

Khaliq Ahmad Nizami: "Shaikh Nizam-u'd-Din Auliya had once remarked, he belonged to that group of mystics who had made mysticism a mass movement and had admitted all sorts of people to the mystic discipline in order to create religious consciousness in them. Baba Farid's long, sincere and strenuous application to the cause of the *silsilah* immensely raised its prestige. People flocked round him from far and near and learnt at his feet the moral and spiritual doctrines of the Chisti order."<sup>5</sup>

Baba Farid is credited with the islamization of the entire South Punjab. He always advised his disciples to develop independence of spirit and place their requests before God alone. God, he told his disciples, 'feels ashamed when he rejects the requests of a man who raises his hands in supplication. A life of poverty (*faqr*) and resignation (*tawakkul*) were frequently stressed in Baba Farid's discourses. He wanted his disciples to accept the life of penury and penitence with pleasure and devote themselves to Him and Him alone. He was keenly conscious of the fact that the highest spiritual aspirations of man are apt to become stifled by the weight of his material possessions and that riches often arrest the growth and expansion of the spirit. "The day of failures," he used to say, "is the night of the highest spiritual ascension."<sup>6</sup> He did not believe in saving money. Consequently he was always unable to pay *Zakat*. When asked to explain the nature and extent of *Zakat*, he had given the following explanation:

"Zakat is of three kinds: Zakat-i-Shari'at, Zakat-i-Tariqat and Zakat-i-Haqiqat. Zakat-i-Shari'at is that one gives 5 dirhams out of 200; Zakat-i-Tariqat means that one keeps 5 dirhams and gives 15; Zakat-i-Haqiqat means that all is given away and nothing is retained."<sup>7</sup>

Baba Farid himself never saved money. He used to distribute all the money instantaneously.

"Whenever the Shaikh accepted any cash he distributed it at once amongst the needy and the poor. He did not keep anything in his *Khanqah* even for a single night. A

**Fateh Muhammad Malik**

## **The Mystic Ideology of Baba Farid**

Shaikh Farid-u'd-din Ganj-i-Shakar (1175-1266), popularly known as Baba Farid, was deeply steeped in the sufi ideology of universal brotherhood. "When Shaikh Moin-ud-din was asked about the highest form of devotion, he replied that it was nothing but helping the poor, the distressed and downtrodden".<sup>1</sup> Prof. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami has identified Baba Farid as the most outstanding figure of the Chishti fraternity on the basis of his dynamic role in giving to the Chishti *Silsila* (Sufi order) "the momentum of an organized spiritual movement."<sup>2</sup> He had adopted an attitude of complete indifference towards the government and had totally rejected materialistic attitude towards life. Russian Scholar Anna Suvorova has aptly observed that:

"beginning with Shaikh Farid the concept of sainthood in South Asian Sufism underwent a certain development: now miracles of humaneness, wrought by a compassionate heart, are considered to be true *karamat*. The degree of sainthood is increasingly measured by the criteria of personal asceticism and selflessness."<sup>3</sup>

According to Shaikh Nizam-u'd-Din Auliya: "Baba Farid had taken the first step in India to convert individualistic effort for spiritual salvation into a movement for mass spiritual culture. As such, it was necessary to carry the message to every home in the Punjab. He, therefore, adopted the Punjabi language as a medium for the communication of his ideas."<sup>4</sup> According to

other lower castes. Baba Farid used oral tradition of poetry and transmitted his revolutionary message through *Dohas* (two-line couplets), in the spoken language of the common people. The imagery is taken from daily life and from the surrounding landscape.

The virtues of detachment from wealth and material advancement as well as the equality of all human beings before God are the dominant themes of Farid's poetry. The tunes are borrowed from folk songs and similes drawn from rural life. He is more given to teaching and preaching than to the singing of a song. In appreciation of Baba Farid's poetry Lajwanti Rama Krishna has observed:

"In two of Farid's most popular *slokas* [*ashlok*], he describes the journey to his beloved's home in pouring rain. They have the flavour of romantic poetry, particularly the great love sagas sung in Punjab. The distance is long, the lanes muddy and if he goes, the rain will wet his cloak but if he stays back, his love will be shattered. He calls upon God's rain to pour down as much as it can; he would go and meet his beloved so that love is kept alive. In the second sloka, Farid, with a dramatic gesture, calls upon the storm to visit him and the rain to pour down with all its might for they cannot make his resolve shake. He is not going to be deterred by any hardships or sacrifices he is called upon to make. He is firm in his faith and has no doubt about attaining the *و صل* (union) with his beloved."<sup>9</sup>

His *Dohas* call for awakening from the slumber:

وقتِ سحر وقتِ مناجات ہے  
نیز دراں وقت کہ برکات ہے

Early morning is the time for prayer

Awake this is the time to seek blessings

story mentioned in the *Jawahir-i- Faridi* very neatly illustrates the Shaikh's practice. Once Ulugh Khan Balban sent a tray of *tankahs* to him. The saint accepted the offer after considerable reluctance and ordered Maulana Badr-u'd-din Ishaq to distribute that at once amongst the poor. The sun had already set and it was dark, but the Shaikh could not wait for the day. His *Jama'at Khanah* was not a storehouse of presents from the king or the bureaucracy. Maulana Badr-u'd-din obeyed the orders of his Shaikh and began to disburse the money among the deserving people. Having finished the work, he brought the candle in just to see whether any coin remained there. He found a coin there and put it in his cap to deliver it to some poor fellow in the morning. Soon afterwards Baba Farid went to the mosque to lead the 'Isha prayer. Three times he began the prayer and then discontinued it. There was something which weighed heavily on his heart and disturbed the concentration of his mind. "Maulana Badr-u'd-din," interrogated Baba Farid, "Have you distributed all that money?" "Yes," replied Maulana Badr-u'd-din, "but one coin remains." Baba Farid angrily took back that coin and threw it away and then peacefully led the prayer. 'Ali Asghar Chishti adds that throughout the night Baba Farid lamented why he had touched that coin."<sup>8</sup>

