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To the Witches and Ghosts Among Us; Exploring how Supernatural Entities uncover Social Processes
in Urban Pakistan.

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Dr Jiri Subrt
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Statement

I hereby declare that I have written this diploma thesis solely by myself and I agree with its eventual publication in print or electronic form. All sources and literature have been properly cited. This work has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, June 30, 2023.

Zoya Wasif

Great Pan is not dead;
he simply emigrated
to India.
Here, the gods roam freely,
disguised as snakes or monkeys;
every tree is sacred
and it is a sin
to be rude to a book.
It is a sin to shove a book aside
with your foot,
a sin to slam books down
hard on a table,
a sin to toss one carelessly
across a room.
You must learn how to turn the pages gently
without disturbing Sarasvati,
without offending the tree
from whose wood the paper was made.

A Different History by Sujata Bhatt

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Abstract

One glaring condition of the enlightenment and modernity is that human beings have been placed at the center of the world in majority of academic disciplines, a condition which the Social Sciences have not been spared from. In an attempt to follow in the footsteps of scholars such as Robert Orsi and his research on presence within Catholicism, the project aims to explore how we as scholars can be more accepting of and hospitable of multiple temporalities, particularly within the field of sociology. I want to display how such encounters add to our understanding of people's perception of their role within society and how their behavior towards others is implicitly shaped by such beliefs.

Introduction

One glaring condition of the enlightenment and modernity is that human beings have been placed at the center of the world in the majority of academic disciplines, a condition which the Social Sciences have not been spared from. This project aims to explore how we as scholars can be more accepting of and hospitable of multiple temporalities, particularly within the field of sociology. My favorite example to cite is an instance from Ranajit Guha's book titled 'Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India'¹. At one point two peasants, who have already been sentenced to death, are asked why they invoked a riot in their village. Previously, other peasants were questioned and the police (agents of the British Raj) were able to trace the revolt back to these two individuals. However when these farmers are cross examined the only answer they are able to give is that Thakoor, or God, incited them to revolt. These men are already on death row, they have no motivation to lie or to protect themselves by remaining true to their allies. Yet they insist that their actions were motivated by Thakoor, who appeared to one of them in a dream. Clearly, Thakoor can't be cross questioned the way these men have been and it is difficult to mitigate the power of his words because there is no obvious source that these policemen can control. While the long run saw the proliferation of western education in the subcontinent, and the simultaneous erasure of the likes of Thakoor from the public sphere, the moment mentioned above was a triumph for Thakoor and his believers. It is these instances, in which agency is alluded to the supernatural, that I shall be studying in this thesis. I wish to explore the sociological lessons we can learn when we do not impose our reality upon the people we are studying, a phenomenon the anthropologist Micheal Jackson refers to as the 'inequalities of presence'²

¹ Guha, 78, 1999

² Jackson, 1998

and to exhibit that there are a variety of ways people's interactions with each other may change or current interactions may be accelerated when the supernatural variable is introduced to research.

The aim behind my research was to explore the ways in which people discuss their interaction with supernatural entities and what sociological knowledge we can gauge from such experiences. I wanted to see what was being said about these experiences and how respondents would relay this information. I wished to analyze why people attributed significance to these events and how these experiences shaped perceptions and influenced actions. I conducted fifteen oral interviews and analyzed one existing account in order to find some answers to my questions. My motivation behind asking these questions was the fact that people act based on a variety of factors, and that solely analyzing empirical reasons behind actions only revealed half the truth. In order to fully engage with people it is important to take their beliefs seriously not just during the interviewing stage but also while analyzing data. If Thakoor is being cited as the reason behind a riot, then a report on this event should give Thakoor full credit rather than resorting to 'deep religiosity' or psychological reasons as primary motivators. I believe that transcribing and relaying events as they are relayed to us denotes respect for the information received and well as deepens our knowledge of the social structure and inner workings and assumptions this society operates upon.

The first chapter in this paper is the literature review and theoretical framework. Since the overarching theme of the thesis is social processes, this chapter begins by outlining the basic tenets of social process theory and elaborates upon certain works of Max Weber and George Simmel³ as they relate to the material I have gathered. This is followed by taking into account the vast literature on the European witch trials of the early modern period. It is important to clarify that my thesis does not embark upon a comparative analysis of Pakistani

³ Subrt, 2017

society and Early Modern Europe. Instead, it observes the various ways in which the trials of the early modern period are written about, and seeks to answer the extent to which supernatural phenomenon in Pakistan can be studied through a similar lens. I also read the books *History and Presence* by Robert Orsi⁴, which discusses the scholarly study of presence while studying Catholicism in the twentieth century and 'Islam, Arabs and the Intelligent World of the Djinn'⁵ by Amira El Zein which discusses how djinns are talked about in the Quran and Hadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet). I also read literature relevant and specific to each analytical category I created in order to make better comparisons and arrive at more succinct conclusions.

The next section details the methodology employed. As discussed above, my research involved interviews, for which I specifically requested to meet and converse with people who claimed to have had some sort of supernatural encounter. I kept the definition of what constituted as supernatural fluid, since I did not want to debate the nature of the entity they had encountered. However, I specified that their stories need to have some sort of supernatural agent and excluded accounts that mentioned disappearances or strange sounds. I chose to conduct my fieldwork within an urban Pakistani setting and approached people who claimed to have been haunted by any presence that they deemed supernatural. Before conducting each interview I would ask potential participants for a brief summary of the type of entity they encountered and select those in which supernatural entities acted as agents and influenced decisions. Before beginning each interview I informed each participant that I would publish these narratives for my master's thesis and asked them whether I had permission to do so. I let them know that they had the choice to terminate the interview at any

⁴ Orsi, 2018,

⁵ El-Zein, 2017.

stage they felt uncomfortable and that they had the option to be published under a pseudonym.

The remaining chapters describe the data I collected and analyze their content while keeping two questions in mind; what is the narrator trying to tell me and what sociological implications does their encounter entail. After conducting two coding cycles I decided to fit the data into three categories on the basis of their social significance. The first is titled domestic relations and analyzes interviews that engage with people who have been cursed by other people. These people were at the receiving end of the most dangerous consequences and were extremely distressed about their interaction with black magic. This section consists of five respondents and studies their experiences in terms of kinship structures, paying close attention to the institute of marriage⁶, the mechanisms used by the Azande tribe in Central Africa in an ethnographic study conducted by Evans Pritchard⁷ and lastly looks at the role of emotions in social change, paying particular attention to the effects of bullying and the need for an outlet to such neuro-aggression and the role jealousy may play in dismantling certain power structures. The second category deals with liminality in which I wanted to collect accounts about the Karsaz Churail (Karsaz Witch) an urban legend who is rumored to haunt the district of Karsaz in Pakistan's biggest city, Karachi. I collected three accounts regarding Karsaz and the myth surrounding it. I also collected three accounts that took place in rural areas from people who originally reside in urban areas. The events they experienced took place in rural settings and left a great impression upon these people. I studied these accounts in light of the concept of liminality as well as the insider/ outsider syndrome. My last category is titled religion and rationality and concerns supernatural encounters in urban settings such as houses and educational institutes. Here my main focus was on the

⁶ Berger, 1971

⁷ Evans-Pritchard, 1937.

coexistence of certain supernatural entities with humans. I collected five accounts for this category as well as their reconciliation process between different strands of knowledge while narrating their accounts. I have analyzed and compared the manner in which people describe these events throughout all categories.

Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

This chapter is meant to serve as a contextual introduction to the analytical portion. Before assessing the data collected for this study, it is important to understand the theoretical tools that shall be employed to analyse this data and to review the relevant literature the data will be compared to. Since the overarching theme of the thesis is social processes, this chapter begins by outlining the basic tenets of social process theory and elaborates upon certain works of Max Weber and George Simmel as they relate to the material I have gathered. This is followed by taking into account the vast literature on the European witch trials of the early modern period. It is important to clarify that my thesis does not embark upon a comparative analysis of Pakistani society and Early Modern Europe. Instead, it observes the various ways in which the trials of the early modern period are written about, and seeks to answer the extent to which supernatural phenomenon in Pakistan can be studied through a similar lens. The final section of this chapter serves as an introduction to the categories I have created for the interviews taken; since my work revolves around linking supernatural accounts to social processes in Pakistan, I have created the categories based on the specific social phenomenon I would like to discuss. The end result is three broad groups; domestic relations, liminality and religion versus rationality which shall serve as individual chapters for the analytical section. For each category I aim to discuss the necessary theoretical background, the specific link to social processes, similarities and differences to the modes of analyses used to investigate the early modern trials and any other relevant literature that may shed light on how the supernatural has been addressed within the social sciences.

Social Process Theory

Social processes refer to the various ways in which people interact and influence each other within society. These processes can be seen as the mechanisms that shape and maintain

the social order, norms, and values of a given society. Some examples of social processes that are relevant to this thesis include socialisation, social stratification, group dynamics and, to a lesser extent, social change. Social process theory is a group of sociological approaches that conceptualise socialisation as a continuous process. According to these approaches, socialisation occurs in all aspects and areas of a person's life. Social process theory also emphasises that individuals create their own identities through interactions with other people and their environment. It then focuses on how these interactions shape the development of an individual. The theory was founded in part by two eighteenth century German sociologists, Max Weber and Georg Simmel.

Max Weber was a German sociologist, philosopher, and political economist who contributed significantly to the study of social processes. His work highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of social processes and their influence on society and individuals. In Weber's terms "the 'social process' is a process of continual adaptation and adjustment between the individual and the environment"⁸. Weber posited that social processes are shaped by various factors, including social action, power, and authority. The concept of "ideal type" is used as the chief methodological tool for understanding social action what is. For Weber, the ideal type is a kind of model, or - as Weber says- a "utopia" that is created solely for clarifying the sociologist's understanding of the social phenomena. Weber distinguishes four different ideal types of action; purposeful-rational action, value-oriented-rational action, traditional action and affective action. According to Weber, social action refers to behaviour that is meaningful to the individual and directed toward others. This behaviour is influenced by the individual's social context, including cultural norms, values, and beliefs. Weber understands all social systems and institutions as a product of the social action

⁸ Weber et al, 39, 1978

of individuals. He considers social relations to be of "chance", which means social relationships do not exist with any iron necessity or regularity, but instead have a somewhat probabilistic nature. He characterises social relations as largely potential entities, based on the chance that certain interconnected actions are taking place in reality. The theme of social relations is also related to the topic of the state and power. Weber defines power, once again, with the help of the concept of chance. In his conception, power is the chance of an actor (individual, group, institution) to enforce its own will against the resistance of others in the framework of a given social relationship.

Georg Simmel was a German sociologist who also made significant contributions to the study of social processes. According to Simmel, "The fundamental problem which confronts modern social life is the relationship between the individual and the social forces which delimit and shape him."⁹, which reflects in his work on social processes. Simmel focused on the social interactions and relationships between individuals and how they shape social structures and institutions. One of Simmel's key contributions was the concept of "social distance," which refers to the psychological and emotional distance between individuals or groups. Simmel argued that social distance can vary depending on factors such as social class, ethnicity, and gender, and can influence the nature of social interactions and relationships. Simmel also emphasised the role of social networks in shaping social processes. He argued that social networks provide the framework for social interaction and can facilitate the exchange of information, resources, and support among individuals. In addition, Simmel developed the concept of the "blasé attitude," which refers to the sense of detachment and indifference that individuals may develop in response to the overwhelming stimuli and social complexity of modern urban life. Overall, Simmel's work highlights the

⁹ Simmel, 34, 1971

importance of social interactions and relationships in shaping social processes and institutions, and the ways in which individuals navigate and adapt to social complexity and change.

European Witch Hunts

Ideas stemming from social process theory have influenced many academic fields outside of sociology such as anthropology, psychology and criminology. In a similar way, the academic study of witchcraft in Europe has been viewed through a variety of lenses and has given rise to several multidisciplinary projects. Barry and Davies have argued that 'scholars of witchcraft have often been pioneers of new forms of historical study and interdisciplinary developments, as the subject touches upon many fundamental issues regarding the human experience both in the past and the present'¹⁰. A few examples of the range of methods employed are Richard Horsley's examination of the social role of the accused in the European witch trials¹¹ and Elenor Rycroft's practice-based research project in which she focuses on the aspects of female speech acts and embodiment that were revealed to her while directing Heywood and Brome's play titled 'The Late Lancashire Witches'¹². Since my research subscribes to the discipline of historical sociology, and "historical sociology is first and foremost a part of sociology, though in our case a sociology that emphasises the historical perspective in its approach to the study of social phenomena"¹³, it is important to clarify that I will not be engaging with the analytical devices that cater to the widespread psychopathological approach to the study of witchcraft. Not only has this perspective garnered sufficient critique as pointed out by Thomas J Schoeneman in his 1982 Article in

¹⁰ Barry and Davies, 1, 2007

¹¹ Horsley, 1979

¹² Rycroft, 2014.

¹³ Subrt, 3, 2017

'American Journal of Psychiatry'¹⁴, but, more importantly, they focus on the elements of unreality rather than the aspects of reality in beliefs about witchcraft and magic. Scholars such as Edward Bevar have focused on the reality of witchcraft by conducting 'a detailed study of trial records from the Duchy of Wurttemberg, a medium-size principality in southwestern Germany that conducted a moderate number of prosecutions, and evaluates the events and experiences reported in them in the context of Wurttemberg's judicial administration, socio economic development, and provincial culture; the findings of historical studies of other parts of Germany and Europe; and interdisciplinary investigations into the activities and phenomena they describe'¹⁵. My research takes such an approach as a departure point. The specific aspects of the study of witchcraft that I aim to compare my research to are the religious nature of the witchcraft accusations, particularly their link to the devil, the use of witches as a symbol in certain strands of feminist movements and the application of theories of emotion to the analysis of the witch hunts. I aim to shed light on the extent to which these methods apply to the Pakistani context of my interviews, and to also suggest certain new ways of examining these themes. I shall provide detailed explanations of these three outlooks below.

One recurring idea that underscores popular belief about witchcraft is its heretical character. While the early modern period employs the most literal religious tools to combat witchcraft, it is worth noting that this was not the only historical epoch that linked witches to a destabilisation of established (in most cases religious) authority. In the Oxford publication 'Witchcraft: a very short introduction' by Malcolm Gaskil¹⁶, the chapter titled 'Heresy', traces fear of religious error to the Greeks and Romans, who attempted to suppress devotion to

¹⁴ Schoneman, 1982

¹⁵ Bever, 15, 2008

¹⁶ Gaskil, 2010

unorthodox (eg Egyptian) gods and cults. What made the early modern trials so unique was their excessive nature. Around this time, several printed treatises written for the purpose of tackling the danger of witchcraft started appearing. The most influential amongst these works was 'Malleus Maleficarum' (Hammer of the Witches) which was published in 1486. The author, a Dominican inquisitor named Heinrich Kramer, mixed demonological theory with first-hand experience, elevating peasant beliefs to cosmic significance while grounding academic theories in real life. By these means, it was hoped, "demons might be condemned not just in print, but in the courts via their flesh-and-blood representatives: the witches"¹⁷. This fed into the idea that witches were criminals and their fate should be decided in the courts. Kramer identified four necessary requirements, all of which had a distinctly anti-religious character. These were "they renounce the Catholic Faith in whole or part with a sacrilegious speech, solemnly devote themselves in body and soul, offer babies not yet reborn [i.e. unbaptized] to the Evil One, and persistently engage in the Devil's filthy deeds through carnal acts with incubus and succubus demons"¹⁸. The devil has featured so heavily in witchcraft accounts of the early modern age that it is possible to claim, as Christina Lerner did, that ultimately, we know more about how people saw the Devil than we do about how they saw God. In 1608, for instance, Francesco Maria Guazzo, a brother in the Milanese Order of St Ambrose, published a demonological treatise, 'Compendium Maleficarum'. As the title indicates, the book presents a summary of information and arguments about witches. It draws on many earlier demonological works, including a number of Italian and French treatises of the sixteenth century, and provides numerous examples from court records. One striking contribution the book makes to demonological literature is its enumeration of the different steps taken in the negotiation of the pact with the Devil. "First, they deny the

¹⁷ Gaskil, 99, 2010

¹⁸ Makay, 120, 2009

Christian faith and withdraw their allegiance from God. They repudiate the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, heaping the vilest insults upon her and calling her Harlot, etc. And the devil arrogates honour to himself, as St Augustine notes . . . The Devil then places his claw on their brow, as a sign that he rubs off the holy chrism and destroys the mark of their baptism"¹⁹. Throughout my analysis, and especially in the final section on religion, I aim to ask exactly how religiously inclined the accounts I collected are. The satanic pact is such a popular motif in witchcraft scholarship, that scholars such as Julian Goodare, who focuses on Scotland, have even started asking questions regarding the extent to which this belief was as pervasive as it seems. He reports that 'elite Biblical exegesis and other demonological sources gave some indication of who, and what, the Devil was – usually a form of animal or beast. The Devil that appeared in confessions about witchcraft was, however, mostly human'²⁰ which indicates that the attitude towards the supernatural was not homogenous across different classes and makes for interesting comparative sociological content with the interviews I have conducted.

Towards the end of his chapter on the appearance of the devil in early modern Scotland, Goodare observes that 'although there was a female aspect to the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity, a similar degree of femininity did not extend to the Devil. The Devil was represented as a male figure and seemed to get away with doing a lot of harm because of the gender he was assigned. Women did not enjoy such leevay'²¹. He ponders over what this indicates about early modern society's attitudes towards the gender of supernatural beings and in doing so touches upon the connection between feminist scholarship's perspective on witchcraft trials. The premise of their arguments is that there was misogyny among elites of

¹⁹ Levack, 100, 2004

²⁰ Goodare, 146, 2008

²¹ Ibid, 155

the early modern period, who are seen as the driving force behind a 'top-down' persecution of witches. In her article on gender and witchcraft, Alison Rowlands alludes to the feminist approach as tackling 'brutal means by which patriarchy exerted control over women and sought to curb the perceived threat posed to men's dominance of early modern society by women's allegedly rapacious sexuality; by the 'illicit' medical skills women supposedly exercised as wise women or midwives; by the power women supposedly possessed as the priestesses of surviving pre-Christian fertility cults; or by the challenge that women were deemed to pose to men in the economic sphere'²². Although radical feminist interpretations have been dismissed by majority of academic historians for their assumption that witch-hunting was 'woman-hunting', their over-reliance on the *Malleus*, their unwillingness to engage with manuscript records of witch trials, and their ahistorical use of the terms misogyny and patriarchy, which downplays the historical specificity of early modern culture and society '²³, they have gained traction amongst feminist political activists, who have rendered those persecuted as witches wise women. This symbolization is relevant to my research, as in the section on liminality I discuss what witches have come to symbolise in Pakistan, and the social realities this sheds light on.

The last aspect of the research conducted around European witchcraft is the study of emotions in relation to the history of witchcraft. However, before delving into this specific aspect, it is worth examining the role emotions play in the social sciences. The book "Emotions and Social Change: Historical and Sociological Perspectives", edited by David Lemmings and Ann Brooks²⁴, explores the relationship between emotions and social change in historical and contemporary contexts. The book consists of a collection of essays by

²² Rowlands, 2, 2013

²³ Ibid, 3

²⁴ Lemmings and Brooks, 2014

various authors, each examining the role of emotions in social movements, political revolutions, and social transformations. The book argues that emotions play a crucial role in shaping and motivating social change. It explores how emotions such as anger, fear, hope, and love can drive individuals and groups to challenge established power structures, mobilise collective action, and create new forms of social order. The book's main pillar is the work of Norbert Elias. While Elias does not directly allude to his work as the study of emotions, this book points out that one of his key insights was that emotions are not simply individual or personal experiences, but are deeply intertwined with social and cultural contexts. Elias argued that emotions are shaped by social norms, values, and power relations, and that they in turn shape social relationships and structures. Another important aspect is Elias's previously discussed concept of "figurational sociology", which emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals and social structures, and suggests that social change can only occur through collective action and the reconfiguration of social relations. In this sense, emotions play a crucial role in social change, as they can mobilise individuals and groups to challenge existing power structures and create new forms of social order. The connection between Elias's civilizational analysis and emotions is that the process of civilization involves the gradual development of social norms and behaviours that restrain and regulate emotions, leading to a more "civilised" and restrained society. Chapter 10 of the book *Emotions and Social Change*, is titled "Norbert Elias and the Sociology of Resentment"²⁵ and is written by Bryan S. Turner. In this chapter, Turner explores the concept of "resentment" in the context of Elias's figurational sociology. Turner argues that resentment, which he defines as a persistent and deep-seated feeling of indignation or anger towards those who are perceived as having more power or privilege, is a key emotion that can drive social change. He suggests that Elias's concept of "figurations," or the complex web of social relationships and power

²⁵ Turner, Chapter 10

dynamics, provides a useful framework for understanding the role of resentment in social movements and political struggles. While my interviews do not fully encapsulate the broad process of social change, they do examine certain relationships wrought with resentment, and try to analyse how supernatural forces exaggerate these emotions and whether there is any capacity for social change under such circumstances.

In order for the interviews to have a historical anchor while they are being analysed through the lens of emotions, this analysis also includes some comparisons with the book "Emotions in the History of Witchcraft"²⁶ which was published by Palgrave Macmillan. The book examines how emotions such as fear, anger, and envy have played a role in shaping beliefs about witchcraft, as well as the ways in which accusations of witchcraft were used to manage emotions in early modern societies. The chapter titled "Fear and Devotion in the Writings of Heinrich Institoris"²⁷(Heinrich Kramer in the portion above) by Tamar Herzig examines the ways in which the 15th-century German inquisitor Heinrich Institoris used emotions such as fear and devotion to promote his anti-witchcraft campaign. Herzig argues that Institoris used fear as a tool to create a sense of urgency and anxiety among the population, and to create a perception of a looming threat posed by witches. At the same time, he also appealed to the emotions of devotion and piety to rally support for his campaign and to encourage people to report suspected witches. His use of fear and devotion, combined with his authority as an inquisitor and his skill as a writer, helped to create a potent and enduring image of the witch as a dangerous and malevolent figure. The chapter "Bullying, the Neurobiology of Emotional Aggression, and the Experience of Witchcraft"²⁸ by Edward Bever explores the relationship between bullying, emotional aggression, and the experience

²⁶ Kounine and Ostling, 2016

²⁷ Herzig, Chapter 2

²⁸ Bever, Chapter 12

of witchcraft. Bever argues that bullying can trigger emotional responses such as fear, anger, and sadness, and that these responses can then be amplified by the neurobiological mechanisms of the brain. These emotional responses can then be misinterpreted as evidence of witchcraft or demonic possession. Bever suggests that the experience of witchcraft can be seen as a response to emotional trauma, particularly in cases where individuals have experienced bullying or other forms of emotional aggression. Witchcraft can provide a way for individuals to make sense of their emotional experiences and to gain a sense of control over their environment. Finally, Bever highlights the importance of social support in helping individuals who have experienced bullying or emotional aggression. Social support can help to mitigate the emotional impact of these experiences and can provide a sense of belonging and connection that can help to reduce the risk of interpreting emotional responses as evidence of witchcraft. I have made sufficient use of both the effects of fear and bullying in the data I analyse, and try to discern the degree of similarity between the Pakistani context I focus on and the early modern epoch of European history.

