’s owner.



Figure 4. 9: A sweet shop at the mela bazaar.

Dogfighting (*kuttyān dī malheṇ*) is usually held in the morning around 10 o’clock and lasts until the afternoon. The almost two-acre wide arena is circled by a large crowd of men—who arrive on motorbikes, bicycles, rickshaws, cars, and tractor-trolleys—to watch the bouts. Unlike cockfighting, dogfighting does not have any intervals or rounds, and the fight usually lasts for 12–15 minutes. Fighting pairs are announced on loudspeakers placed at opposite ends

of the grounds. The announcer receives a small amount of money from both organisers at the end of the day (1500 rupees from each organiser, about \$30 in total). Local minstrels (*dhol waly* [drummers] and *bein waly* [shehnai players]) and garland sellers (*phul waly*) add colour to the winning celebrations and earn money from the winning group for their services.

After all the pairs are decided, the first fighting pair is washed to remove any noxious substances. Washing is a crucial component of dogfighting because unlike pigeon flying and cockfighting, cheating incidents are common in dogfighting. The support networks behind a fighting dog are far more extensive than in pigeon flying and cockfighting, and this raises the stakes of the competition. This can lead to various forms of cheating. Riaz, explaining the mechanics of cheating, stated: “An easy way of getting advantage in a dogfight is to rub sheep’s urine on the dog’s coat prior to the fight. This will stop the rival dog from attacking.” According to local beliefs, the dog becomes sexually aroused by sensing a sheep’s urine, making it less focused on the fight. Moreover, some men rub toxic substances onto their dog’s body. When the rival dog bites, it is at risk of being infected and poisoned. In order to avoid such incidents, two steel water tubs are usually available in the dogfighting arena and the dog owners pour water on their dogs and wash their bodies before unleashing them into the arena. This act of cleansing the canines’ body before each dogfight assures the audience (and all parties) that the combat will take place on equal terms.



Figure 4. 10: A dogfight in progress.



Figure 4. 11: A dogfight in progress.

As the canines are unleashed for combat, both animals lunge at one another with ferocity, locking razor-sharp teeth around each other's bodies, holding on with all their might, and battling to win the fight. Blood flows, tails are raised, and the animals fight relentlessly. The crowd of thousands of men watches the battle with frenzy, curiosity, and amusement. At times, the spectators fall silent, focusing on the attacking and defensive moves of dogs. This silence, as noticed by Alter in the context of North Indian men's wrestling, also serves as a mark of true appreciation:

...once a contest has begun everyone becomes quiet and attentive. This is less a natural reaction than an issue of decorum. Silence serves to focus attention on the wrestlers, and the quality of a bout is said to be reflected in the degree to which skill and strength can leave one quite literally speechless. Periods of silence are counterpoised with eruptions of vocal empathy. But silence is the mark of true appreciation (1992: 180).

Two referees walk around the pit and listen intently to any sounds the dogs make during the bout. The referees' authority in dogfighting is absolute, and no one questions or challenges their decision. The fight ends when one of the dogs barks (*boṅknā*), yelps (*ḍaṇḍī kaḍhnā*), growls (*yakhī mārṇā*) or turns away from its rival (*pāsā mārṇā*). Dogfights also end when the owner of the dog concedes and calls the fight off (*hath kharā karnā*). If both dogs keep fighting for more than 15 minutes, the fight is usually declared a draw with the consent of both owners.

An atmosphere of homosociality marks the whole scene of dogfighting. Only men populate the arena and throughout the fight, an honourable decorum is maintained. In this phase of liminality, the attachment between the animal and human converts into detachment, and both—the canine and the man—adopt roles that are in accordance to dominant masculinity. The

dogfighter maintains a cool composure during the fight, displays self-control to retain his *izzat*. The canine is expected to remain calm like a “true” man when being whipped by the opponent dog, return and attack with full force, and emasculate its opponent. Similar observations are made by Evans et al. (1998) in their sociological analysis of dogfighting in southern United States, where they argue that working class white men take dogfighting as an opportunity to express and validate their masculine bravado, and to gain honour, status, and money (by gambling) [see also Kalof and Taylor 2007: 321]. Though monetary rewards are not the purpose of South Punjabi dogfighting, the men compete for prestige and status, to epitomise their masculine prowess, and achieve their *shauq*. It is a *shauq* of dogfighters that prompts them to celebrate by carrying the “unholy” blooded dog over their shoulders, and it is the passion of the spectators who remain almost all day in blazing sunshine to watch others’ dogs fighting, and asserting the superiority of the winning dog’s owner.



Figure 4. 12: A large crowd gathers to watch dogfighting competitions.

After the fight, the wounds of the dogs are treated with local and biomedical (purchased from a city pharmacy) ointments. After 20–30 days, when the victorious dog recovers, it may enter another fight. The losing dog (*kaṭā huā kuttā*), however, is usually sold or kept for the protection of farm and property. Riaz mentioned that when five years ago his dog lost a fight, he had no more love for the dog, “I took off the collar from its neck and let it go. It is useless to feed a loser.” As discussed earlier, the men invest their time and money in their dogs and develop an emotional attachment with them. It may seem strange that after such a long-standing relationship between a dog owner and his dog, the man can so easily sell or let his dog

go. For dogfighters however, this is more a matter of understanding the “psyche” of a defeated dog. The common response I heard when posing the question about a defeated dog was that once a dog loses a fight, it becomes habituated to losing (*ādī*), and therefore they have little option but to sell it or keep it for guarding. This is very different from other types of *shauq* discussed in this thesis. While a pigeon may be captured by a rival fancier or a cock may die, in dogfighting, the loser dog suffers a “social death.” It is not allowed to fight in that particular competition for life, and in most cases abandoned by its owner and supporters. Indeed, this form of abandonment is criticised by pigeon flyers and cockfighters, many of whom accused dogfighters of not possessing a “genuine *shauq*” (see Chapter 6 for more discussion). Although the losing dog is not killed in South Punjab, as opposed to situations described in some studies of dogfighting in other parts of the world, the dog loses everything (such as quality diet, massage, careful training) and is excluded from competing in the future.⁶⁴ This is a “social death,” where the dog loses its status as a fighter, and is divested of its previous privileges, ending up as a mere guard dog.

As there is no betting involved, the *shauq* of dogfighting has been described as a non-material activity, where the entire struggle is calibrated for prestige and honour (*izzat*). This is, however, in line with Bourdieu’s (1990) notion of symbolic capital, which serves as a type of currency that can potentially be converted into material profit (economic capital). As he argues, “[t]he interest at stake in the conducts of honour is one for which economism has no name and which has to be called symbolic, although it is such as to inspire actions that are very directly material (1990: 120–121).” Following Bourdieu’s analysis, I suggest that the activity of dogfighting should be understood as material as it is symbolic. For instance, the decision to spend an enormous amount of money and effort to ready a dog for the fight seems irrational and economically aberrant (because there is no monetary reward for the winner). Arguably, dogfighters can be seen to justify this spending spree with reference to a culturally meaningful term – *shauq*. I do not doubt their genuine explanations and passions; however, there are some clear pecuniary benefits. If the dog wins, his value increases manyfold, and the owner can make a significant amount of money by selling it or selling its pups. In other words, the whole process can be described as crosscutting three spheres: (a) the dogfighter spends money and resources to ready his dog for the battle, (b) the dog wins a combat and symbolic capital is channelled to his owner, and (c) this symbolic capital has the potential to be converted into economic capital.

⁶⁴ See, for example Evans and Forsyth, 1997; Evans, Gauthier, and Forsyth, 1998; Kalof and Taylor, 2007; Kim, 2015; Coleman, 2009; Homan, 1999; Smith, 2011; Laucella, 2010; Iliopoulou and Rosenbaum 2013.

Thus, the monetary profit that a dog's owner derives is directly related to the dog's ability to win, leading to the accumulation of symbolic capital (which Bourdieu termed "credit of renown" [1990: 120]). Though it is important to note that people do not consciously calculate material profits from their symbolic capital, it is, as Bourdieu stated, that different forms of capital have differing saliency across fields, and in certain circumstances they overlap and can be converted (1990: 123). This is partly why the activity of dogfighting continues to be identified as a *shauq*, and a platform for accumulating symbolic capital rather than acquiring direct economic benefits.



Figure 4. 13: Dogfight – a struggle for the accumulation of symbolic gains.

Forging Bonds

Participation in dogfighting helps men to forge long-lasting bonds with other men. This kind of relationship is usually based on sharing a similar passion and understanding each other's *shauq*. Riaz claimed that wherever he goes to graze his cattle, people recognise him as Riaz

kutty walā (Riaz, the dog keeper). He said, “People know me in a 200 kilometres radius in every direction because of my dog.” Basheer Laar similarly reflected that when he fought his dog at the city of Hasilpur (250 kilometres from his home), many dogfighters approached him afterwards and some became good friends. “I did not know anyone there, but soon my dog won the fight, many people there asked for my mobile number. When I returned back home, many called me and appreciated my dog.” Evans and Forsyth (1998) also observed a similar type of bonding among “the fraternity of dogmen” in America, where the men occasionally meet to discuss the history of champion bloodlines, breeding and training practices, and the recent fights they attended (1998: 55–60). Similarly, in South Punjab dogfighting friends usually discuss the new methods of feeding and training, emerging breeds, and accompany friends to watch their dog fight.

In the dogfighting milieu, a “true” friend is tested by his behaviour at the time of the fight. This is different from regular social settings, where sincere friends usually support and encourage in times of difficulties and hardship. Among dogfighters, those who participate in the celebrations following dogfights are deemed sincere and loyal. According to Meena, “only envious people stay back during the celebrations, a true friend never feels shy. The one who gives money to the local minstrels or purchases rose garlands for the owner of the winning dog is considered a true friend.” With friends, dogfighters usually say, a man enjoys the pleasures of victory. This is often captured in a famous Saraiki language saying: “*yārāñ nāl bahārāñ*,” which means that with friends there is spring (or one can be truly happy only in the company of one’s friends).

The close bond between dogfighting friends is key to various dog-related tasks. Friends borrow each other’s dogs for mating or for fighting. However, the most notable use of this friendship is when one presents a pup to a friend. As feeding a dog requires significant resources and time, most dogfighters only keep one puppy from a litter for themselves and gift others to close friends. Among the men, these kinds of gifts act in forming social relationships, and create alliances and obligations (see Graeber 2001: 27, see also Mauss 1954). When the gift receiver has his litter ready, he returns a similar gift (a pup) to the donor, thus carefully maintaining the exchange.



Figure 4. 14: Eager participation on the part of friends in winning celebrations.

While friendships between the men are socially useful, not all dog keepers are friends. A major reason for hostility amongst dogfighters is cheating during a competition. In the past, when washing of the dogs before the fight was not compulsory, many men cheated by rubbing poison on their dog's body. Informants told me that not long ago, such cheating resulted in the death of a dog, and a quarrel between both dogfighters that stretched for years. Other common reasons for hostility among dog keepers include refusing to return a pup, supporting rival group, or performing black magic to harm a dog (for further discussion of black magic, see Chapter 6).

Whether friends or foes, all men share the *shauq* of fighting dogs. This symbolic investment repays itself when dogs fight well in the arena. No matter how severe the injuries the dog suffers, it is valued for displaying courage, bravery, and strength. There in the arena, the nonhuman becomes evidence of his human keeper's efforts, an embodiment of his *izzat*, an emblem of his *mardāneat*, and a goal of his expectations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described and detailed men's *shauq* of keeping and fighting dogs. South Punjabi rural dogfighters praise fighting dogs and place them on the upper tier of local canine hierarchy, above hunting dogs, guard dogs, or even bear-baiting dogs. I have detailed the religious status of dogs and discussed various stories and traditions for approving or

disapproving the practice of keeping canines. South Punjabi dogfighters do not consider the dog as a polluted animal; rather, they incorporate the animal into their daily lives as part of their *shauq*. They treasure their fighting dogs, keep them with great care, give them personalised names, and provide quality diet. An important reason for providing this care is to prepare the dog for the fight to achieve honour and display masculinity.

Dogfighting in the arena is viewed by a large crowd, who praise the canine's courage (*jur'at*), bravery (*dilerī*), and strength (*zor*), and discourage any immoral behaviour on the part of the owners, such as cheating or gambling. There in the arena, the bravery and courage of a victorious dog enhances the prestige of its owner. However, a dog that loses a fight loses all previous privileges of care and attention, and is either sold or kept as a guard dog. This suggests that the animal is merely a vehicle for achieving the *shauq* of dogfighting. As I have shown in the chapter, the owner of a defeated dog can continue to practise his *shauq* until he re-emerges victorious with another canine and reclaims his honour among peers.

As a “favourite pet” of the 21st century, the dog has captured a special place in human societies. Many see the dog as an interacting companion, whose connection to its owner is long lasting and marked by loyalty and unconditional love. Reports of cruelty to canines receive considerable criticism from animal welfare groups, and society more generally. Such criticisms came to the fore when the American media featured the case of National Football League superstar quarterback, Michael Vick pleading guilty to the practice of dogfighting in late August 2007. He was strongly condemned for engaging in a “brutal sport” and “a reprehensible act” (Laucella 2010, Coleman 2009). Because the dog is “man’s best friend,” the reports of dogfighting generate an emotional response. Whereas other “blood sports” like hunting, bull fighting, hare coursing, greyhound racing, or foxhunting draw less attention. These activities are often viewed as culturally acceptable. In the following chapter, I analyse what is seen as culturally and socially acceptable behaviour on the part of those who interact with *shauqeen*, some of whom view these animal activities with great disdain.

CHAPTER 5: The Perspective of Others: Social Stigma and Familial Relations

کہیں دے گئے کھیر بیون، کہیں دے بجے بُکھ مرن
رزق دی تقسیم تے بک وار ول، گُجھ غور کر
kaheñ de kutte kheer peven, kaheñ de bache bukh maren
rizq dī taqseem te hik vār val, kujh ghoor kar
Someone's dogs drink milk, someone's children starve to death
(O Lord!) Re-consider the division of sustenance

(Shuja-Abadi, 2008: 27)⁶⁵

Animals in human societies have played multiple roles; some have been worshiped as totems, while others were considered polluted, forbidden to be consumed or even touched. Some have been cherished as pets while others are culled for food. Some have been used in laboratory experiments to advance scientific research while others provide amusement to humans through circuses, rodeos, zoos, and baiting-sports. These and the many other roles of animals in human societies have ignited moral debate, both in the West and in elsewhere. These debates have shaped the state's attitude and legislation towards animals in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan. In Chapter 1, I discussed how the newly formed Pakistani Government adopted British laws regarding animal cruelty in 1947. However, these laws were never updated and lost their potency and relevance over time. In this chapter, my aim is to discuss the social and moral criticism of community and the immediate family members towards pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting. By "community members," I refer to relatives, neighbours, and other rural and urban South Punjabi people, who were present in the field site at the time of my research. Among the "family members," I include both blood kin (parents, siblings, and children), and affinal relatives (wives of the animal keepers) who shared their days and nights with the men. However, most of my focus on family members is on the wives of the animal keepers, their perceptions and feelings about their husband's *shauq*, and their views about the men's allocation of resources, care, and attention.

Two central questions guide this chapter: (1) what are the basic principles that construct the local people's objection towards the *shauq* of the animal keepers? And (2) how does the animal keepers' *shauq* affect their priorities with regards to their animals and family members in an

⁶⁵ Shakir Shuja-Abadi (1968 –) is a Saraiki poet who writes on the themes of poverty, inequality, subordination, and mystical love. His poetry is famous in South Punjab, and often sung in local songs. When I met Shuja-Abadi in January 2015 and told him about my research project, he wrote these verses for me (my translation from Saraiki).

inter-species social dwelling? By inter-species social dwelling, I refer to the place where the animals share space and form sociality with humans, such as the houses of pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters.

