

# SUFI WOMEN: THE SUFI GENDER PARADIGM AND PRAXIS IN SOUTH ASIA

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DONNERSTAG, 28.06.2018, 12:00 UHR  
UNIVERSITÄT KOBLENZ, RAUM E312

In his talk, Saad Ali Khan analyses the articulation and understanding of gender within Sufism and how it impacts the social practice of Sufi culture in South Asia. He argues that cultural factors like patriarchy and (constructions of) masculinity, the promotion of orthodox and reformist versions of religion, and Sufis' involvement in politics have over the period of time led to the decline of women's active participation within the Sufi culture. However, the presence of Sufi women in contemporary times also challenges the prevalent stereotypical notions of women's role and position within society and points to the resurgence of women's role as Sufi *Shykh*as (teachers, guides).

*Saad Ali Khan is currently a lecturer at the Centre of Excellence in Gender Studies at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, and Ph.D. scholar at the National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University. Saad has been associated with the Centre for the last four years, where he has taught courses including Gender and Mysticism, Gender and International Politics, and The Social Construction of Gender, among others. In his Ph.D. research, he analyses gender dynamics within the Sufi culture of Pakistan with a special focus on contemporary Sufi women and their role in Sufi culture. He is currently based at the International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, with a Ph.D. fellowship.*

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