Domestic Relations

The first category I have sorted my data under is domestic relations. This section consists of five interviews in which respondents report that they or someone they know has been cursed. The source of these curses are people within these individuals' immediate vicinity, and these curses have affected their private lives and relationships in harmful ways, which is why I decided on domestic relations as a relevant label. Domestic relations, which refer to the relationships and interactions between family and household members, can be representative of particular societal relations and processes in a number of ways. In many cases domestic relations can provide insights into broader societal relations, as they are both shaped by and help to shape the larger social and cultural contexts in which they exist.

For instance, the power dynamics within a family can reflect broader societal power dynamics. Gender roles and expectations within a household may reflect larger societal expectations, such as the expectation in certain societies that men should be the primary breadwinners and women should take care of the home and children. Conflicts within a family can reflect larger societal tensions and conflicts. For example, if family members have disagreements about political or social issues, these disagreements may reflect broader divisions within society. The values and norms that are passed down within a family can reflect larger societal values and norms. If a family places high value on education and hard work, this may reflect broader societal values of meritocracy and individual achievement. I shall analyse this segment in relation to marital relations, as this is the focal point of eighty percent of the accounts, highlighting the importance of this particular institution in Pakistani society. I will then move on to a discussion of the anthropological concept of kinship and how such ties are put to test when supernatural occurrences are added to the equation. I shall also look at this section through the lens of emotions and social change and the dichotomy between religious and cultural explanations for certain phenomena, both of which have been elaborated upon in the review of literature on witchcraft in early modern Europe.

The main text I use for understanding marital relations from a sociological perspective is Peter Berger's article "Marriage and the Construction of Reality"²⁹ which was published in the "Journal of Marriage and Family" in 1971. Berger argues that marriage is a social institution that is fundamental to the construction and maintenance of our shared sense of reality. Premised on the argument that 'the relationships of the family occupy a central position and, in fact, serve as the focus for most of the other relationships'³⁰ it is a sociological exploration of the ways in which the institution of marriage both shapes and

²⁹ Berger, 1971

³⁰ Berger, 8, 1971

reflects our perception of reality, and how larger social structures influence the experience of marriage and intimate relationships. Berger argues that through the process of socialisation, individuals learn to understand and interpret the world around them in ways that are consistent with the social norms and values of their culture. In the context of marriage, this process of socialisation involves the negotiation and creation of a shared reality between partners. He also points out the ways in which larger social structures, such as gender roles and legal and economic institutions, shape the experience of marriage and the construction of reality within it. He argues that these larger forces influence the way that couples understand and experience their relationship, as well as the way that society as a whole values and understands marriage. Given the recurring presence of mother in laws as the culprits involved in (often) cursing their daughter in laws, I also thought of examining this relationship in more depth. Pakistan is a country where there are traditional gender roles and expectations that dictate how women should behave in relationships, including relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. For example, mothers-in-law may be expected to be the primary caretakers of the home and family, while daughters-in-law may be expected to defer to their husbands and their husband's family. Gender theory suggests that these expectations are socially constructed and reinforced, rather than being inherent or natural; gender roles and expectations can be challenged and changed through social and cultural shifts that challenge traditional gender norms³¹. It is a pity to see that there has not been much research conducted on this relationship and the dynamic it operates under. A few quantitative studies focused on mother in laws acting as barriers towards maternal health services (and as a result, controlling the reproductive fate of couples) have been conducted by ML Gupta³² and KD Pun³³ but overall, research in this arena is lacking. Future research could span demographic, economic,

³¹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

³² Gupta, 2015

³³ Pun, 2016

health, and many other fields, documenting both how living with a mother-in-law impacts daughters-in-law, but also how this relationship has changed over time and varies across settings.

Considering that marital relationships (in the context studied) are presented as 'a dramatic act in which two strangers come together and redefine themselves'³⁴I thought it was necessary to discuss how kinship ties can affect a marriage, and whether supernatural incidents influence kinship. Since one of the interviews I took revolved around a neighbour cursing the interviewees family, I also found it relevant to review the process of kinship outside of its relation to marriage. According to the 'Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology', anthropologists do not have a consensus on what the term kinship refers to, which has led scholars such as Rodney Needham to declare that 'there is no such thing as kinship'³⁵. However, 'this lack of precise definition may even be liberating rather than restrictive, since it helps undermine the persistent delusion that the task of kinship studies is to isolate and analyse semi-algebraic kinship 'systems'. For any individual, kinship does not constitute a closed system, but an open-ended set of opportunities and constraints'³⁶. The encyclopaedia establishes that kinship is not restricted to biological ties and describes the myriad of methodologies that can be employed to study it. From a sociological perspective 'Bourdieu (1977) sees kinship as an open ended set of practices employed by individuals seeking to satisfy their material and symbolic interests....the major determinants of kinship behaviour, therefore, are not the explicit rules themselves but people's largely implicit knowledge about 'how things are done', i.e. about social practice'³⁷. It can be argued that kinship is a social process because it involves the ways in which individuals form and

³⁴ Berger, 5, 1971

³⁵ Needham, 1, 1971

³⁶ Barnard and Spencer, 469, 1998

³⁷ Ibid, 477

maintain relationships with one another based on biological or social ties. It is not simply a matter of being related by blood or marriage, but rather involves a complex set of social practices, norms, and expectations that shape the nature of relationships within families and other social groups. At its core, kinship is a system of social organisation that determines how people are related to one another, how they are expected to behave towards each other, and what rights and obligations they have towards one another. This system can take many different forms, depending on the culture and society in question. Kinship also involves a wide range of social practices, including rituals, ceremonies, and customs that reinforce the bonds between family members and other kin. These practices help to create a sense of belonging and identity, and they also provide a framework for resolving conflicts and addressing issues within families and other social groups. Since anthropologists largely focus on remote societies, it is unfortunate that 'kinship theorists are ill equipped to say much of value about those intimate contexts to which kinship in urban, large-scale societies is increasingly confined' and no direct sociological parallels can be found. This has an adverse effect on the study of gender and kinship, which means that the observations made during the interviews do not fully fit the prescriptions of kinship theory and have to be analysed separately in their own right.

One highly relevant case study I have used for this research is the book "Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande," in which social anthropologist Evans-Pritchard provides an in-depth analysis of the kinship system of the Azande people of Central Africa. He argues that kinship among the Azande is a highly complex and nuanced social process that is deeply intertwined with their religious and magical beliefs. According to Pritchard, kinship among the Azande is not simply a matter of biological relationships, but rather is a system of social roles and obligations that are based on a set of reciprocal relationships between individuals and groups. He also describes how kinship among the Azande is linked

to their belief in witchcraft and oracles, which provides me with dense comparative material. While the explanation of the Azande's concept of witchcraft is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to note that in a Zande context, witchcraft is a hereditary phenomenon passed down within kin and easily identifiable within a man's body once an autopsy is conducted. Pritchard deduces that this 'witch organ'³⁸ is the small intestine. Because witchcraft (and consequently 'bewitching') has been defined in such specific terms, the Azande the means to tackle its effects are also highly effective. As witchcraft has been institutionalised (as best it can be within this tribe) the means to seek assistance for its effects are also more sophisticated; the Azande can consult oracles or avail the services of a witch doctor. The manner in which one must approach the oracle is also established based on certain norms;

'a man never asks the oracles, which alone are capable of disclosing the location of witchcraft-substance in the living, whether a certain man is a witch. He asks whether at the moment this man is bewitching him..... If he is a witch, it is of no significance to you so long as you are not his victim. A Zande is interested in witchcraft only as an agent on definite occasions and in relation to his own interests, and not as a permanent condition of individuals.'

The titles of Pritchard's chapters regarding witchcraft indicate the employment of methodological tools that focus mostly on the motivations of subjects. The manner in which practitioners of witchcraft (albeit unintentional) are identified sheds light on the Azande's acute awareness of the complexity of social ties. As far as determining the culprit is concerned Pritchard says

'it is fairly easy for the witch-doctor, because there are a number of stock enmities in Zande culture; between neighbours, because they have a greater number of contacts and

³⁸ Pritchard, 3, 1937

*hence more opportunities for quarrelling than those whose homesteads are separated by considerable distances; between wives, because it is a commonplace among Azande that the polygamous family spells friction among its members; and between courtiers, whose political ambitions are bound to clash*³⁹.

Witch doctors would not hesitate to cite ‘the nature of men’ as a plausible explanation as to what inspired someone to practise witchcraft. The Azande display great cleverness in their all-round competence in social intercourse, in their quick grasp of new situations, in their knowledge of custom, in their economic knowledge, and in their power to impress and manage men. One aspect of this study that has garnered much criticism is that throughout his research Pritchard is trying to define his surroundings rather than understand them. An ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy is established in the first few pages of the report, where the ‘us’ signifies Western Europe or, more specifically, Western European modes of thought. The assumption that he is addressing a Western European audience is seen when he is detailing how the Azande perceive witchcraft in relation to how Europeans initially framed it. It is important to bear in mind that he is an anthropologist writing in the 1930s and his work has been influenced by (if not built on) colonial attitudes. His praise of their methods is limited, for instance when he is given (confidential) information of the witch doctors ways of working he grudgingly admits that ‘nevertheless, I feel strongly that we must allow the Zande witch-doctor a measure of intuition and not attribute his utterances solely to his reason’ and ‘we have to bear in mind that, in spite of the trickery of witchdoctors, their methods are, within a limited compass, successful’⁴⁰. While I find Pritchard’s unearthing of the Azande’s criterion for witchcraft and dense social knowledge very valuable to my research, I have attempted not

³⁹ Ibid, 24

⁴⁰ Ibid, 87

to tread the path of exoticising my interviewees by studying an area I am familiar with and have knowledge of, as well as heeding to the ethics prescribed while carrying out fieldwork.

Liminality

The second section deals with liminal spaces and tackles supernatural presence in settings the respondents are not entirely familiar with. Unlike the previous portion, in which curses were placed upon humans by fellow humans, the majority of the encounters in this section are with beings that are not human, and they inspire different reactions and narration styles from the respondents. It is worth mentioning that this section is a merged version of two previously distinct ones; the first was focused around accounts related to the same entity which took place on Karsaz road in the urban hub of Karachi, while the second set is centred around city dwellers visiting different rural areas or hinterlands. Since all accounts take place in settings where the people involved are passing through temporarily, I chose to combine them into one set in order to add more dimensions to my analysis. Liminality refers to a state of being in-between or on the threshold between two distinct phases, states, or statuses. This often involves a sense of *communitas*, or a feeling of solidarity and shared experience among those going through the liminal phase. Liminality can be a powerful tool for social and personal transformation, as it allows individuals to step outside their usual roles and explore new possibilities for identity and community. However, the liminal phase can be unsettling or even frightening, as individuals confront the unknown and the unfamiliar. This section also deals with symbols and their pervasiveness, in which the concept of symbolic interactionism is built upon by comparing it to the symbol of the witch in radical feminist movements. There is also a conversation about the insider/outsider syndrome, which has been theorised upon by

Elias, Bourdieu and Goffman, and its link to the rural urban divide these interviews uncover. This chapter also makes use of the role emotions play in social theory and processes, focusing particularly on how fear motivates certain behaviour.

Liminality refers to ‘entities that are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial’. Liminality represents social and cultural transition within a lot of societies and is accompanied by a host of symbols. It is a moment of freedom between two structured worldviews. The concept of liminality first used by ethnologist Arnold Van Gennep in 1909 when he was describing the *Rights of Passage*. Liminality was further developed upon by Victor Turner in his book ‘The Ritual Process; Structure and Anti-Structure’⁴¹ which discusses the Limonoid (widened concept). For Turner liminality becomes a bond that connects that ritual of ceremony to wider society. He uses a religious holiday as an example, observing that people go to church for rituals. In order for an individual to escape the threshold state he must create new values in order to return to some form of structure. In the contemporary world, mass media possesses such properties, and can be viewed as manufactured liminality. Another way to view liminality is as a reflection phase during which an individual transitions from separation to incorporation and is dispossessed of what he previously had.

Gennep suggests that creating a liminal phase between transitions marks them as important moments in one’s life. Milestones such as puberty, marriage and death are all ritualised in this manner. Rites of passage of state can be distinguished from rites of passage of time, an example of the former would be a change in social position while a change in season, which would probably be celebrated by a harvest, serves as an example for the latter.

⁴¹ Turner, 1969

Rites of passage are divided into three subcategories in which the middle stage is the liminal period. All stages are not equally important and are sometimes reduplicated. The transitional stage also has the three sub-stages of rites of passage. The first stage is the uncertainty/ambiguous state, the second is the possibility to adapt to new norms and values and the final one is pre-integration. During the first stage the individual relinquishes his past in order to reach the threshold stage. He is equal but at the same time does not possess any rights. He is no longer in the community but part of a process which is almost a dangerous position to be in since he might end up never fully being accepted back if he fails. In the second stage he wants to evolve faster into the new position and is in the role of accumulating new information. He is in the process of becoming new self and if he does not follow rules, he will be punished by the new group. In the final stage he has changed and is almost ready to enter the new group. He is now truly “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial”⁴².

Erving Goffman, who was a Canadian-born American sociologist, social psychologist, and writer, has also contributed to the discussion of the insider/outsider problem in sociology. In his work, Goffman emphasises the importance of understanding the perspective of the actors involved in a social situation, and the role that social context plays in shaping behaviour. Goffman's concept of "impression management"⁴³ suggests that individuals are constantly engaged in the process of presenting themselves in a favourable light to others. He argues that this process is shaped by the social context in which it occurs, and that outsiders may struggle to fully understand the social dynamics at play. Goffman also emphasises the importance of studying the "front stage" and "backstage" of social life. The "front stage" refers to the public performance of behaviour, while the "backstage" refers to

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ Goffman, 1959

the private or hidden aspects of behaviour. Goffman suggests that by studying both the front and backstage of social life, researchers can gain a more complete understanding of the social world and the complex dynamics that shape it.

Pierre Bourdieu has also discussed the insider/outsider problem in sociology. He argues that the social position of the researcher can influence their ability to understand and interpret the social world they are studying. An insider may have an intimate knowledge of the group being studied, but this can also make it difficult for them to maintain objectivity and avoid personal biases. An outsider, on the other hand, may lack an understanding of the group's cultural and social norms, which can make it difficult for them to interpret the data accurately. Bourdieu emphasises the importance of what he calls "reflexive objectivation," which involves the researcher reflecting on their own position within society and how this position might affect their understanding of the social world. He also emphasises the need for researchers to be aware of the cultural and social codes of the group they are studying, as well as their own biases and assumptions.

Religion and Rationality

The third and final section of analysis will discuss supernatural encounters, with other beings as opposed to curses, that have either taken place on a recurring basis or have happened in a place the subject is very familiar with. The common thread within these interviews was the interviewee's attempts to rationalise their experience(s) and make sense of it; after all, if something odd is taking place within a setting you think you know all about, the need to understand it intensifies. The reason I chose to examine the link of these interviews with religion was not to prove or disprove religious explanations, rather, I wanted to examine the role religion played for each respondent in attempting to clarify their situation. Since almost all interviews allude to the supernatural entities mentioned in the Quran, this section

focuses heavily on the sociology of religion, paying particular attention to the theories of the sociological giants Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Sociology of religion is a subfield of sociology that studies the social aspects of religion. It seeks to understand how religion influences and is influenced by social structures, institutions, and culture. It helps us better understand the complex relationships between religion and society, and the ways in which religion shapes and is shaped by social structures, institutions, and culture. This section concludes with a review of Robert Orsi's book 'History and Presence' and Amira El Zein's book 'Islam, Arabs and the Intelligent World of the Djinn' linking their content and analytical tools to further enhance my data and to attempt answering how supernatural entities and interactions are relevant for the field of sociology.

Marx strongly felt that humans should be guided by applied science, facts, and the use of reason. Religion, he felt went against this concept with the use of faith and belief, which only masked the truth while misguiding the person. For him purpose of religion was only to give an illusion and promise of a better life where realistically there was little hope for one. He viewed God as being created in man's own image and in man's perception of what God should be. His critique of religion was a call to people to abandon their illusions and philosophy, he argued, had a critical role to play in exposing these illusions. The only next step he saw was to acknowledge that there was no real God, only nature and humanity. This acceptance would encourage individuals to focus on their own personal development rather than look to a God for help, and then philosophy should establish that ideal of human fulfilment. One major critique of Marx and conflict theory and its position on institutionalised religion in society is that often in periods of positive change, concerning increased equality, organised religion often plays major roles in mobilisation of the masses, and in getting heard in 19th century government.

Durkheim felt that religion aided the people and offered much needed cohesion which creates unification. His work was one of the first to use the positivism of Comte and put it to work in a formal scientific method of study. Durkheim's work was based more on empirical observation than Marx's theory and developed decades later. Striving to understand the basic forms of religious life, Durkheim travelled to Australia, where he performed an ethnographic study for fifteen years among the Australian aborigines, who he considered to be the most primitive in relation to the rest of the world. He reported his findings in his last major written work called *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*⁴⁴ which remains a classic in the study of religion in society. In this simple form of religion, he assumed, he could explore all the basic features and functions contained within religion, and which in later types of religion appear in more complex and complicated forms. Durkheim concluded that religion has a social origin, and equally a social nature. In essence: religion is a kind of expression of social life in spiritual terms. In religion, despite its orientation towards religious subjects, it is society that is worshipped and glorified, and the social nature of our lives. Religion is a form of collective consciousness, indeed the most important form of collective consciousness. One criticism of Durkheim's structural functional approach to religion is that only the proper functioning process of religion is stressed, and the dysfunctional areas are avoided. For instance, much social conflict and many wars have been fought and continue to be fought in the name of a God or a specific religions belief.

Unlike Marx, who characterised religion as offering false hope to the disenfranchised or Durkheim who viewed religion as a necessary cohesion in society, Weber focused his work on the interaction of culture and religion in relation to the economic system of a

⁴⁴ Durkheim, 1912

society. Whereas Marx felt that religion was an obstacle to social change, Weber held that it was an agent of social change. He was not a strict positivist, as Durkheim was, so he was not as concerned with direct causal links as he was with cultural influence on the individual's rational choice. Although Marx and Durkheim did address the issue of religion in society, Weber took the study much deeper creating his own discipline, along with Ernst Troeltsch and Werner Sombart, with the sociology of religion, which Weber coined *religionssoziologie*. His goal was to find reason for different political and economic developmental paths in geographic areas within the religions of the societies. Main themes of study were based on the form of economy which developed in the specific area, the social stratification of the area, and finding distinguishing characteristics unique to Western Civilization. Weber describes the spirit of capitalism and the rationalisation of scientific pursuit in modern times as an iron cage in which the technical and economic conditions of machine production determine the lives of the individual. For Weber, a society in which human activities and relations are governed by rational calculation and economic compulsions was devoid of meaning, a phenomenon that he has referred to as the disenchantment of the world.

Robert Orsi's book "History and Presence" is an exploration of the relationship between religion, memory, and the historical imagination. Published in 2016, Orsi attempts to write a historiography of Catholicism in the twentieth century keeping in mind how the catholic faith is heavily involved with supernatural entities which he refers to as 'real presences'. In doing so he wants to write history in a manner which goes against David Hume's prediction that a day would come when modern men and women would not be able to even imagine that, once upon a time, humans walked on this planet believing that the gods were really present to them. In the first chapter of his book Orsi posits that before the advent of modern epistemology, before the arrival of "religion" within the boundaries of

Enlightenment reason, ethics, and linguistics, and before the codification of “religion” in “national constitutions and diplomatic treaties, the woods, homes, and forests of Europe, its churches, statues, relics, holy oils and waters, and shrines were filled with the presences of spirits, pre- Catholic, Catholic, or a hybrid of the two”⁴⁵. These beings were really there. As mentioned above, Max Weber famously referred to all this as “enchantment,” which he contrasted with modernity’s disenchantment. Humans lived alongside and in the company of supernatural presences. They called on these extra- human presences to witness and to intervene in the affairs of life, domestic and social. From these presences, humans sought protection of their bodies and souls, property, kin, animals, towns, and families. Jesus was there in flesh and blood on the altar, in the Host, in the priest’s hands, and supernatural beings were everywhere, experienced in all the modalities of the senses. “There was a time,” says Calasso, “when the gods were not just a literary cliché, but an event, a sudden apparition.” Things happened between humans and their gods. But that was then. Orsi outlines how the development of the scientific method relegated religious authority and reasoning to the side lines writing that there are historical, philosophical, political, and doctrinal reasons for the scarcity of theoretical language for real presences and for the mistrust of them when they do manage to make an appearance, the haste with which they are translated into other terms. Tracing the history of how polemicists, theologians, jurists, and philosophers mapped other polarities onto “presence / absence, including rationality / irrationality, the impossible / the possible, past / present, female / male, primitive / civilised, and dark skin / white skin”⁴⁶ Orsi reaches the conclusion that political and religious freedom from the seventeenth century forward, meant, among other things, liberation from real presences, or superstitions, an argument that resonated well into the twentieth century in

⁴⁵ Orsi, 5, 2016

⁴⁶ Orsi, 2016, 41

the nagging doubt that Catholics were capable of democracy. He takes this as a departure point and in the remainder of his book outlines his study of Catholicism in the twentieth century alongside his attempt to ensure that real presence is taken seriously in his documentation. An important philosophy and ethic he abides by is that 'scholarship entails risk, for the person whose world has been entered by the scholar, but for the scholar, too, whose own certainties ought to be on the line in the encounter. It is because of this risk, however, if it is taken, that scholarship also creates possibilities for engagement and relationship', which is a practice I have let guide the interviews I conducted. I will be using the advice he imparts to scholars as well as comparisons between his observations and mine in this thesis. In Orsi's work I found an element of empathy which was missing from Pritchard's account of witchcraft and the Azande. Orsi is able to provide valuable research while maintaining the awareness that his 'subjects' are human beings and their stories may not always involve agents that follow scientific laws.

