



‘ABD-AL-VAHHĀB SAČAL

‘**ABD-AL-VAHHĀB SAČAL** SARMAST ĀŠKĀR, late 18th-early 19th century Sindhi mystical poet. Sačal is one of the numerous poets in the Indus valley who composed mystical poetry not only in their native tongue, Sindhi, and its northern dialect, Siraiki, but also in Urdu and Persian. The grandson of a noted faqir, ‘Abd-al-Vahhāb was born in 1739 in Daraz (Drazan) near Ranipur in the Khaipur district of Upper Sind. He was educated in the local *madrasa* (traditional school), where he acquired knowledge of both Arabic and Persian; his uncle, ‘Abd-al-Ḥaqq, instructed him in the mystical path and is praised by him as his true *pīr*. Until 1826, when he died in his birthplace at the age of almost ninety lunar years, Sačal led a solitary, reclusive life, though he did attract followers, most of whom indulged in music and dance and occasionally also in narcotics.

From the 16th to the early 18th century Sindhi poetry developed a very distinctive way of alluding to the secrets of the Truth, using hidden puns and a grammatically complicated style. But ‘Abd-al-Vahhāb Sačal, it is said, “lifted the lid from the kettle” and sang of his firm belief in the Unity of Being in enthusiastic verses which bear comparison with the great mystical poetry of Iran and Turkey. Linking him to one of the famous mystics of Iran, his compatriots called him the ‘Aṭṭār of Sind, since in Sindhi folk literature ‘Aṭṭār’s name stands for martyrdom due to the overwhelming love and is often mentioned together with the names of Šams-e Tabrīz and Maṣūm-e Ḥallāj. Sačal’s pen name is derived from *sač* “truth” and seems to contain an allusion to Ḥallāj’s *ana’l-ḥaqq* “I am the Truth.” In his verse he often speaks of “the



wine of Manṣūr” or “the drum of Manṣūr”; in fact, Ḥallāj’s name occurs on almost every page of his Sindhi or Siraiki verse.

In his Persian poetry ‘Abd-al-Vahhāb assumed the pen name Āškār (Open) and sometimes Ḳodā’ī. Like his compatriots Sačal relied on Sindhi folktales for his poetry but mentions them more briefly than [Shah ‘Abd-al-Laṭīf Bhetā’ī](#) (1689-1752) had done in his famous Sindhi *Resālo*. Sačal’s Persian poetry is neither as outspoken nor as powerful as the verses in his native tongue; one feels that Persian was an artificially acquired language, and as H. Sadarangani (p. 171) states, “in a few cases it falls short of the prescribed standards of metrical excellence.” The poet himself would have replied to such remarks that “this word is from love, and not from poetry.” His Persian works comprise five items: the *Dīvān-e āškār*, *Rāznāma* (“Book of mystery”), *Godāznāma* (“Book of melting”), *‘Ešknāma* (“Book of love”), *Tār-nāma* (“Book of the string”), and *Rahbarnāma* (“Book of the guide”). This last *maṭnavī* was composed shortly before his death for the instruction of his few disciples; it deals with the stages of evolution from *nāsūt* (human nature) to *lāhūt* (divine nature) and teaches the disciple how to proceed on the Path, his two wings being *dekr* (meditation), recollection of God and reflection on Him. Sačal’s whole poetic corpus turns on the claim *hama ūst*, “Everything is He,” which is explained with an endless array of rhetorical devices. His verse is still widely sung in Sind , and the *‘Ešqnāma* and *Godāznāma* have even been translated into English by one of his devotees.

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