

Department of History Presidency University, Kolkata,

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**SUFI POETRY AND THEOSOPHY: THE SINDHI CONTRIBUTION TO THE
MAKING OF A UNIVERSAL SPIRITUALITY**

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Abstract

This paper illuminates the profound and unique role played by Sindhi intellectuals from the late 19th century to the present day in the construction of a universal spirituality. Both Muslims and Hindus, particularly the latter, embraced the concepts of the Theosophical Society and forged a universal discourse of spirituality. This discourse, deeply rooted in the Sufi corpus, notably the *Shah jo Risalo* by Shah Abdul Latif (1689-1752), written in the Sindhi language, was significantly enriched by the Sindhi contribution. The Hindu Sufis, who migrated to India during the partition, re-established devotional sites, this time with a distinct influence from Sachal Sarmast (1739-1827)'s *kalam*, a tradition that held a special place for women. The paper will delve into the methodology implemented by the Sindhi intelligentsia, for example, the publication of Sindhi Sufi poetry, as well as the performances they organize, such as the Darazi *satsangs*, named after Daraza, the place in Sindh where Sachal Sarmast's *dargah*.

Bionote

Michel Boivin is the Emeritus Director of Research at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and a member of the Centre for the Studies of South Asia and the Himalayas (CESAH). Former director of the Centre for Indian and South Asian Studies (CEIAS), he teaches and supervises PhD students at the School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS). Trained in history and anthropology, his work focuses on the "Sindhicate" area, both in Pakistan and India. Among his last books, there are *The Hindu Sufis of South Asia. Partition, Shrine Culture and the Sindhis of India*, (London, I.B. Tauris, 2019), and *The Sufi Paradigm and the Makings of a Vernacular Knowledge in Colonial India: The Case of Sindh (1851-1929)*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). In 2024, he published *Devotion, Religious Authority, and Social Structures in Sindh. Khojas, Vanyos, and Faqirs* (Boston-Leiden, Brill) and co-published with the late Charu Gidwani, and edited by Rohitesh Gidwani, *An Anthology of Sindhi Sufi Poetry as Preserved by the Sindhis of India* (Pune, Adviksham Enterprises).