One chapter in this book that is highly relevant to research is titled 'Holy Intimacies' and recounts the spiritual experiences of three women Orsi has interviewed. The venues of intimacy between humans and sacred figures are a hospital room in the United States in the mid-1990s, small circles of women praying the rosary in an industrial city in the last days of the Second World War, and two homes on either side of the border between the United States and Mexico in the late 1950s. One of the stories has to do with a shrine whose origins are shrouded in mystery and legend, as the past of most Catholic shrines are; another with a mostly forgotten apparition of the Virgin Mary, as the majority of the Blessed Mother's appearances are lost to history and memory; and the third with a Mexican American girl's devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus that went unnoticed amid the surrounding urgencies of migration, domestic violence, the difficulties of speaking one's experiences in a strange tongue, and the challenge of finding work. Orsi remarks on how 'to study the

intimacies with the holy that arose in these places and times, it is necessary to go below the surface of what is remembered and authorised as history'⁴⁷. This chapter was particularly interesting to me because I noticed similarities in how Orsi grappled with the material he received while conducting interviews. The chapter's concluding paragraph laments upon how 'very rarely, if ever, do the people we scholars of religion talk with and write about need our protection, because what we are protecting them from is the judgement and condescension of critical theory. In other words, we are protecting them from ourselves', which I found a succinct way to describe fieldwork experience.

After reading Orsi's work and learning so much about presence in a Catholic context, I thought it would be worth reading about presence in an Islamic context, as Pakistan is heavily influenced by religion. Religious prescriptions have combined with Subcontinental customs in order to produce a unique culture and relationship with presence and the supernatural. By providing religious context, I do not mean to embark on a path that attempts to prove or disprove what my respondents are reporting. Instead, I aspire to understand whether social relations can exist when the entity that one is confronted with is not entirely human. I also want to observe the implications such a variable has on existing social ties and how one navigates the social world. The book I chose to read for such a context was 'Islam, Arabs and the Intelligent World of the Djinn' by Amira El Zein, a scholar, poet, and translator who was the director of the Arabic Program at Tufts University from 2002 to 2008. Not only does it describe the qualities of the 'djinn', who are creatures I shall discuss in my analysis but she views scholarship through a similar view as Orsi which is overtly evident throughout her work. When she talks about her motivation behind writing this book she says

⁴⁷ Orsi, 2016, 72

'I was often confronted with, on one hand, Western sources simply dismissing the whole concept of the jinn as superstitions, primitivism, animism, and the like; and on the other hand, contemporary Arab and Muslim sources, which, in general, expand on the predecessors' work, but rarely innovate'⁴⁸

adding that western scholars in general concentrate on the political and social manifestations of Islam, totally neglecting this concept, while Arab and Muslim contemporary scholars find it enough to reiterate what the Qur'an and prophetic tradition Hadith mention, or try to apply a Western methodology that would lead them to maintain that these "spiritual beings" simply pertain to the "domain of fantasy". El-Zein takes upon the task to look at the concept of the jinn with an open mind and with empathy, letting the sources unfold their meanings. She starts off with explaining the different realms created by God and while referencing both the Quran and the Hadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad) explains how Muslims believe God created many worlds and subjected them to humans and jinn to explore them, benefit from them, and come to a deeper discernment of the Divine and a genuine glorification of his wonders. She talks about how the French philosopher Henry Corbin, used the term "imaginal" to describe this belief after rejecting the term "imaginary"⁴⁹ because it means unreal, fantastic, or utopian in the West, yet for Islam, it is a world that really exists, 'a world as ontologically real as the world of the senses and the world of the intellect, a world that requires a faculty of perception belonging to it, a faculty that is a cognitive function, a noetic value, as fully real as the faculties of sensory perception or intellectual intuition. This faculty is the imaginative power, the one we must avoid confusing with the imagination that modern man identifies with 'fantasy'⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ El-Zein,5, 2017.

⁴⁹ Corbin, 1995

⁵⁰ El-Zein,5, 2017.

El Zein goes on to explain the similarities and differences between djinns and humans, which I drew upon a lot for my chapter on djinns. She discusses how Jinn are addressed in the Qur'an as nations endowed with rational faculties. Jinn and humans have mental faculties that allow them to access knowledge, perceive the truth, and distinguish them from all other living beings in the universe. These two intelligent species are described as discerning the Word of God through reasoning, while the rest of Creation grasps it instinctively. The Quran is addressed to both Djinnat and humans and it is assumed that both are capable of learning from it. However the numerous instances of the correspondences between jinn and humans do not imply in any sense that both species could ever be equal. In all Muslim sources, humans are depicted as superior to jinn. Even though djinns are able to observe humans, the humans who are able to observe, communicate and eventually control them are deemed highly intelligent and spiritual. Throughout this section of my analysis I will attempt to discern whether the respondents display this knowledge, and how they negotiate their position as rational, modern agents with spiritual knowledge that the society they have been brought up in provides them with.

Methodology

In this chapter I will discuss the methodology employed to both collect my data and to analyse this data for findings relevant to my thesis. In the first version of this report, I used grounded theory in order to analyze the data I had collected. The main text I have used to develop a better understanding of grounded theory is 'Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis'⁵¹ by Kathy Charmaz. Grounded Theory originated in the 1960s with the need for qualitative approaches to content analysis. It was originally developed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss during their studies of dying in hospitals. Since grounded theory entails simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis and constructing analytic codes and categories from data one collects, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses, I produced a literature review after I had created categories on the basis of the type of encounter each participant had endured. As mentioned above, I have decided to use the original data I collected, but have discarded grounded theory as my core methodology. Instead I aimed to make my data more sociologically relevant, as I realized that the study of social processes in Pakistan through the lens of supernatural encounters has not been examined before and that these encounters had the tendency to accelerate certain processes or shed light upon others.

In order to do so I had to do much more preliminary research than what my previous project entailed, which is why my current literature review is much more vast than the original one . This allowed me to participate in concept driven coding, as opposed to the data driven coding I previously engaged in. A concept-driven approach looks at the data with a developed system of codes and looks for concepts/ideas in the text. On the other hand, data-driven coding looks for ideas/concepts in the text without a preceding conceptualisation and lets the text speak for itself. Both methods require initial and thorough readings of your data and for

⁵¹ Charmaz, 2006

you to identify several passages of the text that share the same code. This led me to narrow down and merge my categories from four to three. I decided to use the original interviews I collected for my previous report. I chose my participants through Facebook by posting the following request

"Hello! Would anyone like to narrate any sort of encounter you have had that you would classify as supernatural? Alternatively, would you be willing to put me in contact with someone who has had a supernatural encounter? I would like to hear and record these for my master's thesis at Charles University in Prague" ⁵²

I posted these in various Facebook groups but mostly chose participants from my alma mater's Facebook group and a group called Creepy Korma. I have conducted fifteen oral in-depth interviews and collected one pre-existing transcript and in the following chapters I have relayed the content of these interviews as well as cross analyzed these interviews by drawing comparisons among them as well as the previously mentioned literature to further my understanding of the subject matter. I have also recorded the difficulties I encountered while transcribing and making sense of these interviews, therefore hoping to shed light on the constraints a social scientist and historian must function under while attempting to report the unaltered truth. I made it clear to the respondents that this data would not be used for any other purposes and that they had the right to participate under a pseudonym and terminate the interview whenever they wished to do so. I interviewed people from an urban setting in Pakistan, focusing on participants from the three big cities, namely Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. I chose to focus on Pakistan because it is the country I come from and I believed I had an advantage while talking to people because I would know what questions to ask that

⁵² October, 2021

would directly be relevant to me rather than taking time out to gain knowledge of local contexts. I urge the reader to understand that this does not imply that the only research possibilities for this topic exist in Pakistan. I merely chose Pakistan out of convenience and would like to stress upon how my research is aimed at understanding people more than anything. I had to carry out these interviews online and requested if the participants' cameras could be turned on during the recordings. While gauging their reactions and expressions was very helpful, if I follow up with this research in the future I would like the opportunity to have access to the sites of interaction between the respondents and supernatural entities. I feel that despite not being able to meet the interviewees in person, this research can serve as a launching pad for future research endeavors I may pursue.

Domestic Relations

The first category I chose to create was for people who have reported being cursed by someone else. I have collected five interviews in which respondents claim that while they had not directly encountered any supernatural being they had been cursed by another person. Some people have very explicitly described the dark magic that was cast their way while others have identified a person but not detailed their methods. At first, I was wary of including curses in my research but due to five people contacting me I decided that enough people categorised curses as a supernatural incident for me to pay attention. Upon creating this category, I realised the immense sociological significance of studying curses, as the agent behind them was another human. All accounts have been collected from people in urban settings though it will become apparent during the course of this section that location is the least important factor. Instead, the events are propelled by recurring interactions between people who are within each other's orbit. While the more apparent effects of these curses are the physical and psychological pain experienced by the victims, they also serve as a medium through which the structure and operationalization of domestic relations in Pakistan can be observed. Through these accounts, the assumptions behind kinship, particularly marital relations, can be brought to light and one can test whether curses have the capacity to transform these relationships or maintain the status quo. In four of the accounts collected, I noticed that the cause of the curse was due to the interviewees decision to marry and was mostly because they had married someone who was not pre-selected for them, underscoring the importance of marriage in a Pakistani context. Due to the social nature of these curses, the data collected has also been compared to the Zande culture, as the key perpetrators of witchcraft (albeit unintentional) would mostly turn out to be relatives. Because Azande tradition took allegations of witchcraft seriously, there were proper institutions for people to resort to in their hour of need. This is contrasted with how there is no legal body to

incarcerate the people who were allegedly causing the respondents harm, resulting in most of them living in constant fear. Fear is one of the various emotions that such a scenario involves. This chapter shall consider the role of emotions such as resentment in the perpetuation of ideas about the supernatural, and will try to examine whether there is any potential for social change within the arena of domestic relations.

The first account is by a woman in her mid-thirties named Ayza Alam. Ayza suspects that her mother-in-law has cursed her with black magic which has caused her marriage to deteriorate. She reports that she and her husband were head over heels for each other when they met ten years ago but when they got married things took a turn for the worse as her mother-in-law did not want any of her children to get married. Her husband would often complain that he felt heavy in her presence but when he would go to his mother (this was a joined family system) he would feel fine. She claims that their sexual life was not going well and that they would constantly bicker. Her own health was ameliorating as she would constantly experience sharp body aches and once it got so bad that she complained to her mother-in-law about it. Her mother-in-law recited Surah Naas (a Quranic verse known to counter black magic) upon seven chillies and the pain went away. Ayza noticed her physical appearance becoming worse and said that each time she would think about praying or showering something prevented her from doing so; she would clean herself for prayers and would suddenly notice dirt on her body. Ayza is currently still looking for cures to this ailment and laments the fact that professionals who are able to remove curses are too expensive to consult.

Ayza is very quick to pin her mother in law's curse as the cause of her negative condition. Even if one is to say they believe in black magic (it is, after all, mentioned in the Quran), they are still required to provide concrete proof regarding who they suspect it is. Other than one incident, when her mother-in-law cured her body pain (which could easily

work in her mother in law's favour as benevolence rather than proof of her ability to perform any magic, let alone sinister one), Ayza does not cite any direct link with the events in her life and her mother-in-law- in fact, they don't even seem to get into any arguments. The person she is constantly arguing with though, is her husband, which seems to have detrimental effects on her health. The effects of the erosion of her once amicable relationship are in line with Berger's observation about the institution of marriage providing stability in one's life, and how family life is often the basis of one's interactions outside their home. In line with what Berger observes, Ayza does not seem to have any friends with whom she has shared this information and is clearly very isolated within her immediate domestic relationships which gives one insight as to why she does not layer her account with more tangible proof. Ayza's plight harkens back to Edward Bever's work on the psychological effects of bullying and the microaggression that contributes to the emotional responses that may be interpreted as witchcraft. While Ayza's misery is the result of witchcraft, it is clear that this indeed classifies as a form of bullying and is definitely contributing towards her downfall. Her condition can be viewed as acute depression and anxiety, as opposed to witchcraft as she has lost access to the one cure Bever recommends to counter the effects of bullying: social support. The isolation she is trapped within is the overarching theme of her narrative, and will be further discussed at length, and it is apparent that she is not sharing her story in order to create a case against her mother-in-law but as a necessary cathartic outlet.

The most obvious distance created is the bridge between her and her husband, a man with whom she was 'head over heels' with before they entered the folds of marriage. This begs the question; why does she not share the theory that she is being cursed with her husband? One possible answer could be that this would invoke a lot of rage, but since they are already fighting so frequently the stakes do not seem to be very high. The more plausible

explanation is linked to the second tenant of Berger's argument which states that when two people enter a marriage they are doing so within a society with an established set of rules and practices and these societal forces shape the way couples understand their relationship. While Ayza is more prepared to attribute her plight to her mother-in-law, her husband views Ayza as the agent of chaos within the relationship and the culprit behind its erosion due to his constant anger towards her and tendency to start bickering while he is very gentle towards his mother. He is not expected to fight this battle, it is confined to Ayza and her mother-in-law. He even gets softer treatment from his mother; rather than use more benevolent tactics and lure him into spending time with her through her rumoured magical abilities, she chooses to tread a more negative route by cursing Ayza. This dynamic, in which the women of the household are much more active agents in determining the fate of a relationship, sheds light on the general expectations from women in Pakistani society and will feature in other accounts as well. The fact that Ayza is terrified of her mother-in-law rather than disappointed at her husband further highlights the scrutiny women must endure. Returning to Ayza's lack of concrete proof, it can also be said that she did not feel the need to explain why she suspected her mother-in-law of foul play as there is a well-constructed image of 'the evil mother-in-law' in Pakistani society. Given the assumption that a lot of fear is inspired due to the mother in law's higher position within the household, as well as plenty of reference points within literature and films that cast mother in laws in a negative light, it is not outside the realm of possibility that Ayza's mother-in-law detests her. The curse just seems to be an extension of an extant sour relationship that pervades many households.

Whether or not Ayza's fear of her mother in law's tactics are skewed by biases against women, there is no denying that her situation invokes pity. Her isolation is not limited to the domestic sphere. She recounts how she attempts to pray in order to seek some relief, but whenever she prepares herself to do so, she finds herself physically unfit to pray (in the

Islamic tradition, your body needs to be clean in order for you to be eligible to pray and there are detailed instructions on what parts of your body must be clean in order to qualify for prayer). She sees this bodily impurity as one of the dimensions of the curse that has left her spiritually isolated. It is interesting to see how despite being a product of magic, this curse manifests itself in such social ways. Instead of morphing her body (apart from making her appear sallow) and more imaginative trajectories this curse could have taken, its sole goal is to ensure Ayza is not able to unburden herself, even the act of prayer which can be viewed as a mystical practice is in reality just her attempt to converse with God and gain some reprieve, which gives the curse a much more sociological character than the heretically motivated actions of witches in early modern Europe. In its social awareness, this curse seems to resonate more with the set of usual suspects the presented in Zandeland, where the witch doctor or oracle would operate under the logic that despite being hereditary, witchcraft was motivated by human nature and it was a lot more probable that a kinsman was responsible for witchcraft rather than someone from another homestead or village. In a similar way, curses in Pakistani society are enacted upon by people who are within close familial proximity to the victim.

However, unfortunately for Ayza, this is where the parallels with the Azande end. Kinship among the Azande is linked to their belief in witchcraft and oracles, and as a result of a consensus around these beliefs, they have been able to devise proper ways to counter the excesses of witchcraft. A man who believes he is the victim of witchcraft must consult an oracle or doctor who will answer yes or no questions about who might have bewitched him. Once the culprit is confirmed, the tribal chief appoints men to visit them and extract an apology. Since witchcraft is technically no one's fault and can be activated through emotions such as anger and jealousy, an apology seems like a reasonable way to put an end to the

matter and provide relief to the victim, who does not have to worry about this any longer⁵³. Of course, in cases of death, the issue is treated more seriously but this is beyond the scope of my research. In Ayza's case the specialist she tried to consult in order to covertly remove the curse charged her a fee that was beyond her means, which displays apathy within the religious community that will be seen in the rest of the interviews as well. While this can be compared to the fact that witch doctors in Zandeland also charge a certain fee, it can be argued that the main authority on witchcraft in the Zande culture are the oracles who require a sacrifice of fowls. These fowls are available at every household because they are considered a necessity. Performances by witch doctors are optional and not essential to vanquish witchcraft. There are also a number of people willing to assist men when they are consulting the poison oracle and they do so without charging a fee. Even if Ayza is able to confirm that her mother-in-law is behind the tragic events in her life, she cannot talk to her husband about him as he is insulated from this dynamic, cannot confront her mother-in-law direct because of the fear surrounding her and cannot ask a third party to remove the curse due to financial restrictions. She certainly cannot go to the police with such a case. In this context, it makes sense that she is only searching for someone who will hear her story and does not hesitate to point fingers at her mother-in-law, since this bears no legal consequences for either party involved.

The next account is by a boy named Ali Memon in his late teens. Hailing from Lahore, Ali discusses his parents' failing marriage and attributes this to his mother's aunt cursing her. The reason behind this was that she wanted his mother to marry her son but she fell in love with his father instead. Ali says that his parents were madly in love with each other and quite materially prosperous when they got married but soon after things started going downhill. He says that his parents would constantly fight and his father would

⁵³ Evans-Pritchard, 1937, Chapter 3

complain about a bad smell clouding his mother that no one else could sense. His father lost his job and they had to move from Islamabad to Lahore and to a much smaller house. His parents had also considered a divorce. He says that his mother consulted a specialist in Medina who confirmed that the aunt was cursing her and said that he would help her out but never responded beyond this. His mother recites verses on a daily basis and if she skips a day, they face negative consequences.

Ali narrates a chain of events that sounds similar to Ayza's in terms of the general downward trajectory both of them are on after a curse enters the equation. He reports that before they got married his parents were deeply in love with one another but due to the curse this has changed significantly. He also reports how their finances have dwindled and they have had to relocate to a new city, which again points towards the curse not being limited to the victim's physical health but having far reaching consequences that have affected an entire household. While Ali, unlike Ayza, is not being cursed he is definitely suffering the negative consequences of it. The curse sheds light on Berger's idea that marital relations do not just affect the two people involved, rather they contribute to the entire household's perception of reality, which we can see is clearly very unstable in Ali's case. Similarly, to Ayza's account, the husband is quite a passive agent when it comes to the curse; Ali's mother is at the forefront of the anger of a rejected proposal. This is something that even Ali does not question, it seems quite normal to him that his mother is the one bearing the consequences of her actions while his father's displeasure is primarily directed towards Ali's mothers' shortcomings. It is worth mentioning that he does lose his job, which has a negative impact on the entire family's fortunes. His mother, on the other hand, is more focused on her aunt (Tai) and pins most of her frustration on her as the agent of the curse rather than having a conversation with her husband regarding her theory. It is important to realise that the stakes

were a little higher for Ayza owing to the fact that she lived in the same house as her mother-in-law and if she did confide in her husband, she would be bad mouthing his mother and forcing him to make a difficult decision. In the case Ali presents, his mother would be placing an allegation on her own blood relative, which should not be too hard for her husband to stomach. However, she does not choose this path and instead decides to seek covert help from a third party. These observations reveal a kinship pattern that is structured around knowing what can be discussed with certain people and what can't. It delegates roles according to who qualifies for a certain conversation, which can be seen most obviously through the fact that in both narrations so far, women have a more active role in social decisions involving the homestead.

Since Ali is not directly the subject of this curse, though he is not spared of its ramifications, his narration of the events also differs slightly from Ayza's. While in Ayza's case the urgent need for a cathartic outlet was clear as day, in Ali's case he goes further than just stating one instance in which his mother's Tai was identified as the culprit behind her misfortunes. He states that the motive behind cursing his mother was her rejection of her Tai's son and choosing Ali's father. The entire responsibility of rejection is placed on the woman and her Tai's wrath is confirmed by a religious scholar who points towards her as the perpetrator of the curse. In further narrations, the interviewees provide more proof behind why they think a certain person within their family or neighbourhood is responsible for performing black magic. While this method of proving their account is different from what is identified in the 'Religion verses Rationality' section (no one doubts that curses and black magic are real), it is interesting to see that the further away one is situated from a marriage, the more they are expected to provide proof for their theories. Perhaps the importance of marriage in general, and within Pakistani society in particular, is so strongly felt that people

are able to sympathise with someone whose marriage is deteriorating (regardless of the cause) and categorise them as worth their pity because of a deep understanding that their built reality is shattering.

This sympathy is not elicited by the religious scholar his mother consulted. While he is able to confirm the culprit's identity, he displays callous apathy by not pursuing this case further. Several observations come to light here. Firstly, it is obvious that the Pakistani society lacks the institutions that Zandeland offers to its people and that this absence of structure around a force that people very much believe in makes seeking solutions a precarious venture. Secondly, the link between religious methods and warding off the curse are very apparent in this narrative; Ali's mother recites Quranic verses on a daily basis to ensure her family's safety. The fact that a religious scholar is not interested in solving a problem with such a strong link to his specialty (it is also important to bear in mind that black magic is forbidden in the Quran and practice of it should ideally upset someone with a strong bond with religion) shows their arbitrary involvement and places curses and the interactions around them in a very social dimension. The social nature of curses is highlighted through their primary effect; social isolation. While Ali's mother has not suffered as drastically as Ayza, she is still able to maintain her link with spirituality and has garnered her son's sympathy, the isolating effects of the curse are still quite obvious. The family's economic status has suffered, which has displaced them within the class system as well as geographically since they relocated to a different city and had to begin again here. There is also isolation within the household, not only between Ali's parents but between the parents and their child, which can be attributed to the impact marriage has on perceptions of stability. From here on, it is worth examining whether there is any capacity for social change within the kinship structures of Pakistan, or whether they are so robust that curses are merely

normalised and considered an extension of kinship (that helps uphold the structure in place) rather than a problem that needs to be addressed.

