

BABA SHEIKH FARID
SHAKAR GANJ

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB



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Preface

THIS MONOGRAPH IS the newest addition to the series 'National Biography' being published by the National Book Trust, India. Baba Sheikh Farid (1173-1265) known mostly to Muslims as a teacher of religion, has more than one important dimension to his personality, as the reader will be able to find for himself. Besides being a great and enlightened Teacher of religion, he has the distinction of being the spiritual preceptor of the famous Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi, at whose mausoleum high and low have bent in prayer all these centuries. Besides, his spiritual compositions in his native Punjabi were studied by Guru Nanak and his spiritual successors and found a place in Granth Sahib, Scripture of the Sikh faith. These are reverently studied by the Sikhs to this day. Their inclusion in Granth Sahib constitutes a unique and highly significant event in the history of inter-religious goodwill and the enlightened approach to religion as the guiding

force in man's life. This poetry, thus coming down from Sheikh Farid is the vehicle of a profound spiritual vision and is the product of a supreme poetic genius. As such, it is a cherished part of the cultural heritage of the Punjabi-speaking people. These points have been touched upon in some detail in the pages that follow. Sheikh Farid is, thus of the company of the greatest men produced by our country. In an age torn with strife and violence, he brought the message of goodwill, humanity and peace. It is only right and proper that the relevant information about this great man should be brought within the knowledge of our people at large. His message has great relevance in these times when the voice of hate and rancour still rises now and again in strident tones, and man has not yet learnt the way of God to attain inner peace. Amidst the blowing tempests of materialism and cynicism, Baba Farid's sweet strains, appealing to something deep down in man, dormant but not dead, cannot but produce much-good.

The immediate occasion for the commissioning of this booklet was provided by the Octocentenary of the birth of Baba Sheikh Farid, which falls in the course of the present year (1973). While a considerable volume of effort is afoot to commemorate suitably this great man, particularly in Panjab, it would only be right and proper to present his image through a piece of biography, modest though it be. In this book is combined much that is authentic about his life according to the original sources in Persian along with a simple presentation of Sufism, particularly as this great

movement grew in our country. An attempt has also been made to present to the reader the characteristic quality of Sheikh Farid's poetry. At the end is given an English rendering of his poetical work in Punjabi as found in Granth Sahib.

All the renderings from Panjabi, Persian and Arabic are the work of the present writer. Transliteration of names, except in the case of 'Hadith' and 'Mathnavi' is as these are generally pronounced in India. The more purist systems have been eschewed, as they would only confuse the general reader. A brief bibliography and location map of Pak-pattan, seat of Sheikh Farid are placed at the end.

Note AH in the text stands of course, for the Hijri (Hegira) era and AC for the Christian era. 'Bani' used quite often in the text in relation to the compositions of Sheikh Farid in Punjabi, is used in the Sikh tradition for the texts included in Granth Sahib, and is Sanskrit-derived: lit. meaning 'speech'. The footnotes are not too oppressive, but are a useful guide for the reader unfamiliar with the Sufi tradition, with Farid or with the Panjab and its language.

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CHAPTER I

A Biographical Sketch

SHEIKH¹ FARID, (A H. 569-664) popularly known as 'Baba' (father) is of the company of the greatest Indian saints Born in the Punjab, to which his name has brought great lustre, he is also the first recorded poet in the Punjabi language As such, the Punjabi-speaking people have a special reason to be proud of him and have cherished his memory for centuries He is a great moral teacher whose message of universal significance, by its elevated tone and vision of the higher truth, has helped to disseminate spiritual light.

