



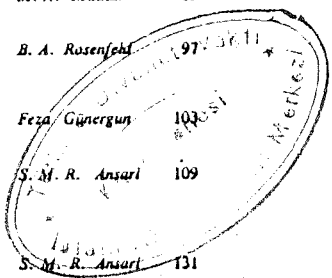
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Hyderabad, s. 55-63.

ARAB LEGACY TO FALCONRY

ABDUL ALI

FALCONRY or hunting with falcons and hawks is an ancient sport which has been practised in different parts of the world. Prior to the development of fire-arms as means of hunting, falconry was practised as one of the most interesting field sports by people of the upper classes all over the world. It also served as an important and practical means of hunting birds and animals in ancient times. An idea of the efficiency of falconry may be derived from the fact that as many as twenty or more rabbits have been hunted in a single day with a goshawk.¹

Falconry was introduced into Arabia from Persia many centuries before the birth of Christ. The fierce nature of this sport seems to have been of special appeal to the pre-Islamic Arabs who lived a hard life and prided themselves on exhibiting a high degree of courage and bravery in inter-tribal hostilities, and to whom the fighting mood was a chronic state of mind. The fact that they faced acute shortage of foodstuff and depended upon hunting for their livelihood to some extent also encouraged the development of falconry among them. In the course of time Arabs practised this sport and celebrated it in their literature. It became a way of life in a manner that is hardly shared by any other people. They developed so much fascination for it that even in the modern age when the sport has become unpopular in other countries, particularly among the rulers and sophisticated classes of people following the invention of the gun and its use in hunting, the Arabs, both rulers and ordinary men, could not give up their interest in it; and it is widely practised in the Arab world, especially in the Gulf countries, the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Syria and North Africa.

Religious Sanction for Falconry

It is remarkable that at the advent of Islam in the beginning of the seventh century of the Christian era falconry got a sort of religious sanction in virtue of its lawfulness having been maintained in the following verses of the Qur'ān at a time when most of the pre-Islamic practices and customs such as gambling, drinking, raiding, etc. were declared as un-Islamic and forbidden:

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