This Sufi way of life was in complete rejection of Brahmanism's concept of "divinely" created caste system. Sufi ideology is without distinction of caste and colour, high and low. Baba Farid preached his ideology by example and precept. He also composed poetry in Arabic and Persian. But his Punjabi verses spread his revolutionary ideas, far and wide. Brahmanism had closed the doors of education to the untouchable and

رُکھی سَکھی کھائے کے ٹھنڈا پانی پی  
دیکھ پرائی چوڑی، نہ ترسائیں جی

"Eat dry bread and wash it down with cold water.

Do not tantalise your soul, hankering after others'  
battered bread."

The language spoken by the illiterate masses in these, easy to remember, two-line couplets is identified by Baba-e-Urdu, Maulvi Abdul Haq as the earliest version of Urdu language.<sup>10</sup> Anna Suvorova has correctly remarked that: "this couplet serves as an example of how Arabic doctrinal vocabulary was gradually finding its way into the Indian poetical forms, adapting itself to their prosody and to the phonetics of the modern Indian languages, which is characteristic of the early stage of the formation of Sufi poetry in the vernacular languages."<sup>11</sup> The *Khanqah* of Baba Farid thus became one of the earliest cradles of Urdu language.

The spiritual awakening of the toiling masses broke the shackles of Brahmanism and they accepted the creed of sufi humanism. The popularity of Baba Farid enraged the Mulla. Muneera Haeri has stated that:

"The local *qazi* was opposed to *sam'a* and disliked Sufis in general. He tried to persuade the '*ulama* of Multan to issue a *fatwa* against a man who lives in a mosque, hears songs and dances. The '*ulama* wanted to know the name of this person. When they realized that it was Baba Farid, who already enjoyed a considerable reputation in the Punjab, they replied: 'You have referred to a Saint against whom no *mujtahid* dare raise his finger. The *qazi*, frustrated in his endeavours to persecute the *Shaykh*, finally hired a man to murder him. Even in this he failed."<sup>12</sup>

Today nobody knows the name of the *Qazi* but Baba Farid is leading eternal life in the hearts and minds of his devotees. The door to his place of burial is identified as *Bahishti Darwaza*: the door to paradise, by pilgrims to

جاگ فریدا سَٹیا تے چڑیاں بول پیاں

جاگ فریدا سَٹیا ، تے جھاڑو دے مسیت  
ٹو سوئے ، رب جاگے، تیری ڈاھڈے نال پریت

Dohas on the above theme remind me of Muslim's call for morning prayer. Universal human brotherhood is a recurring theme in his poetry.

فریدا چچھی رات نہ جاگیوں جیون درو مویوں  
جے تیں رب وِساریا تے رب نہ وِساریوں

Night ends, but still you sleep; you die while living yet,  
Though you forget the Lord, still He does not forget.

He is in search of the creator in his creatures:

فریدا، خالق خلق میں، خلق وِسے رب سائیں  
مندا کس ٹوں آکھینے، جاں تِس بن کوئی ناہیں

"O Farid! The creator lives in the creatures, and the creatures subsist in God.

How can we call anybody bad when there is no one but HE."

Glorification of the life of hardship and renunciation is another recurring theme of his poetry:

میں جانیا دُکھ مجھی کو دُکھ سہائے جگ  
اُپے چڑھ کے ویکھیا گھر گھر ایہا اگ

"I thought pain was my peculiar share, (but actually) the whole world is caught in this pain.

When I viewed the world from a height every home revealed this fire."

فریدا روٹی میری کاٹھ دی، لاون میری بھکھ  
جینہاں کھادی چوڑی، گھنے سہن گے دُکھ

"My bread is made of wood, and hunger is my salt,  
Those eating buttered bread will suffer greatly."

Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu Pakistan, 1977).

11. Anna Suworova, opt. cited, Pp. 99-100
12. Muneera Haeri, *The Chishtis: A Living Light*, (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 87
13. Nirad C. Chaudhry, *Continent of Circe*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.63

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6. \_\_\_\_\_, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar*, Delhi: Idara-e-Adabiyat, 1973.
7. Suworova, Anna, *Muslim Saints of South Asia: The 11th to 15th Centuries*, London: Routledge, 1999.



his shrine.

The popularity of Baba Farid's mystic ideology as reflected in his poetry in the folk idiom converted "untouchable" and illiterate masses to the fold of universal humanism of Islam. N.C. Chaudhry has described this phenomenon as a permanent revolution:

"The Muslim conquest of India could not be made innocuous for the Hindus through the caste system. The conquest was an extension into a new country of a well-established and mature society, with a fully developed way of life and a living culture....What was even more important was the fact that the Muslims were not barbarians at a low level of culture who would consider admission to the Hindu fold as a promotion. They were the first people in history to put forward the idea of an irreconcilable conflict between a particular way of life and all others, and to formulate a theory of permanent revolution."<sup>13</sup>

Needless to say that this revolution was spearheaded by Sufi saints, foremost among them Baba Farid.

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3. Anna Suworova, *Muslim Saints of South Asia: The 11th to 15th Centuries*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p.103
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5. Ibid., p.107
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7. Ibid. Pp. 96-97
8. Ibid, 119, as referred in *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, (MS).
9. L. R. Crishna, *Punjabi Sufi Poets*, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1938), p.8
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