His father's name was Sheikh Jamaluddin Sulaiman, whose family, according to current tradition, was related to the rulers of Kabul by ties of blood As a matter of fact,

¹ 'Sheikh' is the honorific prefixed to the names of Muslim Sufis and scholars in general This is the title by which the subject of this sketch, Baba Farid, has been designated in the Granth Sahib Literally it means, in Arabic, 'Elder of the Tribe' The Persian 'Pir' means the same.

his grandfather was a relation of Farrukh Shah Adil, king of Kabul. His ancestry can be traced back to the second caliph of Islam, Hazarat Omar ben-al-Khattab. Sheikh Farid's family left their home in central Asia during the period of Mongol incursions — on which more will follow soon. Seeking safety and some place to settle in, they came to the Punjab where several Muslim religious centres had already developed under Ghaznavid rule and a sizeable Muslim population had grown, particularly in the areas now in Pakistan. The Punjab, being the part of India nearest to the Muslim countries in the west and north-west, naturally became the first Indian region where Muslim religion and culture took root. Later, with the establishment of Muslim rule in Delhi and the rapid spread of Muslim conquests in northern and central India, these influences also spread to other areas which passed under the power of the new rulers. Some of the oldest Muslim centres of religious influence in the areas west of the Jamuna are Lahore, Multan, Uch, Hansi, Kaithal, Samana, Sirhind, Sunam, Panipat and Narnaul. In other areas, besides Delhi, the great early centres were Ajmer and Badaun.

To Sheikh Jamaluddin Sulaiman was born in 569 A.H. (A.D. 1173) in the month of Ramadan, which is devoted to fasting according to the Muslim tradition, a son who was to be the great saint Sheikh Farid. It is said that owing to the fast, the newly-born child refused to suck at his mother's breast while the hours ordained for fasting lasted. Accounts of other miracles such as pious biographers of saints have always been fond of recording about their spiritual preceptors have also been handed down to us.

The child was named Farīduddīn Masaud. The family had already produced scholars and men of piety, and the newly-born child is said to have been named after the Sufi poet Farīduddīn Attar, who was born in 1119 and was the author of several works on Sufistic philosophy including the allegory in Persian, *Mantiq-ut-Tayr* (Conference of Birds). By the time the child was born, Attar was already famous. The child became known by the first part of his name, Farīd, which is Arabic for 'unique'. He also acquired a famous appellation, *Shakar-Ganj* or *Ganj-i-Shakar* (Treasury of Sugar) or *Pir-i-Shakar-bar*, of which an explanation will follow.

The place of his birth, close to Multan was called Kothwal. Now its name is Chawalī Mashaikh (Home of the Holy). His father having died while the future Saint Farīd was still a child, it was left to his mother, Qarsum Bibī, who was an extremely pious lady, to bring him up. She was referred to by biographers of the age as a saintly woman in her own right. She educated the child Farīd herself in the essentials of religion and in the strict performance of the duties enjoined upon believers by Islam. It is said that by the age of eight the child had learnt the Koran by heart. Such a feat at a tender age may not be impossible, considering the background and the atmosphere prevailing in the family, and the genius of the child. He grew up not only to be a great saint, but combined with his saintliness great scholarship in all the sciences known at the time to Islamic studies, such as canon law, jurisprudence and mystical philosophy.

About the appellation, *Shakar-Ganj*, which was popularly

given to him, it is related that, in order to induce the child to say his prayers regularly, his mother used to place a small packet of *shakar* or brown sugar under his prayer-mat at which the child would get as a reward. Once it is said she forgot to place this incentive in the usual place. Such was the piety of the child and such the divine favour bestowed upon him that a packet of *shakar* nevertheless appeared in the usual place. On discovery, this was attributed to a miracle and hence the appellation *Shakar-Ganj*. Another explanation is that while undergoing extremely hard penance in his youth, he, in a fainting state, once looked around for something to break a three-day fast. Not finding anything, he thrust a few pebbles into his mouth. By divine intervention the stones turned into lumps of sugar. But the real explanation of the name may be derived from the blessing which he is recorded to have received from his spiritual preceptor, Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, who praised the sweetness of his disposition, and remarked 'Thou shalt be sweet like sugar'. Devotees and poets have celebrated this quality in his poetry in reverent tones. Syed Muhammad Mubarak *alias* Mir Khurd, author of *Siyarul-Auliya*, written in *circa* A.H. 800, has quoted this couplet from Sanai, a mystic poet, to pay high tribute to his spiritual powers.