In answering the first question, I adduce some ethnographic instances from my fieldwork, and discuss the reflections of local South Punjabi people about all three animal activities. I contend that in South Punjab the general attitude of people towards the animal activities is heavily influenced by local socio-religious values. The second section of this chapter seeks to answer the next question by looking at the viewpoint of family members of animal keepers. The presence of pigeons, cocks, and dogs at an animal keeper's house requires time, energy, and resources, and this ultimately affects his roles and responsibilities as a family man. Both the cherished animals and family members depend on the animal keeper's prioritisation of care, and he needs to strike a balance between the two. If the flyer or fighter bestows more care on his family members, he risks forfeiting his *shauq* and neglecting his animals (who usually promise honour, glory, and prestige). The flip side is that if the man devotes more affection to the animal, he is likely to be chastised by his family members and local people. Perhaps the most vulnerable to such preferential treatment of animal over family is the animal keeper's wife. In the second section of this chapter, I therefore pay close attention to how the wives of the animal keepers consider their husbands' lack of affection and care, and examine the men's strategies and their continuous efforts in (re)shaping and (re)forming their priorities in light of such reproach.

Both sections of the chapter are entwined with the concept of *shauq* and discuss the "others'" perspectives on pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting. I use the word "others" for the South Punjabi community people and close family members because they lie outside the realm of one's *shauq*. *Shauq* is therefore a mark of inclusion/exclusion: those who come within its boundary, no matter whether they are living in a distant area, are considered "insiders" or *apny*. Those who do not, even if they are closely related, are often referred to as "others" or *dojhy/dosry*. To be sure, these "others" are not homogenous and they are made up of concentric circles of relationships: some are intimate "others" who share daily routines with the animal keepers (such as the wives and children), then there are "others" who are a part of the men's daily life (such as neighbours and relatives), and those who have little appreciation of the *shauq* and are complete outsiders. In explaining the perspective of "others," the chapter is therefore

attentive to the nuances of opinions that such people raise with relation to the men's passion for animals.

By discussing various ethnographic accounts, the chapter also tries to show crucial attributes of an "ideal" masculinity in contemporary South Punjabi society. A "true" male, according to many local respondents and the family members, is the one who is responsible for his family's wellbeing—a protector, a carer, and a provider. This type of masculinity stresses socio-cultural norms, and lays emphasis on different traits than those discussed in previous chapters. An "ideal" man, according to South Punjabi people, is the one who prioritises the care for family over that of animals, uses the time in a "productive" way, and avoids wasteful pursuits.

Section 1: Normative Violations

In South Punjab, the general perspective of the people I spoke with is that pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting are not *shauq* but useless activities (*fazol kām*). We also find a disagreement about what actually constitutes *shauq*. For the animal keepers, *shauq* is a matter of capturing their personal passion and zeal for the animal activities. Yet many villagers spoke of such passions with disdain, and considered them an abnegation of one's social duties. No matter how much delight the animal keepers derive from their *shauq*, the general perception I encountered when discussing the matter with people was that these were immoral practices.

The immoralities associated with pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting were couched in different terms, but they all included violation of social norms. For example, pigeon flyers were seen as violating the *purdah* norm by climbing onto rooftops and peeking into their neighbours' house. Cockfighters were castigated for gambling—an activity considered as a social ill, reflecting upon a man's inability to control his desires. Dogfighters were criticised for touching and cherishing the company of an "unholy" and "polluted" animal, and even providing it with "holy" and "pure" diets, including dairy products. This denunciation of cockfighters and dogfighters was compounded by what community members often described as cruelty (*zulm*) and sinful (*gunāh walā*) acts, where roosters as well as canines are primed to fight for human enjoyment. Moreover, village people usually reprimanded the animal keepers for wasting time and money in a manner similar to that of addicts. The main themes associated with such criticism are discussed below.

1. *Purdah* Violation

Purdah, literally meaning curtain, is a word commonly used by the South Asian Muslims to describe the system of secluding women to certain gendered spaces and limiting their mobility by enforcing values of modesty and shame (Papanek 1971: 517). In other words, the norm of *purdah* is imposed in two ways on women. First, they should remain “inside,” within the four walls of the household, and avoid unruly public space or the “outside.” The public space or “the world” in South Asia, according to Indian historian Partha Chatterjee (1993), can be described as the domain of the male, usually identified with materiality and danger, whereas the private space or “the home” is perceived as one’s true identity and spirituality, and must remain unaffected by the “profane activities of the material world—and woman is its representation” (Chatterjee 1993: 120).⁶⁶ The four walls of a house are considered a shelter for women from the vulnerabilities of the public space. The second form of *purdah* is for those women who need to go “outside” or into the “public space” (the men’s world). Thereupon a woman must wear specified extra clothing (such as *burqa*, *niqab*, *chador*, dupatta, scarf, shawl) in accordance with the cultural values of modesty and shame. However, for the purpose of my analysis, I focus only on the first type of *purdah*, which involves the seclusion of women within the four walls of the household.

In South Punjab, pigeon flyers climb up onto their rooftops to fly their pigeons twice a day, in the morning and afternoon. When they are on their rooftops, they are able to peer into the neighbourhood courtyards (private place for women) and can potentially see unveiled women. Although many flyers argued that on rooftops they are completely focused on their pigeons and never look into neighbourhood houses, many neighbours and relatives thought otherwise. They interpreted the flyers’ act of climbing up on rooftops as their covert intentions for executing a demeaning act of peeping at unveiled women over the parapet. The predatory gaze of outsiders at females is not only regarded as a direct violation of the *purdah* norm, it is also considered a violation of family honour (see also Osella, Osella, and Chopra 2004: 23–24). Such considerations render pigeon flying a type of perversion; an un-Islamic and amoral activity that breaches women’s privacy and honourable conduct.

During my fieldwork, I personally encountered such objections on a few occasions. When I climbed up onto Ustad Shakoor’s and Rafik’s rooftops, complaints from their neighbours about my presence on the rooftop were heard soon afterwards, since an outsider male in such position

⁶⁶ See also, Dipesh Chakrabarty’s excellent analysis of “public” and “private” (1992: 541–547).

could easily violate *purdah* by peeking at the women. Eventually, I had to remain seated to avoid complaints. Both Shakoor and Rafik had been living in their respective neighbourhoods for many decades and developed a relationship of trust with their neighbours. Still, inviting an “outsider” to such a space where potential transgressions can occur was viewed as a lack of respect towards their neighbours.

The violation of *purdah* norms triggers strong criticisms from both neighbours and relatives towards pigeon flyers, at times with serious consequences. One such case occurred between Akram and Ghafoor. Akram is the father of a 17-year-old girl. He shares his wall with Ghafoor’s house in the residential blocks of Bukhari Chowk, Kahrur Pacca. Once Akram’s daughter complained about Ghafoor and said that the neighbour smiled at her while flying pigeons. Ghafoor was thrice her age, and the complaint caused tensions between the two neighbours. A community meeting of elder men was summoned where Akram publically accused Ghafoor of violating *purdah*. Ghafoor tried to defend his innocence, but the community elders decided that either Ghafoor leave his *shauq* of pigeon flying or build a head-high wall over his rooftop. Ghafoor built a wall.

The incident highlights the importance of *purdah* and the authority of the community elders’ decision, and it also suggest that pigeon flyers are vulnerable to such accusations. The very activity is coloured by all sorts of neighbourhood transgressions, such as whistling, shouting, and yelling during the training of pigeons.⁶⁷ Thus from the outset, Ghafoor was vulnerable. He ultimately had to build a surrounding wall over his rooftop to avoid such accusations in future. The point is that in order to practise one’s *shauq*, real social sacrifices must be made that can potentially marginalise the *shauqeen*.

2. Gambling

Gambling (*jowā*) in South Punjab, as in other parts of the country, is regarded as a corruptive and a destructive practice that bears on one’s moral fibre. In Chapter 1, we saw that there are strong legal restrictions towards gambling in Pakistan due to its prohibited status in Islam. In everyday social settings, I also discovered extreme dislike of this practice. Like *purdah*, gambling was described as morally dubious, violating the codes of an “ideal” male. Many

⁶⁷ Whistling or shouting are important tools for guiding and directing the pigeons’ flight, but this also creates a disturbance in the neighbourhood.

people I spoke with described gambling as a sin, a waste of money, and an addiction that could be disastrous to a gambler's social and economic life.

In accordance with Islamic textual prohibitions on gambling, many rural South Punjabi people consider it a sin. Regardless of whether it is a cockfight or a simple dice game (*luḍo*), or the amount gambled is high or low, any form of gambling is unacceptable and sinful. One informant explained, "Gambling is *haram* (prohibited) in Islam and the money you win through gambling also becomes *haram* (contaminated with sin)." If the money is earned through the amoral activity of gambling, it not only itself becomes polluted but also contaminates various aspects of the gambler's life, leading him to wrongdoing. One such behaviour described as "forgetting God." Gambling is believed to be so alluring and obsessive that it takes up all of one's time and attention, and distracts one from saying the daily prayers. Given the Islamic prohibitions on gambling, it was banned in Pakistan during the last months of Prime Minister Bhutto's reign in the late 1970s. This ban was said to be enacted through the influence of "Nizam-e-Mustafa" (Order of the Prophet)—an Islamist movement supported by right-wing Muslim parties (Richter 1979: 548). In contemporary South Punjab, the public strongly condemns all types of gambling, leaving cockfighters and pigeon flyers in a compromised position.

Because of gambling, cockfighting and pigeon flying usually receive criticism. People living in South Punjab argue that gamblers develop enmity and resent each other, lose sight of their social and familial responsibilities, and squander their earnings. In describing the obsessive nature of gambling, one story was repeatedly narrated to me. It was about an affluent pigeon flyer, Nawab Ishaq, who sold almost all of his 70 acres of inherited agricultural land to satisfy his obsession with purchasing unique coloured pigeons, then betting on them. He died a poor man and even his sons cursed him. When discussing the story, people (even pigeon flyers themselves) draw a cautionary conclusion about overindulgence in *shauq* that can prove to be destructive of one's economic and social life.

For the *shaukeen* animal keepers, gambling is more than just winning money; it is a matter of reciprocity and an expression of support for their peers and friends. Winning or losing money through gambling is far less important to them, as the amount spent on purchasing, breeding, or feeding the birds inevitably exceeds the money that is usually won through gambling. The men emphasize the positive interpretation of gambling and suggest that this act is more profound than simply pursuit of money. This is in line with Rebecca Cassidy's study of

gambling houses in Britain. She suggests that the question to explore is not how much money a person wins or loses but “what does it mean to win or lose?” (Cassidy 2010: 140). By emphasising the meaning of gambling, South Punjabi animal keepers try to fend off criticisms from the local community members.

3. *Cruelty and Care*

In addition to gambling, the theme of cruelty (*zulm*) often came up in my discussions with people. According to Sadiq, a tea-stall owner from Kahrur Pacca city, cockfighters and dogfighters were inflicting cruelty on speechless creatures (*be-zubān makhloq*) that could not even complain about their tormentors. Here again religious dictums were summoned and animal fighters were seen as directly violating the teachings of the Prophet, who strictly forbade fighting, baiting, or harming animals in any way (see also Fakhar-i-Abbas 2009: 55–56; Frembgen and Rollier 2014: 144). Speaking about cockfighting, Moen, a cloth merchant in his 30s from the city of Lodhran, argued, “Allah strongly dislikes those who harm other creatures just for fun, and He will avenge this by making them [cockfighters] blind as well [like their birds who sometimes get blind during the combat].” He recalled a story about a blacksmith Hanif who in the last two decades of the 20th century was a famous cockfighter. As he got older, he lost his eyesight and people said it was in response to his past deeds. Some cockfighters do change their ways. Imran Niazi told me about his father, a police constable and famous cockfighting enthusiast of his time, who left the activity at the age of 55, stating that it is a sin (*gunāh*) and cruelty (*zulm*).

The concern with animal cruelty was far less of an issue with dogfighters. Here criticism resolved around the care dogfighters showed for a “polluted” and “impure” animal. The dog, as discussed in Chapter 4, is a *haram* animal in Islam, usually associated with dirt, filth, and pollution, and treated indifferently in South Punjab. Because dogfighters were touching this “unholy” animal, feeding it “pure” things such as milk, butter, and *ghī*, and keeping it within (or near to) their house, they were often criticised. Even at the start of my fieldwork, I was cautioned by the people to refrain from meeting or sharing food with dogfighters, whose reputation as dirty (*gande*) people preceded them.

Speaking about dogfighters, a landlord from the village Khan Da Kho said, “It is a matter of extreme disgust and revulsion when they [dogfighters] carry their dog on their shoulders after the fight, without noticing that the dog’s blood and saliva is spattered on their clothes and body.” The strong sentiments voiced against such practices led some people to label the *shauq*

of dogfighting a curse, as one man claimed, “they are cursed (*phiṭ hy inhāṇko*) to keep dogs, otherwise no sane person would feed pure products (milk, butter and *ghī*) to a dog.” In the Qur’ān, milk has been described as “palatable to drinkers” (16: 66), and the faithful are promised “rivers of milk” in paradise (47: 15). In Pakistan, milk (and other dairy products) is considered pure and sacred (Philippon 2012: 295, and Mughal 2014: 103, Parkes 1987: 653). Therefore, provision of this sacred substance to “polluted” dogs is considered abhorrent and disrespectful, and is in stark contrast to the prevailing values of South Punjabi society.

4. *Squandering*

The animal keepers also came under regular criticism from villagers for squandering time, energy, and resources on their animals.⁶⁸ Pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters spend an enormous amount of time and money in training and preparing their animals for competitions. They also spend a great amount in purchasing the “powerful” ingredients for the diet of their animals, and devote countless hours in preparing their diet and feeding them. Although the animal keepers do this to increase their chances of success during the competition, many people I spoke with view this behaviour as extravagance.

The argument I commonly heard was that the money spent on the animals could be used for the betterment of the family. When Riaz (a dogfighter discussed in Chapter 4) and I were talking about the chances of his dog’s success in the coming dogfight, his father interrupted and started criticising Riaz for lavishing time and money on a useless activity (*faṣol kām*). His father reasoned, “A *shauq* is to feed a bull, make him bulky and strong, that when it is sold it earns a stack of money (*thabbī raqam dī*); whereas keeping a dog only brings loss (*charā nuqṣān*).” Indeed, caring for livestock is considered far more productive—socially and economically—than keeping a dog.

The concept of waste in South Asia, as Gidwani (1992) has noted, carries meaning of socially undesirable: as a noun, it is marginal, unimportant, or unpalatable; and as a verb, it is associated with human behaviour that is unacceptable and unproductive (1992: 31). Often, I heard people draw parallels and define *shauq* as a waste, and this was also viewed as a chief reason for the *shaukeen*’s social and economic downfall. For instance, Malik Khizar, a famous cockfighter and the current chairman of a local union council, is said to have sold almost half of his agricultural land (50 acres) for purchasing expensive cocks and gambling on them. Similarly,

⁶⁸ These views were expressed during a focus group discussion conducted in Shahpur village on 24 May 2014.

the name of Rana Abdul-Rehman came up in my discussions with the locals, as he beggared himself for the *shauq* of dogfighting by selling his 11 acres of agricultural land, considered particularly valuable since it was near the canal and irrigation was very cheap. In other words, people viewed such activities as both a waste and a curse, and as a threat to a person's moral and socio-economic wellbeing.

The opposite of squandering was conceived as nourishing the family's needs and supporting them socially and financially. This, for many South Punjabi people I spoke with, was an "ideal" masculine behaviour. Following Connell's paradigm of multiplicity of masculinities, I have shown how pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters try to perform masculinity in their respective fields and achieve *izzat* and prestige among peers. However, according to community members, a man's honour and prestige does not lie in the flying or fighting arena but in his efforts to fulfil his social and domestic responsibilities. Those men who neglected their duties towards their household were considered incapable of meeting socially defined expectations of an ideal male self. For instance, when I visited Ashiq in March 2015 at his home in Hithar village, he invited me to join his four sons and we lounged on two charpoys under the shade of a rosewood tree. After an hour of discussion, Ashiq's elder son Bilal, in his late 30s (who was not a dogfighting enthusiast) started chastising his father for not taking care of his family but rather wasting every penny in his *shauq* of fighting dogs. He commented, "...this is a wasteful (*fazol*) *shauq* because it takes your attention away from your domestic responsibilities." He further argued that the amount of time, money, and resources invested in this *shauq* would be far better spent in cultivating the land or feeding the livestock, which would yield actual returns. Thereupon, his father replied with a famous saying, "*shauq dy wich lekhy ne karendy*" (never keep accounts in *shauq*). Ashiq, in his reference to this saying clearly suggested that *shauq* lies outside the zone of monetary restrictions, and should be evaluated in its own terms. Nevertheless, the son kept arguing and the afternoon was spent with dialogues back and forth between father and son, the latter insisting that a "true" man should prioritise family needs over *shauq*.