The third account is by a girl named Saher Binte Haider in her late twenties from Lahore. She reports the experience of a family friend who was cursed with black magic. She says that her mother's friend's son chose to marry someone who was not pre-selected for him. While his mother did not oppose this, the mother of the rejected girl (who was also the boy's mother's cousin) was enraged, which is why she pursued black magic. Sahar stresses upon how her mom's friend is a gem of a person and a very God-fearing person who wouldn't hurt anyone before elaborating on how the bride would often speak in a voice that was not hers and that her body would freeze from time to time. They took her to an imam (seer) of the mosque in our area several times after which he confirmed that the girl has been possessed and someone was doing black magic. After a few days he found out that it was the (mom's friend's) cousin who had hired someone to do black magic. Sahar reports

"I don't know how but these imams get visuals of people doing the deed and he said that these were the words of the curse "In ko basnay nahi dongi ink betay ka ghar tbah krdongi" (I won't let them rest I'll ruin their household). The imam told them not to confront the cousin at all as it could worsen the situation. He asked to continue treatment silently which they did for almost three years".

The bride moved to Saudi Arabia with her husband and all went fine but whenever she visited Pakistan, she started experiencing the same things as soon as she landed. They continued her treatment once again, and in the meanwhile she got pregnant. When it was her seventh month, she delivered her baby and it was a stillbirth. Sahar concludes by reporting that "it was definitely a tough time for them but they stood strong and strengthened their ties

with Allah. Soon everything was fine and her bahu was blessed with a healthy child afterwards”.

Since this story is narrated by someone who has not been influenced by the events she recounts in the slightest, the narrative structure of the interview is a lot more coherent and it is apparent that the narrator realises the need to provide solid proof rather than garner pity for someone. She does so by detailing the methods employed by the Imam (it is important to remember that the narrator does not have to prove curses exist, rather, they must prove who has practiced such craft) who confirms that the mother in law's cousin went far enough to hire someone to curse the bride. Once again, the motive behind this is a rejected proposal, and as per previous observations it is the girl who must suffer. However, there are some positive elements to this account; instead of posing a threat to the girl's safety, the mother-in-law is on her side and they represent a united front rather than contributing to fractured domestic life. While it may be tempting to label Ayza's story as an exception rather than the norm, this alliance still maintains the power mother in laws have; if they extend help towards their daughter in laws, they can be the force of immense support which is a role that, so far, we have not seen the husband assume. It is also worth pointing out that anger over the rejected match is experienced more strongly than the potential mother-in-law than the rejected girl herself, showing the central place they occupy within organising marriages. While there is thankfully no acrimony between this pair, the mother-in-law plays a pivotal role in getting her son's wife the help she requires. This prevents her from facing the social isolation that the other victims endured and helps maintain her bond with spirituality, which is said to benefit her a lot as it resulted in the successful birth of her second child. This allows one to see that while curses certainly have detrimental and tragic effects, the nature of kinship ties is a crucial part of who is able to withstand these horrors, and it is more beneficial to be favoured

by kinship members who command greater power, a role that we have observed is quite fixed.

While this girl is definitely more fortunate than Ayza and Ali's mother, it is important to realise that she is not fully insulated from the perils of black magic. Like Ali's mother, she would have to regularly ward off the curse, which is different from what would happen in Zandeland where the curse would completely be gone after one consultation with the oracle. Ultimately, the couple has to leave Pakistan (though the curse is not cited as the primary reason for their departure) and starts experiencing negative symptoms the moment she sets foot on Pakistani soil. She has to exit the fold of Pakistani society in order to remain shielded from its negative qualities. This does not paint Pakistan in a favourable light; it seems as though the negative aspects of kinship (expectation of unwavering loyalty and rigid hierarchies) are so robust that anyone who is placed in a disadvantageous position is doomed here. In fact, the imam's advice to the girl seems to be the final nail in the coffin; he tells her to seek treatment privately and avoid direct confrontation which indicates the power of kinship ties over religious authority. Even the imam can't ignore the crucial relationships that are a result of kinship, and as a consequence must handle the matter delicately.

The fourth interview is with a girl called Sara Khan. She is in her late teens and also lives in Lahore. She reports:

"One of my cousins was diagnosed with colon cancer and he died within six months of his diagnosis. Just days before his death, his 5-year-old son also died in an accident. A couple of years later, one of our close relatives came to our house and while talking to my mother she confessed that the boy (my cousin) misbehaved with her one day and she did black magic on him to eliminate him and his "nassal" (family). My mother was shocked to

hear this. This woman is very well known in our family by taweez,⁵⁴ dam darood⁵⁵ etc. but no one could believe that she would stoop this low. She then asked my mother to end my brother's engagement and get him married to her daughter. My brother is very handsome and successful. My mother gently told her that she cannot do this. The woman left and the next day my brother got sick. He stopped eating and meeting with people. He locked himself in one room and he became extremely weak. My parents would switch doctors to get a diagnosis but all in vain. All of his reports were normal but he looked like he was about to die. Pale white complexion with bones visible confined in a dark isolated room. My mother then consults aalim (seer) who says that someone has done black magic on him. The rituals started for him and he started getting better. Alhamdulillah he is better now but we are extremely worried. It is such an unfortunate thing to have someone like this woman in a close relationship. You can't confront such people because of the fear that they will do it again out of rage. You cannot stop them from visiting you because of the same fear. Our family had some very mysterious and accidental deaths over the past decade and it is reported by witnesses in the family that this woman directly threatened them of the worst before they died".⁵⁶

Here we yet again confront a relative whose proposal was rejected. While in this case we do see the boy being punished but this is only because it is the woman's daughter who has been rejected. If anything, this sheds light on the role of women in negotiating marriages within Pakistan and seems to hint at marriage as an arrangement that women are key agents in. Sara's father is absent from the narrative and despite the arranged marriage system being

⁵⁴ Tawiz is worn by some Muslims contain verses from the Quran and/or other Islamic prayers for the protection from magic and diseases. The Tawiz is worn by some Muslims to protect them from evil also. It is intended to be an amulet. The word ta'wiz is used to refer to other types of amulets.,

⁵⁵ Anyone who believes that the mere recitation of Quranic verses and blowing it on water, or burning pieces of paper with some instructions has magical properties

⁵⁶ Khan, Sara, 2022.

common in Pakistan, the fact that women are the ones involved in reaching agreements on this topic makes knowledge about the inner workings of this relationship reside within women. As a result, it is understandable that frustration at certain wishes not being fulfilled are borne by women and husbands are not entirely present when relations between women turn sour. The fact there is proof of black magic being practised on the brother as well as the presence of someone known to practise black magic is of no help in order to alleviate this stress. Sara displays a sharp knowledge of kinship ties when she says that it is an unfortunate thing to have someone like this woman in the family as it is difficult to confront such people because of fear that they will do something again out of rage. They cannot be stopped from visiting ones house because of the same fear. Sara says that her family had some very mysterious and accidental deaths over the past decade and it was reported by witnesses in the family that this woman directly threatened them of the worst before they died. It is sad to see that despite the curse being lifted, there is no formal way to put an end to the fear that exists within Sara's head. When this is contrasted with the Azande, it is important to note that they were not able to formally put an end to witchcraft. Rather, through acknowledging the reality of witchcraft, they were able to prevent fear of it by ensuring that whoever was responsible for witchcraft was identified and, if their witchcraft resulted in death, executed. The fact that no mechanism exists to cater to people cursing others has resulted in people living in constant fear of waiting for the other shoe to drop.

The last account is by a girl named Anamta Choudry in her early twenties. Anamta is from Karachi and reports that her neighbour did black magic on her entire family with damning consequences for her mother. The lady had two sons and her husband was abroad. Her cousin lived right across the street and she admitted that the lady did totkas (home remedies) in qabristan (graveyard) for the issues she faces. She would request favours from

her neighbours such as asking them if they could store certain things of hers in their house and would never ask for these things to be returned. Once, the lady requested Anamta's mother to make a dessert that her son really liked. However, she soon sent the plate back saying her son was not hungry anymore. Anamta reports that 'Ammi hadn't even put their returned food to the wok and still it tasted so bitter as if somebody had added a rat kill to it. Everyone at our place had it and felt something was off but didn't sense what it could be. Next day my youngest sister fell terribly ill. She almost died of a bad jaundice'. Then, her mother was diagnosed with cancer. Strangely though, before her diagnosis her mother had a nightmare in which someone dug their nails into her back and slapped her on her neck. Her neck was where the cancer ended up being identified. The house itself started depressing her mother which is why they moved to her aunt's house where her mother became stable. However, when they moved back into the old house her mother's health deteriorated and she started resembling a skeleton. The family was advised to employ spiritual healing but didn't believe in such methods. The only reason Anamta decided to share this account was because she was at a loss for explanations and this is more of a theory she has rather than an actual accusation.

Anamta is the only one who has not experienced black magic at the hands of a relative. She claims that a neighbour has cursed her entire family. While this relation is in line with the rule of proximity defined by the Azande, it is interesting to note that with direct family members, the curse was also directed towards one individual. Even in Ali's case, he is describing what his mother went through rather than experiencing something directly. While Anamta's mother bears the brunt of the curse, her sister also fell seriously ill because of a meal the neighbour sent to their house. This is the only account in which doubt about the identity is expressed; Anamta says she has a suspicion that her neighbour is cursing her

family out of jealousy and goes on to describe all that her family has endured. She explains what has happened and indirectly challenges the listener to provide an explanation that makes sense. Firstly, she contextualises the jealousy by mentioning that the woman's sons and husband had died while Anamta's family was doing quite well. Then she talks about how the woman was known to engage in certain forms of magic and various instances when her family seemed to be at the receiving end of this. Anamta ends her account with saying that spiritual methods of healing were recommended to her family but they did not pursue them because they didn't believe in such methods. It is almost like this statement was tinged with regret. Through this narration structure it is evident that Anamta is someone who wants the story to be taken seriously. It is worth noting that the premises for the curse are jealousy not complications with arranging a marriage. It seems as though the importance of marriage in Pakistan is understood so deeply that any other reasons behind suffering a curse would be met with more scrutiny. While the people narrating the stories, with the exception of Sahar, are definitely suffering, at least they are not under any pressure to prove that they are being cursed by a certain person; it is understood that the irked this person with relation to marriage and it is assumed that the accusation is probably correct. Anamta, on the other hand, needs to detail exactly why she thinks he neighbour cursed her, which is why her story is corroborated with proof.

In this section we are confronted with the multitude of effects curses can have on one's life; these range from various terminal illnesses as was the case in Anamta's family, financial loss as we saw in Ali's case and even being effectively banished from a certain place like the victim in Sahar's story was when she was not able to visit Pakistan without falling sick. Through this section we are able to witness what the Azanade had already established much earlier on (it was only uncovered by Prithard in the 1930s); that curses are a uniquely social phenomenon. Curses, as we have come to see, are a manifestation of 'the

nature of men' and express feelings of resentment over the way power is organised and distributed within society. One of the effects of being cursed is social isolation, which exhibits awareness of the importance of social relations and that having access to these relations removed can prove to be lethal for people. We also see the difficulties in both asking for and providing help in such circumstances; religious scholars are either too expensive to consult, disinterested or are acutely aware of the strength kinship ties possess and the sturdy power structures within domestic settings, and as a result need to tread carefully while offering their services.

Liminality

This section consists of six interviews, three of which are with people who either lived in or passed through rural areas while they had a supernatural encounter and three of whom report incidents at Karsaz road in the urban centre of Karachi. This chapter was initially composed of two different chapters based on the type of supernatural encounter being described, but upon re coding and creating new categories on sociological bases, I decided to merge the two in order to focus on the concept of liminality. Two out of three accounts are experiences of city dwellers who were in a rural setting when they encountered the supernatural. Although one respondent was residing in the place, he had his experience in, he is educated along the lines of a city dweller and currently lives in an urban setting. Since I was conducting these interviews remotely, it was quite difficult reaching out to people who are currently residing in villages. It is also worth mentioning that the lifestyles in the four provinces of Pakistan, Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) vary greatly and because of different languages and dialects they have very distinct cultures. I have tried to include stories from Punjab, Sindh and KPK and was unable to find a respondent from Baluchistan. I am aware that this section of my thesis could be worked upon the most thoroughly and if I do get the opportunity to continue this project, I believe that personally speaking to people dwelling in rural areas would add a lot of depth and quality to my analysis. Regarding the remaining three interviews, it is contextually important to know that Karsaz is a district in the city of Karachi that is rumoured to be haunted. The rumour is that a bride's groom died on the Karsaz road. She was truly heartbroken by the incident and also passed away. Now legend has it that the bride still roams the street where her husband allegedly died. Many ghostbusters still travel to the site to spot one glimpse of the Karsaz bride. When I started researching, I explicitly sought accounts for the Karsaz bride because this is a well-known urban legend and I wanted to see whether narration styles were different

for an area that was already known to host a supernatural entity. I collected five accounts, out of which I have decided to discuss and analyse three. In this section I attempt to answer how the 'supernatural' variable can help us understand liminality and the concept of insiders and outsiders. With regards to liminality, it is interesting to see what places are encompassed within this label and why it is meted out to certain areas. When insider verses outsider syndrome is explored in these accounts, it is used to discern how these categories are created to begin with and to understand where the supernatural is situated within this dichotomy.

The first account is by a man in his late twenties who prefers to stay anonymous. He lives in Karachi and narrates the experience of his cousin who went hunting with his friends in the Cholistan desert in Sindh. The province of Sindh is mostly covered with deserts and apart from Karachi and Hyderabad it does not host a lot of big cities. They knew it was going to be a long journey and due to shortage of resources they might even face problems there but despite all odds they collected gallons of petrol, water, and food to spend the next days of their journey and left on their jeep. He said on the way while crossing local villages people told them not to travel in that area at night and warned them that others have sighted 'chalawa' which is a cultural term to describe a type of *djinnat* who are swift footed and can jump and travel long distances in a flash. They can even show up in a human form and then disappear in a glimpse, but it is advised not to follow them, look back at them or go to them in any case as it might cause harm. None of the guys believed these stories. They were driving through a deserted silent path at night with acres of barren land on either side, not a single bush or a plant could be seen, when they suddenly realized there was a woman dressed in red bridal dress standing at a distance. They immediately knew it couldn't be human as there wasn't any dwelling around from where she could have come. She was dressed in a local bridal dress and was standing alone at that time staring intently at the jeep. They drove past her, and no one looked back to see whether she had disappeared or was still standing

there. A few moments later, they saw an old man standing on the side of their path. He had a white cloth wrapped around his body and held a stick in his hand. The woman kept on appearing after every few minutes and so would the old man. Sometimes alone and sometimes together. This continued until sunrise, just as the locals had said.

Because we were discussing someone else's experiences I thought that my option to ask questions in this instance was severely limited. However, during the second round of coding I picked up on the fact that I had been given the opportunity to analyze how a third party treated these experiences. I was touched to see that, like the Karsaz incidents that will be discussed later in this chapter, the tone of the reporter was serious throughout, and a lot of care was taken to ensure that the reporting was done in a professional manner that didn't ridicule the person whose original experience it was. The narrator did not try to add his opinion on any matter and since he just recounted his cousin's words and did not try to convince the listener that this account was true because of his cousin's credibility I also felt that he was respectful to my sentiments. It was as objective as an interview can get with his primary concern being relaying the event to me. Of all the accounts collected, this one seemed to have taken place in the most liminal setting. This group is just passing through an area within the Cholistan desert and are insulated from direct physical contact because they are in a vehicle. The place is sparsely populated and none of them have any connection to it other than its purpose to reaching their destination. I found their lack of curiosity about life here interesting as the place is not culturally significant to them and they ignore the locals' warnings which proves to be an unwise omission. It made me question what contributes to making a certain place a liminal setting; are liminal spaces assigned liminality or is liminality fluid? In this case it seemed as though the place did not offer the group any benefits and as a result didn't inspire any curiosity from them.

Even though this area does have certain communities, it becomes apparent that this group of city dwellers is so convinced of their status as ‘insiders’ that they only realize they should have paid heed to the warnings they received when it is too late. They do end up following the advice they were given and keep driving on despite the recurring appearances of the bride and the old man. Towards the end of the account, it is admitted that when the sun rose the chillawa vanished 'just like the locals had said'. It appears that insider status is not restricted to geographical location, rather it is so mentally ingrained that people are not willing to step into the shoes of an outsider when they encounter unfamiliar territory. It is also interesting to note that one of the apparitions haunting the boys was a bride. She was clad in a local bride's attire and was staring at them intently. This is not the first account in which the figure of a bride is featured as a supernatural entity; the stories featuring Karsaz road in the latter half of this section are also centered around such an entity. If this is viewed in light of the previous chapter, the fact that a bride is performing the haunting seems to establish a link between the treatment of married women and their need for cathartic outlet. This supernatural being seems like a manifestation of guilt at the treatment of women under the institution of marriage and an implicit acknowledgement that society and its overall structure has failed women in difficult domestic relations. If comparisons to the review on witchcraft literature are made, there is a very obvious link between the figure of the witch being adopted by certain strands of feminist movements as a symbol of injustice towards women and this bridal clad figure being a symbol of injustice a sizable number of Pakistani women must endure as wives. The chillawa represents an outsider in all senses of the word; this figure is a ‘local type of djinnat’ and not like the beings encountered within urban settings, and its appearance as a bride represents outsider status in terms of kinship hierarches. Ironically, while the boys are in the desert at least, there is an inversion of power

and this outsider, who would normally not be taken seriously or be at a disadvantageous position to negotiate her rights, inspires fear within this group of dislocated insiders.

Eventually, they were able to escape the situation when the sun rose and, in this case, reciting Quranic verses did not help them in any way as the chillawa did not disappear. This makes me wonder what people's relationship with the supernatural is. In the case of the Karsaz churail there was harm caused to the people who interacted with her or there was a potential threat. With the djinns, even though they were provoked before causing harm, they had the potential to do so. In this case the chillawa did nothing but linger. I wonder what it is that makes us so wary of such entities. We have gradually come to a point in time where we have started appreciating the cognitive functions of animals and are including plants and nature within our sphere of empathy. I'm curious as to why supernatural creatures, especially the ones that mean no harm, are treated with such caution. I do think that if I were to conduct future research, I would probably make this question the leading philosophical one I aim to answer.

The next account is by a man of the same age group who is also from Karachi. We will refer to him as M Khan. He recounts the experience of his mother-in-law when she was young. He prefaces his account by mentioning that he and his wife are both medical doctors doing their post-graduation and born and bred in Karachi with Urdu as their first language, therefore already identifying himself with a certain area and preparing the reader for the narration to come. The event took place when his wife was about 6-7 years old, and her family decided to take a trip to the Northern areas of Pakistan. He mentions that 'Gilgit & Baltistan along with Kashmir are some of the most beautiful places in the world with tall ice capped mountains and captivating valleys and above all with the solitude and calmness in contrast to the busy and polluted air of the cities is a welcome escape from the daily routine'. Towards the end of their trip, they were unable to find a suitable hotel and eventually got one

at a very distant place which was very sparsely populated. There was hardly anyone residing in the hotel at that moment, and they got a room on the 2nd floor. His mother-in-law couldn't find a handbag she bought on one of her earlier shopping trips. They looked everywhere in the room and in their travel bags which sounded very strange as they took much care locking all their stuff when they left, and she distinctly remembered putting it in one of the travel bags and locking it up. It was already late night, so they decided to sleep with hopes of giving it one more try in the morning before leaving. That night his mother-in-law woke around 2am at night and felt the room's temperature to be unusually cold when something caught her eye which startled her.

She saw that the large window near the bed was open and there was a woman sitting on the windowsill facing her. She was attired in traditional northern clothing even wearing a traditional Hunzai woman cap and had a blank expression on her face. The eerie part was that she had my mother-in-law's handbag in one hand and with her other hand was slowly gesturing, calling her near as if to come and take her bag. My mother-in-law started reciting Duas (prayers) and drew the blanket over her face and kept it as such. After some time, she felt that the heaviness and cold in the room had gone but she couldn't sleep for the night.⁵⁷

When everybody woke up in the morning, she was shocked to see the window locked and her handbag lying on the side table near the bed. She told everyone what she went through the night before, after which they started packing and left. What concerned her was how the lady got there when everything was locked, how she got the bag in the first place and above all who she was and whether she was 'evil'.

⁵⁷ Khan, M, 2022.

The narrator begins this account by mentioning that both him and his wife are medical students. I found this interesting because he is not narrating his personal experience but something his mother-in-law went through. It seems like there is a burden on the entire chain of narrators to have sound reasoning abilities. I noticed the same respect for the person who endured the experience here as I did with the previous narrator's cousin. Of all the accounts in this section the participants in this one is the furthest removed from the setting in which they experienced their encounter. Hailing from Karachi, which is at the southern end of Pakistan and Hunza which is deep in the heart of northern Pakistan. The respondent's distance from this setting is apparent through his description of the northern areas; he needs to create an image to relay the rest of his story. Even his descriptions of the hotel are quite detailed which further adds to the sense of foreignness from the setting. This positioning is also liminal; while the family is not just passing through and is spending an extended amount of time here, they view it as a setting that serves a particular purpose, in this case, facilitates their vacation. If there is an interest in the culture, it is a culture that is viewed as external to Pakistan's mainstream culture, a point which is reinforced when the figure that appears on the windowsill is reported to have been clad in 'Hunzai' attire rather than 'Pakistani'.

Like the chillawa in the previous account, the figure viewed did no harm to M Khan's mother-in-law. She is reported to have recited some verses while hiding under her quilt, hence cannot confirm whether these helped or not. It appears the narrators are implying that these entities are so far removed from anything they have encountered that even examples within the Quran could not have prepared them for this, showing how removed they are from rural settings and lore. Now that I have discussed two events in which the supernatural entities described did not harm the participants in any way, I want to explore potential reasons for them reaching out to me to appear for an interview. In my introduction, I mentioned that I wanted to discuss incidents where the supernatural acted as an agent and

motivated human behavior such as moving out of a house or avoiding a certain area. These two accounts mainly provide good stories for their narrators. However, upon comparing them to other accounts I realized that the supernatural does serve an implicit function here; further exoticizing rural areas and deepening the gap between rural and urban areas. I find it interesting how these singular events are imprinted in the respondents' minds in a much more significant way than the people who live in houses with supernatural beings present and interacting with them on a much more frequent basis. Even Adil, who was affected by these events the most, took a considerable amount of time to move out. While those participants were coexisting with the entities they discussed, these two associated them with the foreignness of their setting. The fact that both the bride and the Hunzai woman were clad in local attire grounds them within a specific setting. While the narrator's attempt to explain their own rational faculties, they do not seem interested in answering questions regarding the likelihood of the events they encountered as they have already categorized these places as very remote and alien settings.