سنگ در دست تو گهر گردد

دهر در کام تو شکر گردد

(Stones in thy hands turn to jewels,
Poison to thy palate turns sugar)

SHEIKH FARID'S SPIRITUAL LINEAGE

Sheikh Farid is one of the founding-fathers of the famous Chishtiya Sufi Order in India. This order was begun towards the close of the twelfth century with the coming of the great saint Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti, popularly known as Khwaja Gharib-Nawaz (Cherisher of the Humble). Khwaja Muinuddin came to India during the reign of Rai Pithora or Prithviraj Chauhan, the last Rajput king of Delhi whose kingdom stretched to Ajmer and beyond. The founder of the Chishtiya Order was a ninth century Sufi saint of Iraq, called Sheikh Ishaq Chishti, most probably because of his old home in Khurasan (Iran). But the period of his sufistic penance and spiritual attainment was passed at Baghdad, famous as a great centre of Muslim learning, piety and culture. According to a parallel tradition, the founder of the Chishtiya Order is Hazrat Ali Dinawari.

In the spiritual line of Sheikh Ishaq appeared Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti Sijzi, disciple of Khwaja Usman Harooni. His home was in Sijistan in central Asia. He left his home in the period when Mongol incursions had begun towards the south and south-west, and were usurping the lands inhabited by the Iranians, Turks and Afghans. Muslim scholars and divines from these areas emigrated in large numbers, and the process continued for more than a hundred years, as wave after wave of Mongol invasions came, culminating in the vast uprooting of empires and cultures under Changez Khan and his successors. The Mongols or Tartars were till now unconverted to Islam, and professed

various creeds which were forms of Buddhism and Shamanism. The area towards which the fleeing Muslim scholars and divines directed their steps was the Punjab, then under the Muslim rule of the Ghaznavids and their successors, who had established several centres of Islamic faith and culture. A considerable Muslim population grew in various parts of this area and a short time after, with the occupation of Delhi by Muinuddin Sam, known as Shahabuddin Ghauri, the process accelerated and, in a short period, spread over 'Hindustan' (modern Uttar Pradesh), parts of Rajasthan and central India.

To resume the story of Khwaja Muinuddin, also known reverently as Sultan-ul-Arifin (King of the Enlightened Ones), he found shelter under the tolerant rule of Prithviraj at Ajmer, where the population was overwhelmingly Hindu. He camped close to the Sambhar Lake and along with a band of devotees and disciples (said to be forty in number) began his small religious colony. His piety and sweetness created a powerful impact on the local population, which sought his blessings for the attainment of desires and the warding off of evil, as they would to all saints. It is not reliably known if he made any converts from the local population during the period of Prithviraj's rule. The story of this period is wrapped in mystery and full of contradictory accounts. But after the overthrow of Prithviraj it appears that large numbers came forward to embrace Islam. Khwaja Muinuddin established, as is true of the Chishti Sufi saints all over India, the tradition of an open kitchen or *langar* for all who came and was otherwise known to be kind-hearted and sympathetic towards the common

folk in an age of feudalism and violence. His *Dargah* or abbey, extant till today as the most famous of the Muslim centres of pilgrimage in India, provided sanctuary for all who were oppressed and potentates and others dared not molest those whom the saint took under his shelter. Hence the appellation *Gharib-Nawaz* (Cherisher of the Humble) by which he came to be known and which was passed into a current expression for any philanthropically inclined person. Khwaja Muinuddin undertook great austerities and kept nothing for himself. Numerous stories are related of his voluntary poverty and his abstemiousness in food and clothing.

Of the Muslim saints of India, he is pre-eminent. Ajmer has all through these centuries maintained its supremacy among the Muslim shrines within India. A vast hymnology has grown in various Indian languages, eulogizing the spiritual greatness of Khwaja (Lord) Ajmeri, as Khwaja Muinuddin is popularly called. Every year lakhs of pilgrims collect at Ajmer from India and abroad to pay homage to this saint on the occasion of the anniversary of his *urs* (literally wedding—implied meaning joining the Creator in death). It was to Ajmer to Sheikh Salim Chishti, a descendant of Sheikh Farid, that Akbar came barefoot to pray for a son and heir. It is said that as a result of the blessings of Sheikh Salim, a son was born—the future Jahangir—who on birth was given the name Salim, in honour of the saint.