5. Addiction and Disease

Notwithstanding community objections, *shauqeen* continue to maintain their bond with their animals. The men's unshakable attitude towards their pursuits has led others to argue against the very couching of these activities as *shauq*, and to cast them in pejorative terms, such as addiction (*nashā*) and disease (*bemāri*).

The animal keepers often nurtured their passions with what they described as obsessive longing, and found inner comfort and escape from social responsibilities in the company of their animals. To describe this yearning, some animal keepers said that their *shauq* is a type of addiction (*nashā*)—something similar to smoking, drinking, or using heroin and marijuana. The men used this symbolism of addiction to demonstrate their lifelong allegiance to their *shauq*, and the strong pull of their pursuits. However, local people I spoke with saw such activities as uncontrollable obsessions. According to Nazir, a car mechanic at Mailsi Chowk in the city of Kahrar Pacca, all animal keepers (particularly pigeon flyers) are so immersed in their activities that they forget more important responsibilities, such as caring for their children and family. He referred to the animal keepers as *nashā'ī* (addicts) and found great similarities between them and chronic addicts like hashish consumers (*charsī*). In noting the social impacts of drinking among the boatmen of Banaras, anthropologist Assa Doron (2010: 294–95) explains that alcoholics (*sharābi* or *darubāz*) are viewed with great disdain by the community because the activity is believed to take their attention away from performing familial and social responsibilities. Similarly, in South Punjab, *shauqeen* are often said to neglect basic social and familial roles.

Male South Punjabi villagers sometimes label the obsession of keeping animals as a disease (*bemārī*). Even animal keepers use this term when soberly describing the deep-rooted attachment to their animals. However, Akram and other village men saw the animal keepers as infected with a chronic disease. They used the noun in three ways. First, like many other chronic diseases, it is seen as almost impossible to cure. Once a man is “infected” with the *shauq* (or disease) of flying or fighting animals, he is considered beyond cure: it is as if one is possessed. No medicines, doctors, or even hospitals can remedy the “infection” of *shauq*. Secondly, *shauq* travels across generations, and has the potential to be contagious. Because most of the animal *shauq* (particularly pigeon flying) run in the family, male relatives are often described as victims of an inherited affliction. Third, this disease can turn into an epidemic and can potentially infect anyone in the larger community; it is seductive and one must be cautious.⁶⁹ During a focus group discussion with the men of Village Seekrain, the respondents expressed that all *shauq* of keeping animals poses serious danger to the men’s personal life—

⁶⁹ Finding such a metaphor of disease for *shauq*-driven activities is not unique. Jerolmack in his study of the Turkish pigeon handler immigrants of Berlin also observed this symbolism of disease with the enthusiasm of keeping pigeons (2007: 884–885).

much like the addiction of using drugs or going through a serious disease—and usually leads the animal keepers to the point of social destruction.



Figure 5. 1: Pigeon flyers captivated by the sight of their airborne pigeons.

Response from the Animal Keepers to Community Members

The animal keepers seemed almost impervious to such harsh accusation addressed towards their *shauq*. Many pigeon flyers stated that they remain “true” to their enthusiasm, and respectful to their neighbours and never violate *pardah*. As Shakoor described, “When I am on my rooftop, I have no idea what is happening in the street.” He and many others explained that during pigeon flying, the airborne pigeons captivate their attention and they do not think of anything else. The men argued that the activity of pigeon flying actually shields them from illicit temptations (looking at women); as Rafik stated, “...pigeon flying is my love, and pigeons are my beloved...in this love, I forget everything else.” He maintained that if this *shauq* is practised within limits—that is flyers spending sufficient time seeking livelihood along with flying pigeons—then it is a productive rather than a destructive activity; “this *shauq* is not bad, but it gets a bad name (*badnām*) [because unless you are in it, it’s hard to understand it].”

Cockfighters similarly expressed that betting is not done to earn money, but to stimulate the pleasure of fighting cocks. They regarded their activity as a serious pursuit rather than just fun or a pastime. Some emphasised that they are not inciting cocks to fight, rather they just provide the platform and opportunity to the roosters to fulfil their “natural desire” for fighting.

Dogfighters, too, provided multiple reasons for keeping “polluted” dogs. Ashiq said keeping dogs is not bad; the animal is also “a creature of Allah (*Allah di makhloq*), it has life (*sāh*), in winter it feels cold, in summer it feels hot, and like humans it also requires food to live upon.” He did not consider himself as “cruel” (*zālim*), but a “dog lover” who kept and fed dogs despite strong social disapproval. Dogfighters argued that dogs possess three vital characteristics which are disappearing in the current age: loyalty (*wafā*), obedience (*adab*), and honesty (*imān-dārī*). Because of this, Basheer stated that he was proud of keeping a dog, because “there is more sincerity in the dogs than in the humans these days.” Riaz, Meena, Mehboob, Ashiq and Manna also suggested that the dogs are better than the humans, because they are not disobedient or dishonest. Such observations suggest a deeper understanding of why such *shauq* is appealing and attracts people. Dogfighters suggested that in an age of social and moral decay, when “friends can be doubtful,” “women unfaithful,” and “children disobedient”; it is better to keep the company of dogs than humans. Riaz summarised it up, “*to kutte ko hik wārī roṭī ghat, oh wal na bhonksī*” (once you feed a dog, he will never bark [at you]).” Many men found spending time with their dogs to be an escape from contemporary moral decadence, and a way to achieve solace (*sakon*), which they said is rarely available in the company of humans.

The cultural concept of *shauq* continues to resonate strongly in the lives of the animal keepers in an environment that is increasingly disapproving. Some have pointed out that in the past, *shauqeen* rarely met with such disapproval, but that since the mid-1970s, and after the Islamisation of the country, such practices were deemed less acceptable. Now the men’s position in society and their indulgence is tolerated far less. Many animal keepers do accept that the yearning for their animal is the primary reason for their condemnation from the community; however, they still believe that their *shauq* brings meaning to their lives. The men suggested that it is not simply up to them to leave their activities, rather they are victims of an all-embracing *shauq*: “*shauq dy hatho majbor hen*” (we are helpless to our *shauq*).

Section 2: Familial Relations

In the inter-species social dwelling, pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters form a kinship of needs and responsibilities, care and affection, and attention and attachment between their animals and family members. The men keep their pigeons, cocks, and dogs in (or near) the household and the animals share the space with family members. However, the animal keepers often confront problems in striking a balance between their *shauq* and family demands. Mostly, the men remain busy tending to their animals’ needs, and the care of their families comes

second. This generates criticism from the wives of the animal keepers, who complain about the men's attitude in bestowing more affection on the animals than their own kin.

In his study of animal husbandry in Nepal, Ben Campbell (2005) offered similar observations, describing how keeping livestock entails an inordinate amount of time, attention, and effort. Such intimate care, he argued "not only makes care of livestock comparable to looking after kin but actually renders caring for kin almost impossible when they most need it" (2005: 81). Unlike in the West, he maintained, human-livestock relation in Nepal is not dichotomised and there is scope for bonds of intimacy, knowledge of character, and for fostering intersubjective relations between humans and animals (2005: 80). Similarly, South Punjabi pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters do not draw clear boundaries while tending to the needs of family members and their animals. Their cherished animals loom large in their lives, serve as markers of honour and prestige, and fulfil the men's *shauq*. However, such intimacy towards animals is often a challenge to reconcile with the demands of everyday family needs.

The institution of the family in South Punjab, however changing, remains relatively static. The family or *khāndān* in the Punjab could be as small as a nuclear family (comprising only husband, wife, and children), and as large as a joint family (comprising many generations living together in the same household). Whatever the case may be, one's *shauq* is always conceived as a personal matter. The majority of animal keepers I met during my fieldwork were married, something which generated even more criticism from community members, who saw the men's *shauq* as a serious threat to the family unit.

It is important to note that the majority of marriages amongst the animal keepers, as per the prevailing local custom, were patrilineal in nature and arranged by the heads of families (usually fathers, grandparents, or uncles). This means that even those who were known to cultivate a *shauq* of animal keeping (which society frowns upon) were marriageable, largely because marriages were endogamous in nature and intended to maintain family alliances. In South Punjab, most women remain uneducated, and this was the case with the wives of the animal keepers interviewed. Those women I interviewed with the help of a female assistant ranged from the age of 30–50 years, the majority were married mostly in their early 20s, and had on average between four to seven children. These women were willing to share their views on different aspects of the men's *shauq*, and how they affected their own lives.

1. Prioritising Care

When I visited Aslam on an autumn morning in 2008, I observed a charpoy (rope cot) placed with his pigeon coops. Squatting on the embankment of the canal that runs just across his adobe house, I asked Aslam out of curiosity “do you sleep close to your pigeons?” He guffawed “*hān, yeh bhī mere bacy heñ*” (yes, they [pigeons] are also my children). Aslam, as introduced in Chapter 2, was a lanky man in his mid-40s and the father of five children. Two of his sons assisted him in flying pigeons and running a shop of traditional sweets. His comment for equating his pigeons to his children was revealing; for him the care for the birds was as if he was caring for his own children. In fact, he slept near his pigeons to protect them from thieves (who usually operate at night), and animals (such as cats and snakes) that kill pigeons. He added that pigeons preoccupied his life, and that he could not stop thinking about his pigeons, “walking, eating, meeting people, or sitting alone in my shop, I shall be thinking about my pigeons.” Through his *shauq* of flying pigeons, Aslam found it hard to maintain clear boundaries between non-humans (pigeons) and human (family members) realms, and this drew extensive criticism from his family members. Aslam was not alone, as I increasingly realised many other pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters were routinely denounced for their inability to make clear distinctions between their non-human companions and their family.



Figure 5. 2: Aslam’s charpoy with his pigeon’s *khokhā*, 2008.

During interviews, a dogfighter's wife protested about her husband's over-indulgence in his *shauq*: "He remains busy with his dog, even when I call him for his meals, he does not come." The women also complained about the men's choice of caring for their birds and canines to the detriment of loving their biological children. One complained that her husband massages the canine after taking it on exercise runs, and after all this attention, "he even places the dog in his lap like his children." The women often spoke of their displeasure for their husbands' *shauq*, and the preferential treatment that such "polluted" animals received over their biological children. Another complained that her husband loved his roosters more than he loved his own children, she inveighed: "Once our son got sick but my husband did not take him to any doctor, but when his cock was unwell, he took the bird all the way to the vet at Bahawalpur (70 kilometres away)." These complaints from the wives clearly indicated their frustrations and sufferings towards their husbands' *shauq*.



Figure 5. 3: Four generations – Manna (second from right) is accompanied by his father (far left), son (second left) and grandson (far right). Both Manna and his son, Hanif, were dogfighting enthusiasts, while his father usually criticised their shauq.

Another problem raised by the wives was that some of the men exposed their sons to such animal activities, which sometimes led the children themselves to become *shauqeen*. During an interview, a woman protested her husband's plan to make their two year-old son a cockfighter. Similarly, another woman complained that she worries all the time about her two sons who assist their father in flying pigeons.



Figure 5. 4: Saifal's three year-old son, aspires to be a pigeon flyer one day (photo by Mahar Akmal).

In South Punjabi society, where divorce is a social stigma for both women and men, *shauq* of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting rarely has any serious impact on the men's marital life.⁷⁰ If a woman complains about the future of her children, she usually receives the response from her husband that the *shauq* of keeping pigeons (or cocks or dogs) is a productive activity that keeps children away from vices such as drinking, smoking, taking drugs, stealing, or staring at women. To this end, women feel they can make little reply since these morally denounced practices (drinking, stealing, or taking drugs) could potentially land the family in far more dire circumstances.

2. *Division of Resources*

Wives of the animal keepers accused their husbands of frivolous spending on their animals, in feeding them and wagering on them. As I mentioned earlier, most of the animal keepers spent almost one-third of their daily earning in feeding expensive things (almonds and other nuts, rare herbs, dairy products, raw meat for dogs) to their animals. For example, a pigeon flyer's wife protested that pigeons eat almost 300 rupees daily (two kilograms of millet and 250 grams of almonds), and in return they only give *beth* (pigeon droppings). The point is that although the men viewed pigeon flying as a *shauq* and were ready to spend an inordinate amount of money despite receiving no monetary return from their birds, their wives considered the act of lavishing money on pigeons as financially irresponsible and consequential to the household economy and social status. Similar accusations were reported against cockfighters and dogfighters.

Many wives of dogfighters blamed their husbands for not fulfilling household responsibilities, and criticised their *shauq* as a wasteful activity. A woman commented that keeping a dog and feeding it is useless because, as she stated proverbially, "[unlike cattle] dogs neither give milk nor can they be slaughtered [for eating]" (*kutty nā dohwaṇ dy, nā kohwaṇ dy*). Many women said that they implore their husbands to leave their useless *shauq* and focus more on productive activities, such as caring for cattle. Unlike animal keeping, working on agricultural farms or keeping livestock are considered productive, with the prospect of a stable income. Over the past few decades, growing inflation, changes in the family structure, and minimal increase in the wages of labourers have all greatly affected the social life in almost all over Pakistan.

⁷⁰ In contrast, pigeon racers in Indonesia (or "pilots," as they are locally known) face strong familial objections and the situation often leads to divorce. In Java, for instance, the religious court received about 90 petitions for divorce from the wives of pigeon flyers in July 2017 (see Coleman and Lanceron 2017).

Recent price hikes in seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides further exacerbate such uncertainty, while the price for crops in the market has not changed much. For every menial job, there are a dozen labourers available. This means that although about 50 years ago, one man was able to nourish a family of 8–10 persons, now everyone needs to work in order to maintain the domestic economy. In this situation, more and more women are joining men to support the family economy. In rural South Punjab, women pluck cotton in the field, manually weed, harvest, and thresh crops, tailor cloths for money, and prepare and sell manure fuel plates (*thāpī*), clay hearths, and ovens. However, women's work is considered an extra support to household economy, and men are still considered responsible for the nourishment, clothing, shelter and other necessities of household members.

In such challenging times, the fact that animal keepers spend a considerable amount of money on their animals is frowned upon. The women, whose increasing role in the household economy entitles them to speak openly, blame these men for squandering money and resources on their *shauq*. According to the women, the *shauq* of keeping animals not only requires “irresponsible spending” but also these activities made the men idle, as instead of working to improve the domestic economy they remained distracted by their animals.

3. Uneven Responsibilities

The men sometimes asked their wives to help and prepare the diet for the animals. Such requests, according to many women, were an extra drudgery. This was not across the board, with some pigeon flyers claiming to have performed all pigeon-related works (such as feeding the pigeons or cleaning the coops), and receiving minimal help from their wives. In contrast, cockfighters and dogfighters seemed to rely far more on their wives for help, which the wives resented. In a sense, the men appeared to assert their dominance in the home by forcing their wives to comply and assist despite the women's avowed reluctance to do so.

In many interviews, the women spoke of their aversion to preparing the roosters' diet, feeding it, or cleaning its place. During an interview, a woman complained, “...my husband commands me to peel the water-dipped almonds for his rooster.” She added with frustration that this demand came on top of the many other tasks she was charged with doing as part of her routine household chores. A wife of a dogfighter stated that her husband ordered her to prepare *chorī* (kneading wheat bread by mixing sugar and *ghī*) for his dog with “soft hands” (*koly hathān nāl* – also meaning with love), and to cook the meat as succulently for the dog as she would cook it for her husband. Another explained, “If I refuse to cook meat for my husband's dog, he starts

doing it himself. Then I feel embarrassed because cooking is a women's domain, and I immediately start helping him." Such culturally structured gender roles suggest that when dogfighters are busy in their daily agricultural tasks, they could cajole their wives to prepare food for their animals. In some ways then, one could argue that the "honourable" men who claim to be responsible for grooming, caring, and feeding their animals, highly relied on their wives for maintaining their *shauq*, and by extension their *izzat*.

