

# Evaluating Excellence: A Guide to Pigeon Judging and Breed Characteristics

Ashraful Kabir\*

*Department of Biology, Cantonment Public College, Saidpur Cantonment—5311, Nilphamari, Bangladesh*

## ABSTRACT

Before judging a pigeon, it is important to understand its original characteristics. In this sense, this paper could help to do this part successfully. There are no sufficient alternative books to judge of pigeons. National Pigeon Association of the USA is the leading to judge pigeons worldwide, they have published a book for doing this job perfectly, but its base has come from the book of Wendell Mitchell Levi. Correlation among eight pigeons of Bangladesh found significant difference at the 0.05 level ( $p$ -value 0.744) special emphasis on the beak and tarsus length. Other characteristics such as weight, ornamentation, colour, and behaviour were prominent phenotypically.

**Keywords:** Fancy Pigeons, Characteristics, Grading, Judgement, Show Pigeon.

## INTRODUCTION

Fancy pigeons are divided into three—Asian, European, and American. Some European people lived in India and when they returned to the Europe they took some pigeons for selective breeding. Finally, people of the USA imported pigeons from India and Europe to produce their own breeds. Asian breed of pigeons has great impact in the pigeon kingdom. Mughal emperor Akbar had fascinations to collect pigeons. His poet Abul Fazl wrote a poem on his pigeons. The renowned book 'Akbarnama' described the status of Akbar court of Delhi with such pigeons. Abul Fazl mentioned nine pigeons in his 'Kobutarnama' [1]. Wendell Mitchell Levi [2], an American pigeon fancier first wrote a scientific book on the breeds and varieties of pigeons. At the same time, his other book 'Encyclopedia of Pigeon Breeds' [3] published with much information with colourful plates as well. Kabir [4] mentioned some grading point of ten common pigeons of Bangladesh. Additionally, Kabir and Hawkeswood [5] published an article on the judging of Indian fantail pigeon after the international exhibition in Bangladesh. NPA Book of Standards [6] is a unique book to judge most of the pigeons. Fancy pigeons are pretty based on their head

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## \*Corresponding Author

**Ashraful Kabir**

Department of Biology, Cantonment Public College, Saidpur Cantonment—5311, Nilphamari, Bangladesh, Phone: +88-01712563750; E-mail: ashraful.mission@gmail.com

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and leg feathers [7]. All pigeons are unique with their colours, and most of the fancy pigeons are showed their ancestral colours especially blue and barred. The plumage colour inheritance of pigeons is very interesting and important to geneticists. After the letter sending of pigeons, researchers have identified other significant qualities of pigeons through the selective breeding [8]. Most importantly, some table breeds especially king pigeon is fulfilling the protein demand of human being [9]. Many show or exhibition breeds in the world are available which enhance the economic sector of a country. From the very beginning, pigeon flying was the common hobby [10]. The objective of this study is to mention characteristics of some common pigeons in order to make them standard bird.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Following eight breeds of pigeons were available in Bangladesh. To know the behaviour and characteristics of such pigeons, several years observation in own loft, pet shops [11], and pigeon markets of Bangladesh [12] were selected. To make this paper, the idea has followed from 'Encyclopedia

of Pigeon Breeds' by Levi. His presentation about pigeons was the key point to clarify breed details. Before judging a breed, the following criteria carried out a noteworthy result. The SPSS (version 26) used for the correlation analysis among breeds (Table 2; Appendix 1).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Name and Origin:** Gorra pigeon, Bangladesh, probable year is 1995. Some breeders of Dhaka Division produced this variety from the Indian highflyers. **Description:** It is a flying variety with general appearance of the tumbler. Its flight duration ranges from 2 to 7 hours in the sky and till now this variety used in race with 101 km. **Size:** Medium sized bird, weight is about 9 to 13 ounces. **Ornamentation:** It is plain-headed and clean-legged. **Colour:** White-headed with red, black, silver, blue, ash-red, and dun. Primaries and tail are always white. **Comment:** The variety is growing in popularity especially in Dhaka Bangladesh. This is the only colourful highflying pigeon in Bangladesh. Bangladesh Gorra Pigeon Association (GPA) [13] is thinking to establish this breed as an exclusive breed of Bangladesh.



**Plate 1.** Gorra, black pied adult cock, bred and owned by Hossain, I., Dhaka, Bangladesh. Photo by Imran Hossain.

**Name and Origin:** House-tumbler, Bangladesh. Some breeders of Rajshahi Division developed this variety from the Turkish tumblers. Kabir and Zaman [14] mentioned that this is a small version of Turkish or Uzbekian tumbler. According to Brent, this is a crossbred of tumbler and lotan pigeons. **Description:** It is a performing variety with general appearance of the tumbler. It flies straight and at the time of take-off and landing performs huge. In an area of balcony,

this pigeon does perform spontaneously. **Size:** Slightly small than the Turkish tumblers. Its average weight is about 7 to 9 ounces. **Ornamentation:** It is plain-headed or crested and should be muffed. **Colour:** Selfs and mottles in any colour. **Comment:** The variety is growing in popularity especially in Rajshahi and Saidpur of Bangladesh.