After the occupation of Delhi by Shahabuddin's commander, Qutbuddin, first of the 'Slave' dynasty of Turks, Delhi naturally attracted a vast number of Muslim scholars

and divines, so that at the time it is said to have vied in importance as a centre of Muslim learning with the twin centres of Bokhara and Samarkand. In a contemporary work it is called Qubbatul-Islam (High Dome of Islam). Here were established Muslim mosques and Sufi monasteries (*Dargahs*) and Madrasahs (schools and seminaries of theology). For a time Khwaja Muinuddin also came to Delhi, perhaps on the invitation of some disciples. There he spent some time with his old disciple Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki Ushi, who was to occupy such a prominent place in the history of the city of Delhi. Qutbuddin Aibak was greatly devoted to the Sufi Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar and perhaps wanted his capital to be honoured by the presence of the twin lights of spirituality—Khwaja Muinuddin and Khwaja Qutbuddin. But in order not to let down his devotees in Ajmer Khwaja Muinuddin preferred to go back to that distant centre. So great was the devotion of the disciple for the master that Khwaja Qutbuddin too decided to leave Delhi to accompany Khwaja Muinuddin. The population of Delhi and the Sultan, Qutbuddin, would not have both these saints leave their city. So, after persuasion Khwaja Muinuddin agreed to leave Khwaja Qutbuddin behind. It was in his honour that a later Sultan, Iltutmish, built the famous Qutub Minar at Mehrauli close to Delhi.

Sheikh Farid became the disciple of Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar and according to accounts of his early sufistic penance and training, first met his future Master at Multan where he was receiving a course in theology. Khwaja Qutbuddin came from his home in Central Asia, also a

refugee from Mongol terror ¹ As he noticed the handsome, serious-minded youth, from whose face shone the light of genius, he asked him what he was studying On being told that the book before him was the famous Arabic text *Nafi* (literally profit-bearing), a book on Muslim jurisprudence, the Saint, in a cryptic pun remarked 'Much profit from it will accrue to thee' This had reference, of course, to his future greatness as saint During the stay of Khwaja Qutbuddin at Multan, such devotion and affection developed between him and the youthful Farid that when Khwaja Qutbuddin left Multan to resume his journey to Delhi, he adjured him to follow him, after completing his studies Farid accompanied him a few stages, to see him off The holy Khwaja spoke to him, 'Friend Farid, go back, and for a period pursue thy studies at Multan After, come to me at Delhi' Sheikh Farid obeyed this command, and for five years after the departure of the Khwaja pursued his studies and acquired great proficiency in its various branches. Then he set out for Delhi, and had the honour to 'kiss the feet of the Supreme Qutub' A place was set apart for him near the holy man's house, where he engaged in austerities and ascetic exercises Once every week he would appear before the illuminating presence of the Master ² Later Sheikh Farid lived for several years at Hansi instructing the

¹ Khwaja Qutbuddin in Multan encountered opposition from the Sufis who were already congregated there They urged him not to settle there And a few months perhaps after his settling down, gave him a broad hint to depart, by placing his slippers so that they pointed outwards as was customary about a guest not too welcome

² Based on *Siyar-ul Aqtab*

people in Sufi piety. A large centre of Sufism grew there, and the tradition has continued right up to this day

At Delhi, Khwaja Qutbuddin had been joined by his master Khwaja Muinuddin. During this period, Farid continued his ascetic Sufi discipline under the guidance of the master he had adopted. This involved, in accordance with the tradition of the Chishti Order, severe penance and constant prayer, to subdue the flesh and to acquire spiritual illumination. One of the severest spiritual exercises was that known as *Chilla-i-Makus* (constant prayer with head hung downwards for forty days). This exercise, frightening in its extreme severity, was recommended only to the most eminent men by Sufi masters. At the successful conclusion of the exercise the Sufi-seeker was acknowledged as Qutub (literally polestar) a high title in the hagiological tradition of the Muslims. The exercise was usually undertaken in a lonely place, away from human commerce, and the place chosen for hanging the head downwards was a small well, in which the seeker would be suspended each morning for forty days and drawn up at sunset. He would naturally have to fast during this period and obviously not be able to absorb much food even during the night. It appears that both Khwaja Muinuddin and Khwaja Qutbuddin saw Farid during this period and noticed his self-discipline and the inner light which illumined his mind and soul. Full of love and admiration, Khwaja Muinuddin in the famous words reported in *Siyar-ul-Aqtab*, a seventeenth century account, blessed him thus