4. Family Disgrace

Lyon (2004) has argued, "virtually everything a Punjabi individual does, has an impact on the family" (2004: 71), and that the honour of a man or a family is measured in part by what others say about him (2004: 64). In South Punjab, not only the animal keepers are castigated for their passion for keeping animals; their wives and children face a similar stigma. During the interviews, wives of the animal keepers spoke of three key reasons that bring such dishonour to the family.

First, the gambling associated with these practise not only invites criticism from neighbours and relatives, it also brings disgrace upon the family. The women conveyed their grief that their husbands are being referred to as *jowārī*, a derogatory term used for addicted gamblers in Punjab. Second, fighting a *halal* bird (in the case of cockfighting) was seen as "immoral" and "cruel" on the part of the men, and the stigma extended to the whole household. Such practices, one woman expressed, rendered the whole family complicit in the act, and the stigma stuck. Third, such stigmas were compounded with dogfighting. Some people accused the whole family of dogfighters for living, sleeping, and feeding with the dog (a polluted animal) in the house. The women blamed their husbands' *shauq* as creating a bad identity (*burī pehchān*) for the whole family.

To preserve and maintain *izzat* of one's family is not considered a women's role in South Punjab. Men have the responsibility to act and behave in a way that makes other people respect them and their family (children and wife). However, despite being aware that their *shauq* was having a negative impact on the family's prestige, most of the animal keepers adhered to the activities of flying or fighting animals. Therefore, the wives—themselves unable to improve the family's honour—raised their concern and argued that the men's *shauq* was damaging to the family's honour.

Discussion: Worthy or Unworthy Shauq

For the *shaukeen*, their non-human companions are much more than mere animals. They are cherished, kept in proximity, and treated with care. Such close bonds with their animals develop a diverse set of emotions. For instance, keeping pigeons, cocks, and dogs can generate joy and pleasure, while their ailments produce pain and despair. At times, their injury might provoke frustration and anger, and the animals' death can cause sorrow and distress. This intimacy means that the animals are kept very close and ultimately influence the men's social relations.

However, such interspecies interaction, as I have shown, also generates criticism from close family members. While the men commonly claim that their *shauq* allow them to escape troubles and find pleasures, the wives are far less willing to accept this rationale. According to the women, such pursuits perpetuate and even exacerbate household hardships—both materially and symbolically. For them, these practices are a waste (time, money, and effort), or even more problematic, an addiction (gambling), informed by immorality (cruelty, and a bad example for the children). In spite of such impacts of animals on family relations, the men continue to breed the animals; raise, feed, and train them in the household; and fly or fight them to fulfil their *shauq*.

It might appear that the men were taking care of their animals, however, their activities were the care of their selves. For instance, when pigeon flyer Nadir's wife asked him to leave this *shauq*, he replied that he would accept anything she will say, but not this. "Because," Nadir told his wife, "by looking at pigeons, I forget all my worries." Such worries could be daily social or family issues, or economic and status troubles, which Nadir feels he can ward off when in the company of his cherished birds. As such, when I discussed with the animal keepers about the severe implications associated with animal keeping, they argued that their animals do not ask them to stop taking care of their families. "It is upon the person," Rafik suggested, "how he manages time between his *shauq* and his domestic responsibilities."

Some men sought to present the positive elements of their *shauq*, for instance involving their sons in taking care of the animals and making them *shaukeen*. Many animal keepers suggested that participation in these activities would cultivate stronger values in their children. For instance, pigeon flyers were assisted by their sons on the rooftops, and were using this activity for spending time with their children—an opportunity to raise and discuss social life (see also Feeley-Harnik 2007: 171). Rooftops were the space where the men sought to bond with their

sons and socialise them into what they thought were proper etiquettes of life.⁷¹ Pigeon flyers spoke of how through the practice of flying pigeons, they were demonstrating to their sons the core values of care (*khayāl*), hard work (*meḥnat*), and honesty (*imāndārī*). They were teaching their sons about developing and maintaining friendship, not succumbing to bad acts (such as drugs, staring at women, stealing and so forth), and about evaluating people on their merits and skills rather than on their social status. Similarly, cockfighters and dogfighters spoke of how core values could be heightened by learning about *shauq*, such as the importance of saving one's honour in face of dangers or in difficult situations. In other words, the criticisms expressed by society, family members, and the wives were rebuffed by counterclaims made by animal keepers, who suggested that in fact a dedication and passion towards a *shauq* (be it pigeon flying, cockfighting, or dogfighting) was an opportunity for both personal growth and the nurturing of the future generation.

Conclusion

The chapter discusses the objections from local South Punjabi people and family members toward pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting. The people criticised the men for their violation of existing social values (waste; destruction of one's life; taking up an activity like an addiction) and deviance from Islamic mores (gambling, violation of purdah). In response to these objections, the animal keepers insisted that their *shauq* were harmless to others, and only helped them to adorn their personal lives (c.f. Narayan and Kavesh n.d.). In this contentious social relationship, where the villagers described the animal activities as wasteful addictions, the *shauqeen* conceived these practices as a way of freeing themselves from the everyday mundane routine to find joy and meaning in life.

The wives of the animal keepers similarly asserted their criticisms for emotional and practical reasons. Emotionally, they argued, their husbands did not provide appropriate care to the family. They criticised the men's prioritisation of care and affection between their non-human companions and human kin, and argued that these activities were a chief reason for family disgrace. Practically, the women noted, flying pigeons or fighting cocks and dogs was harmful to the domestic economy.

⁷¹ While the focus of this study is largely on male relations (competitive or otherwise), other relations with women and children implicitly (to varying degrees) inform ideologies and perceptions of masculinities in rural Punjab. For instance, pigeon flyers stated that rooftops allowed them to educate their sons about life, values they believed in, and aspirations for the future. However, like many other South Punjabi men, pigeon flyers took very little interest in the socialisation of their daughters; the latter were deemed the wives' responsibility.

Both male members of the community and the wives of animal keepers, condemned the enthusiasts for not fulfilling the role of a “responsible man”—the one who should devote all his energy and attention to the support of his family. They criticised the animal keepers’ uneven distribution of time, care, and other resources which neglected social or familial obligations in favour of their personal *shauq*.

In response to such objections, the men argued that those who do not possess a *shauq* would not understand the true meanings it carries. They pointed either to their own inability to control such passions or to the benefits of *shauq* to their lives and their children—as an opportunity for bonding. This combination is one that they regard as a “*genuine shauq*,” a topic I turn to in the final chapter of the thesis.

CHAPTER 6: Exploring “Genuine Shauq”

فرصت کاروبار شوق کسے؟
ذوق نظارہ جمال کہاں؟

Furṣt-e-kārobār-e-shauq kisy?
Zauq-e-naẓārḥ-e-jamāl kahāñ?

Who has the leisure for the industry of passion (*shauq*)
Where is one’s longing to behold the glorious

Ghalib (1797–1869)⁷²

“Only an honourable man possesses a genuine *shauq*,” the dogfighter Ashiq told me in April 2015. We were sitting on a woven palm-leaf mat under a neem tree in the open courtyard of his son-in-law’s house, golden wheat fields in our sight. Sitting cross-legged, Ashiq started explaining what seemed a connection between honour and *shauq*. “A genuine *shauqeen* will always protect his animals from all harm, and never sell them in the market,” he added. In his early 60s, Ashiq never went to school; however, I was not in the least surprised by his use of English word “genuine” to highlight the characteristics of a “true” *shauq*. Many South Punjabi people use the word “genuine” (with slightly different pronunciation) in their daily conversations to hint towards something that is original, authentic, or pure, such as “*genuine radio*” (original radio), “*genuine banda*” (an authentic man), or “*genuine gāñ*” (a pure-breed cow).⁷³ Similarly, the term “genuine *shauq*” was one that Ashiq and many other animal keepers employed to express a pure *shauq* that is practised for achieving delight and satisfaction without financial and material rewards. For a “genuine *shauqeen*” the animals are not seen as passive objects but as active subjects, which facilitate the exploration of freedom and joy. This is why Ashiq believed that true enthusiasts should act like honourable (*izzat-dār*) men, who devote their days and nights to their cherished animals, protect them from all possible harm, feed them well, and fly or fight them to admire their abilities.

My concern in this chapter is to examine the three major characteristics of a “genuine *shauqeen*.” First, why does a man think he is superior among other enthusiasts? Which animal (pigeon, rooster, or dog) is seen as most prestigious to keep, and how do such animals help in achieving the sense that one is embracing the finest *shauq*? Second, how far a person should

⁷² Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib was a classical Urdu poet. His is greatly admired for his rare capacity to observe life deeply and express his observations with poignant beauty (Sadullah 1965: vii). The English translation for the Urdu stanza has been adopted from Raza (2009: 63).

⁷³ In his introduction to “Keywords,” anthropologist Craig Jeffrey argued that many English words are casually used in India (and in other countries of South Asia), and usually convey different meanings at different times and in different situations (Jeffrey 2017: 272-273).

be committed to his animals, and how should one protect his animals to save his *izzat* and masculine status? Because one's *shauq* is an intimate affair and because it involves an intricate relationship between human and non-human, *shauqueen* often blame others for spoiling and even destroying their *shauq* by casting a curse or the evil eye. Black magic is often the product of a relationship gone sour, and the evil eye usually happens when someone is envious of another's success. I am therefore interested in the discourse and practice involved in safeguarding a "genuine *shauq*" from the jealousy and envy of others. My final concern examines the wider relations forged through *shauq* in the changing South Punjabi society. As mentioned in earlier chapters, *shauqueen* often speak of a degenerating age where past ideals are continuously waning. I therefore ask what an enthusiast does to shield the purity and sublimity of his "genuine *shauq*" from the effects of materiality and modernity.

I have divided this chapter into three sections to address these problems concerning "genuine *shauq*." In the first section, I explicate the debate over the superior *shauq*. I highlight the viewpoints of pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters and describe their conceptions of *shauq*. I discuss their reasoning in criticising each other's activities, and their justifications in depicting their ascendancy over others. In the second section of this chapter, I explore the potential violation of *shauq* and cultural meanings of two cosmological beliefs in South Punjab—black magic and the evil eye—and explain their role in the lives of animal keepers. I discuss how deep bonds between the men—those that are developed through a relationship of friendship and brotherhood—are affected by suspicion, jealousy, and envy. By adducing two short case studies, I discuss how black magic and the evil eye become reasons for conflict, and how the men have recourse to blaming these to explain misfortunes involving their animals. In the last section of this chapter, I examine the tension between "genuine *shauq*" and monetary gains, which foregrounds perceptions about the decline of animal related *shauq*.

Although my argument in this chapter revolves around *shauq*, its authenticity, vulnerability, and its evolution across time, at the heart of my argument are human-animal relations. I examine how *shauq* renders pigeons, roosters, and dogs as active subjects of their human owners' imagination, and how the progressive decline of *shauq* suggests that animals are becoming mere objects and docile bodies. This argument becomes more evident in the last section of the chapter, when I discuss how "genuine *shauq*" is affected by an enthusiast's decision to sell his cherished animal in the form of a commodity. As the animals are cherished,

kept close, and recognised with personalised names and traits, there is an expectation that they remain long-term companions rather than passive objects that are traded or sold in the market.

Section 1: Who is the Best Enthusiast – Comparing Passions

There was a king who had a young beautiful daughter—his only heir. The king decided to find her a husband, but the princess refused. The king was gloomy to hear this response and asked his most wise advisor (*vazīr*) to investigate the matter. After a few days, the wise advisor suggested the king replace the pair of chickens with a pair of pigeons in the palace. His suggestion was followed and a week later, the princess was willing to marry. The confused king inquired about this matter, and the advisor replied, “the princess used to observe the rooster’s authority and cruelty over the hen; it kept beating up the chicken all the time and kept her in ill manner. Thus, the princess imagined life after marriage as brutal, disrespectful, and full of violence, and she refused to marry. However, when we replaced the fowls with pigeons, she observed the pigeons’ love and care for each other, and the harmony in which the couple managed to share the responsibilities of eggs incubation and feeding the squabs. Thus the princess realised that marriage could also be about love, care, and sharing responsibilities, so she agreed to marry.” (Ustad Nadir Abbass, April 2015)

During my fieldwork, I noticed that all the animal keepers were seeking to establish the superiority of their *shauq* over other passions. After quoting the above-discussed story, many pigeon flyers argued in favour of keeping pigeons at their house instead of penning gamecocks or tethering fighting dogs. They denounced cockfighters and dogfighters for staging animal fights for amusement, and regarded fighting animals as a sin. Rafik argued that his male pigeons, too, sometimes fight in the coop, but he instantly separates the fighting birds. He emphasised that fights among wild animals could be natural, but manipulating animals’ fighting instinct for pleasure is a great sin.

Pigeon flyers also justified the superiority of their *shauq* over cockfighting and dogfighting with reference to the role of *ustāds* (masters). As discussed in Chapter 2, the institution of *ustāds* was a key for pigeon flying *shauq*. The flyers argued that complete submission and devotion to *ustād* is crucial for learning the intricacies and technicalities of any *shauq*. Many revered their *ustāds* and argued that a disciple should remain loyal to his master all his life. In following this long-standing tradition of admiring the experience of *ustāds* and consulting these wise old men on matters relating to health and nourishment of pigeons, the flyers established their credentials as “genuine *shauqeen*,” and described cockfighters and dogfighters as wayward and direction-less.

Nevertheless, as we shall see below, the *shauq* of pigeon flying came under criticism from cockfighters and dogfighters. The latter considered pigeon flying as a “cheap” *shauq*, more as a “hobby” than a true enthusiasm where the flyers were not ready to sacrifice time and resources.

When I spoke to cockfighters about other *shauq*, they often replied by scoffing at pigeon flyers for keeping very cheap *shauq*. As discussed in Chapter 3, an average *aṣīl* rooster costs about \$20 in South Punjab; however, the price of a good fighting cock sometimes reaches up to 20,000 rupees (\$200). In contrast, pigeons were cheap and a good flying bird was available for about 200 rupees (\$2). Some did keep pigeons worth \$10–\$40; however, most of the men were poor and unable to afford valuable pigeons in large numbers. Cockfighters taunted pigeon flyers on their restricted spending in *shauq*, as cockfighter Ghamo suggested, “we cockfighters spend any amount without thinking...a *shauq* is not only an investment of time and hard work [to train animals for competitions] but it also requires a financial sacrifice.” Ghamo and many other cockfighters proposed that in *shauq* one must not aim to save money but instead invest to keep high-value animals.

In some cases, cockfighters aligned themselves with pigeon flyers and chastised dogfighters for two reasons. Firstly, they argued that historically both cockfighting and pigeon flying were the passion of the kings and the nawabs: “genuine *shauq*” that was native to the culture. Secondly, the men emphasised the *halal* and holy aspects of their cherished birds, unlike reviled *haram* dogs. According to this view, a “genuine *shauq*” was a matter of purity, sanctioned by historical and religious injunctions, and enveloped in wider social and economic considerations.

Ironically, it was the purity that dogfighters celebrated as the virtue of their *shauq*. According to them, a “genuine *shauq*” was not about the purity of animals (*halal* or *haram*) but about the purity of intention. South Punjabi dogfighters perceived their *shauq* as a non-monetary pursuit, practised without the impurities of gambling—an activity that was common amongst both pigeon flyers and cockfighters. Gambling was religiously prohibited and considered an immoral activity. Dogfighters reprimanded these men for corrupting the purity of their *shauq* with gambling. Ashiq explained that dogfighters only fight the dog to admire the animal’s courage, bravery, and strength; they never seek to profit from their *shauq* through wagering. Similarly, Meena Darzi questioned, “How can they [pigeon flyers and cockfighters] be genuine *shauqeen*? When one requires money to arouse interest in his activity, he is not a genuine

shauqeen.” According to dogfighters, there were double standards inherent in pigeon flying and cockfighting *shauq*, which sought to emphasise the purity of the birds without considering the morally and religiously corrupt nature of gambling. Such double standards, they maintained, revealed the deceptive nature of these *shauq* and their impure motivations.