**Plate 2.** House-tumbler, heterozygous dominant white adult cock, bred and owned by Hridoy, A-M. F., Rajshahi, Bangladesh. Photo by Al-Muhi Ferdous Hridoy.

**Name and Origin:** Indian lotan, India, in the early 2023. Some breeders of Bangladesh imported this variety from the India. **Description:** This is a performing bird on ground. After shaking between two fingers or striking on the head, it rolls. Its rolling performance is better than parlour roller of the USA. In India, it has three types—dasti, kalami, and havai. Dasti is available in Bangladesh, performs after shaking. Kalami performs by a strike on heads, and havai

performs after shaking and after some rolls it sudden fly [2]. This pigeon has abnormal and an average flight [15]. **Size:** Medium sized with longer body. Its average weight is about 10 to 15 ounces. **Ornamentation:** Broad-crested and muffed. **Colour:** Self-white with bull eyes. **Comment:** This variety is growing in popularity all over Bangladesh. For keeping its purity, it is urgent to keep them separately [16].



**Plate 3.** Indian lotan, self-white adult hen, purchased and owned by Kabir, A., Saidpur, Bangladesh. Photo by Ashraful Kabir.

**Name and Origin:** Bombai, India, but from the very beginning this breed was available in Bangladesh. Some breeders of Bangladesh imported this variety from the India. **Description:** This is a show and large bird. Very attractive and energetic bird. **Size:** Large-sized body with rounded breast. Its average weight is about 19 ounces. **Ornamentation:** Broad and hooded (ear-to-ear) crested;

clean-legged. **Colour:** Self-red but self-white, self-yellow, and self-black are available. Sometimes, white feathers are found in selfs. **Comment:** This variety is growing in popularity all over Bangladesh. In the last International Pigeon Show of Bangladesh (2023), these pigeons were kept for judging. Bangladeshi breeders have developed its head crest [17].



**Plate 4.** Bombai, self-red adult cock, purchased and owned by Kabir, A., Saidpur, Bangladesh.

Photo by Ashraful Kabir.

**Name and Origin:** Kokah, Bangladesh. From the Arabian trumpeter, through selection, this pigeon has originated [18]. **Description:** This is a voiced bird. Very similar with the Arabian trumpeter. Long and narrow beak. Elongated and slim body. **Size:** Small bird, average weight is about 12

ounces. **Ornamentation:** Peak-crested and clean-legged. **Colour:** Mostly self-red then spread black, occasionally found self-white. **Comment:** This variety is growing in popularity all over Bangladesh. Its continuous narrow vocals are very attractive to everybody.



**Plate 5.** Kokah, silver adult hen, bred and owned by Kamal, A. A., Dhaka, Bangladesh. Photo by Arif Al Kamal.

**Name and Origin:** Lahore pigeon, Pakistan. This is an ancient breed in Bangladesh. This breed is thought to have been cultivated since the 15th century. Some records also show that this is actually an old race from Persia [15]. **Description:** Big-headed with short and fine beak. **Size:** Large-sized pigeon. Its average weight is about 27 to 30 ounces. **Ornamentation:** Plain-headed and grouse-legged.

**Colour:** Bilateral colours of white, red, yellow, silver, black, blue, andalusian, and opal. Tail, breast, and belly are always white. **Comment:** This variety is growing in popularity all over Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, there are lots of best scored Lahore pigeons. In our last pigeon show, Lahore pigeons got champion prize [19]. This is actually a utility pigeon but now more used as fancy for its beauty [15].





**Plate 6.** Lahore pigeon, black-white adult hen, bred and owned by Islam, M., Gazipur, Bangladesh. Photo by Monirul Islam.

**Name and Origin:** Indian fantail, India, but an ancient breed in Bangladesh. **Description:** This is pretty pigeon to everybody. This is a pigeon in structure group. It has extra tail feathers and more than 14. Depending on the number of tail feathers and its expansion quality, its price is depended [20]. It shows neck trembling. **Size:** Medium-sized pigeon. Its average weight is about 13 ounces. **Ornamentation:**

Peak-crested and grouse-legged. **Colour:** Mostly self-white but other colours are available. **Comment:** From the very beginning, this breed is popular breed in the country. This is a popular variety all over the country. For its peacock-like expanded tail, everybody likes it. In the market, it has demand always.



**Plate 7.** Indian fantail, self-white adult hen, purchased and owned by Kabir, A., Saidpur, Bangladesh. Photo by Ashraful Kabir.