It is related that when the King of the Enlightened Ones,

Hazrat Khwaja Muinuddin Hasan Sijzi¹ (may Allah sanctify his secret) came to Delhi from Ajmer the Supreme Qutub² presented his disciples to the presence of his succouring master. Each got a blessing in accordance with his merit. After that the King of the Enlightened Ones queried 'Master Qutbuddin, is any one among your disciples still remaining?' He submitted 'A hermit (fakir) named Masaud³ is undergoing *chilla* and being involved in this (has not been able to come)'. The King of the Enlightened Ones got up and said, 'Come let me see that wilderness. Then both these great saints, lords of spiritual experience, came to the lone chamber of that distinguished person. As the door opened, the Lord Shagr-Ganj was seen to be so weak that he could not even bend to make his obeisance. So, tears welled up in his eyes and he placed his forehead on the ground. As the King of the Enlightened Ones saw this, he remarked, 'Qutbuddin, how long wilt thou torment this poor soul in these ascetic exercises? Come, let us confer our blessing on him.' So, each grasped him by one arm and the King of the Enlightened Ones turning his face backward prayed 'Thou Lord God of Highest Glory Accept the penance of Farid and confer on him the highest sainthood.' At once a Voice replied, 'I have accepted Farid, Farid is unique⁴ and unequalled among mankind.' This Divine Oracle sent Sheikh Farid into a state of ecstasy. When the holy Khwaja (Qutbuddin) saw this, he communicated to him, 'the Great Name' which had come to him by word of mouth from the Chisti holy men, and Divine Illumination immediately got revealed to him, and no veil was left to intervene between him and God, the Supreme Lord of all. Then the King of the Enlightened Ones conferred on him his own special robe, and the Supreme Qutub bestowed on him his turban and shawl and

¹ By an error, written as Sanjari in the text, with which it has close orthographic resemblance

² Refers to Khwaja Qutbuddin ³ Farid is meant

⁴ Refers to his name, which literally means 'unique'

whatever else was needed to appoint him his successor. A poet, on the spot composed this couplet in his praise:

Farid got the blessing of both worlds from the two holy men;
From the kings of the world he got royal status.
Then the King of the Enlightened Ones was pleased to remark:
Friend Qutbuddin hath ensnared a mighty royal eagle (*shahbaz*)
that would not settle anywhere below the Tree of Paradise.

CHAPTER II

The Mongol Incursions

THE TWELFTH CENTURY in the history of Iran is marked by the invasions of the Mongols or Tartars, a nomadic race living in the north of Turkestan, who descended upon the Muslim lands where over the centuries great civilizations and cultures and cities had grown. In their lust for the wealth of Turkestan and Iran, these tribes, at that time not converted to Islam, came with their hordes¹ repeatedly. Their incursions reached as far as Ghazni and Herat and forced the inhabitants of these areas to surrender or migrate. A vast amount of loot was taken, and men and women were ruthlessly butchered or taken as slaves. Sykes, in his *History of Persia*, has called these century-long Mongol invasions which repeatedly ravaged Muslim lands all the way from Turkestan through Iran to Baghdad, a cataclysm; and considering the vast destruction and havoc these

¹ 'Urdu' is the Mongol word for army, which has been anglicized into 'horde' with connotation of barbarism

invasions rendered, this term exactly conveys their effect. An entire world, a civilization, was uprooted by these nomads, who left the countries ruined and charred. Ultimately they captured the capital of the Islamic world, Baghdad and murdered the last of the Abbasid Caliphs, Mustasim Billah in a barbaric gesture of superstition. The chronology of these events is somewhat mixed up by the old chroniclers, writing in Persian, who ascribe these invasions to the beginning in the twelfth century, to Changez Khan. Changez Khan, the most famous and greatest of the Mongol lords was born in 1162, assumed leadership in 1175 and continued in his vast destructive career till his death in 1227.