Dogfighters tried to defend their decision to keep and feed dogs. They argued that a *shauq* does not discriminate between *halal* and *haram* or rich and poor, and is practised with devotion. Speaking about the social stigma towards keeping dogs, Basheer protested, “Islam does not forbid us from touching or petting dogs.” He stressed that the unconditional love, faithfulness, and obedience found in dogs is absent in humans. He added that while a person can be a trickster (*chāl-bāz*), a dog’s intentions are straightforward and pure. This point was emphasised by many dogfighters, for whom dogs should be seen as displaying unmatched friendship and loyalty—characteristics often missing among humans in modern life. When this issue was raised in my discussion with dogfighters, many agreed, pointing out that in bad times when a man loses his money and honour, his relatives, and even his children will leave him, but his dog will remain forever loyal.

Most dogfighters have described the loyalty of dogs as the vital reason for keeping canines; however, merely keeping dogs was not their *shauq*. A *shauq*, according to dogfighters, was to fight the animal and appreciate his stamina, dominance, valour, and aggression. For these men, their *shauq* was all about the display of honour, prestige, and masculinity in the presence of a crowd of thousands. They did not see the pleasure of *shauq* in gambling money (securing economic capital), but gambling prestige (accumulating symbolic capital); their *shauq* was not focused on the past (pedigree of their dog) but rather it was about mastering the present (winning the competition); and it was not about choosing a *halal* or *haram* animal but fighting an animal that truly represented the values and ideals of a dominant masculinity: courage (*jur’at*), bravery (*dilerī*), and strength (*zor*).

The above discussion demonstrates that *shauq* is a passionate pursuit that is rationalised in accord with social values and aspirations. All animal keepers considered their chosen *shauq* as the genuine pursuit, which was directed towards achieving the profoundest delight. However, a disconcerting aspect that all the men collectively raised was the fear that other animal keepers would harm their *shauq* through casting black magic or the evil eye. To take help from black magic in order to win the competition was considered a “coward act” and perceived as being against the values of true manliness (*mardāngī*). The evil eye, unlike black magic, was

considered an unintentional harm directed towards people and animals. Most of the animal keepers believed in the malicious effects of black magic and the evil eye, and found these as crucial evidence for any misfortunes to their animals. In addition to providing explanations for any defeat or injury to their animals, these cosmologically malicious acts often caused conflicts among the men. The intimate bonds that *shauq* was believed to generate among the men—such as being *yār* (friends) and *bhirā* (brothers) [as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 respectively]—were usually damaged by the suspicion of envy and jealousy through black magic and the evil eye. In the second section of this chapter, I examine why and how the men's *shauq* was facing threats from these two cosmological means, and how we can examine these beliefs through anthropological interpretation.

Section 2: Safeguarding Shauq

Black magic and the evil eye are two major issues that many animal enthusiasts have to deal with on a routine basis. As the men take their cherished animals to be vehicles of their *shauq*, the animals' wellbeing and protection is a priority. Before flying or fighting competitions are organised, the men spend many hours in carefully feeding and training the animals and attempting to mitigate all risks. However, if despite all careful preparations, the animals do not perform well or die, people seek explanations. One common explanation is that the animal has fallen victim to black magic or the evil eye. This suspicion can also create disputes among friends (*yār*) and brothers (*bhirā*), and may render the accused an “inauthentic *shauqeen*,” and a “dishonourable man.” As I discussed earlier, an honourable (*izzat-dār*) man is believed to participate in his chosen pursuit on fair grounds and never to cheat. Therefore, when such accusations are raised against a *shauqeen* they are taken seriously, as they risk compromising one's *izzat* and status. Before examining how black magic and the evil eye affect the life of the *shauqeen* (and particularly the life of cockfighters and dogfighters), I first briefly discuss the general prevalence of these two beliefs in South Punjab.

Black Magic

The belief in black magic is not only the jurisdiction of folk religion. Even if we go by the textual traditions of Islam, the notion of black magic is apparent. For instance, the belief in the unseen (*al-ghayb*) has been emphasised in Islam. This means belief in Angels, Paradise, Hell, and Jinn (Khalifa et al. 2011: 69). Among the Jinn (or spirits), some are righteous while others are non-believers (Qur'ān 72:11). And it is understood that these were the non-believing Jinn

who first taught magic to humans during the reign of the Prophet Solomon (Qur'ān 2:102, see also Al-Sha'rawi 1995).⁷⁴

In Pakistan, there is a strong prevalence of belief in black magic. Locally known as *kālā jādo*, *kālā 'ilm*, *jādo-ṭonah*, the phenomena have been discussed in anthropological studies, especially those focusing on conflicts in everyday relations (Shaw 2000: 209, Marsden 2005a: 60). More specifically, Mikkel Rytter (2010) has looked at the experiences of two Pakistani migrant women in Denmark whose personal lives were affected by black magic, and examined the changing notions of relatedness, family, and kinship structures among the migrants. Moreover, Emma Varley (2012) discussed the prevalence of black magic in north Pakistan and explained the cosmological mechanism employed by Sunni women for seeking explanations for their reproductive health issues. However, very little is known about men's experience of black magic. A major reason for this exclusion is a popular perception that women are more inclined to practise sorcery (cf. Callan 2007, Shaw 2000, Rytter 2010). However, as I show below, in South Punjab men are also disposed to sorcery, especially when the issue is related to fulfilling their *shauq* and protecting the wellbeing and performance of cherished animals.

In South Punjab, the professional male perpetrator of black magic is called *bābā*, *pīr*, or *'āmil*, while professional women are known as *bībī* or *mā'ī*. These sorcerers commonly charge money from their clients for making someone fall in love with them, to control an errant son, or to cause someone financial harm. When pigeon flyer Khudla was in his mid-40s and the sole bachelor in the village of Shahpur, he sought assistance from a sorcerer to find a wife. "The sorcerer asked me to bring a living crow and a black chicken, then he sacrificed both birds and cast a spell, and after two months my uncle offered me his daughter in marriage," he recounted.⁷⁵ However, according to Khudla and other animal keepers, there is a flip-side to such sorcery, especially when someone performs black magic to harm animals or alter their performance. As we will see shortly, this purposeful act causes serious conflicts, but is complex to identify and shield against.

⁷⁴ Muslims' belief in black magic is not only supported by the Qur'ān; there is also a famous account of Prophet Muhammad being bewitched by a sorcerer (Al-Bukhari, 3268, Muslim, 2189). Due to black magic's destructive nature, there is a consensus among Islamic scholars that if any Muslim practises it, that person will become a disbeliever (Al-Sha'rawi 1995: 68–69, Rytter 2010: 51).

⁷⁵ In addition to crows, bats and striped hyenas are used in magical practices in South Asia, see for example Frembgen 2006b: 246; 1998: 339.

The Evil Eye: A Malice Gaze

Nazar (I translate it as the evil eye) is an additional cosmological phenomenon that causes harm to a victim. Unlike black magic, it is rarely intended. It is usually found in the innate and uncontrollable gaze of jealous people which inflicts misfortune on others. In Pakistan, the belief is grounded in the support of Islamic texts and everyday practices. In the Qur’ān, the evil eye has been mentioned (68: 51), and many Hadith (Prophet’s sayings) discuss its harms (see Sunan Abu Dawud 3879, 3884, 3888, 3889, and Sunan Ibn Majah 3510).

The belief in the evil eye is common in South Asia (cf. Pocock 1973: 25–40, Shaw 2000: 200–201, Callan 2007: 332–333, Spiro 2005: 61–68, Rytter 2010: 47, Woodburne 1981: 55–65). In his ethnography of the beliefs of the Patidar people of central Gujarat in India, David Pocock (1973) devoted a whole chapter to explaining the connection between the evil eye and the expression of envy and jealousy. He argues that the evil eye functions in reinforcing caste and social hierarchies among Gujarati villagers. In addition, Alan Dundes (1992) in his casebook, combines 21 essays on the evil eye by different authors, and explains the origin of this belief in different cultures throughout the world.

According to the local South Punjabi belief, the gaze or praise of others sometimes works maliciously and worsens the conditions of humans, animals, crops, and objects such as houses and cars. Many misfortunes are attributed to the evil eye; for instance, it can make children sick, ruin a newly married couple’s life, cause significant loss to a prosperous business, or death to an animal, an accident to a new car, destruction of a house and crops, and so forth. The Punjabi belief in the evil eye can be categorised under two major types: the malign gaze (*ghairān dī nazar*), and affectionous praise (*apnyān dī nazar*). The first type is the jealousy and envy of others (*ghair*) about one’s prosperous condition, while the second is the affection and appreciation of close ones (*apny*). These are two sides of the same coin, as both can result in harm, even if there are no explicit malicious intentions. In explaining the second type, the animal keepers provided some illustrations, such as that a mother can harm her child by praising too much, the manifestation of deep love among spouses can cause separation, or appreciation of animals can affect their efficacy or health. However, unlike black magic, the perpetrator is often difficult to identify, or even if someone is accused of casting the evil gaze, it is assumed that the person is unaware of the damage she/he is inflicting.

Cosmological Beliefs and Pigeons

Pigeon flyers were well aware of these two cosmological dangers, yet believed that pigeons never became victims of black magic or the evil eye. The bird, according to many flyers, was a holy animal who liked to dwell on shrines and mosques minarets and was therefore shielded from harm. In addition, it was said that the pigeon was a “Sayyid bird.” The term Sayyid is generally used for descendants of the Prophet. The pigeon flyers believe that the bird has also witnessed the martyrdom of the nephew of the Prophet, Imam Hussain, at Karbala where it dipped its beak or claw in the blood of Imam Hussain and flew back to Medina to inform the people about the tragedy (see Frembgen and Rollier 2014: 51). Because of all the religious symbolism and power attributed to the bird, most of my interlocutors believed that such harms (black magic and the evil eye) cannot affect it.

During my fieldwork, I heard few complaints of black magic and the evil eye against pigeons; the phenomena was commonly discussed amongst cockfighters and dogfighters. To explicate cockfighters and dogfighters’ encounters with black magic and the evil eye, I examine two short cases below—Riaz’s dog and black magic, and Waso’s rooster and the evil eye—and then discuss the symbolic importance of black magic and the evil eye on the *shauq* of animal keeping.

Riaz’s Dog is Bewitched

Riaz’s encounter with sorcery commenced with a pistol—a 14-bullets new and *zero-metre*⁷⁶ pistol that he bought for 12000 rupees (about \$120). Riaz convinced me that he did not purchase the pistol for showcasing his power to others (*show-bāzī*), but kept it at home for personal safety or any time of need. The pistol was unique, and admired by all the young men of the village for its novelty. One day, Riaz was approached by Rabo, his neighbour and his relative (father’s mother’s sister’s son or *abby dā maṣāt*). Dishevelled, Rabo told Riaz, “my daughter has eloped with your friend Jeda, now help me to get her back.” Riaz rushed to get his pistol and accompanied Rabo to Jeda’s place. Upon reaching, Riaz asked his friend Jeda to hand over Rabo’s daughter, which Jeda did instantly out of fear of the pistol. Riaz then gave his pistol to Rabo and asked him to kill both lovers and save his honour (*izzat*), but Rabo refused and returned home with his daughter. Riaz later told me, “I sacrificed my friendship for Rabo, but he appeared a coward and shameless (*be-ghert*), who did not have the balls to kill the

⁷⁶ The term comes from zero-metre cars or motorbikes. South Punjabi people use this term to indicate anything that is brand new and never used.

disgraceful couple and save his honour.” Furious, Riaz then went to Rabo and told him “*to ko’ī bandah ne, dallā heṇ*” (you are not a man, but a pimp), and asked him not to try to contact him anymore. Such incidents demonstrate the significance of *izzat* and the need for maintaining masculinity within South Punjabi village settings. The fact that Rabo was not willing to adhere to the code of masculinity that Riaz demanded, rendered him weak in the latter’s eyes. Riaz, on the other hand, did maintain the code both by demonstrating loyalty and by his masculine actions in protecting the honour of Rabo’s family.

After a few months, Riaz exchanged his cherished pistol for a fighting dog, which was very quick and speedy in attack, like a bullet. Perhaps not surprisingly, Riaz named the dog Pistol. The dog soon became famous, and triumphed in all dogfights for three consecutive years. Pistol’s popularity reached its peak when he outclassed a champion dog, and appeared on the back page of a local newspaper along with Riaz. After that victory, Pistol received invitations to participate in major dogfighting competitions in South Punjab. When Pistol was fighting in Mela Bawee Shaheedan in December 2014, many of Riaz’s friends and myself accompanied him. Pistol fought for 16 minutes but yelped and lost the dogfight. This was a massive blow for Riaz’s reputation. After a few days, Riaz told me that he had found the root cause for Pistol’s defeat; “an act of black magic performed by my old rival, Rabo,” he claimed.

Riaz declared that Rabo was jealous of his success, happiness, and popularity, and always wanted to harm him. Though Rabo failed many times, this time he succeeded by inflicting black magic on Pistol. Riaz continued, “I suspected an act of black magic as soon as I noticed that Pistol was behaving in a peculiar way: he had no appetite, he sat in the arena which he never did, and he bit my leg before the fight.” Putting those pieces together, Riaz was able to declare that Pistol was victim of an act of black magic – he had a suspect in mind. Riaz asked a sorcerer (‘*āmil*) to counteract the black magic and find out the culprit. The sorcerer told Riaz that the night before the fight someone from his relatives had dissolved ashes of a *ta’veez* (a paper on which a spell is written) in the water and given it to Pistol to drink. Riaz instantly concluded that the relative who had perpetrated this malicious act was Rabo. After the incident, Riaz told me he sold the dog for eight times less money than its worth. Riaz said “the money I have received after the sale of Pistol is not enough to buy a good fighting dog, but sufficient to buy a pistol to avenge Pistol.”

What this incident further captures is how the *shauq* of dogfighting is closely associated with notions of honour. Honour in this case was embodied in an object—the pistol—which

enhanced a man's ability to showcase his masculinity and ensure that structures of male power were enforced. Such forms of masculinity are articulated in the dogfighting arena. In the arena cosmological forces also operate, and acts of black magic continue to influence the social relations of the animal keepers, who consider jealousy and envy as potent forces that could severely undermine their success and performance in the arena.

Do Not Praise It: Nazar on Waso's Rooster

"I tried every cure but Hitler's health got worse and worse, and he died three days later." Waso was telling me about his most cherished gamecock, Hitler, his tone carrying an undercurrent of sorrow. Although the rooster died in 2010 (before my fieldwork), his image was vivid in Waso's memory. Removing a loose-fitting turban from his head, Waso recounted, "Hitler exhibited the qualities of a champion as soon he was hatched from the egg." According to Waso, Hitler was quickest and strongest among all the chicks. When he was tried in sparring exercises with senior cocks, Waso recounted, "his jumps were high, his attacks were sharp, and his balance was extraordinary." Considering Hitler's remarkable qualities, Waso devoted every effort and spent countless hours in training and feeding him.

When Hitler reached 18 months of age, he fought in a cockfight and killed its adversary in only three minutes. At this time, someone from the crowd shouted "the cock is cruel like Hitler" and later this name became the cock's identity. Waso nostalgically recounted, "When Hitler used to kick the opponent in fury, the opponent died instantly. So powerful his kick was." Hitler's popularity soon spread, and everyone was praising the cock's skills. This was the time when Hitler became a victim of the blasting effects of praise and the evil eye.

All good gamecocks are susceptible to the evil eye and so was the case with Hitler. In order to protect him from the infective gaze and the blight of jealousy, Waso would carry Hitler under his right arm, completely buried in a black shawl to ward off the evil eye. The cock was only exposed from its protective shawl when it was his time to fight in the pit. One day, Waso's cousin (who was also a cockfighter and coveted Hitler) unexpectedly visited his house and bestowed praise by looking at Hitler "*ae kukar barā chaṅgā he*" (this rooster is so good). Waso was helpless to deflect the evil gaze of his cousin. Later at night, Hitler became sick.

