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One Tale, Many Narratives: Versions of Sohni-Mahiwal from Sindh to Punjab

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Abstract

This paper looks at the multiplicity of voices and versions in folktales by taking the popular folktale of Sohni-Mahiwal or Suhini-Mehar as a case study. It examines how the narrative in a folktale is adjusted to suit the context where it is being told or shared. It also notes the multiple narratives and voices that surround a tale over a period of time and how successive narrators adapt it to their audience. Through an inter-textual analysis the paper explores strains of continuity between folk cultures that help us understand the uniqueness of folk cultures even as they share narratives.

Keywords: Folktale, Sohni, Mahiwal, Sindh, Punjab

Introduction

The subject of narratives by itself implies the existence of a story or a tale. Storytelling is considered as old as culture itself and storytelling traditions are traced in different cultures across the globe. Some cultures have travelling storytellers such as the Griots in West Africa and the Seanchai among the Irish. Other cultures have embedded storytelling