The period during which Sheikh Farid was born and grew up (1173-1265) has as its backdrop in the Islamic world—this tragic chapter of the destruction of a whole culture—at least for the time. This feeling is expressed in the deeply moving *Marsiya* (dirge) composed by the poet Saadi in Persian, on the Mongol capture of Baghdad and murder of the Caliph Mustasim, who by his office combined imperial status (as witnessed by his title Amir-ul-Mominin—Commander of the Faithful) with holiness as the Prophet's Regent. This world-shaking event occurred in A H 656 (1258) at the hands of Halaqu Khan, grandson of Changez and founder of the Second Khan dynasty of Persian rulers. These century-long Mongol invasions of the Muslim world were the first major set-back in the long career of Muslim conquest and consolidation which had now entered the seventh century of its progress—a tremendous episode in continuity of development. The sack of Baghdad and the

terrible consequences were only the culminating episodes of a destructive process, and because of the symbolic character which Baghdad wore—similar to that of Rome to the Christian world—naturally caused tragic feelings and dismay among the thoughtful section of Muslims everywhere Saadi, in the *Marsiya* already referred to, laments in its opening verses

It behoves heaven to rain blood on the earth,
 To witness destruction of the empire of Mustasim,
 Commander of the Faithful
 Listen Muhammad! If it be true that thou shalt
 come out of thy grave on doomsday—
 Then lift thy head and see this doomsday
 descend upon mankind!

It would be outside the purpose and scope of this small book to trace the course of the Mongols in their conquests or to trace the vast expeditions of Changez Khan, which brought him into India, upto Sind and Multan in pursuit of the heroic Muslim King of Bokhara, Jalaluddin Khwarizm Shah, who fought against the Mongols to the bitter end. While Changez did not choose to advance further into India (1221) there was enough in the terror inspired by the Mongols to shake the Sultanate at Delhi whose outlying provinces witnessed some of their fury This happened at the time when Sheikh Farid was long settled at Ajodhan, near Multan, and was engaged in his beneficent mission of preaching godliness among semi-civilized tribes

At several places, in accounts pertaining to the twelfth

century and the pre-Changez Mongol era (with mixed chronology though) there is mention of the Mongols and the largely ineffectual fight which the Muslim princes waged against them. All this would provide the background to the series of migrations which sent Muslim scholars and divines into this country. Sheikh Farid's own great grandfather is stated to have been killed in a fight or sack at the hands of the Mongols, at Ghazni to whose ruling family he is said to have been related. It was this event which impelled his family to seek shelter in India. That would be in the Ghaznavid areas of the Punjab around Multan.

The Mongols, before the incursion of Changez Khan around 1221, had earlier harassed Nasiruddin Qabacha, Governor of Uch and Sind. This must have happened when Sheikh Farid was a young man. Qabacha in his difficulty turned for help to the holy man, Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. He adjured him to cast a 'blessed' arrow given by him at random into the Mongol ranks, which would overwhelm them. This done, the Mongols met with such a hail of arrows and such a storming of their defences that they raised siege and fled. This event is reported to have happened during the reign of the powerful Sultan Iltutmish (Iltemish) whose Governor, Qabacha was harassed by the Mongols. Earlier still, in the life-time of the poet Fariduddin Attar (born 1119), the Mongols had raided Nishapur, famous as the birth-place of a number of Persian poets and scholars. In Browne's *Literary History of Persia*, a quatrain is reproduced from a Persian poet of this period, Najmuddin Kubra, asserting the desperate determination of the Muslim Persians to

PAKPATTAN IN ITS REGIONAL SETTING



fight the infidel Mongols

We are of the noble race that grasps wine-cups,
Not of the paupers who live on skins of goats,
With one hand we hold the cup of the pure wine of faith,
And with the other snatch the *infidel's* standard

Again, it is recorded,¹ that Sher Khan, ruler of Multan and Uch tried to harass Sheikh Farid, though the reason for his animosity against the holy man is not recorded. Perhaps inter-Order rivalries of Sufis or the intrigues of the orthodox among the ulema caused this. Farid bore the harassment with patience. His suffering, however, brought divine retribution on Sher Khan, as infidels (i.e. Mongols) invaded his territory the same year.