Waso knew that Hitler had become a victim of the evil eye but he needed to confirm this. He asked his wife to weave some chillies around the head of Hitler, and threw them into the fire. And when the gas from the chillies did not appear, he became absolutely sure that Hitler was

suffering from the evil eye. In order to counteract the evil eye, he did “everything”: he weaved seven wheat-flour balls around Hitler’s head in a clockwise direction and threw them out from the wall; he tied black threads around both shanks; and soaked the old leather shoe in water and give it to Hitler to drink. When all measures failed and he found no improvement in Hitler’s condition, then he attempted what he called “*dwā ty d’uā*” (biomedical treatment and prayer). He took Hitler to a veterinary doctor and started biomedical treatment. He also brought Hitler to the local Imam of the mosque and asked him to pray for Hitler’s health. Waso did not sleep for three nights, doing everything in his power to save Hitler. But Hitler died. Waso said he had many gamecocks afterwards, but none was akin to Hitler.

Discussion

The perpetration of black magic to win animal fights is considered “cowardice” (*buzdilī*), “cheating” (*bemānī*), and a “disgraceful act” (*be-qherī*). The accused is considered lacking true male qualities. Dogfighter Manna suggested that using sorcery to make animals sick or less effective during the fight is “not what a man should do” (*mard dā kam nī*). In contrast, the perpetrator of the evil eye is hardly ever accused, and it is perceived that this destructive power is not in anyone’s conscious control. However, it still indicates the jealousy of the perpetrator towards one’s happiness and prosperous condition.

In both of the above case studies, Riaz and Waso blamed afflictive supernatural powers to justify their misfortunes. Black magic and the evil eye have been taken to explain the inexplicable. When the sorcerer blamed *any* relative for perpetrating black magic against Pistol, Riaz instantly thought of Rabo because of their existing rivalry. This was also in accordance with the common perception of agnatic rivalry and mistrust among close relatives in Pakistan (Lyon 2004: 127, see also Barth 1959: 65-66, and Ahmed 1980: 3). Close relatives, and particularly cousins from the patrilineal side or those who share inheritance (*sahreek*), are usually considered jealous in South Punjab. Therefore, keeping in mind their personal rivalry, Riaz concluded that Rabo was the culprit behind his dog’s defeat.

In Waso’s case, he projected his own anxiety about possessing a champion cock, and suspected that others coveted his rooster. Moreover, his over-investment (of resources and time) in his cherished rooster led him to expect severe counterproductive and injurious effects. When Hitler got sick, Waso tried folk remedies for the evil eye, but did not consult the vet until the third day (the day the cock died).

During interviews, veterinary doctors told me they urge instant medical consultation for sick animals. Doctor Atta recounted an incident when a dog had canine influenza but the dog's owner suspected sorcery. At that time, Doctor Atta said to the dog's owner, "I respect your belief about black magic, but let me do my (biomedical) treatment, along with yours (counter-sorcery) treatment." The vets explained that most medical issues are diagnosed and treated as sorcery or the evil eye by the animal keepers and this only worsens the sick animal's condition. This might have been the case with Hitler. Waso kept looking for the treatment for the evil eye, and only brought the rooster to the vet on the last day of its life.

Both case studies illustrate the fact that belief in black magic and the evil eye are enmeshed in the everyday social relations of animal keepers. Even though strong bonds such as friendship (*yārī*) and brotherhood (*bhirapī*) are held in esteem, cases like this harbour suspicion, which can lead to feuds among the men. Like Riaz and Waso, most of the animal keepers suspected other keepers if any misfortune befell their animals. Most of them avoided taking personal responsibility for defeats or the death of their animals, and sought to protect themselves from the possibility of loss. Moreover, by referring to these illegitimate forces as causes of illness and misfortune, the men attempt to rationalise defeats and avoid public and peers' humiliation.

Blaming cosmological forces as the reason for one's failure implicitly served to protect the integrity of one's *shauq*. Unexpected death or defeat of an animal affected the men's status. Their mastery was questioned. To justify their loss, many animal keepers blamed cosmological forces. They accused their opponents, and argued that those who performed such acts were inauthentic *shauqeen*. Indeed, the argument was that despite defeat, a "genuine *shauqeen*" would never resort to "cowardly" practices like black magic to win competitions.

However, a question emerges why, unlike pigeon flyers, cockfighters and dogfighters were so partial to supernatural explanations for their losses. There could be two possible explanations. Firstly, pigeon flocks comprised around 100–150 pigeons, and the loss of one or two pigeons did not heavily affect the flyer's status as master of his *shauq*, whereas roosters and canines were kept in much fewer numbers and any loss greatly influenced the men's prestige. Secondly, a normal gamecock or fighting dog was expensive to buy (20,000–80,000 rupees on average), whereas pigeons were cheap (200 rupees). Therefore, both cocks and dogs involved a significant cost to their owners, and their loss warranted explanations.

Even though sorcery and the evil eye are believed to be destroying the competitiveness of animal competitions, the men's *shauq* faces a more serious threat. In the changing South Punjabi society, *shauq* of flying and fighting animals is on the wane. People speak of such changes in terms of authentic or "genuine *shauq*," which is compromised by money-oriented animal keepers. Many men accused newcomers for just breeding animals for profit. They argued that keeping pigeons for flying, and cocks and dogs for fighting as a *shauq* is losing its spirit, and all these long-standing traditions are transforming under the forces of modernity—a topic I turn to next.

Section 3: Transformations

Shauq, Narayan (2016) suggests, is a personal predilection "that draws people to particular cultural practices not because they *have* to but because they *want* to" (2016: 224 my emphases). *Shauq* therefore stems from a person's choice and taste. People are pulled toward their *shauq*-driven activities in search of joy and delight (Narayan 2016: 217). As the purpose is to achieve personal fulfilment, pursuits inspired by *shauq* represent a pleasant space of action beyond material reward and financial need (Narayan and Kavesh n.d.). In Afghanistan, for instance, *shauqueen* musicians consider themselves different from *kesbi* or hereditary musicians, because, unlike the latter, they do not seek monetary rewards from music and pursue their enthusiasm only because of their deep interest (Baily 1988a: 101; 1988b: 144; Sakata 1983: 84). Similarly, *shauqueen* amongst rural Chitrali musicians of North-West Pakistan never seek monetary rewards for their performance, and their musical programs aim to express their love for music and make others happy (Marsden 2005a:130, 2005b: 13). Music as a type of *shauq* becomes a source of fascination and fulfilment rather than a platform to accumulate pecuniary profit. In Lucknow, India, Wilkinson-Weber noted a similar expression of *shauq* among the women of the embroidery industry. These women, she noted, conceived of *shauq* as crucial for creativity in embroidery and regarded it in opposition to work performed for *pareshani* or financial gain (1999: 132–135).

The South Punjabi animal keepers also perceive *shauq* in opposition to the labour performed for financial gains. *Shauq*, according to many, must be practised by giving up all monetary desires and channelling focus towards the pursuit of pure pleasure. However, this zest for flying or fighting animals is changing in modern times, with the dominant discourse pointing towards change marked by the corrosive effect and unbridled desire for money. Many *shauqueen* I spoke to suggested that money depersonalises *shauq*. If an activity is practised for pecuniary benefits,

it ceases to remain *shauq* and becomes *kārobār*. According to the men, *shauq* and *kārobār* cannot co-exist. *Kārobār* can be glossed as “business,” or any task that is performed for profit. The seasoned animal keepers (or old-timers – who have been keeping animals for generations) use this juxtaposition of *shauq* and *kārobār* to castigate “unserious” animal keepers. According to *shauqeen*, it is the young enthusiasts who lost their way and indulge in “disgraceful acts” of making money through selling their pigeons, roosters, and dogs. Therefore, they argue, when a person begins earning from his *shauq* or makes it a form of business, he ceases to be a “genuine *shauqeen*.”

In what follows, I detail the tension between *shauq* and *kārobār* as perceived by pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters, and highlight the commodification of *shauq* said by some to be gradually transforming these pursuits.

Genuine Pigeon-Shauqeen and Greedy Captors

“There are two types of pigeon keepers,” said Ustad Nadir while artfully maintaining control over his motorbike’s handlebar, “some are genuine *shauqeen*, and others are *chirī mār*⁷⁷ [literally, sparrow killers, or as Nadir conceptualised, greedy captors].” The old motorbike was moving through the half-grown wheat field, leaving a cloud of dirt behind. It was a pleasant February afternoon and Ustad Nadir was taking me to watch a *khokhā* pigeon competition. Sitting on the rear of the roaring two-stroke Yamaha, I was cautiously making sense of his words. “Pigeon flying was a passion of the Mughal kings, right?” he asked and I nodded. “After the long day of politics in the court,” he continued, “the Mughals used to relax by looking at and flying colourful pigeons.” Like many other enthusiasts, he believed that the flyers forget their worries in the company of their pigeons, as a man forgets everything with his lover. The colourful and beautifully patterned pigeons were a “window of solace” (*sakoon dī khīrkī*) for the Mughals, concluded Ustad Nadir. According to him, whenever a king’s pigeon landed at the houses of a commoner, the king would send his royal servant to bring back the pigeon and give some money to the poor man in exchange. Ustad Nadir suggested that because poor people received a hefty ransom for the pigeons, they began catching the birds as a way of making a living. Ustad Nadir then equated the past with the contemporary: “genuine *shauqeen*,” he asserted, are similar to those Mughal kings who kept colourful pigeons and found peace and

⁷⁷ In pigeon flying language, *chirī mār* are those greedy pigeon flyers who do not take pigeons as distinct beings. They indulge in the activity not because of their pure passion, but only to catch others’ pigeons in a similar fashion to hunting sparrows.

joy, while “greedy captors” are like those poor people who sought the practice of catching pigeons as a *kārobār*, a lucrative business.

For a “genuine *shauqeen*,” Ustad Nadir argued, every bird possesses a distinct personality; some are cherished for their valuable colours and patterns, while others for their loyal character. However, for him and many other old-timer pigeon flyers, there was now a great increase in the numbers of greedy captors, who have made it their business to catch others’ pigeons. Because of these “inauthentic” (*do-number*) pigeon flyers, they suggested, the *shauq* is losing its charm.

Many old-timers, who had lifelong intimacy with the *shauq* of flying pigeons, categorised “inauthentic” greedy captors into three types. First are those who sell their pigeons. *Khokhā* (coop) pigeon flyers are particularly infamous for selling the whole lot of their pigeons (almost 100 pigeons in one coop), or exchanging it with another coop full of pigeons. Aslam told me that he once sold his whole coop of pigeons in exchange for a quarter acre of agricultural land. Likewise, Saifal exchanged his old *khokhā* of pigeons for another one (by paying some extra money) to get better and well-trained pigeons. Although for Aslam and Saifal this was a good business, other flyers condemned their actions arguing that such transactions meant the men never developed a close attachment to their birds, and hardly appreciated them on their individual characteristics.

The second type of “inauthentic” enthusiasts, as identified by most of the old-timers, were those who bred pigeons on a large scale for financial gains. Because female pigeons can lay eggs every month, some pigeon flyers were believed to exploit such fecundity. They would bring together a pair of pigeons in a dovecot, and once the eggs were hatched, the juvenile pigeons would immediately be sold at market (*mandī* or *goḍaḥī*). There is a famous bird market in Multan city, which takes place every Friday and attracts pigeon flyers from all over South Punjab. However, some pigeon breeders avoid market exchanges, as Khudla explained, “In the market the trader buys my pigeons cheaply, and then sells them at high price.” He argued that person-to-person exchange is far more advisable, because then one can inquire about the breeding and history of the birds, whereas in the market it is impersonal and random.

The third category are those men who indulge in person-to-person exchange. Rehan Baig from Kahrur Pacca city is famous for this type of exchange of pigeons, and is usually referred to as *wapārī*. The term *wapārī* can be literally translated as a “merchant,” but among pigeon flyers,

it contains derogatory meanings—a greedy person, whose economic transactions are not based on trust. Rehan Baig proudly stated that he goes to remote rural areas to buy good colour pigeons, which he then sells to rich urban pigeon flyers. In his view, the *shauq* of pigeon keeping often involves some financial loss: “The rich flyers lose more, and the poor lose less.” His technique ensured that keeping pigeons for him was financially beneficial. However, no matter how much money Rehan Baig made in his business, other flyers were unimpressed and branded him money-oriented, greedy, and an inauthentic *shauqeen*.

Many old-timers blamed the greedy captors for dishonouring the values of “genuine *shauq*.” Ustad Jameel noted that in the past, “...people used to spend all day on rooftops in July’s 48° heat to witness and praise the flight of pigeons.” However, he argued, such traditions associated with this *shauq* are now ebbing away. Similarly, Rafik sighed, “The genuine *shauqeen* are very few now, and indecent people (*lumb*) have taken over this activity.” He believed that some money-oriented flyers infect the whole community and tarnish the practice of pigeon flying. “These are the greedy flyers who violate *purdah* and create nuisance in the neighbourhood by whistling and shouting” he remarked. Such considerations, he maintained, lead community members to condemn the *shauq* and regard it as a frivolous activity.

Commodification of Human-Cock Intimacy

Like pigeon flying, the *shauq* of cockfighting is also undergoing transformations. Although, it involves betting, as detailed in Chapter 3, these wagers serve a particular goal: to boost the thrill and to demonstrate the support and confidence of friends and relatives in the cockfight. The money is seen merely as a mean rather than an end in itself. The bets are small, no more than \$10 for a single fight per person. Winning such a bet does not make a person rich, and losing does not render him poor. Cockfighters are adamant that such regulations mean that despite the presence of money and betting, the genuine passion associated with the *shauq* of cockfighting is not compromised.

However, there are some people who violate the codes of betting in cockfights. These men are believed to lack “genuine *shauq*” and are often criticised by other cockfighters, as “addicted gamblers” (*jowārī*). The cockfighters chastise such behaviour for its general disregard of roosters, with little consideration of the cocks’ personalities, fighting styles, and winning histories. These men are said to be motivated by instrumental goals rather than the purity of *shauq*.

Similarly, those cockfighters who traded gamecocks also came under criticism, and were usually referred to as businesspersons (*kārobārī bande*). Malik Khizar is a famous “businessman” cockfighter, who stopped fighting his roosters a decade ago. He explained his withdrawal from cockfighting as a result of huge financial loss, though he maintained that his interest in the practice continued and he occasionally went to cockfighting events in Sindh province in support of his friends. However, cockfighters often spoke of Malik Khizar’s Sindh visits with disdain, suggesting that these are in fact his secret “business trips.” Waso believed that Malik Khizar used these events as an opportunity to purchase good pedigree cocks cheaply from the poor cockfighters and then sell them for profit to rich aficionados elsewhere. He criticised such acts as violating the true ideals of honour and masculinity. Mehmood argued, “Cockfighters are respected for their love for cocks, those who are money minded (*paisy dā muḥabbattī*) have no respect (*izzat*).” Cockfighters argued that a pedigree rooster must be cherished rather than be sold. Imran Niazi explained that a breed is a cockfighter’s identification, and stated that when an enthusiast sells his breed, the whole relationship between a rooster and the man shatters. Like pigeon flyers, some cockfighters claimed to maintain a “genuine *shauq*,” and regarded themselves as the gatekeepers, who continued to uphold the true codes of their activity. The common theme in both pursuits is that money and monetary exchange is disliked, and considered a corruptive influence that undermines the genuine relations between *shauqeen* and their animals, and tarnishes the activity in the eyes of outsiders.