**Name and Origin:** Mookee, India. The oldest representatives of the Indian pigeon breeds, and were first introduced to Europe in 1676, and developed since 16th century [15]. Some notes mention that this breed belongs to tumbler type [15]. **Description:** It has a wide sloping body structure. Its 'S' shaped snake-like neck exhibits trembling when it is excited. **Size:** Small-sized pigeon. Its average weight is about 10 to 18 ounces. **Ornamentation:** Peak-crested and

clean-legged. **Colour:** Mostly jet black, but blue, silver, khaki, and chocolate are available everywhere. **Comment:** For its walking style, size, and trembles of the neck, this pigeon has a demand always in the market. This can fly well but there will be a possibility to injure on the breast. At present, its development is more aimed for unique and interesting appearance [15].



**Plate 8.** Mookee, solid black cock, purchased and owned by Kabir, A., Saidpur, Bangladesh. Photo by Ashraful Kabir.

**Table 1.** Breed details

Name of breeds	Origin	Weight (ounce)	Ornamentation	Colour	Special note
<b>Gorra</b>	Bangladesh	9-13	Plain-headed and clean-legged	Various colour	Colourful flying pigeons
<b>House-tumbler</b>	Bangladesh	7-9	Chiefly plain-headed and clean-legged but sometimes peak-crested and grouse legged can be found	Various colour	Tumbles in short space
<b>Indian lotan</b>	India	10-15	Peak crested and muff	Mainly self- white	Rolls after shaking
<b>Bombai</b>	Bangladesh	19	Broad crest from ear to ear; clean-legged	Mainly self- red	Very powerful pigeon; robust body
<b>Kokah</b>	Bangladesh	12	Peak crested and clean-legged	Mainly brick red	Voice
<b>Lahore pigeon</b>	Pakistan	27-30	Plain-headed and grouse legged	Various colour	Bilateral colour combination
<b>Indian fantail</b>	India	13	Peak-crested and grouse-legged	Various colour	Fan-like tail
<b>Mookee</b>	India	10-18	Peak crested and clean-legged	Various colour but chiefly self- black	Tremules of the neck

## Statistical findings

**Table 2.** Correlation among eight breeds

Breeds	Characteristics	P-value
<b>Eight (8)</b>	Beak and tarsus length in cm	0.744

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Name and Origin:** Based on the origin of fancy pigeons, there are three—Indian, European, and American breed of pigeons. Most of the fancy pigeons are originated from the Asian regions. In Bangladesh, before the liberation war, most of the pigeons were available in Bangladesh. Due to course of time, when European left India, they shifted some pigeons in their country and after selective breeding they produced their own breeds. Finally, people of America, imported such pigeons from Asia and Europe, and established their own breeds. To know the fancy pigeons well, there is no shortcut

to know Asian breeds. Emperor Akbar was a pioneer to collect many pigeons from various regions [1]. **Description:** In Akbar court, poet Abul Fazl wrote a poem about Akbar's pigeons in the 'Kobutarnama'. In this poem, there were little information about those breeds [1]. Wendell Mitchell Levi, an American writer first introduced most of the fancy pigeons in his renowned book 'The Pigeon' [2]. This book is the main source to accumulate information on most of the breeds. Additionally, his other book 'Encyclopedia of Pigeon Breeds' [3] focused information with colourful plates. **Size:**

Actual size is important for judging pigeons. Small, medium, and large-sized pigeons will have different body weight and length. **Ornamentation:** Fancy pigeons can be categorized into head and leg feathers first [7]. Then the arrangement of the breast, wing, and tail feathers changed gradually due to selective breeding. Among all arrangements, only head feathers are the best creation, it expresses its actual beauty then the leg feathers. **Colour:** In fact, all pigeons are unique with their colours. Some specific colours are found in specific breeds but for the time being all colours and patterns are found in all breeds once a time. The basic colour of pigeons is red, black, and brown. On the basis of genetics, the plumage colour of pigeons are still a mystery. **Keeping history:** Pigeons were first come to know to humans for their letter sending capability (Table 1). By the course of time, people knew other impact of pigeons. They made it table breed, and finally commercial breed for entertainment. Pigeon flying was the ancestral hobby of human being [10].

## CONCLUSIONS

While judging a pigeon, at first, need to know their original characteristics. There is no alternative to analyze a pigeon without proper study and practice. National Pigeon Association of the USA is a leading organization that controls all sorts of characteristics of the breeds and varieties of fancy pigeons of the world. An international or national pigeon show always invites pigeon experts for judging. They are well-known about specific pigeon. The idea to judge a pigeon, their prolonged experiences play a significant role. In order to make a show breed, we should express our respect to those invited experts.

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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## APPENDIX

**Appendix 1.** Raw data on beak and tarsus length of pigeons

Pigeons	Beak length in cm	Tarsus length in cm
Lahore pigeon	2.2	10
Mookee	1.8	2.4
Indian lotan	1.8	2.8
Bangladeshi house-tumbler	2.05	3.25
Kokah	2.3	6.4
Bangladeshi bombai	1.8	3.05
Gorra	2.05	3.25
Military pigeon	1.75	3.25