The Mongols again invaded the Punjab, the outlying province of the Sultanate, during the reign of the great Sultan Balban, in 1285. A terrible battle ensued near Multan, in which the Delhi armies suffered great loss, and the Sultan's son, Prince Muhammad, was killed, who was honoured as *Shahid* or martyr. This loss broke the heart of the Sultan, who died shortly after. The poet Amir Khusrau composed a 'lament' (*marsiya*) on the occasion, in which incidentally 'Punjab' happens to be recorded for the first time as the name of the area. Sheikh Farid's son, Nizamuddin, who was an officer in the Sultan's army, also died in this battle. It was in this battle that the poet Amir Khusrau, a camp-

¹ Fawaid-ul-Fuwad (Persian) purporting to be recorded conversations of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya

follower of Prince Muhammad was taken prisoner by the Mongols. He has depicted his suffering in a couplet

من که در سر نمی نهادم گل
بار بزرگ بیاد و گستاخ

(*I who had never carried ever so much as a rose—the Mongol put a load on my head and commanded 'March'!*)

Siyarul Auliya, written around A H 800 (A C 1400), gives another peep into the Mongol terror. Firozshah Tughlaq (1352-1388) was put on the throne by the nobles, as it was felt that he alone could check the Mongol incursions. Earlier, in 1328, his predecessor, Muhammad Tughlaq, had faced an attack from the Chaghatai Mongols. Among the arguments which weighed in favour of his ill-fated decision to shift the capital from Delhi to Deogiri was the immunity of the latter from the Mongols. The terror inspired by the Mongols is still part of the unconscious race-memory of the people of the Punjab. In Punjabi a stupid brute is called *ujmakh* or *uzbek* (both used), recalling the years when the Central Asian Uzbeks, a tribe allied to Mongols, were a terror to the people.

Not long after these events, the Mongols got gradually converted to Islam, so that by a kind of nemesis, these destroyers of Islamic culture became the most powerful factor in the subsequent centuries for preserving and advancing its cause. Timur (Tamerlane) who appeared on the scene towards the later years of the fourteenth century, while he carried fire and sword over as vast an area as his ancestor Chingiz did, nevertheless, carry out his conquests in the name of Islam. His descendant Babur founded the Mughal (Mongol) dynasty of the Emperors of India which

became the most splendid Muslim ruling house in the world and left behind it such great traditions of administration and artistic achievements. The Mongol conversion is remarked on by the poet Iqbal in a well-known line in Urdu:

Pasban mil gaye Kaabe ko sanamkhane se

(The Kaaba got its guardians from out of the idol-house)

CHAPTER III

Succession to Khwaja Qutbuddin

SHEIKH FARID as a disciple and novice showed extreme devotion to his master Khwaja Qutbuddin and, according to tradition, obeyed him implicitly. Obedience, even what may be called blind, to the Sheikh or spiritual preceptor was an established canon in the tradition of Sufism. Parallels to this implicit devotional attitude are found in the Indian Bhakti tradition—sometimes remarkable stories are narrated of such obedience. In the case of Sheikh Farid it is said that while receiving his spiritual training from the Khwaja at Delhi, one cold morning, he set about, as usual, heating water for the Master's bath. There was no fire in the house, and he set out to find a live coal to make one. The mistress of an open house became infatuated with the handsome person of the innocent hermit and sought to seduce him as the Potiphar's wife (the Zuleikha of Muslim tradition) sought to seduce Joseph. The pious youth would not yield to her but, finding no way to get a live ember,

he gave one of his eyes to the frustrated woman in exchange. As the Master discovered his ruined eye, he is said to have prayed to God to make it whole, and his prayer was granted.

Sheikh Farid spent long periods at Hansi, where he was adjured to set up a centre of devotion. That centre still exists and it was his devoted disciple Sheikh Jamaluddin who carried on Sheikh Farid's tradition there. At this centre Sheikh Farid would impart the holy truth to the common folk. On his visits to Delhi, where his master Khwaja Qutbuddin was the reigning holiness (Qutub), his own devotees in the rural areas around Hansi missed him. Sheikh Farid was particularly touched by the sobbing wail of one Sarhanga, who fell at his feet and prayed to him to go less often to Delhi, since his devotees could not then behold his face and get his blessings. After this incident Sheikh Farid left Hansi.

