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REVISITING PARTITION

TALES OF DISPLACEMENT, HORROR,
NEGOTIATION AND RECONCILIATION

Editors

Sachchidanand Joshi
Ravi Prakash Tekchandani



REVISITING PARTITION

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NEGOTIATION AND RECONCILIATION

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Folk Narratives of Sindh and Punjab through the Lens of Partition

Pooja Sharma*

Introduction

Folk narratives reflect the culture, beliefs, traditional knowledge and customs of a folk group. These narratives are passed on over the generations through orality and praxis. Delivering the presidential address at the American Folklore Society in 2013, Diane Goldstein argued that there had been a major change in the academic and popular approaches to vernacular literature and the focus now is on narrative and local knowledge. (Goldstein 126). The narrative turn – a phrase first used by Martin Kreiswirth – therefore enabled a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to folkloristics as opposed to narrower approaches viewing folk as simply a relic of the dead past. (Kreiswirth 61). This paradigmatic change also provides us a significant entry point into watershed events like Partition of 1947.

In the context of this paper, folk narrative is understood as a broad category of folk material that is a collective creation and is circulated orally. In India, folk narratives form crucial oral heritage with information providing a window into beliefs, thought processes, social milieu, framework and geographical as well as social contexts. Folk narratives are further divided into various subcategories such as myths, legends, tales, etc. The social and cultural underpinnings are crucial to folk narratives as they provide a holistic and comprehensive understanding. While formalized aspects of culture fall within the domain of anthropological studies, folk studies have to take into account the informal elements such as customs, rituals, tales and legends, among others.

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