The third account is by a man named Hamza Arshad who lived in a small village in the north-eastern area of Pakistan, adjacent to the Indian border. He currently resides in Lahore. Before the Partition of the Subcontinent in 1947, many Hindus used to live in the area. They continued to live side by side with Muslims for centuries without any strife. But after Partition, Hindu families opted to migrate to India. His grandfather migrated to Pakistan in 1950, three years after independence. He was stationed in this very village and built a house at the place where Hindus used to cremate their dead before partition. People of the village forbade him to build a house there, but he, being an ex-soldier, knew no fear. Hamza reports

"When I was in my teens, I began to see weird things. I often saw a crawling skull in our garden and backyard. We had planted so many trees and flowery bushes there, and the place

had become a tiny grove. Often in the small hours, when thick darkness prevailed in the atmosphere (as there was no electricity in our village then), amidst dead silence, I felt myself awake... Awake and fully conscious. I felt the presence of something crawling on the floor in my room. Despite darkness, I could see, or I was made to see, a skull moving. I could hear the scraping sound that chilled the marrow of my bones. Its upper teeth were visible, but its lower jaw was deformed, and its hollow eyes seemed to look at me. I couldn't shriek. My whole body became numb. I felt chill, very chill. The skull moved towards a Vachellia Nilotic tree which we locally call 'keekar'. It disappeared beside it somewhere, as I couldn't chase it due to fear and darkness. I witnessed this ghastly sight randomly, but mostly on moonless nights.

After a while my condition used to become normal. I was terribly afraid, but I couldn't recount these events to anyone. But I couldn't go near that keekar tree even during the day. I can't call these events hallucinations because I felt I was awake and undergoing that terrible experience. I remained afraid during my high school time. Later, my father cut down some trees, including that keekar tree to build new rooms. When the earth was dug for foundations, some bones and a skull were discovered. I was stunned to see that it was the same skull that I used to see at night."⁵⁸

Hamza explains how this place used to be populated with Hindus before the partition of the Subcontinent and that they chose to migrate after the creation of Pakistan. Even if he had not provided a detailed account of why the Hindus chose to migrate, it is assumed that most people in Pakistan who have attended school are aware of the partition of the Subcontinent and its legacy.

It is very tempting to link this narrative to historical guilt and to comment on the collective memory and trauma of partition. The narrator himself wants to forge a link between history

⁵⁸ Arshad, Hamza, 2022

and the recurring appearance of this skull. The skull is a unique feature of this story. It is also worth noting that these events could have fit better in my section on urban settings because the narrator encountered the entity more than once and he did reside in the place where he had his experiences. However, once examined thoroughly it becomes clear that even though Hamza lived here and the experience he endured was a recurring one, his status in this village is that of an outsider. His grandfather was merely stationed in this village as an army official, and it is clear through the historical background he provides that this family has more in common with city dwellers than the other villagers. His entire time spent living here can be classified as a liminal period of his life, as he reports his relief when he finally moves to a city and views the liminal phase in his life as one clouded with discomfort.

The narrator uses similar strategies as Kayhan did during his narration and says that he understands if the listener thought he was hallucinating. He goes on to describe how his father wanted to build a few more quarters and when he dug up the area near the tree where the skull was sighted, they discovered a skeleton with the same skull. He ends his interview by saying that it has been forty years and he has failed to find an explanation for this, indirectly saying that he is open to suggestions but the explanation he has provided above seems to make the most sense. I asked him whether this motivated him to leave the house and he replied that he was too young when all this was happening, but he was relieved when he and his family moved to Lahore.

The first interview involving Karsaz road is with a lady in her early thirties named Rabia Gohar. She narrates the experience of her friend Saba as she leaves Rabia's house to travel back to her own. Karachi is Pakistan's biggest city (it is bigger than New York City) and it takes a long time to get from one place to the other. This is why Rabia's husband Faris came to pick her up in a motorcycle rather than a car; it would have taken a long time till they

were back home, and he did not want to attract the attention of burglars. They were on the Karsaz expressway when Saba reported she saw a woman who looked identical to her except for the fact that she had an enormous grin on her face. Faris warned Saba not to look at the creature directly as she would not be able to withstand it. The creature floated along with Saba for what seemed like eternity. During this time Saba felt faint and nauseous, she did not recover from this feeling till she reached back home. According to Rabia to this day, Saba is still terrified to look in the mirror, she doesn't travel on bike anymore, she has the fear of travelling after nine pm, she can't sleep or stay alone even if it is broad daylight. Her fear of being so close to that entity has a deep impact on her mental health.

She describes the creature as being a doppelganger of her with a huge grin. While the rumour about Karsaz road specifies that the churail is dressed like a bride, this is not mentioned in Saba's account. She is warned by Faris not to look directly at the creature. Even though no one has dictated what to do in such a situation, Faris seems to know how to react intuitively. I find this interesting because even in the accounts in the previous section, narrators started reciting verses intuitively, like Kayhan did when he heard murmuring outside his window.

Unlike the narrators in the previous accounts, this encounter definitely traumatised Saba and she made sure she never ended up on that road again. It also affected her mobility as she refused to travel on motorcycles and did not stay out of the house beyond nine pm. In short, she is avoiding everything associated with that night. It is interesting to note that while this entity caused Saba physical harm and she had a witness in the form of Faris as well as established stories about Karsaz at her disposal, she chose not to report it. In fact, the cursory search I conducted revealed that many people have had an experience on Karsaz road, but the official reporting was delegated to blogs and YouTube channels. Legal institutions are either uninterested or have never been approached about the events at Karsaz road.

The second story in this series is narrated by a girl in her early twenties. Her name is Hina Imtiaz and she narrates her friend's experience at Karsaz

'This happened with my best friend, he was coming back from a project with his assistant who was driving his own car behind him, when they turned for karsaz from sharah faisal, right there my friend saw a graceful woman in white clothes , she was dressed up as if she was coming back from a wedding, since there is a shadi (wedding) hall not so far away from that point, my friend thought she might have had her car broken or something, he said she did not seem to be the call girl kind that you usually find around the streets at these odd hours, so he slowed down a bit to see if her car was broken or she needed help.. what he saw next froze his blood, that woman turned and had the creepiest grin ear to ear on her face, and she had black holes for eyes, with a pale white face, she didn't exactly turn, it was just her neck moving slowly in synchronization with the turning of the car , my friend was on call with his assistant and he asked him if he saw that, the assistant said “ there is no one there” he could not see anything, my friend recited dua and told the assistant to speed up and not look back, they drove off, my friend said he was so psyched out that he felt in a blink of an eye that she will be sitting next to him or at the back seat, so he kept looking around, he could not see her in the back view mirror even'⁵⁹

Hina also mentions two other people (a friend and a friend's relative) encountering the same being at Karsaz and concludes that this is a regular occurrence there. At first he dismissed it due to lots of wedding halls being located in Karsaz, but soon he saw how big her grin was, a common feature in both his and Saba's encounter and started getting worried. I find it interesting how both him and Faris intuitively knew what to do; they

⁵⁹ Imtiaz, Hina, 2022

weren't paralyzed by fear unlike Saba, who was on the receiving end of the worst effects. While Karsaz is an area that's darker side is well known and documented it is interesting to note what aspect each interviewee wanted to focus on in their narration. Rabia wanted to highlight the harrowing experience Saba went through and the aftereffects it had on her daily life, Hina's focus seems to be corroborating the fact that Karsaz is indeed haunted. After narrating her friend's story she briefly mentions how another friend as well as a friend's relative encountered the same entity at Karsaz road. While Rabia is convinced that the previous experiences at Karsaz road speak for themselves, allowing her to focus more on her friend's mental state, Hina still feels that the account she is narrating must be supported with evidence.

The third story is Alia Chatta's, who is in her late teens. She reports that she already knew about the rumours regarding Karsaz but didn't let them bother her since she would commute through Karsaz every day. However, two nighttime incidents shocked her. She reports:

'The first time around I was coming home late from a friend's house. It must've been around ten or ten thirty when I got into the car, and we drove onto the main Karsaz road. I remember my father complaining that I had taken too long, meanwhile I argued that it wasn't. As we were driving, a corolla driving at full speed overtook us. Perhaps the driver was under influence because that car out of nowhere flipped upside down and crashed barely inches away from us. The front portion of it was entirely crushed, the last thing I saw was shattered glass littering on the road. We still don't know if the driver survived or not. Road raging is possible but could a car flip when there are not even any bumps.

Regardless I had the experience of passing by once again late. Many years later. The second time was even stranger since I experienced it first-hand. I had been hanging out with some friends and ended up leaving quite late. Around eleven. My driver arrived to pick me up

around eleven and seconds after I got into the car it began raining cats and dogs. Karachi just being Karachi. The storm was so rough the visibility faded, and the rain thundered against the roof so hard I genuinely thought it would collapse. People were desperately looking for a way to escape the rain. The moment we reached the road near the nursery the car stopped moving. The driver couldn't figure out what was wrong apparently and went outside in the thundering rain to check, leaving me alone in the car. I tried calling home but there was no service. All of a sudden, the car began to slide backwards slowly. At that moment I felt my life flash right before my eyes, it felt as if I was free falling despite there being no slope? Luckily or unluckily, it crashed into a car right behind us. Their headlights were damaged, but it stopped the car from a bigger crash. I was frozen still in my seat however until I heard the owner of the car and the driver arguing outside. In a cold sweat I realized this was the same spot I had seen the car crash years ago'⁶⁰

Alia was already familiar with the rumours surrounding Karsaz. She starts her interview the same way Kayhan starts his account; she directly says that it is up to the audience to decide what is going on based on the evidence she is about to present. Its posed as 'well what better explanation could there be for these events?'. Interestingly, Alia doesn't encounter the figure that the other two respondents did. While Alia seems to challenge the reader to reach their own conclusion and while she has a story to share, when I compare this event and the previous two to the accounts shared about haunted buildings, I felt that the burden to make a strong case lay on the former category. The accounts in the previous category were a lot more vivid; there were more examples, more argumentative tools employed and most importantly the interviews lasted longer. With the Karsaz churail I felt that knowledge of the rumors associated with the setting was taken for granted and that having a location with a known past is a huge advantage; people can relay more crucial

⁶⁰ Chatta, Alia, 2022

information rather than being taxed with the double responsibility of recounting an event and making sure this narration is being taken seriously.

This chapter sheds light upon insiders and outsiders within Pakistani society, shedding light upon the deep rural and urban divide that exists within the country. This is made evident through the utter disregard for the villagers advice in the accounts narrated by Hamza and the one that took place in Cholistan. Even when the group in question was very obviously the ‘outsider’ in this situation, it becomes clear that this divide is understood less in terms of geography and more in terms of education and upbringing, which makes it contingent on extremely social factors. In Hamza Arshad’s case, he is an insider despite living in a rural area because he clarifies that he is only there due to his grandfather’s stationing, and that his stay there was temporary. In M Khan’s case, it is interesting to see that the entity his mother-in-law describes is not given any name and is merely referred to as the ‘Hunzai Woman’. It is almost as though the supernatural entities (whom they are reporting on in these interviews) and as well as features of rural and distant settings fall within the broad category of ‘outsider’ for these people. Even Karsaz, which is located in the heart of the urban metropolis of Karachi, is not a place people want to be associated with; Faiza’s husband picks her up in a motorcycle when he knows he has to pass through Karsaz so that he does not attract the attention of thieves, Alia’s father is worried for her safety when he finds out she is in this area and Hina’s friend associates the place with ‘call girl types’. We see the transformation of Karsaz from a place of relevance to a liminal place that people just want to pass through and not stop by. The degree to which places are liminal varies within the country. There are places like the Cholistan desert, where people do not even stop driving to see what the surroundings are like, there are mountainous regions like Hunza that are only considered important for the tourism they generate and there are places like Karsaz, which was once an important road but is now becoming of little relevance outside of the myths surrounding it.

This section consists of the greatest amount of third person narratives, it seems as though people believe liminal spaces host supernatural beings with such conviction that they are not afraid to report someone else's account as they expect no follow up to be done on this front.

Religion and Rationality

In the final section of my analysis, I will discuss five interviews in which people experienced presences in either their homes or educational institutions. What differentiates these experiences from the previous two categories is that unlike the respondents who were suffering the effects of curses, these individuals were often encountered with agents that they did not deem human. While the interviewees in the previous section were also at the mercy of beings that did not classify as human's, their experience was a singular event and took place in a setting they were not familiar with. In contrast to this, the events that have been narrated in this portion are recurring events, and are situated in areas the respondents' dwell or spend substantial time in. The key question this section aims to explore is what repeated interactions with non-human beings can teach us about social processes within Pakistan. It is important to note that these interviews have been conducted within urban settings and that the respondents have been formally educated according to the western (mostly British and American) curriculum. While it is not overtly expressed by all respondents, there seems to be an awareness of the role religion plays within the modern world as well as knowing the perils of relying too heavily on religious knowledge. In the literature review, Marx's views on religion as nothing more than a soothing agent for the disenfranchised and Orsi's conclusion that belief in presence automatically sorts people into categories that are deemed inferior by modern standards are made clear. The respondents in this section attempt to avoid being placed into these categories by displaying their rational faculties, though each respondent does so to varying degrees. Yet, despite acknowledging the place of religious thought within modern society, these respondents cannot deny that the experiences they had endured are referenced within the Quran and there are attempts to make a connection between the two. There is an awareness about the presence of beings that inhabit this world that is akin to what Orsi studies. In the fifth chapter of his book, Robert Orsi talks about relationships between

the living and the dying, placing a family with a deceased son and the constantly transforming picture of Jesus in his room at the center stage. Recalling the experience of visiting this household with his friends, Orsi writes 'not once did we did think we were in a haunted house. With the exception of my friend's girlfriend, who was Jewish, all of us had grown up Catholic, in the culture of presence'⁶¹ Ultimately, this section studies these two strands of knowledge and attempts to see how people reconcile between the two, which has been done by analysing the narrative structure of the interviews and argumentative techniques (if any) employed. This section can be seen as an exercise in harmonizing two seemingly opposing perspectives to cultivate stability within each respondent's sense of social reality.

The first account is by a man named Adil Yosuf, who recounts how his childhood home, where his parents still reside, is haunted. He currently lives abroad and refuses to visit the house, situated in Karachi, Pakistan's port city. His was a two-storey building with an upper portion under construction. Construction was on hold for years due to personal reasons. The walls had been erected however they had not been plastered. There was timber on the floor and just doors and window openings without frames. Several things happened in that room and that house. He reports hearing the second-floor door bang at around three in the morning as well as any guest being terrified of spending the night (those who would stay the night would have a very disturbed sleep). He mentions waking up to his brother playing video games at 3 AM on the computer in his room but upon double checking he found his brother soundly asleep in another room. He would have family members complain about not being able to sleep while staying over. One prominent figure in his narrative was a cook who was blind and elderly. He was very religious and kind. He would refuse to sleep in the room dedicated to staff. He would sleep in the garden away from the main house. He and Adil used

⁶¹ Orsi, Robert, 198.

to get along well so Adil asked him why he wouldn't sleep in his room. He said it was loud, even though it was very secluded. Upon being asked what he meant, he said people talk to him at night and don't let him sleep. He said they fight all the time. Now his room was not quite on the second floor but there was another staircase leading towards staff rooms from that floor, so he used to be close to that floor. Adil told him about everything he had seen. The cook said there are others living upstairs, some good, some not so much but asked me not to go upstairs at night again. He said we were safe because the good ones were protecting the family. The cook used to wake up at 3am to pray and would be seen circling the house praying. The house was quiet when he was with Adil's family. He had heard the cook read ayahs from Quran loudly at night. Adil said he felt bad because he thought the cook was really scared, given that he couldn't see, spoke to his mother and asked for the cook to be moved into a room in the main house. But he even refused to sleep there and continued to sleep in the garden. He once told Adil that the 'others' don't like him much. Sadly, Adil was the one who eventually discovered the cook lying dead on the floor in the staff bedroom (which he never used). This event traumatized him so much he eventually moved from the house and refuses to move back.

When viewed as a whole, it seems as though the entire story is about Adil moving out of his home and eventually leaving the country because of the trauma his cook's death caused. Even though Adil responded to a call for an interview requesting supernatural encounters, he does not once mention that he believes in the supernatural or allude to his experience as a definitive supernatural one. Throughout this section, the narrative structure of the events is interesting to note as it sheds light on the respondent's awareness that they are grappling with two opposing strands of knowledge. Eventually it becomes apparent that similarly to the narrators in the section on curses, the ones in this portion simply want their reality and experiences to be acknowledged and validated. While Adil's case takes on a less

persuasive tone, it is interesting to note the structure of his interview and how this supports that he possesses sound rational faculties. While Adil does claim some 'pretty creepy' things happened to him while he lived here, the onus of claiming there were 'others living upstairs' falls on the cook who is unable to bear witness to or falsify Adil's account. What helped me categorize these others as djinns was the qualities, they bore that Adil chose to highlight. He mentions that the cook would recite Qur'anic verses to protect himself and keep the 'others' at bay, which situates them within a very specific religious setting. Furthermore, the traits of the others match what El Zein and other scholars have written about. The fact that they choose who they like and who they dislike displays the intelligence that El Zein identifies and, in their paper, 'Possession and the Djinn', Najat Khalifa and Tim Harde inform the reader that 'Djinn are said to inhabit caves, deserted places, graveyards and darkness', which aligns with Adil saying that the upper portion of his house was empty. While Adil does not use the word djinn, the evidence he provides suggests implicit belief that these were the 'others' that retaliated against his cook. The instances that Adil does personally encounter, such as his brother's doppelganger, are shared by the rest of the narrators in this section. While Adil is able to neatly conclude his story by tying the events at his former house to his departure from the country, the weight of religious belief is placed upon the cook which sheds light on the place of such beliefs and the appropriate way of expressing them. This is a common thread within these interviews; while some respondents can cite religious knowledge very comfortably, others feel the need to justify why they are following religious prescriptions. Such a situation begs the question; can these two views co-exist or are they meant to exist in opposition to one another? It leaves one wondering whether the contemporary world has truly become as 'disenchanted' as Max Weber feared.

The second account is by a girl who prefers to stay anonymous. She attended university at Kinnaird college for women which was established in Lahore in 1913. There

were already rumours that certain parts of the college were haunted, yet there was no backstory to this other than the fact that they were very old. She describes how she was in the science building, and she noticed a shadow form over her shadow while wind caressed her back, even though she was in an enclosed space and there should have been no wind. This presence wasn't restricted to the science building and seemed to follow her after their interaction. She reports.

"Nothing more happened when I was in the premises but as soon as I sat in the car outside the gate, I started smelling something really bad. I asked the driver if he could smell it, but he couldn't. I even opened the window, but I could still smell it. I recited 4 qul (quranic verses) till I got home, and it got stronger, I asked my mother if something was smelling but she said no, and I told her about my experience and the weird disgusting smell. I was the only one smelling it. No one else could. It stayed with me till my mother sprinkled some prhai ki hui (recited upon) rose water on me, and told me that while she was walking with an auntie who lives in the same street as us, she brought up the topic of the smell, and auntie told her that it's because a jinn is right with me, and that the same happened with her daughter (who also used to go to Kinnaird college) and a buzurg (elder) told her that and gave that prhai wala rose water to sprinkle on me" ⁶²

She also describes how a friend of hers was stuck in an elevator on campus. She heard a laugh and in the huge mirror behind her saw her doppelgänger standing next to her, but the eyes were blood red and that she was so scared and could only recite ayats (verses) in heart as her body and tongue was frozen. And she said that if we hadn't opened the lift at that time, the entity would have hurt her more, it had its arm over her shoulders and squeezing hard, she

⁶² Student, 2022

had marks on her left shoulder. The friend fell very ill the next day and refused to use the lift, even in the company of people.

Similarly, to Adil's experience, the narrator of this experience also crosses paths with supernatural beings in a setting that she is familiar with. However, unlike Adil's case, the university campus is a place that is already rumored to host other beings because it is very old. While this detracts from Adil's evidence (he had portions of his house he did not use), it is in line with the tendency of djinns to occupy similar places as people do, hence the older a place the greater likelihood there is for other beings to reside here. In this account, the student does not attempt to prove or disprove that the place she studied at was haunted using logic. After stating that the university was haunted and that this was generally agreed upon by most people who studied there, she is comfortable enough in her narrative. This is the power of social affirmation; since enough people are aware of the stories surrounding the university campus, the narrator does not find the need to situate herself within the category of 'sane' as it is taken for granted that she already occupies this space. Instead, she goes on to recount how she was met with an unusual presence within her university's science lab and how she was eventually told that this was a djinn and offered a solution by her mother's friend. The speed with which she is presented with a solution is astonishing compared to what the victims of curses endured; within the course of an evening the problem has been eradicated and seeking help has been as easy as asking for a common remedy. This sheds light on how it is easier to seek help regarding third beings as opposed to being cursed as a result showing how these encounters operate, amongst other things, on social logic. While belief in curses and djinns are endorsed by what the Quran says, curses require a human agent while djinns are independent agents. Therefore, as the religious scholar in Sahar's account confirmed, dealing with curses involves a higher degree of delicacy and covert action while dealing with a non-human agent such as a djinn assumes a more direct form.

Upon further comparison with Adil's experience, it is important to note exactly how much an experience that is shared can bolster one's sense of reality and validate their knowledge. While Adil's deceased cook bore the brunt of the djinn's activities, there are no other concrete participants within his narrative. He mentions cousins and distant relatives who would feel uncomfortable in the house but does not make them easy to identify. Since the events in this interview took place within a familiar setting and were backed by most of the student population, the girl does not hesitate to recount what her friend went through, going into vivid detail when she talks about the doppelganger and her friend resorting to reciting Quranic verses in order to relieve herself of the harrowing situation. Through this story, the subject seems to be saying 'not only did I experience something, but it could have been lethal'. My understanding is that this account was included to highlight her sense of relief at how she narrowly escaped a very dangerous scenario and ought to be recognized for this.