For many cockfighting enthusiasts, *shauq* is invaluable. It is fundamental for their pursuit of happiness and allows them to derive delight from the courageous combat and acrobatic stunts of fighting cocks. As gamecocks require serious hard work, diligence, commitment, and devotion, so many men invest weeks and months to prepare their birds for the fight. The high point of their *shauq* is achieved when a cock outwits its opponent through its fighting skills, and receives applause from those whose praise is worth having (the cockfighting audience). However, if this pursuit for joy and pleasure (*shauq*) is contaminated with the pursuit for economic capital (money), peers question the commitment and authenticity of the person’s *shauq*. The money thus becomes a depersonalising agent and ruins the purity of one’s *shauq*. It is believed that “unserious” cockfighters—those who are not accustomed to the traditions of this *shauq* and just adopt it for fun—are usually more prone to excessive gambling. Such laments were common to hear amongst old-timers about wayward *shauqeen*—the one who veered from the true path. For them, to restore the glory of the past, it was crucial to impart “true codes” of the practice to newcomers so that the genuine qualities of the *shauq* are retained.

A Good Bitch is a Blank Cheque

“If the desire for money is mixed with *muḥabbat* (love), it loses its sublimity (*shān*),” Meena Darzi told me at the start of my fieldwork. He and other dogfighters coveted fighting dogs, and fed, trained, and fought the animals to fulfil their *shauq*. However, there were a few men (the likes of Mehboob Sukheera and Basheer Laar) who were keeping dogs not for *shauq* but to make money (as a *kārobār*). These men were denounced by the other dogfighters for breeding and raising canines for pecuniary gains.

Mehboob Sukheera has a furious, 31.5 inch-high bitch named Bilo. The dog produced good pups and Mehboob sold the pups to other dogfighters. They believed that Mehboob made almost 300,000 rupees (about \$3000) by selling the pups. According to the men, Bilo (the bitch) was like a “blank cheque” for Mehboob, and he only cared for her as long as she kept delivering pups. Makhan argued that what Mehboob was doing, a true *muḥabbattī* (a “lover” of dogfight) will never do. Manna, while criticising Mehboob, proudly claimed that once some people from Kashmir offered Manna 60,000 rupees (about \$600) for his fighting dog, but he replied, “I am not Mehboob Sukheera, I do not sell my dogs.” When I asked Mehboob about his choice to sell his pups, he responded that keeping dogs usually ends up in financial loss, “but with Bilo I have found a way of profit.” However, Mehboob’s cherished bitch was getting old and others predicted that his business would suffer a hit once he lost Bilo.

Mehboob Sukheera was already infamous for selling the pups, but dogfighters were shocked when Basheer Laar sold his first dog. One day during my fieldwork, I received a phone call from Meena Darzi, who whispered excitedly, “Have you heard Basheer Laar has sold Bruce Li (the name of the dog) for 80,000 rupees (about \$800)?” The news soon spread amongst dogfighters, many of whom expressed their surprise at Basheer’s “disgraceful” decision to sell Bruce Li, who was a young and a promising fighting dog. The disappointment was compounded by the fact that Bruce Li’s owner, Basheer, was regarded as a true enthusiast. His decision to sell the dog, not only affected his *izzat* and status among dogfighters but raised questions even from close friends who began doubting his “genuine *shauq*.”

When I visited Basheer, he told me that he decided to sell Bruce Li because a good amount of money was offered to him. He conceded it was a tough decision for him, but argued, “in modern times, it is useless to spend countless rupees in feeding the fighting dog and not getting profit on it.” Basheer’s example reveals a changing landscape whereby even famous dogfighters are willing to breach established practices and norms. Whether this type of profit making can be

reconciled with *shauq* is hard to answer. As I mention below, such incidents generate tensions, and the old-timers (those who function as gatekeepers) try to police the boundaries of what constitute a “genuine *shauq*.”

Discussion: Modern Times

Most South Punjabi animal keepers consider mixing money with *shauq* as morally decadent for multiple reasons. Firstly, money downplays the value of hard work (*meḥnat*). It is precisely because of one’s efforts in breeding, feeding, and training the animals that even poor animal keepers can compete with the rich. However, if prized animals can be purchased easily, it can undermine the value of hard work and allows the rich to possess the best colour pigeons, skilful cocks, and powerful dogs, with little investment beyond money. Similarly, by purchasing factory-produced animal feed, rich men surpass the effort of those enthusiasts who spend countless hours in preparing their animals’ diet. Such standardisation and commodification is a mark of capitalism, displacing traditional social relations and cultural practices. This type of monetary involvement, many animal keepers believe, ruins the true passion and impedes one from developing intimacy with one’s animals through years of close association.

Secondly, the animal business which makes the merchant richer, *shauqeen* noted, renders the animal keeper morally poorer. The merchants (like Rehan Baig and Malik Khizar) buy the animals cheaply from the impoverished animal keepers and trade them at high prices. Although this provides a great deal of profit to the merchant, the seller experiences a moral loss (see Keane 2008: 35). Merchants not only disengage the animal keepers from their *shauq* (by purchasing their animals), they also invoke a feeling of regret and loss by rendering the seller morally vacuous, even if financially better off.

Thirdly, buying and selling the animals compromises long-term social relations that are fostered through flying or fighting. Money depersonalises social relations and dissolves intimate bonds. Parry and Bloch (1989: 6) made a similar observation, suggesting that money in Western societies has long been seen as “...a kind of acid which inexorably dissolves cherished cultural discriminations, eats away at qualitative differences and reduces personal relations to impersonality.” Thus, trading animals (or involving money in *shauq*) is viewed with disdain, since it threatens friendly bonds with other enthusiasts and animals.

Lastly, the exchange of pigeons, roosters, and dogs commodifies the animals and renders them mere objects, whereas for a “genuine *shauqeen*” they are active actors and inalienable

possessions with names and distinctive traits. Through one's *shauq*, a person develops deep knowledge about his animals (such as during breeding and training), tends to their needs (through feeding), and experiences delight (through flying or fighting). However, as the animals become a type of commodity, this turns the birds and canines into objects, that are unable to evoke strong feelings in their human caretakers.

Most of the animal keepers believed that a market-driven approach would ruin the sublimity of *shauq*. *Shuaq* was a productive endeavour that extended beyond the realm of the animals, in which new social relations were developed and sustained—*ustāds* were respected, friends cherished, and opponents humiliated. However, now the “genuine *shauq*” was threatened by modernity and desire for money. This desire was particularly associated with young animal keepers who viewed non-humans as commodities that can be traded rather than cherished. Many argued that young animal keepers lacked that innate inclination which is crucial for one's *shauq*. By hinting at his inborn attraction for pigeons, Rafik criticised the young flyers, “I was almost two years old when I first saw pigeons in my uncle's house. I madly ran after them even though I could not walk well. Now, young boys do not have that thing (*wo cheez*).” By criticising young people, Rafik and other seasoned enthusiasts tried to re-establish their connection with the ideal pigeon flying past.

External factors such as inflation, consumerism, demographic (and urban) expansion, education, and the role of media were also highlighted in describing the decline of “genuine *shauq*.” As I outlined earlier, seasoned enthusiasts were now also converting their *shauq* into a form of livelihood. For instance, while speaking about Basheer's decision to sell his cherished dog, Ashiq expressed empathy, “It is difficult to blame him [Basheer]. You can see the increase in the cost of milk, butter, and *ghī*. How can one feed a [fighting] dog now?” He added that enthusiasts need to work more than ever to support their *shauq*, and predicted, “...people soon will have no time or money for dogfighting.” In addition to the influence of money, the value of time has changed drastically. Urban expansion in recent decades has given birth to a labour class from rural areas, whose work is measured in capitalist stands of time and money (see Thompson 1967). Moreover, the educated middle class scorn such practices as peasant pursuits associated with backwardness and illiteracy. It is not surprising that those who still nurture these *shauq* are also well aware of their imminent end.

Old-timers have predicted that in couple of decades or so, these animal activities will completely disappear from sight, along with the values they harboured. No longer would

anyone remember the passion for training an animal, the excitement for the competition, the expression of honour, the portrayal of masculinity, and the shame and humiliation of defeat.

Conclusion

In his famous work, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922[1932]), Bronislaw Malinowski suggested, “we have to study man, and we must study what concerns him most intimately” (1932: 25). He further argued that in each culture, people have different aspirations, aims, and modes of happiness. Before studying the cultural institutions, anthropologists must take into account “the subjective desire of feeling by what these people live,” and “the substance of their happiness” (1932: 25).

Shauq in South Punjab is that subjective feeling and substance of happiness through which the animal keepers live and shape their social worlds. It is a philosophy of life, through which they structure their daily routines, develop friendships and intimacies, and defend their passion from the corrupting effects of the evil eye and black magic, as well as that of modernity and market exchange.

The chapter discusses the link between honour, masculinity, and “genuine *shauq*” in three ways. First, it highlights how pigeon flyers, cockfighters, and dogfighters indulge in contentious debates to prove who is the best. Second, by providing two short case studies, the chapter examines how the beliefs in black magic and the evil eye give birth to suspicion and conflicts among the men, and influence their genuine enthusiasm and social relationships. Third, the chapter explicates the tensions between *shauq* and *kārobār* (business) and details how animal activities are undergoing structural transformations. In all three sections, the chapter highlights some crucial characteristics of a “genuine *shauqeen*,” and explains how this can help us to better understand human-animal relationships in the South Punjabi cultural context.

Throughout my fieldwork, study of *shauq* helped me to build a relationship of trust and mutual respect with my interlocutors. When Malinowski advised the ethnographer to sometimes put aside camera, note book and pencil, “take part in the natives’ games,” and “sit down and listen and share in their conversation” (1932: 21), he did not only mean to develop a good rapport with the natives, but to develop a relationship of intimacy, friendships, and mutual attachment with the locals based on participant observation. Malinowski himself did this, as he suggested “not only for the study’s sake but because everyone needs human company” (1932: 22), and

further remarked, “I have carried away a distinct feeling that their behaviour, their manner of being, in all sorts of tribal transactions, became more transparent and easily understandable than it had been before” (1932: 22).

When I started taking interest in the *shauq* of my interlocutors, they began to open up, shared their stories, and introduced me into the intricacies, specialities, and technicalities of their enthusiasm and their culture. The animal keeper’s *shauq* became a frame through which I became able to portray their social landscapes. These, after a year of close relationships with the animal keepers, became my own amusement, my study, enthusiasm, and *shauq*.

Conclusion

In June 2017, I travelled to Pakistan to be with my wife for our baby's birth. I took this opportunity to visit friends and animal keepers. In the evening, I found Rafik surrounded by customers at his famous kebab stall in Kahrora Pacca. Clad in thin white sleeveless singlet and grey shorts, he was fully absorbed in making the round *shami* kebabs. His devotion to his work reminded me of our first meeting in 2014 when he was deeply immersed in his flock of pigeons. After a while he glanced over the customers and met my gaze. Smiling, he asked his son to take over the stall and greeted me warmly.

We relaxed on two old chairs under the fluorescent light beside his kebab cart, a worn wooden stool between us. We chatted about life, work, family, and ate mangoes; a noisy pedestal fan threw air and provided us with relief from the heat. Rafik showed me his "pigeon's note-book": a detailed record of the birds' breeding, caring, training, feeding, and flying techniques. The book also contained recipes for healing potions, and passages on the appropriate distribution of various seeds according to the seasons. "This is my life-long hard work, my whole *ustādi* (mastery)," Rafik remarked as he held onto the hand-bound note-book. "And yet," he soberly acknowledged, "there is no one I can pass this knowledge to." Rafik's despair was palpable, frustrated at the lack of interest of young pigeon flyers who he claimed, did not show eagerness or possess energies for flying pigeons. Leaning forward, he said, "my two sons have this *shauq* [of pigeon flying] too, but it is different from my generation." Rafik questioned the devotion of today's young flyers; their apparent indifference to the pigeons' needs, and overall reluctance to invest the hard work and time required to sustain this *shauq*, including cleaning pigeon coops and respecting the old masters. "Times are changing," Rafik mused, "pigeon flying is now losing its meaning."

Next morning, as the news of my arrival spread in the village, dogfighter Makhan Pehlwan invited me to celebrate the birth of my first child. Later in the day, I reached Makhan's father-in-law's adobe house. Other friends and relatives of Makhan joined us and we lounged on four charpoys, placed in opposite direction to each other. As the Pakistani Government had not yet supplied power to that area, most people used palm leaf hand-fans to cope with the oppressive heat of the afternoon. To my embarrassment, Makhan's younger brother Abid, a muscular 20 year-old wrestler, was ordered to stand and swing a hand-fan for my comfort. My embarrassment grew as I was the only one presented with a glass of boiled milk and halva made of *desī ghī*. The treatment accorded me also indicated that my interest in the *shauq* of

dogfighting was appreciated. This was not a frivolous activity, but rather one that deserved attention, indicated by the fact that someone living in Australia was there to study it.

After discussing my life in Australia, our discussion turned to the subject of dogs. Makhan and his father, Ashiq, told me that dogfights in the area had recently decreased. “As you know well,” Makhan said, “The Government is becoming increasingly strict and putting a stop to all public gatherings.” He was referring to the chain of terrorist attacks on shrines in recent years which provoked authorities into banning *melas* and other public gatherings held around rural shrines. Makhan added that he ventured out to far-away places in search of a dogfight, but couldn’t find one. “As there are no dogfights,” he continued, “the enthusiasts are not keeping dogs anymore.” He concluded that because of this change, the *shauq* of dogfighting had suffered and was progressively declining.

Later that week, before leaving for Islamabad, I met with my cockfighting friend, Imran Niazi. We sat near the city’s canal, enjoying sugarcane-juice from a nearby vendor. Imran told me of the sadness that gripped him following the death of his cockfighting master, Ustad Ramzan, who died peacefully at night in his single room house. As a devout disciple, Imran attended the funeral prayer. Now, as the old *ustād* was not there to give his blessings and advice on matters related to the cockfight, Imran lost much of his passion and stopped keeping roosters. He spent most of his time and energy on his work, trying to earn extra money to support his family. He acknowledged that he still has this *shauq* and sometimes went to cockfighting, but he was now more focused on meeting his domestic responsibilities. “The *shauq* is there,” he said with a smile, “but priorities have changed.”

It seemed that there was a consensus amongst experienced *shauqeen* that in South Punjab, *shauq* of keeping animals was changing. Young people are less interested in these “old” (*purāny*) pursuits, while restrictions by police on cockfights and dogfights severely limited interactions with fellow *shauqeen*. This decline was exacerbated by the loss of knowledge held by the older generations of *ustāds*. The animal keepers I worked with—the ones who devoted their energies, time, and money to their animals—all lament these changes, casting themselves as the last generation of “genuine *shauqeen*.” For these men, their *shauq* not only facilitated the accumulation of symbolic capital and production of masculinity, it adorned their lives, and injected exhilaration and thrill to what was otherwise a mundane struggle of everyday social and familial obligations. Their *shauq*, many believed, helped them forge meaningful

relationships with their animals and fellow enthusiasts, altered their experience of time and space, and gave them a sense of personal wellbeing.

Throughout this thesis, I have sought to elaborate on the domain of *shauq* as it was articulated amongst animal keepers of rural South Punjab. Such *shauq*, I have contended, animates the men's lives, structures their priorities, enhances their sociality, and allows them to develop a meaningful relationship with non-humans. I have highlighted various spheres of the men's lives: their relations with their animals, peers, *ustāds*, the wider community, as well as with close family members. By examining different modalities of human-animal relations and emphasising the animal keepers' point of view, I have argued that the *shauq* of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting are not mere pastimes but should be viewed as meaningful pursuits that allow the *shauqeen* to experience a richer life: one that is sustained by an accumulation of honour (*izzat*), and a performance of various forms of masculinity (*mardāneat*).

While discussing different phases of human-animal relationships, the question that I have left unexplored and which is worthy of a separate research project is the life-worlds of animals. Pigeons were usually forced to fly hungry (so they follow orders) during the summer's unbearable heat. Chickens and dogs often faced life-threatening injuries. These speechless creatures were unable to express their sufferings, even as the hungry eyes of pigeons, limping cocks, and fighting scars on dogs' faces betrayed a harsh reality. I do not mean to underplay the painful life trajectories of the animals. However, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, my key concern and focus revolved around following the animal keepers' enthusiasm, and wider understandings of what constitutes *shauq* in rural South Punjab. By discussing the men's experience of *shauq*, I have tried to uncover an understudied cultural phenomenon which informs and motivates the lives of these men, providing them an opportunity to go beyond the constraints of their daily life and achieve delight and fulfilment.

