

Pavitra Kumari

University of Delhi

College of Vocational Studies

New Delhi, India

Spatiality, Mobility, and Femininity: Mapping Movement of Pari in Haryanvi Folktales

The proposed paper surveys folktales from Haryana in order to investigate cultural encounters between various religious belief systems and their impact on constructions of femininity as reflected in folk narratives about Pari. The figure of Pari, in folktales of Haryana, is morally ambiguous and occupies a liminal space between the good and the evil. Their representation appears to be a conflation of cultural figures of Pari from Persia, Apsara from South Asian cultures, and Dakini from Tantric and Buddhist subcultures. The paper will employ ideas of travel, mobility and spatiality in order to trace the trajectory of the idea of Pari travelling from Persia to the Indian subcontinent, and its incorporation with ideas about supernatural female beings in existence within the culture of Haryana. A close study of these folktales and their content can reveal remnants of the cultural concepts of femininity which may have travelled along with these tales. Their subsequent integration could have transformed the concept of supernatural female figures in the folk imagination. The second part of the paper would investigate the mobility of the female characters within the folk narrative space, and their temporal and spatial location in culturally specific contexts. These readings can give us insights into the cultural ideas of travelling vis – a – vis domestic and socio – cultural public spaces. The paper will also explore the dialogue between the cultures as a result of historical encounters, and the dialogue between folk texts and the culture within which it is produced and received. As a consequence of these dialogic relationships, one can trace how notions of femininity and its relationship to space travels across geographies and manifests in folktales of a region.

Keywords: Pari, cultural encounters and exchange, femininity, mobility and spatiality, Haryanvi folktales