So far, the accounts I have examined have shed light on the need to have one's reality affirmed rather than disregarded. This theme shall prevail throughout the remaining accounts. What separates them from the narratives analyzed above is that the narrators are aware of the consequences of their beliefs. They display acute knowledge of the (often derogatory) categories their beliefs tend to place them under, and, as a result, they seem forced to tell two things at once; what they went through and provide proof that they are not crazy. These accounts also highlight how it is healthier to have shared experiences against different beings rather than solitary ones because it is easier to discuss these events and reconcile that knowledge can assume many forms, rather than be consumed with doubt and fear your experience will lead to social humiliation once it is shared with others.

Another person who experienced presence in his house was Kayhan Suleiman. Taken from a public twitter thread, Kayhan's story to me seemed like a more vivid version of what Adil narrated. If Adil had one instance of seeing his brother when he wasn't there, Kayhan was able to give three such instances. I found it interesting that Kayhan chose to share this story on a public platform and to put his experience under everyone's scrutiny because instead of claiming that he believes in supernatural entities Kayhan prefaces his story by clearly stating that he is not superstitious. He writes.

*'I am going to start this thread by prefacing it with I am not the sort of person who would typically believe in djinns, neither is my family. Sure, our religion insists on it so we are more welcoming of the idea but for us it was our experiences that gave us little choice. I still can't say If what we experienced was objectively real, or if there's a logical explanation for it so you don't have to believe what I say - we struggled a lot with it ourselves, still do. We've just filed it under the tab - knowledge is not absolute. We'll never know.'*⁶³

Throughout his tale, Kayhan will interject and write things such as 'I know it sounds unbelievable' or continue to prove that he does not believe in the occult. I sympathize with Kayhan because I see a narrative structure in which the subject must be cognizant of their audience and perception to their potential reactions to such a degree that the experience itself is rife with proof. Stories such as Adil's are rare- this was a story in which he was confidently able to provide reasons for his relocation. Kayhan's story, on the other hand, seems as concerned with appearing credible as he is with detailing what happened; he seems to be convincing the reader as well as himself that the following events are true. While Adil's story has a purpose, where he tells me his reasons for leaving, Kayhan's story is a collection of anecdotes. He walks the reader through multiple stories and can provide vivid descriptions

⁶³ Suleiman, Kayhan, 2021

such as the one of the figures on his bed. These characters are a recurring feature and to corroborate his story he describes how other people in his family had not only similar experiences but saw similar things. His cousin claimed to have seen the same creature he saw in his bed, his aunt and him both encountered and heard a wolf-like humanoid creature and another aunt and his mother claimed to have seen two bald children. The sites for such encounters would also be the same; a mango tree in the garden and the second floor of the house seemed to have been popular locations for these creatures. Like Adil and later Aman's experiences, there were also doppelgangers of family members at times when they weren't in the vicinity; his grandmother saw his father despite him being out of the city and his sisters would often hear each other even though the other would not be at home. Another similarity with Adil's story was the visitors to the house were afraid of it and unlike Adil, Kayhan can supply numerous instances of visitors, such as his cousin and his sister's friend having their own encounters. There seem to be too many people involved in the story to say that it is made up. He reveals their identities which seems to imply that if one wishes they can crosscheck this story which enhances its validity.

While Adil's cook recited Quranic verses to shield himself from the 'others', Kayhan further bolsters the validity of his story by mentioning that two religious scholars had commented on how there was a family of five living in the house with them. He adds that the scholars said 'they did not want to hurt us. They had grown used to us so we shouldn't worry and think of them as almost - but not necessarily offering protection'. Even though Kayhan writes that he is not a religious person at the beginning of his account, I find it interesting that he chose to share this information. Two interesting things happen once religious authority is introduced to the equation. Firstly, Kayhan can justify why he and his family spent such a

long time in this house as the scholar has said that the family of five did not mean any harm and experience had proven that no bodily harm came to any family members except the first cook the family hired, whose hands were often bruised. The observation that they didn't experience anything extremely negative is made clearer towards the end of the story when Kayhan and his family moved out the next tenants were not having a pleasant experience; 'after we moved our landlord lady's sons called my dad very seriously worried asking if we had had any strange experiences in the house because they weren't having a good time. My dad was like I told your mum numerous times but they're harmless. The son said, 'I think they don't like us'. Although it is not explicitly mentioned, it does seem as though religious authority was able to convince the family that these experiences weren't detrimental. Kayhan ends his account on a positive note writing:

'I talk about this house lovingly and calmly because well I grew up there but know that most people feared that house. Not in a visual sense of the way that oh this is an old house; it has some dark corners - it was an average looking house - but more like you genuinely felt like you were being watched or followed in it you felt like you were the one intruding on someone else's territory'⁶⁴.

The second interesting religious aspect of this story is how Kayhan started reciting verses 'like any good Muslim boy' when he heard murmurs outside his window at night. This shows that despite not being a practicing Muslim, the idea of presence and religion are so deeply intertwined that religion seems like a useful combatant in such a scenario.

The next account I collected was from a lady named Kausar from Lahore, the cultural capital of Pakistan and my hometown. Unlike the other two respondents who were in their

⁶⁴ ibid

late 20s/early 30s, this lady was in her late 60s and recalls incidents that took place around thirty years ago. She is the only one in these accounts to describe the presences in her house as djinns and details how they were co-existing in her house alongside its usual residents. She mainly alludes to them as being a nuisance and cites this as the reason for having them removed. She got in touch with an 'expert' in the field of djinns and sought his help in removing them from her place. She said that he taught at a university and was known to help people out with such predicaments. Even on the way to her house he was constantly receiving phone calls and was particularly worried while attending one. Upon asking what had happened, he replied that the djinn in a lady's house had thrown acid on her back. When they arrived at Ms Kausar's house, the Doctor, as she alluded to him, told her that he had received a lot of complaints from the area she lived in. He said that twenty years ago the entire area was a forest and the recent construction in the area was infringing on the djinns homeland. He went into her house and started murmuring in a low voice, warning them that he would hit them if they bothered Ms Kausar too much. He then proceeded to tell Ms Kausar that they only retaliate when they feel there is a threat to them, so if they ever annoyed her too much, she should inform him rather than acting on her own. To her astonishment, he also told her that her room was the djinns' favourite one in the house. She said that they remained in the house but did not pose a threat to her after the doctor's visit. She also details how a more lethal variety of djinns plagued her sister in law's house and how they tore apart her wardrobe and would leave minor burns on the bodies of residents.

The next story is Ms Kausar's. Her house was inhabited by djinns, and she sought professional help to get them removed. I can confidently say the presence she was experiencing was a group of djinns because this is the stance she maintains throughout her interview. She also ensures that this detail is not scrutinized too deeply; upon being told what the project was and that it would be submitted and defended within a university she remarks

that djinns do exist because the Quran mentions they do and that she is not sure whether a younger or Western audience will appreciate this fact. I found this remark, stressed upon at two other points during the interview, quite interesting because she was aware of the divide between presence and absence that not only exists within certain cultures but also within the very specific domain of Western academia. Furthermore, because she does not need convincing as to what is going on, she is willing to seek help to get these creatures removed from her house. She was recommended to a university teacher who had experience with such matters. In the interview, the fact that he was teaching at a university was stressed upon. This makes me think of the Azande and their witch doctors. Zande witch doctors make a living by performing seances and training apprentices. Ms Kausar's doctor (she called him the doctor because he was a professor NOT because he was a witch doctor) took no fee for his assistance and was helping several people in the same situation. In fact, as later stories further highlight, there is no official body one can consult when they are sure that they're in the presence of a supernatural creature. In most cases, someone is referred to and the solutions, at least in the cases I witnessed, are along religious lines. Another interesting aspect of this interview was how Ms Kausar kept stressing on the fact that this man taught at a university and at one point in the interview added that he was a very respectful and helpful person. It seemed as if his education bolstered the fact that what he was dealing with was a legitimate problem and not just consoling someone in discomfort. To me, this is like what Kayhan did when he mentioned what the religious scholar had told his family. None of the conclusions in this story are 'religion is correct'. Although Ms Kausar says she believes in djinns because the Quran says they exist, most of her story focuses on her own experience and, as we have seen with the insistence that the Doctor was an educated man, she reasons in a (for want of a better term) modern manner. Both she and Kayhan are aware of the reaction their experiences may be met with and both seem forced to tell two things at once; what happened and that they are

not crazy. In fact, after narrating her own account she recounted how a family member had experienced something similar, and in this experience a lot more extreme acts were committed by the djinn, who had. After conducting these interviews and then reading Pritchard's text, I couldn't help but wonder whether this story would have been narrated differently if it had been told a few decades ago; would the stories be as brazen as what the Azande disclosed to Pritchard? I recall chapter seven of the study being related to the place of witch doctors in society. I do think that interview subjects are becoming increasingly aware of such 'sociological' considerations and that this has serious ramifications for sharing and studying people's experiences. It is to conserve real conversations that scholars like Orsi and El Zein advocate for a different lens while researching. Interestingly, Ms Kausar is also the only respondent whose story is in line with the specifications made by El-Zein. When I conducted my literature review after collecting my data, I saw similarities between Ms Kausar's account and El-Zein's book when she writes 'In spite of all the correspondences mentioned above between jinn and humans, a foremost distinction between both remains. Although the subtle jinn can see humans and intervene in their lives, the latter cannot perceive them in the manifest realm, except in rare instances as mentioned in the Qur'an: "Surely, he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you see them not"⁶⁵. Kayhan saw figures which he was able to explicitly describe. Another point made by Ms Kausar that is supported by El-Zein is that only men who possess a certain level of intelligence can see the djinn, which is what she tries to do when she tells us about the Doctor's scholarly credentials. This is supported by El-Zein when she says that some holy and saintly spiritual humans have the ability not only to foresee things through their imagination but also to be in two places at the same time through their power of concentration⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ Qur'an 7:27

⁶⁶ El Zein, Amira, 74

The last account in this section pertains to Aman Ahmad who is also in his early twenties and lives in Lahore. In stark contrast to Kayhan, Aman prefaces his interview by saying that he believes in the supernatural; he is not exactly sure what he believes in, but he believes that there are forces beyond our comprehension. In Aman's case, the events he experienced were not restricted to a specific place but are linked to a period in his life. Referred to by its address, he maintains that his old house, 80H was haunted. He is the first one to use this specific word, I have accounted for the fact that Adil and Ms Kausar are older than him, but it is interesting how Kayhan doesn't use this word, which leads me to believe that he does take what the religious scholars said into consideration. Aman's story also includes a relative, his cousin Shahmir, who was afraid of the house. He says that his siblings were quite scared of going to the kitchen alone and that to this day they discuss how they always felt like they were being watched in that house and how they felt this was not the case in the house they currently live in, where they moved in 2014. A recurring feature of 80H Model Town was that Aman would hear his mother calling him but when he would go up to her room, she would either not be there or would be confused as to why he was there, claiming that she had not called him. I asked Aman how he had never talked to his parents about these events and would only discuss them with his siblings. He answered that while he was living in the house, he would constantly rationalize what was going on in order to not feel too scared but when his family had moved out, he would discuss the house with his siblings because there wasn't any specific event or sighting that they could talk about. It was just this general feeling of always being watched that they would reminisce about. They would not try to understand what happened, especially since they weren't directly being threatened; it was enough for them to just remember what the experience of living there was like and to know that they were not the only ones who felt wary while living there. Aman says that out of the three stories that he has, this is probably one he shares the least because

the other two startled him a lot more. Much like what Kayhan endured, it seems that these supernatural experiences don't just bring the people involved together but also differentiate the ones who do not experience them. The people who do go through these interactions are also somehow deemed worth the djinns trust; Adil's family was liked by the 'good ones', Kayhan's family was preferred over the next tenants and Ms Kausar's relative suffers a much harsher fate because she is not very likable. Even in Aman's case, it seems that these entities are benevolent, and do not irk his parents in the slightest. Through Aman and Kayhan's stories, it also becomes evident how encountering such entities may result in a strengthening of kinship ties, which is rather different from the result curses produce.

Aman also shares an account of his school and reinforces how people who go through supernatural experiences together can rely on each other to affirm their experience. He starts the story by mentioning that the school, Aitchison college, was a very old one thereby reaffirming the fact that old places were prone to being haunted. There was a rumour that the woods on his campus were haunted and that the ghost of an ex-security guard's daughter, Sheila, haunted them as she had died on the premises. This is the first, and perhaps only story where a ghost is mentioned. In fact, in the entire section, Aman's story was one I was easily able to link to Western horror movies I had seen in the past. Anyway, he and his friend's decided to test this theory and went to the woods in the evening after play rehearsals. He says that towards the end a lot of people had abandoned them, and it was just him and a few other boys. He says that they all saw the silhouette of a monster in the distance with big horns. They were frozen in their spot, and it did not move towards them. Soon they saw their security guard's flashlight in the distance and were prompted to flee because they would be in trouble if they were caught, as the woods were forbidden to students. As was the case with his siblings, Aman would recall this event with the boys who experienced it just to reaffirm that it had happened. When he says that he believes in the supernatural at the start of this

account he mentions that he doesn't exactly know what category he believes in, unlike Ms Kausar who believes in djinns because they are mentioned in the Quran. He just 'knows' that what he experienced was not fabricated and these discussions with other people involved in the events seem to reaffirm his belief.

Aman's experiences were not limited to one geographic space. While he was living in 80H Model Town, he went on summer vacation to Dallas, Texas where he spent a month with his family. He recounts seeing a doppelganger of his sister Ammal in a green dress when she was supposed to be out shopping at the start of their trip. Towards the end of the trip, he says Ammal came home with the exact same dress. If there's any moment in his narration when Aman sounded terrified it is probably this part. With the story of his house, he had his siblings to share the perplexing moments with and would constantly rationalize certain things to himself. In this instance, even his sister is perplexed by his reaction, and he has no one to validate what has just happened. This is a very good example of what the lack of eyewitnesses can result in. Aman has described this incident as the most 'freakish' one. He says that because the other experiences he had involved different people, he did not feel prompted to share them, whereas this incident has been shared with many people. This seems to connect with the section on curses and their need for a cathartic outlet rather than a solution to their woes. Since he experienced this episode on his own, there is a certain degree of isolation that Aman feels the need to rid himself of by communicating what he went through.

In this section, the reader gets the opportunity to interact with narrators who claim that they experienced 'presences' in either their homes or educational institutions. The common ground between these accounts was that the venues for these (often recurring) instances were places the interviewees were familiar with and often closely attached to. This

explains their need to embark on providing different theories as to what they experienced, and results in narrative structures that are rife with sociological significance. While the narrator's responded to an interview call for supernatural experiences, they did not arrive at the interview unaware of the implications of such beliefs. Since Pakistan is a Muslim majority and Quranic knowledge of non-human agents is common, the problem was not that they adhered to such beliefs in the first place but why they chose these over the mainstream rational school of thought. Throughout the interviews there is an attempt by the interviewee to convince the listener that they are sane, which reflects the importance of social affirmation; it is not enough to believe what one has endured, but equally as important for others to validate these beliefs. Through various means, such as Kayhan citing a religious scholar after he declared he did not believe in the supernatural and Ms. Kausar boasting the academic credentials of the man who was helping her rid her house of djinns, the participants reveal that they possess both strands of knowledge and that they both factor into their decision-making processes and perception of reality. Thus, it can be said that in Pakistan it is not enough to flock towards one camp, rather demonstration and harmonization of these perspectives play a larger role in the interpretation of one's reality. This section also reinforces the importance of shared experiences, in this case against non-human beings with whom an inevitable 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy emerges. It is interesting to witness the unity such beings inspire within the people who encounter them, a bond that can take on many different forms as this section has outlined. There is the apparent relief of having people by your side as you experience something unknown, the way Aman did when he and his school friends ventured into the woods and despite encountering something terrifying, they look back at the experience as a shared memory. We also learn that just acknowledging a place is haunted can make it a lot easier to share instances when something odd takes place, which is the case with the student from Kinnaird. The reverse of this is seen through Aman's

experience in Dallas, which reveals how confounding an isolated event can be, and through Adil's cook who is the only one being tormented by the others and is met with a bleak death. When the beings in question proved to be more benevolent, there were instances of kinship ties growing stronger, as was the case with Kayhan who only has 'fond memories' of his old house and Aman, who would discuss these occurrences with his siblings. In fact, when the beings did not prove to be a threat, there were even attempts at coexistence. This is seen throughout Kayhan's narrative and through Ms. Kauser's when she starts attributing human characteristics to the djinns in her house by describing her room as their favorite one and their emotional connection to the land her house was constructed on. This reveals the tendency to humanize third beings once a certain level of comfort has been established. However, these creatures are still outside of the domain of humanity enough for their social needs and positions to be disregarded. Unlike the section on curses, where it was often difficult to directly confront the agent of chaos and put an end to the victim's misery, the lack of djinns position within social hierarchies and kinship structure made it easier to confront them without the need for the various institutions housed by the Azande. Instead, people were willing to help others out without any fee, and mostly provided solutions in the form of religious verses, reinforcing the connection of these beings to existing religious forms of knowledge.

Conclusion

In her book 'All About Love; New Visions', Toni Morrison concludes with a chapter on spirituality and its healing qualities. In this chapter she writes

The presence of angels, of angelic spirits, reminds us that there is a realm of mystery that cannot be explained by human intellect or will. We all experience this mystery in our daily lives in some ways, however small, whether we see ourselves as "spiritual" or not. We find ourselves in the right place at the right time, ready and able to receive blessings without knowing just how we got there. Often we look at events retrospectively and can trace a pattern, one that allows us to intuitively recognize the presence of an unseen spirit guiding and directing our path.⁶⁷

We are able to see a variety of things when we employ such a consideration to our research and daily interactions. If we view our own encounters and ones we hear about through such a lens, we are able to engage in sociological research that can truly understand why people behave in certain ways and what implicit messages are conveyed through the way they talk about the world around them. The study of presence and non-human beings is not a new phenomenon; Robert Orsi's research and Sajjata Bhatt's poem are a testament to this. The main aim of the analysis I have conducted is to understand the unique sociological fabric of Pakistan while keeping these supernatural entities and their interactions with people at the center stage. Through analyzing these interviews, I have attempted to show that there is a lot more at play when one is going through a supernatural encounter, and the way they approach and discuss these experiences sheds light on their social reality at a micro level, and the social processes of the society they play a role in at a macro level. Through examining the motives behind sharing a certain episode and the important stakeholders within each account, one gets

⁶⁷ Hooks, bell, 236

a glimpse at the sociological implications these accounts hold and can understand the operationalization of Pakistani society.

Through my research I have attempted to answer two questions. The first concerns the narrator's motives; why are they sharing this information with me and what importance does it carry for them. The second question seeks to understand the sociological significance of these interviews and what lessons scholars of the social sciences can learn from these encounters, about human interaction in general, and the laws that dictate this interaction within Pakistan in particular. When it comes to the first question, we have seen that in cases where people are being cursed, their main intention behind sharing a story is for cathartic reasons, especially in Ayza's case where the curse had crept so far into her life she had no one to confide in and was financially and spiritually isolated. We also learn that curses have far reaching consequences and affect everyone within the victim's orbit. Ali, for instance, was not directly involved when his mother's aunt cursed his mother; he suffered the consequences of economic misery that this curse entailed as well as being subject to his parents failing marriage. In most of the narratives that involve curses there is not much focus on proof other than providing motives and receiving affirmation from religious scholars. As we have seen in the cases of Ayza and Ali, even this help is quite arbitrary; managing to contact a scholar is dependent on one's financial means or pure luck. In Ayza's case, her mother-in-law had isolated her to such a degree that she wasn't even able to seek spiritual refuge. This is in stark contrast with the Azande, who have made asking for help in such situations a much easier and straightforward task and do not bar access to assistance for most men in society.

In instances where supernatural encounters took place in a liminal setting it is important to remember that these confrontations take place in areas the subject is unfamiliar with, and that four out of the six collected accounts are third person narratives, in which the

interviewee did not directly go through what they are reporting. While they are respectful narrators and don't question the original source, objectively sharing the stories they have heard, it seems as though this is the case because they firmly believe the source material and expected me to do so as a narrator. There is no solid proof that these encounters took place, but this lack of proof is alluded to the fact that the places that these instances were situated in are very outlandish, as is the case with the Cholistan desert and Hunza, and this makes it very difficult to verify what took place. Lack of proof can also be attributed to the fact that the site in question was already the topic of many myths, such as Karsaz, and it had far too many accounts backing it up for the narrator to be labeled a fabricator. The narrators seem to assume that these places are so distant (geographically and socially) anyway that no one would spring to their defense or have a contradictory story, hence making such accounts much easier to share, and the purpose behind sharing them to take caution in these areas.

When supernatural occurrences within domestic settings are concerned, the narrative structure indicates that the respondents acknowledge the need to provide evidence for the sake of their sanity not being questioned. While there is no denial that djinns exist as they are mentioned in the Quran, as elaborated upon by Amira El Zein and while there there are similarities between Islamic relationship with presence and the relationship with presence Catholics have, as described by Robert Orsi, the narrators here understand that religious knowledge is not the only form of knowledge. The interviews or accounts are structured in a way that attempt to either create a debate between the two, such as Kayhan's account in which he demonstrated sound knowledge yet still accommodates religious explanations or they clarify that while they wholeheartedly agree with Quranic explanations, they are not ignorant of scientific knowledge, for instance Ms Kausar when she spoke of her helper's academic credentials and when she admits at the start of the interview that she knows her account might not be taken seriously because she is narrating it to a university student who

holds different forms of knowledge as superior to hers. The narrative structure also changes depending on whether the experience one endured was a shared experience or whether they went through it on their own, which is evident when Aman's accounts of what he confronted in his school with his classmates, as opposed to how scared he was when he saw his sister's doppelganger on vacation. These different narrative styles all point towards the social need for one's reality to be acknowledged and affirmed by the people in their orbit.

These encounters also succeed in shedding light upon the social fabric and dynamic within Pakistan. Through the victims of curses we learn that even though curses are a uniquely social phenomenon, as they are for the Azande who predict that there is a higher likelihood of a man being cursed by his neighbors or relatives, it is extremely difficult to ask for assistance when one has been cursed. This is because, unlike the Azande, who attributed curses to hereditary causes, the curses in these accounts are tinged with much more malice which makes confrontation lethal. We see the triumph of kinship structures and are made aware of the fact that they are so robust, there seems to be no room for change. The positions within these structures are quite fixed, as seen through the power possessed by the mother in law, and marriage is a decision that is of such vitality that it can provoke feelings of anger and jealousy if certain decisions are not followed there can be lethal consequences for certain parties. Sara Khan describes it best when she says that despite having confirmation as to who the culprit is, it is very difficult to have such a situation in the family. Even offering help in such cases is difficult, as the Imam in Sahar's story made clear by having to help the victim out covertly rather than confront the person at fault.