Different modalities of human-animal relationships, as the first chapter showed, is existing in the subcontinent from centuries. Chapter 1 offered an historical perspective on the transformation of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting from their celebrated past in the pre-colonial and early colonial eras to their gradual decline during late colonial and post-colonial periods. Many Indian rulers—from Emperor Akbar (1542–1605) to Nawab Wajid Shah (1822–1887) of Lucknow—kept thousands of pigeons at their courts. Similarly, cockfighting remained a chief passion of many Indian elites and a popular practice amongst

early colonial officials in India. Unlike the other two forms of *shauq* discussed in the thesis, dogfighting was introduced by the British in India with the aim of developing political relationships with native elites. In the latter half of the 19th century, these animal activities began to lose their hold among the elites. Such decline, the chapter argued, was largely the product of political and social developments taking place in Victorian England, along with increased prevalence of Anglo-Protestant masculine traits, the rise of the animal welfare movement, and formation of the *Animal Protection Act* in India (1890). As the native elites withdrew from these pursuits to comply with the colonial government; it was the lower classes who, due to their tenuous relationship with the authorities, adopted these practices with gusto. In addition to discussing the historical evolution of these three animal activities, the chapter also heightened how such activities were closely aligned with shifting (and sometimes competing) masculinities.

Chapter 2 provided ethnographic accounts of pigeon flying in South Punjab. The chapter discussed how pigeon flyers achieve delight while flying their birds on their rooftops and momentarily forget the vagaries of everyday life. There on the rooftops, intrusions from guests or even from family members are frowned upon. There the men seek to provide an environment of ideal mating conditions to pigeons, and decorate the birds' feet with distinct beads and bells. The men appreciate the birds' unique colours and patterns, and train them hard so they are prepared for competitions. I argue that activities like pigeon flying can be taken as a lens to understand elements of the larger value system of South Punjabi society, with regards to notions of friendship, social hierarchies, modesty, and diligence. The *shauq* extends beyond the "pigeons realm" as the men develop friendships and rivalries with other flyers, choose an *ustād* to learn the intricacies of pigeon keeping, and transmit pigeon-related knowledge to their subsequent generations. The point is that pigeon flyers see their *shauq* as far more than a hobby; it becomes a way of life that involves deep commitment.

The *shauq* of cockfighting is equally demanding and requires a total absorption of a *shauqeen* cockfighter. Those who are dedicated to their passion are rewarded with an exhilarating experience, particularly when the achievements of the fighting cocks reflect well upon their owner. As I show in Chapter 3, the men develop a strong attachment to their cocks and consider them as beings with distinct personalities and fighting styles. In their *shauq*, many spend a great deal of time with their gamecocks, breed them carefully, raise them responsibly, give them unique names, keenly prepare their feed, and train them to fight with determination,

courage, bravery, and strength. These traits are put to the test in the cockfighting arena, where a winning owner and his rooster achieves honour and the loser is humiliated. Away from the arena, this *shauq* helps the men to cultivate lifelong friendships. The discourse circulating amongst the men is of equality, that regardless of one's class, sect, or ethnic affiliation, the *shauqeen* are members of a cockfighting community which is based on egalitarian values. In other words, for cockfighters, this *shauq* endows them with a sense of belonging, and recognises them as dedicated *shauqeen*.

Dogfighters are perhaps the most extreme in espousing their *shauq* because of the investment and sacrificed involved—social, moral, and financial. Their *shauq* demands touching, feeding, and training a degraded animal that considered religiously abhorrent and polluting by dominant interpretations of Islam. Chapter 4 argues that while this *shauq* provokes aversion from outsiders, it also brings high rewards in terms of achieving honour and prestige (*izzat*) and performing masculinity (*mardāneat*). I contend that even though pigeon flyers and cockfighters strive for *izzat* and *mardāneat*, among dogfighters the struggle for such symbolic gains is amplified and pronounced. This is in part because of the large sums of money invested in fighting dogs, and because dogfights are held as public events in front of thousands of spectators who monitor and judge the courage, fearlessness, and strength of the competing canines.

It is perhaps because all these pursuits are carried out with such passion and commitment that many people view them with suspicion and disdain. In Chapter 5, we saw that the local South Punjabi people regularly castigated the animal keepers for their “useless” and “wasteful” *shauq*, criticising the men as immoral for willingly violating existing social norms and religious doctrines, and neglecting their social and familial responsibilities. Such accusations are also directed at the *shauqeen* by their wives who protest their husbands' over-indulgence in their *shauq*. These women voice their frustrations at the men's obsession with flying or fighting their animals, which has severe implications for the household economy. I argue that in the inter-species social dwelling, the men try to fulfil the needs of their animals and family members, and often blur the boundaries of humans and non-humans. Like humans, the animals are also viewed as persons with needs and desires, requiring care, affection, attention, and resources similar to those of close kin. This leads the enthusiasts to confront practical problems in trying to balance their *shauq* with family demands and social expectations. In such cases, one could argue that notions of masculinity and honour in the “domestic” realm—as breadwinners—are

in tensions with those achieved in the “public” realm, where the men seek to assert their masculinity through their *shauq*.

Yet such criticisms from family and wider community also means that these *shauq* are increasingly hard to sustain. Only those who are absolutely committed to their passion can maintain their pursuits, and to do this, they rely on a network of friends. Such commitments, the old-timers and seasoned enthusiasts maintain, should not be conflated with the temporary obsession or craze of some young animal keepers. In Chapter 6 we learn how seasoned enthusiasts—the self-proclaimed gate keepers—try to police the boundaries of what constitutes true or “genuine *shauq*.” The key for maintaining a “genuine *shauq*,” they insist, is to follow the codes of engagement. The men value honesty and sincerity as long term and hard-earned quests, as opposed to cheating or using cosmological forces (black magic or the evil eye) to ensure victory. The “genuine *shauqeen*,” therefore, would never conceive of his animals as a commodity or as passive objects, and would not contaminate his *shauq* with the desire for money. The old-timers complained that young, money-oriented animal keepers, breed and sell their animals in the market for pecuniary benefits, so that their *shauq* is no more than a form of *kārobār* (business). Such activities, they maintain, are not simply a sign of individual failing (greed) but of a phenomenon illustrating the wider social malaise afflicting Pakistani society.

The change in the animal activities can be seen in the light of larger transformations in South Punjabi society. The exposure to new forms of education, advent of consumer capitalism, and rapid urbanisation, have introduced new modes of being into society that older generations find unsettling. Seasoned animal keepers were often bemused by what they saw as the “strange” (*ajeeb*) practices of the new generation. They commonly called them the *burger log* (burger persons), decrying their love of fast food (the iconic American burger) over traditional ways of eating, and *mobile log* (mobile persons), referencing the obsession that young people have for mobile phones and virtual interactions (see Doron and Jeffrey 2013). Such materialism was cast as morally reprehensible, and as something which threatens long-standing social relations and contaminates cherished practices. The old-timers used local references to describe this shift; for instance, in a world where *desī ghī* (pure clarified butter) was once valuable, it has been replaced with hydrogenated oil; where yellow domestic chicken’s eggs were prized, white battery farm eggs are everywhere; or where real wood has been replaced with chipboard; and *shaker* (raw brown sugar) with white sugar. They spoke of the prevalence of modern diseases that never before existed, the decrease in the number of trees, and the disappearance of animal

species (fireflies, vultures, wild boars). All these changes, the older generations of *shauqeen* attributed to the corrosive effects of materialism and modernity on society and the environment.

For the younger generation, such laments are nothing but complaints. They regard pursuits such as pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting as interests of “illiterate” and “backward” peasants. According to those I spoke with, the true pleasures lie in more modern sports such as cricket, badminton, and volleyball. Some of these young boys do develop a *shauq* of keeping animals, but it hardly resembles the pursuits of past generations. For instance, Rafik’s son prefers to breed quails in his house, and friends of Imran cultivate a *shauq* of keeping partridges in fancy hand-made cages. I was told that rich boys are replacing fighting dogs with greyhounds. Similarly, village boys are said to invest more and more money in raising, feeding, and decorating bulls or goats than dogs or cocks. These are new *shauq*, mostly popular among the rural youth. In urban centres, dog shows are usually organised, patronised by a growing middle class. These modern changes in human-animal relations suggest a decline in pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting, and with such decline, as many *shauqeen* argued, the values that are central to these practices will also be lost.

What can we learn from the tension that appears between modern and past generations of South Punjabi people, and revolves around cultural practices such as animal keeping? On the one hand, this can be viewed as an inter-generational friction, often found in societies experiencing rapid social change. It revolves around the bemoaning of an old value system, and pose a threat to structures of authority and established social networks. On the other hand, such debates are reflective of wider transformations taking place in “traditional” South Punjabi enthusiasms. This is not limited to the *shauq* of animal keeping. For example, people often described the fact that not long ago, one could see men gathering around a village story-teller (*qisā-go*) to listen to stories until midnight, or how grandmothers would amuse children with riddles and tales every night before bed. However, such passions for story-telling are now replaced by TV serials and mobile phones. The men also lamented the waning of *melas* where live stage-theatres were a chief entertainment; whereas now more preferred visiting cinemas. Some pointed out that the *shauq* of learning music on local flutes is now replaced with the sounds of guitars. Likewise, public spaces are changing, since children are spending more time at home in front of their computers, invested in video games rather than playing marbles in the streets. Adults, too, are shifting their interests. Where in the past rural landlords kept horses, now they are far more interested in imported cars. As the values, needs, and aspirations of the society are changing,

such transformations affect both domestic and public spaces. I suggest that we cannot separate the decline in pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting from the larger forces at play, where modernity and consumerism are transforming rural South Punjabi life.

My effort in this thesis is to document the spirit of these three pursuits, the values they represent, and the symbolic meanings they carry. As an anthropological account, the thesis elaborates the seemingly mundane activities of ordinary men, and takes these as a lens to explore larger cultural values in South Punjabi society. The concept of *shauq*, like society itself, will also change to accommodate new forms of enthusiastic engagement, and will most probably carry distinct values. One can already imagine a “modern” *shauq* of clothes designing, learning foreign styles of cooking, interior decoration, and not least, the spread of dog shows to many towns. Whatever the *shauq*, it will continue to enliven the experiences of enthusiasts in culturally meaningful ways.

Glossary

The glossary includes most of the non-English words used in this thesis (aside from the name of food items, breeds and colours of animals, animal competitions, or words that can commonly be found in unabridged English dictionaries), and provides contextual meanings of the terms. I have decided not to add three key terms—*shauq*, *izzat*, and *mardāneat*—in the glossary.

<i>‘Aeb</i>	Mismarks, shortcoming
<i>Ashrāf</i>	Noble people
<i>Āzān</i>	A call summoning Muslims for daily prayers in the mosque (Arabic <i>athan</i>)
<i>Bad-naslah</i>	Bad breed
<i>Bāng</i>	Saraiki word for a call for prayer, see also <i>Āzān</i>
<i>Bāzi</i>	Play, game, gambling, over indulgence
<i>Bein wala</i>	A shehnai player
<i>Bemārī</i>	Disease, sickness
<i>Bharī</i>	Jumping exercise for roosters
<i>Bhirā</i>	Brother
<i>Bhirapī</i>	Brotherhood
<i>Bid</i>	Pigeon competition(s)
<i>Chirī mār</i>	A greedy pigeon flyer who only tries to catch others’ pigeons
<i>Ḍerah</i>	A place of male socialisation near one’s home in the Punjab
<i>Ḍhol wala</i>	A drummer
<i>Dilerī</i>	Bravery
<i>Ḍo-number</i>	Not original, inauthentic
<i>Dogazā</i>	A two-foot net used for catching and training pigeons
<i>Dost</i>	A friend
<i>Faḏol kām</i>	Useless or wasteful work
<i>Gālah</i>	Special diet provided to a rooster during a cockfight
<i>Ghī</i>	Clarified form of butter. Used as an alternative to cooking oil in the subcontinent
<i>Ghungro</i>	Anklet(s)

<i>Girdān</i>	A loyal and experienced pigeon, literally <i>girdan</i> means “to repeat again and again”
<i>Gunāh</i>	A sin in Islam
<i>Halal</i>	Things, acts, behaviour allowed by Islam
<i>Haram</i>	Any thing or act prohibited by Islam
<i>‘Ishq</i>	Love, see also <i>muḥabbat</i> and <i>Pyār</i>
<i>Jang</i>	A state of war (among two pigeon flyers)
<i>Jhandī</i>	A bamboo pole used to fly pigeons; a trash bag or piece of cloth is usually attached at the end of it
<i>Jowā</i>	Gambling
<i>Jowārī</i>	A gambler
<i>Juoān Mard</i>	Literally “young man,” in South Punjab the term connotes a “real man,” or “masculine man”
<i>Jur’at</i>	Courage
<i>Kabūtar bāz</i>	Pigeon flyer(s)
<i>Kabūtar bāzi</i>	Pigeon flying
<i>Kālā jādo</i>	Black magic
<i>Kamrah</i>	A room
<i>Kārobār</i>	Business
<i>Kashnā</i>	Training a cock through sparring exercises
<i>Khāndān</i>	Family
<i>Khobṣortī</i>	Beauty
<i>Khokhā</i>	A coop to keep pigeons
<i>Khuḍā</i>	A dovecote, where chickens or pigeons are kept for breeding
<i>Khurāk</i>	Special diet; a mixture of local herbs
<i>Kukaṛ</i>	A rooster
<i>Kukaṛ Bāzī</i>	Cockfighting
<i>Kuttā</i>	A dog
<i>Kuṭṭī</i>	A pigeon with clipped wings, used for luring other pigeons
<i>Mahāwat</i>	Handlers in a cockfight

<i>Malheṇ</i>	A publically organised competition, specifically a dogfight
<i>Mālish</i>	Massage, usually with an oil
<i>Mār</i>	Literally “to beat”, in pigeon flying, to train the bird
<i>Mehnat</i>	Literally “hard work,” in pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting: to feed and train the animal
<i>Mela</i>	A festival
<i>Motī</i>	Beads
<i>Muḥabbat</i>	Love, see also <i>‘ishq</i> and <i>Pyār</i>
<i>Muhājir</i>	Those who migrated from India to Pakistan at the time of Partition
<i>Mukhālfat</i>	Opposition, hostility, envy
<i>Mukhālīf</i>	An enemy, a rival, or an opponent
<i>Munṣif</i>	A referee, the person who controls, keeps time, and oversees a competition
<i>Murgh</i>	A rooster
<i>Murgh Bāzī</i>	Cockfighting
<i>Murghī</i>	A hen
<i>Nasal</i>	Breed, pedigree, genealogy
<i>Nashā</i>	Addiction
<i>Nazar</i>	The evil eye
<i>Pānī</i>	Literally “water,” while in a cockfight a “game round”
<i>Paṭā</i>	A dog’s collar
<i>Pehlwān</i>	A wrestler
<i>Phul wala</i>	A garland seller
<i>Purdah</i>	Screening women from strange men, or wearing a hijab
<i>Pyār</i>	Love, see also <i>‘ishq</i> and <i>Pyār</i>
<i>Qisā-go</i>	A storyteller
<i>Riwāyat</i>	Tradition
<i>Shāgird</i>	A disciple
<i>ṣifat</i>	Characteristics, strong points, features, attributes
<i>Sulah</i>	A state of peace (among two pigeon flyers)
<i>Tapānah</i>	Sparring exercises for roosters

<i>Ṭharuk</i>	Deviant attraction
<i>Ustād</i>	A master, experienced animal keeper
<i>Ustādī</i>	Mastery
<i>Veyl</i>	Monetary exchange by close relatives on different ceremonial occasions
<i>Wapārī</i>	A businessperson
<i>Yār</i>	A friend
<i>Yārī</i>	Friendship
<i>Zor</i>	Physical strength
<i>Zordār</i>	Strong
<i>Zulm</i>	Cruelty

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