When encounters in a liminal space are examined in more depth, the stark rural urban divide in Pakistan is brought to light and it becomes apparent that people who live in villages are considered outsiders to such an extent that they are grouped together with supernatural entities and are both considered external to the insiders, who seem to be urban dwellers. It is

also interesting to note that these people don't ask for help or even plead for it, especially in the case of Karsaz, which is in the middle of the city and very prominent within it. Their solution seems to be avoiding the area completely in the future, as Faiza does, further contributing to making it an uninhabited, liminal space where people will mostly pass through but never consider their destination. I find rural areas very interesting with regards to future research; I acknowledge that in this paper the only perspective considered is that of the people from urban areas. Perhaps in the future I am able to collect perspectives of people from rural areas and conduct a comparative analysis on how they view the supernatural and what the key highlights of their encounters have been like. The only glimpse we get in this section is the warnings given to the boys who were touring Cholistan and the warnings given to Hamza's grandfather when he decided to build a house on the remains of a Hindu village.

When studying the sociological significance of households within which supernatural encounters have taken place, we see how in an attempt to affirm their social reality, most people end up creating a structure within which these two seemingly opposing strands of knowledge are harmonized to certain degrees and the interviewees seem to make space for both rather than being on one extreme. We see how certain relations are strengthened when they experience shared encounters, such as Kayhan's family and Aman and his siblings. In these two cases, we also see a degree of coexistence with these 'other' beings, and this coexistence seems to be guided by Quranic prescriptions. For instance, when Kayhan is frightened of them one night, he recites Quranic verses and the murmuring he hears fades away. It is also much easier to ask for help in such situations; since these beings are not human and social relations are not at stake, help countering such beings seems much more readily available. The Kinnaird student's issue was solved within one evening, and the consultant Ms Kausar asked for help visited her numerous times, helped her make sense of the situation, and did not charge a fee for his services.

This research project is very dear to me; through conducting this research I feel that I have not only improved my research and writing skills but found a way of being in this world in which I am better at identifying people's needs and empathize with the state of mind they are in. I learnt that if a person says they moved to a different country because of a djinn, that they avoid a certain area of the city or country because they saw a churail there or that their marriage was deteriorating because they are under a curse this is not an invitation to remind them that the world we live in is governed by scientific laws. This project has aimed to move away from the idea of development that scholars like August Comte have proposed and wishes to speak against the disenchantment of the world that Max Weber apprehends. If we let these people speak uninterrupted and provide them with a space free of judgment we are able to observe how they think, what they believe, how they relate to other people, what they fear and ultimately why they act in certain ways. The djinns and churails in the accounts I heard helped me understand people in a more intimate manner.

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Appendix

Aman Ahmad

I have multiple stories. I believe in the supernatural, always have. Always believed in- I don't even know exactly what I believe in I just believe that the encounters that I've had are not bull shit. So I'll start at the youngest- the first experience I had. So when we were in school, when we were in eighth grade right, that was when I made friends with my friend Raza so I made friends during the same class section. I narrated the English play of prep school that year- the middle school English play. They dressed me up like a lion because it was jungle book and this is where I met most of my good friends Ghani, Tabraiz, Raza, Tun we're all involved with this English play this is 2010, or 11- mostly closer to 11. At this time there was a famous song called Sheila ki Jawani which you may be aware of- famous Indian song. So we have this building in our school called the amphitheatre where we'd practice this play and where this play was going to be held. So behind the amphitheatre there were these woods where no one would go into- it was a big school and there were woods available. A lot of these play practices would happen at night, around 6- 7 o'clock when the sun would set. There were rumours floating around that there was a ghost in the woods. And there was a story passed down to generations that there was a janitor who lived in aitchsion (the school) who had a daughter called Sheila and she fell off the amphitheatre into the woods and died- and the legend goes that Sheila haunts those woods which is why no one can go there. So one night during maybe the last or second last practice we decided to test this theory. So we're all 12 years old at this point and the whole squad of the play lines up in front of the amphitheatre at the entrance of the woods. There's still light here but not in the woods. There's maybe 30 or 40 of us and we said 'let's do it'. So we were entering the woods and more than half of the people ran away from the entrance. It was me, Mustafa Yazdani, Faisal Yazdani, Raza and a few other guys who actually went in there and persevered into the woods. So we enter the woods and there's no light anywhere-there's a straight line and woods on the right and left. So I start going right, periodically people are running off (as kids do) it's a very scary mahol (environment) and at some point we got split up and I was alone. So while I was alone I see a light in the distance and I see this figure way off in the distance. It was a large, thick, well-built uhh monster. Yeah it was a thick monster that had two horns coming from its head and it was giant size, it wasn't the size of a regular human being and it was fixed in place and looking away from me. I'm looking at this thing and walking towards it. A couple of guys came behind me and they fucking screamed. They ran and I was the only one who was trying to approach the place so I walked towards the thing, the monster that was fixed in place and uh uhhhh the. From behind where the light was coming I see a guard was approaching and coming towards me because I wasn't allowed to be in the woods. So I ran in the opposite direction and most people were scattered around the woods and I remember having to run out of the woods and the image is still in my head. The woods were scary as hell. The only light in the woods was the searchlight in the distance that stationed guards would use. Later on when we recalled the story and the ones who didn't see it called bull shit but the ones who saw it believed it; we knew what we saw. There were a lot of contrary explanations such as light shining on a tree and so and so- but trees don't take such shapes and forms so I've always maintained that that was something (that was something). In retrospect the Sheila story is probably bull shit and carried over for the past 5-10 years with a different name it was a school legend. So that was my first experience with the supernatural. The funny thing is all my experiences happened roughly around the same time.

The next one is over a longer term. The house I grew up in, 80 H block Model Town, moved in 2004 and moved out 2013, so I had the bulk of my childhood years here. We lived upstairs, the girls room was there, the boys room and my parents room. Downstairs we had white stairs that would go downstairs, on the ground floor we had my dad's study on one side, a guest room on the opposite corner and in the middle we had a lounge called the black lounge because all the furniture was black. The kitchen was also downstairs. Growing up my younger siblings would be too scared to go downstairs to get water or a snack- so I had to guide them. My entire childhood, I could not help shake the feeling that someone was watching me. Especially in the black lounge I'd look through the

windows and I'd see shadows, which I rationalised to be my own as it would walk beside me. Anyway, I could never shake the feeling that I was being watched, I just figured it was a normal feeling and another thing that would happen was that oftentimes when I was playing video games I would hear my mom calling out to me. Most of the times it was here but occasionally I would hear her voice call out to me but when I'd go to her room she'd say 'No I didn't call you'. I used to think I'd misheard but this was very frequent. One day, I was probably 8, I hear her call out and I go over to her room and it was locked. I went back and resumed my video game. Half an hour later I heard somebody coming up the stairs and it was my mom and I asked her where she was and she said she had been out for the last two hours. Somebody was calling my name with my moms voice but it was not my mom! I freaked out a little but then I thought it must be something with the pipes and the walls and voices being carried over... I don't even know what I was thinking at the point. From then on this happened often, I'd hear them, my mom, call out my name but it wasn't her. I chalked it up to another normal thing. I never paid any attention to it. Sometimes when my cousin would come over we'd wrestle in my sister's room because she had a really thick mattress and Shahmir was always scared of the house, he said there's something wrong here. One time in my sisters room he swore he saw something pass through the window. I thought it was normal and that Shahmir was being a scaredy cat. So I lived in the house till I was 14 and I think a 14 year old has enough awareness. Till 14 I felt like I was being watched and there were shadows in the window. I'd started getting really into horror stuff such as the exorcism and I'd often had to comfort my sister Amal who would have episodes and say she'd seen something. Then we moved out and into my grandparents place where we had a little portion and all of it stopped. I thought it was because we had a smaller portion which is why this was the case. Then we moved into my new house and there was none of it! No shadows, no mom calling me and that is when I came to the conclusion that 80 H Model town was fucking haunted. I maintain it and will do so till I die- there was something going on there, something was watching me and it was spooky shit but only in retrospect because when I was there it was so normal to me

So my third big story is summer of 2011 when the whole family was in America where we spent three months. Two of those months we were in a house in Dallas and we chilled out there. It was build in the 60s so not ancient but old. It had a hallway; the first room was a washing room, second room was where me and my younger two siblings stayed, bathroom in front of that and my parents room at the end. One day I'm in my room and I wanted to watch wrestling on the big tv in the lounge. so the hallway I just described had a tv lounge if you turned right from the washing machine. So I get off the bed and open the door which leads to the hallway. Right next to the door was a walk in closet with a light on top. I'm exiting the room and from the corner of my eye I see that the closet light is on and my sister is there with short hair wearing a green dress. I don't pay any attention to it and walk to the lounge. I open the door and my sister is there watching TV. I RUUUUN back to the hall and the closet and the light is off and no ones there. I freak out and go to the lounge and my sisters there with her typically long hair (falls to her back) and ask her if she was in the closet and she said that she had just gotten back from shopping and was watching tv. I couldn't understand what was going on. This was early on in the trip. A month and a half later (trips about to end) same thing happens. I get up to watch wrestling and out of the corner of my eye I see the exact same scene. I turn around and look at her directly: it is Amal, in a green dress and short hair. I look at her freak out. She asked me what happened and told me that she's gotten the haircut and dress today and I could not believe it I'd seen this exact scene a month prior. I was in such disbelief I started surfing the Internet and searched 'how to contact spirits'. And then I got really scared when a couple of nights later when I went to the lounge and said if there's anyone here show yourselves. Nothing came of it but it was all very spooky. I remember when we moved into the house and the maintenance guy said it was from the 60s and I asked 'oh so is it haunted' and he said 'yeah it's definitely haunted'.

So yeah that is my recollection of the supernatural experiences I've had. I still maintain that 80H is haunted and someday I want to buy it. I definitely believe in something I don't know what but probably ghosts. I can't speculate on what it was but it definitely happened.

Threat?

Never threatened or even an inkling of being threatened- it just felt like they were there. It was very normal to me I never put my finger on a presence it was a feeling

Did you ever try to explain your way around it through other accounts or discuss it with people around you?

I was always into horror movies and books but I never shared most of the house experience. I shared the woods and Dallas incidents but not the houses because I fishy realise there was anything funky going on. Even later on I never searched up accounts, it was always just a me thing. There was a lot of bonding with my younger brother about it because we definitely saw eye to eye so it was definitely a shared experience

Conclusion or reminisce about it?

Earlier on it was us trying to reach a conclusion but now we mostly reminisce about feeling something there all. The. Time.

Did the elders know (parents)?

You know what, never. I feel like once (maybe) and they were just like 'what??'

I haven't had this convo with my parents I probably should, maybe they experienced something.

Anamta Choudry

I have never shared my observation with people outside my immediate family. The reason for sharing is to get any advice that may help us out if this situation. I am not giving out exact details of the person we doubt.

We used to live in a very old building, built somewhere around 1938 so maybe that's the reason, we have had a lot of young people pass away in that building but we never thought of paranormal things until we got affected. And we had an extremely jealous neighbour living two apartments away from us. As Ammi or abbu would get back from work or us sisters would achieve something academically she would always stare and say how come you guys manage. I can never really climb up so many stairs and this age. Even Such simplest of things. My parents used to be very active professionally and fitness wise. The lady had two sons and her husband was abroad. Her cousin stays right across the street and she admits that she does totkas (home remedies) in qabristan (graveyard) for the issues she faces.

When her husband came back after leaving his job in the other country he got diagnosed with kidney failure and later was on dialysis then passed away. Her one son passed away of cancer six months before her husband and the other son died a few years ago of the same kind of blood cancer. She was known for doing utaar when someone got sick in her house. She would ask other neighbours to keep some meat in their freezers for a few days and they would notice their fam members severely ill until she didn't take back whatever she had them keep.

My father helped her husband a lot in assisting with hospital visits and in emergencies, etc. Then after her husband's passing, my father was diagnosed with a failure in one of his kidneys while other worked partially. Alhamdulillah he is stable.

Then my mother in the same year that her second son died, got diagnosed with cancer. But here's a strange thing. She came to our in the same week as her son's passing and requested Ammi to make her ill son (let's call him Abdullah) this special dish Ammi used to make. She said he loved ammi's version of this dish and really wants to have it. Since we all grew up together almost, Ammi eagerly made him what he had requested and sent a plate over for him. In just some time she returned it saying he doesn't want it and he hasn't had it so you guys can have it. After just having received the plate, the entire wok full of the dish went bad. Ammi hadn't even put their returned food to the wok and still it tasted so bitter as if somebody had added a rat kill to it. Everyone at our place had it and felt something was off but didn't sense what it could be. Next day my youngest sister fell terribly ill. She almost died of a bad jaundice but Alhamdulillah she received after a long time.

Even though we lived there for over twenty years, the place suddenly started feeling very gloomy. Ammi didn't want to live there. A few weeks after her son's death, our family physician suspected Ammi had cancer which she couldn't get treated until it became stage 4.

But again before this a strange thing happened that scared Ammi for life and she no longer wanted to stay there. She was sleeping when she felt someone slap her hard on her shoulder and dug their nails scratching through her back. She thought maybe one of us sisters had accidentally hit her in our sleep but when she tried getting hold of the hand it felt like a skeletons. She was terrified and woke up abbu. And he said you might have had a bad dream. It's nothing, go back to sleep. And that's the same side of her neck she got cancer after a few days.

We didn't sell off the house but my aunt is a widow and has no other family members and my Ammi only has her after our nanis (grandmother) passing away so Ammi moved in with her. We all did. Ammi got treated and became stable.

Now after many years we returned, my sisters got covid and Ammi was already immunity compromised, so khala and abbu came back with her. We had been planning to have that place cleaned up for us as it had turned into a store. When ammi went there Ammi could eat and drink with no problem at all. They stayed for a week and ammis health declined. By the time they came back, ammis throat had choked. Her cancer had recurred and spread so much. We got the scan done and there was much spread. All doctors have now given up on her as cancer is spreading to distant sites and she tried different therapies, all have failed and her cancer is only increasing. She had turned into a skeleton.

We do pray ruqya though sometimes it's difficult to keep regular as she isn't well. We also visited deoband shersshah and they gave us amulet and lamp to light at specific times of the day and another things to amulet kind of thing to burn close to her everyday. But we don't believe in these techniques of spiritual healing.

Adil Yosaf

Our house was a 2 storey building with upper portion under construction. Construction was on hold for years due to personal reasons. The walls had been erected however they had not been plastered. There was timber on the floor and just doors and window openings without frames. Pretty creepy right off the bat. We had a staircase leading up to the 2nd floor and then a door which would take you to the rooftop.

My room was next to the staircase and the staircase used to creep me out because it disappeared into the darkness of top floor which had no lights.

A lot of things had happened in that room and that house.

I used to study till 3-4am. This one time I heard the second floor door banging at around 3. I thought maybe someone went up and forgot to lock the door during the day. Without giving it a second thought, I grabbed my phone turned on the flash and went upstairs to check. Mind you the door was on the opposite side of the floor so I had to cross the entire floor, empty rooms, timber on the floor to get there. I checked the door and it was locked. Thats when I heard a noise behind me, it clearly felt like someone was walking and coming out of one of the rooms, then I heard the same noise again but this time on the timber. I completely froze and realised what I had done, I never come upstairs at night and everyone was asleep, why did I do it? My legs were shaking because I knew I would have to go across the floor, cross that room and run down the stairs. I don't remember how I did it but I ran, I got to my room and my heart almost gave in.

I had my desktop computer in my room next to the bathroom. My little brother used to play games on my computer during the day but no one was allowed in my room at night.

I was asleep in my bedroom when a bright light woke me up. I opened my eyes and saw someone sitting on my computer chair, the screen was on but I couldn't see the face. Assuming it was my little brother, I scolded him and told him to turn off the computer. I didn't get a response so I asked him why he wasn't responding? This figure got up and that's when I realised it was much, much taller than anyone in my family. He got up, walked across the bed and left the room. The screen was still on so I went out to talk to my brother and kind of scold him for not listening.

I went out immediately and there was no one outside. Like I mentioned in the previous post, my room is next to the staircase to 2nd floor all other rooms on first floor are pretty far from my room. There is no way he could have disappeared right away.

I went to his room because I was in shock. He was fast asleep, in fact snoring.

I came back to my room and the screen was still on so I definitely wasn't dreaming plus the dark figure was very tall.

I checked the time and realised it was 3:30am. Things like this always happened around that time.

I could see the staircase from the window behind my bedhead. And while studying at night I had seen figures walking up the stairs to second floor. No one from my family ever dared to go upstairs at night. I used to smell food at night as well.

Another incident where we had hired a cook who was actually blind and elderly (quite impressive, he was a very good cook, he would only make breakfast but he was more part of the family). He was very religious and kind. He would refuse to sleep in the room dedicated to staff. He would sleep in the garden away from the main house. We used to get along really well so I asked him why he wouldn't sleep in his room? He said it was loud, even though it was very secluded.

I asked him what he meant, he said people talk to him at night and don't let him sleep. He said they fight all the time.

Now his room was not quite on the second floor but there was another staircase leading towards staff rooms from that floor so he used to be pretty close to that floor. I told him about everything I had seen, he said there are others living upstairs, some good, some not so much but asked me not to go upstairs at night again. He said we were safe because the good ones were protecting us.

We had a cousin's wedding and majority of the family members stayed with us so I had to share my room with my cousins. I thought they slept well at night because I didn't wake up at night from any noise but they told me in the morning that they didn't get any sleep and eventually left the room to sleep elsewhere. I asked them why? They said they after out chatter, they were ready to sleep but one by one they started waking up because it felt like someone was pulling their pillows. Initially they were blaming each other but then they heard loud cries of cats. They tried to wake me up but I was fast asleep and wouldn't wake up (I am a light sleeper). Terrified, they left the room. Similar incidents had happened to my friends who had come for sleepovers. We never shared these incidents with anyone so there was no way they knew about this or were making this up. People eventually stopped staying with us in our house, they would come during the day but refused to stay.

The cook I mentioned used to wake up at 3am to pray and I would see him circling the house praying. The house was quiet when he was with us. I had heard him read ayahs from Quran loudly at night. I felt really bad because I thought he was really scared as well given that he couldn't see so I spoke to my mum and asked for him to be moved into a room in the main house. But he even refused to sleep there and continued to sleep in the garden. He once told me that the 'others' don't like him much, i told him to leave and we will continue to support him as he was family, he said he didn't want to leave us alone here. Sadly, I was the one who eventually discovered him lying on the floor in the staff bedroom (which he never used). It was so traumatising, I left the house and country not long after that. I have not been back to that house in 15 years, my family still lives there but they come to visit me whenever I go to Pakistan.

Ayza Alam

I have been shrugging this thought for a while but I just came across a post about shaadi and magic and it started to hug me again. But I am scared to think on those lines so want a perspective. Kyunke kisi pe jadoo ki najaiz Tohmat lagana bhi Itna hi Haram hai jitna jadoo haraam hai.

So I and my husband were head over heels with each other and got married 10 years ago. My MIL who is a sweet-talker manipulative (I used to adore her and trust her more than my mom) didn't want her kids to get married and all my husbands other siblings are still single. Khair both of us got married after much trouble. Now some interesting facts.

- We had our first baby after 3 years. Before that I was working and continuing my studies and somehow got very little time to spend with my husband. My MIL used to encourage this routine (because it kept us away from each other).

- in the very first week of my shaadi I used to get very sharp pain in my stomach EVERY NIGHT. I would be fine all day long but as soon as it would be bed time I would get very intense excruciating pain so much so that I wouldn't be able to sleep but it would subside on its own by morning. My medical reports were normal. Then my MIL did my nazar with 7 mirchen (she claimed she recited Surah naas on them) and the pain went away.

- My husband was the first and only man I have ever slept with but since wedding night to this day he complains that he feels I am too loose and doesn't feel connected to me while having Sex. At the same time I would always feel disconnected too and as much as I love him, would always feel tired when we had to have sex and felt detached.

Likewise he complained he felt "bhaari" when I am around. He always gets backache when sleeping in our bedroom but sleeps very well in my MILs bedroom or elsewhere in the house. However he also sleeps well on our room when I am away at my moms.

- when I left work after my first born and started to spend more time at home that's when we began to fight very crazily. My mil made sure I don't do any of my husbands chores including cooking and he would eat with his parents only. We would often fight on petty things and began to grow apart. In this time I also stopped feeling like taking care of myself, I put on weight, stopped praying namaz and my skin and face became dull (I was better looking than my husband). For days I wouldn't even feel like taking a shower. My hair used to get such bad knots that it would be almost impossible to brush them out.

- I spent time at my moms last year when I was expecting my second born and that's when I decided to take charge of my life and I and my husband discussed over our issues. I make a lot of effort to keep myself calm and take care of myself consciously but I am still unable to pray regularly. I either forget or get lazy, and if somehow I reach the prayer mat, something or the other happens and my namaz or Wuzu breaks.

- I pray ruqyah on phone in my room and while my relationship with husband have hit slightly better due to a lot of hard work, our sexual life is still a mess, and at times he suddenly picks fight over his sexual deprivation.

- i often wake up with unknown Bruises and marks over my body.

I have had my blood work done multiple times and have no underlying conditions and so is the case with my husband. I do have reasons to believe that we might be under a spell but I am not sure. I once contacted a raaqi and he asked for 70k. I can't afford to spend money and I can't go anywhere physically.

- I would also like to add that initially a lot of my clothes went missing randomly and maid only cleans the room in my presence. My wedding ring also went missing from my closet while all other jewellery in the same pouch is there as it is

Sana Adnan

One of my cousins was diagnosed with colon cancer and he died within six months of his diagnosis. Just days before his death, his 5 year old son also died in an accident. A couple of years later, one of our close relative came to our house and while talking to my mother she confessed that the boy (my

cousin) misbehaved with her one day and she did black magic on him to eliminate him and his "nassal". My mother was shocked to hear this. This woman is very well known in our family by taweez (Tawiz worn by some Muslims contain verses from the Quran and/or other Islamic prayers for the protection from magic and diseases. The Tawiz is worn by some Muslims to protect them from evil also. It is intended to be an amulet. The word ta'wiz is used to refer to other types of amulets), dam darood (Anyone who believes that the mere recitation of Quranic verses and blowing it on water, or burning pieces of paper with some instructions has magical properties) etc but no one could believe that she would stoop this low. She then asked my mother to end my brother's engagement and get him married to her daughter. My brother is very handsome and successful. My mother refused her gently that she cannot do this. The woman left and the next day my brother got sick. He stopped eating and meeting with people. He locked himself in one room and he became extremely weak. My parents would switch doctors to get diagnosis but all in vain. All of his reports were normal but he look like he is about to die. Pale white complexion with bones visible confined in a dark isolated room. My mother then consult aalim who says that someone has done black magic on him. The rituals started for him and he starts getting better. Alhamdulillah he is better now but we are extremely worried. This is such an unfortunate thing to have someone like this woman in close relation. You can't confront such people because of the fear that they will do it again out of rage. You cannot stop them from visiting you because of the same fear. Our family had some very mysterious and accidental deaths over the past decade and it is reported by witnesses in the family that this woman directly threatened them of the worst before they died.

Sahar Binte Haider

Sharing a true story that actually happened in my mother's very close friend's family. It's 100% based on true events.

So my mom's friend lives in a joint family system with each floor designated for each bahu. Her jeth/jethanis had a separate floor in the same house. So she fixed her son's engagement with her sister's daughter (niece) after which her jethanni got furious and cut ties with her. It's because her jethanni wanted aunty (my mom's friend) to choose one of her 2 daughters for her son. Aunty's son wasn't interested in their daughter and was in love with khala ki beti. Some time passed by and they started preparing for the wedding. That's when one day her bahu to be (niece) started getting sick very often. She would call my mom and share every detail in fear and confusion. Please note that my mom's friend is a gem of a person, a very God fearing person who wouldn't hurt anyone. She said her niece's body freezes and her voice starts changing. They took her to imam of masjid in our area several times after which he confirmed that her neice has been possessed and someone was doing black magic. After a few days he found out that it was her jethanni who had hired someone to do black magic on her niece. Idk how but these imams get visuals of people doing the deed and he said following were the words of her jethanni "In ko basnay nahi dongi ink betay ka ghar tbah krdongi". The imam Sahab told them not to confront the jethani at all as it could worsen the situation. He asked to continue treatment silently. Just get her roohani ilaaj which they did for 2-3 years.

They got married (I attended their wedding also) and the bride moved to KSA with her husband. All went fine but as soon as she visited Pakistan, she started experiencing the same things as soon as she landed on airport. They continued her treatment once again, and in the meanwhile she got pregnant. I remember I was also pregnant back then and our due dates were same so we were in touch with them and she was doing completely fine.

One morning when it was her 7th month my mom got call from her friend that her bahu is not feeling well and they're rushing to the hospital. On the way, she delivered her baby and it was a still birth

It was definitely a tough time for them but they stood strong and strengthened their ties with Allah. Soon everything was fine and her bahu was blessed with a healthy child afterwards

Kinnaird Student

I've been in kinnaird for four year's now. Never encountered any kind of supernatural problem, but I have heard many horror tales, and in my quest for adventure visited every nook and cranny, all the empty and lonely corners and places(I love to spend time at places like this all alone). Namely speaking of the one's I have heard and some of my friends experienced the first floor of science block, The huge creepy tree at the back of Art block, The lift in Amaltas (a sort of tree).

For the lift and the tree I never experienced anything there. I always get to college really early in the morning, tend to use the lift all alone , go sit at the most empty place till class, nothing every happened!

But I guess something got offended?

It was end of March (last year), mids were ongoing I forgot my notebook in physics lab on the first floor of science block. A senior found it and put it in the small room attached to it where the equipment was kept(don't why she didn't bring it and just give it to me since we had the last lecture together as well). Next day I was panicking, the exam of the subject was on the next day (and also the college was empty as well) Khair (anyway) She told me that she found it kept it in the room, So I told my friends to wait for me in the cafe while I quickly grab it from the lab.

One step in, and I started getting the chills, all the way to the lab I felt like someone was tailing me. I quickly got into the room, saw the notebook grabbed it and I kid you not in front of me there was a huge shadow growing in my shadow.

My soul left my body for a sec, and just as my mind started to work and I was about to recite Ayat ul Kursi, the door shut close. And it was so loud I felt the room shake. Having dealt with black magic for so long it did not phase me as much as it would back when I was in school so I quickly in a loud voice started to recite Ayat ul Kursi, and while doing that I simultaneously played surah baqarah at full volume on my phone. While reciting I felt someone caress my back and a huge bang from outside like the chairs were being thrown. The door opened on its own, 6-7 mins in of the recitation, I took a quick glance while hightailing out of the room, everything was in place!!

I didn't mention it, and kept assuring myself it might have happened because of the wind, and science block classes (MashaAllah) also don't have a handle to open the door from inside. So if it's windy and door shuts close you have to wait for someone to save you or pray the door magically opens!

But as I calmed down all thorough out the study session I could only think if it was the wind then the lab doors would have closed not the small rooms, and the wind won't open them back while caressing my back and presenting a creepy shadow in my own.

Nothing more happened when I was in the premises but as soon as I sat in the car outside the gate I started smelling something really bad. I asked the driver if he could smell it, but he couldn't. I even opened the window, but I could still smell it. I recited 4 qul till I got home, and it got stronger, I asked my mother if something was smelling but she no and I told her about my experience and the weird disgusting smell. I was the only one smelling it. No one else could.

It stayed with me till my mother sprinkled some prhai ki hui (recited upon) rose water on me, and told me that while she was walking with an auntie who lives in the same street as us, she brought up the topic of the smell, and auntie told her that it's because a jinn is right with me, and that the same happened with her daughter(who also used to go to kc) and a buzurg (elder) told her that and gave that prhai wala rose water to sprinkle on her (she also gave some for me).

But that was it, nothing ever happened since then. Shukr Allhamdulliah.

Another incident, my friend reckons she saw a doppelgänger of herself and got really creepy vibes in the lift when she got stuck in there. I believed that because I just got out of my Islamiyat class and was heading towards the lift with a classmate(who was a Christian), I don't remember exactly what led to conversation but I was telling her the meaning of Ayat ul kursi and its benefits as she was in the isl class due the economics ma'am being absent and got curious about it.

Long story short, she presses the button, the lift opens, my friend stumbles out panicking. I'm like yr kya hua, tum yahan kya kr rhi ho? (Hey What Happened what are you doing here?). I sat her down with me on the bench in front of the lift and then she told me everything!

She said that she got into the lift, and all of a sudden the lights started flickering and it got stuck, then she tried calling for me and another friend(it was our first year, second week in, and only us three friends knew each other at that time) (pitiful I know) , but the call wouldn't go through, she was stuck for 15 mins, even showed me the record of her trying to call us and the help no in the lift. She said she heard a laugh and in the huge mirror behind her saw her doppelgänger standing next to her but the eyes were blood red and that she was so scared and could only recite ayats (verses) in heart as her body and tongue was frozen. And she said that if we hadn't opened the lift at that time, the entity would have hurt her more, it had its arm over her shoulders and squeezing hard, she had marks on her left shoulder!!

I helped her to her class which was right next to the lift ,and on instance of my Christian class fellow who thought she was just exaggerating took the lift, nothing happened with us (Allhamdulliah) But I definitely believed her, as I have heard some things about it and I also have known her since 5 grade. She wasn't one to scare or make things up. And she also fell ill with a high fever next day, and never used the lift again even when in a group.

Alia Chatta

If you live in Karachi you must've come across the strange incidents surrounding Karsaz road. Many people have reported being haunted while passing by late. Do they hold any truth? That is for you to decide on your own. I commute through Karsaz every day but nothing seems odd during daylight hours. At night however the vibes are very eerie. I say because I have seen it with my own eyes not once but twice.

The first time around I was coming home late from a friend's house. It must've been around ten or ten thirty when I got into the car and we drove onto main Karsaz road. I remember my father complaining that I had taken too long meanwhile I argued that it wasn't. As we were driving a corolla driving at full speed overtook us. Perhaps the driver was under influence because that car out of nowhere flipped upside down and crashed barely inches away from us. The front portion of it was entirely crushed, the last thing I saw was shattered glass littering on the road. We still don't know if the driver survived or not. Road raging is possible but a could a car flip when there are not even any bumps?

Regardless I had the experience of passing by once again late. Many years later. The second time was even stranger since I experienced it first hand. I had been hanging out with some friends and ended up leaving quite late. Around eleven. My driver arrived to pick me up around eleven and seconds after I got into the car it begun raining cats and dogs. Karachi just being Karachi. The storm was so rough the visibility faded and the rain thundered against the roof so hard I genuinely thought it would collapse. People were desperately looking for a way to escape the rain. The moment we reached the road near nursery the car stopped moving. The driver couldn't figure out what was wrong apparently and went outside in the thundering rain to check leaving me alone in the car. I tried calling home but there was no service. All of a sudden the car begun to slide backwards slowly. At that moment I felt my life flash right before my eyes, it felt as if I was free falling despite there being no slope? Luckily or unluckily it crashed into a car right behind us. Their headlights were damaged but it stopped the car

from a bigger crash. I was frozen still in my seat however until I heard the owner of the car and the driver arguing outside. In a cold sweat I realized this was the same spot I had seen the car crash years ago.

Rabia Gohar

OK so my sisters wanted to know about the karsaz incident that happened to my friend and her husband in 2019 when I visited khi and both husband and wife came along to meet me(my friend 'saba ' along with her husband 'faris ') so they live in North nazimabad and I was in DHA , its atleast 40mins drive without traffic from my place to theirs . Acha tu saba came to see me and waapsi mai her husband came to pick her up , baato baato mai we couldn't realise it was 1:30 am and raasta kaafi lamba tha, since khi k halaat are a bit uncertain once its late tu he had come to pick his wife on a motorcycle (motorbike doesn't attract muggers thus lesser risk of street crimes) acha ji, I offered them to stay since I didn't like them leaving this late but they refused and said its fine for them and it won't be such an issue ofcourse they'll recite ayat ul kursi and they left.

So, there came the KARSAAZ ROAD, they were talking to each other about something (personal) which kept them busy until this horrendous creature caught their attention and left them traumatised for life.

I'll narrate " mai bike per bethi hui thi and

bike chal rahi hai with achi khaasi speed, aik dum mere bilkul sath mai bulkul meri hi jaisi larki hai jo ussi speed k sath hawa mai hai , aik second ko mujhe samajh nahi aaya k sheesha kahan se itnay barray Road per aagya mainey zara si neck turn ki towards her direction tu faris ne bola 'saba nahi' , khauf k maaray meri body bejaan si honay lagi lekin woh cheez mere sath jaisey mere bilkul godh mai ho, move karrahi mujhe woh qpni ankh k paas mehsoos horahi thi and jaisey mujhe hi dekh rahi ho, mujhe khauf se vomit and behoshi wali feeling aanay lagi,

"faris" mai ne bht mushkil se bulaya , awaaz jaisey nikal hi nahi rahi thi, kahuf itna k mere and faris k moo se kuch nikal hi nahi sak raha tha, Road jaisey khatam honay ka naam hi nahi le rahi thi, bike ki speed faris ne bht zyaada increase kardi, lekin woh cheez ub bhi ussi speed se hawa mai mere saath chal rahi thi, meri tbyat itni kharaab horahi thi k neck mai meri jaisey jaan khatam horahi ho, mujhse jo hoska mainey parhna start kardiya , lekin woh cheez tub bhi wahin ki wahin,

"so jaao" faris samajh gya tha k mai behsoh horahi hu kahin bike rokni na paray, mainey eyes close ki husband k shoulder per

sir rakh diyya "ya Allah mai behosh hogyi tu yahan is mohtarma meri hamshakal k sath rukna na parja ye, bus aisa laga kitne ghanay guzar gaye hain is Road per. Aakhir ko mujhe faris ki awaaz aayi saba, sub theek hai hum nikal aaye hain aagay.

Gher kareeb hai. Aankhein kholne ki himmat mere ander tub bhi nahi thi, jub tak k gher k samny nahi aayi. Aankhein kholi and ander bhaagi.

Gher aaker faris aur mai itney khauf zada thy k kuch discuss nahi kiya.

Subha uth k faris ne mujhe bataaya,

k woh jo bhi cheez thi bilkul tumhari shakal ki thi bus uski smile bht barri thi jo k lagaatar wide smile hi kaarahi thi, faris ne bola k bus Allah

ne bachaaya maine aik nazar us cheez ko dekh k dobara nahi dekha , k

accident hojaya , mai lagaatar ayatul kursi parhta raha and tumhe mana kiya k uski taraf mat dekhna, shayad tum bardaasht nahi karpaati,

To this day , saba is still terrified to look in the mirror, she doesn't travel on bike anymore, she has the fear of travelling after 9 pm, she can't sleep or stay alone even if its broad day light. Her fear of being so close to that entity has a deep impact on her mental health.

Hina Imtiaz

This happened with my best friend, he was coming back from a project with his assistant who was driving his own car behind him, when they turned for karsaz from sharah faisal, right there my friend saw a graceful woman in white clothes , she was dressed up as if she was coming back from a wedding, since there is a shadi hall not so far away from that point, my friend thought she might have had her car broken or something, he said she did not seem to be the call girl kind that you usually find around the streets at these odd hours, so he slowed down a bit to see if her car was broken or she needed help.. what he saw next froze his blood, that woman turned and had the creepiest grin ear to ear on her face, and she had black holes for eyes, with a pale white face, she didn't exactly turn, it was just her neck moving slowly in synchronization with the turning of the car , my friend was on call with his assistant and he asked him if he saw that, the assistant said *there is no one there* he could not see anything, my friend recited dua and told the assistant to speed up and not look back, they drove off, my friend said he was so psyched out that he felt in a blink of an eye that she will be sitting next to him or at the back seat, so he kept looking around, he could not see her in the back view mirror even.

When he was telling us this story , he reenacted the whole thing in a slow motion pace the way it happened with proper facial expression of that smile, and it gave us such bad goosebumps.. every time i tell someone this story i think of my friend's face..and even his face was so scary tou i imagine k asli wali ka kaisa hoga...

Another friend had encountered the same being at karsaz too, he was on his bike and he drove right through her.

Someone else narrated their relative's encounter at karsaz and the description of the being matched to that my friend had seen, so this is an occasional happening over there.

Anonymous

Today's story belongs to my cousin. He was very fond of hunting and adventures so one day he made a plan with his friends to visit Cholistan dessert. They knew it was going to be a long journey and due to shortage of resources they might even face problems there but despite all odds they collected gallons of petrol, water and food to spend the next days of their journey and left on their jeep. He said on the way while crossing local villages people told them not to travel in that area at night and they even warned us that others have sighted ' chalawa' (a cultural term to describe a type of jinnat who are swift footed and can jump and travel long distances in a flash and can even show up in a human form and then disappear in a glimpse but its advised not to follow them, look back at them or go to them in any case as it might cause harm—don't know the reality behind this personally).

Anyhow none of the guys believed these stories. So my cousin narrates:

'It was a deserted silent path with acres of barren land on either side and not even a single bush or a plant could be seen. The only thing lighting our path was the headlight of our jeep and we were enjoying the serenity and calmness of nature when we suddenly realized there is a women dressed in red bridal dress standing at a distance. We immediately knew it couldn't be any human as there wasn't any civilization around from where she could have come. She was dressed in local bridal dress and was standing alone at that time staring intently at our jeep. Her calmness gave us further chills and we

totally ignored her and moved past her and no one looked back to see whether she had disappeared or was still standing there. Everyone thanked God they had safely crossed whatever it was... But we hadn't travelled a few more Kilometres till we saw an old man standing on the side of our path now. He had a white cloth wrapped around his body and held a stick in his hand. He too stood alone in the wilderness just staring at them pass. We ignored him too and drove on reciting Quranic verses. We sped up the jeep and hadn't crossed a few more kilometres till we saw the same women again standing in our path. There was no way she could have travelled so far and so fast so we really freaked out.. we came on the verge of crying.. as she kept on appearing after every few minutes and so would the old man. Sometimes alone and sometimes together. But always standing by our path and staring at us with a deep look and a cunning smile. It continued until sunrise and those 'chilawa' as the locals said kept scaring us. Thankfully they didn't harm us and we finished their journey safely only with a story to freak out over for the rest of our lives'

Hamza Arshad

I belong to a small village in the north-eastern area of Pakistan, adjacent to Indian border. Before Partition of Subcontinent, many Hindus used to live in our area. They continued to live side by side with Muslims for centuries without any strife. But after Partition, Hindu families opted to migrate to India. My grandfather was in the British Army during British Raj and he was quartered in Hyderabad State that is now in India (that is one reason why all us brothers and sisters know English though our native language is Punjabi). He migrated to Pakistan in 1950, three years after the freedom. He built a house at the very place where, before migration, Hindus used to do cremation. People of the village forbade him to build house there, but he, being an ex-soldier, knew no fear.

Most of our life remained peaceful and tranquil. But when I was in my teens, I began to see weird things. I often saw a crawling skull in our garden and backyard. We had planted so many trees and flowery bushes there, and the place had become a tiny grove. Often in the small hours, when thick darkness prevailed on the atmosphere (as there was no electricity in our village then), midst dead silence, I felt myself awake... Awake and fully conscious. I felt the presence of something crawling on the floor in my room. In spite of darkness, I could see, or I was made to see, a skull moving. I could hear scraping sound that chilled the marrow of my bones. Its upper teeth were visible but lower jaw was deformed and its hollow eyes seemed to look at me. I couldn't shriek. My whole body became numb. I felt chill, very chill. The skull moved towards a Vachellia Nilotic tree which we locally call 'keekar'. It disappeared beside it somewhere, as I couldn't chase it due to fear and darkness. I witnessed this ghastly sight randomly, but mostly on moonless nights.

After a while my condition used to become normal. I was terribly afraid, but I couldn't recount these events to anyone. But I couldn't go near that keekar tree even during the day. I can't call these events hallucinations because I felt I was awake and undergoing that terrible experience. I remained afraid during my high school time. Later, my father cut down some trees, including that keekar tree to build new rooms. When the earth was dug for foundations, some bones and a skull were discovered. I was stunned to see that it was the same skull that I used to see at night. We buried them at some other place. Now I am fifty years old. But still I can't explain these events. This memory terrifies me still

M Khan

I don't have any paranormal experiences of my own. The incident I'm about to narrate was told to me by my wife and happened to my mother-in-law.

A bit of a background about our family. I and my wife are both medical doctors doing our post-graduation and born and bred in Karachi with Urdu as our first language.

This happened when my wife was about 6-7 years old and her family decided to take a trip to the Northern areas of Pakistan. Gilgit & Baltistan along with Kashmir are some of the most beautiful places in the world with tall ice capped mountains and captivating valleys and above all with the solitude and calmness in contrast to the busy and polluted air of the cities is a welcome escape from the daily routine.

So coming back to the story, they packed and left in early morning for a week's trip which included the parents and my wife with her 3 elder siblings (2 sisters and brother). They enjoyed a lot on their trip especially at the famous Hunza and Kaghan valleys.

At one point, with a day remaining of their trip they couldn't find a suitable hotel and after much hassle got one at a very distant place with very little population and residences around. There was hardly anyone residing in the hotel at that moment and they got a room on the 2nd floor. Now this room had 2 windows, one larger facing one of the beds at some distance from the foot end and both of these were locked. As there was a day remaining they decided to do some shopping and left in the afternoon and returned around 10pm. They immediately took to packing their stuff.

My mother-in-law couldn't find a beautiful ladies handbag she bought on one of her earlier shopping trips. They looked everywhere in the room and in their travel bags which sounded very strange as they took much care locking all their stuff when they left and she distinctly remembered putting it in one of the travel bags and locking it up, then where did it go? It was already late night so they decided to sleep with hopes of giving it one more try in the morning before leaving.

That night my mother-in-law woke around 2am at night and felt the room's temperature to be unusually cold when something caught her eye which gave her chills. She saw that the large window near the bed was open and there was a woman sitting on the window sill facing her. She was attired in traditional northern clothing even wearing a traditional Hunzai womam cap and had a blank expression on her face. The eerie part was that she had my mother-in-law's handbag in one hand and with her other hand was slowly gesturing calling her near as if to come and take her bag. My mother-in-law started reciting Duas and drew the blanket over her face and kept it as such. After sometime she felt that the heaviness and cold in the room had gone but she couldn't sleep for the night.

When everybody woke up in the morning, she was shocked to see the window locked and her handbag lying on the side table near the bed. She told everyone after which they started packing and left. The thing which concerned her was that how the lady got there when everything was locked, how she got the bag in the first place and above all who was she and whether she was evil. They tried asking the receptionist about it and he had no clue either as he started working there recently.

Ali Memon

My mom was supposed to marry her cousin and she refused to marry later after graduation so her tai did black magic on her and my dad

Initially everything was good and my parents visited 4-5 countries after marriage, my brother was born after a year

Life was smooth and perfect until a few years later my dad begin to insult my mom for minor faults and he started making fuss over everything and blaming mom and this was time when my parents came to Pakistan and we settled in Islamabad. Long story short

My parents who were totally in love with each other went nuts,

Once my mom saw in her dream a messy old woman with long dirty hair telling her your husband will lose his job and never get it again so after few days my dad resigned and it has been 13 years he never got a job since then, Now due to financial crisis we moved to Lahore and things started to get worse than ever my parents started fighting on daily basis and sometimes it was intense

and before every fight she would see her tai in her dreams. At this point my mom contacted few alam and all of them told abt black magic on my mom and dad both and it was done on purpose to get them divorced. Since many years has passed it was getting stronger

My mother got bruises on her whole body for no reason, almost our whole family get sleep paralyzed(till now) and we were sinking in every aspect we shifted from 1kanal to 4 marla house in just 1 year after we came to lahore

We contacted so many molvis and most of them said it was too severe to tackle, every time my dad was near mom she would say he smells so bad and we all were like no she doesn't and same goes for dad

He stated hating mom till a point came he gave her one divorce and then after some time ruju kar leya, My mom stared sleep walking she would sit at some unusual places like kitchen floor, in store room and talk to a wall.

Now my sister is epileptic, my brother has sever anger issues.he wont even get a proper job, my mom is broken due to my dad behavior and my dad he is just cold and mean and totally isolated from society no friends no family nothing

He like to stay in his room alone isolated

My mom again contacted some alam in Madina. He assured her everything will take a u turn after he come and remove that entity from our family

But he never came. My mom recites kul shareef and few duas on daily basis

If she skips a day we face immediate bad effects