When Sheikh Farid left Delhi for Hansi for the last time, his preceptor, Khwaja Qutbuddin, divining that the time for him to depart from this life was not far, said to his beloved disciple with tear-filled eyes 'Fariduddin, I know thou shalt not be my side in my last moments. Thus hath it been decreed. Thou shalt come two or three days after.' Saying this, he recited the Fatiha (opening verse of the Koran) and giving him leave to depart said, 'What I owe thee shall be handed over to Qazi Hamiduddin. Receive it from him on arrival.' Thereafter Sheikh Farid came to Hansi and stayed there for a considerable length of time. 'On the night that the Supreme Qutub departed this life Sheikh Farid dreamt that Khwaja Qutbuddin beckoned him to come over. He left immediately for

Delhi, and reached there on the third day; and saw the tomb of his succouring Master. The Master's patched cloak¹ and other articles² which had been left with Qazi (Hamiduddin) were delivered to him. The Qazi informed him 'This place (i.e. the ministry of Delhi) has been left by the Khwaja to be looked after by thy 'servants' (meaning Hamiduddin himself³)

Sheikh Farid stayed three days in Delhi, and on the fourth day after the morning prayer directed his steps towards Hansi. The people in Delhi appealed to him not to go away, but Sheikh Farid told them, 'What the Master hath conferred on me is mine, wherever I be.' So, he came over to Hansi, where he got great fame and was venerated by large crowds.

Khwaja Qutbuddin left this mortal world in A.H. 635 (around A.C. 1240). He had settled in Delhi in obedience to the command of his master Khwaja Muinuddin, who told him 'to take under his wing the territory of Delhi'. He left a great tradition of Sufistic piety in Delhi, which till today is symbolized, apart from the world-famous Qutab Minar, by the mausoleum of his disciple's disciple, Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya and the large number of great theologians and scholars which this city has thrown up during the last eight centuries. Khwaja Qutbuddin and his Master, while true to the tradition of the Chishti saints left behind no book, their conversations have been recorded and handed down from generation to generation. Khwaja Muinuddin defined

¹ Worn by Sufis after attaining a certain spiritual eminence

² His sandals, a staff and such others,

³ Based on *Siyar-ul-Aqtab*

to him the true Sufi as bearing these three qualities Fear of God (*Khauf*), Resignation to the will of God (*Reza*), and Love of God (*Mahabbat*) The first of these, Fear, is to abjure evil to escape the torment of hell-fire Resignation is implicit in the love of God, so that the true lover of God must not bring to his mind anything except God, as nothing created will last and the Painter of Existence had dubbed all creation only with this text from the holy Koran 'All shall pass away except the face of God'

The other precepts which the Masters, before dying, taught Khwaja Qutbuddin were

These marks of Sufism that I hand over to thee are a trust which has come down to the forebears of our Order from the holy Prophet himself I discharged that trust, now it shall be thy duty to discharge it Do it in a way that it bring not repentance to thee later My beloved son, the enlightened ones of God are like the sun, which illumines the whole world They shed the light of their Divine Knowledge over all mankind The devotees of God occupy a station higher than that of the angels Four are the qualities which emancipate man from the servitude of the ego first, to enrich oneself through self-denial (*dervishi*), second, to feel ever filled even though hungry, third, to be cheerful even when sorrows arise, and fourth, to requite evil with good¹

The great lessons received from Khwaja Muinuddin were transmitted by Khwaja Qutbuddin to the chief of his disciples and to the generality of mankind When he passed

¹ Based on *Siyar-ul-Aqtab*

away, it was a day of mourning for vast multitudes. He had himself earlier selected a certain patch of ground for his burial. When death came, he was in a state of ecstasy over this couplet, depicting the state of sweet torment in divine love, which is akin to the exalted joy of martyrdom.

تشنگان خنجر تسلیم را
هر زمان از عیب جان دیگر است

(Those thirsting after the touch of the Dagger of Resignation, find each moment a new life from on high) ¹

His funeral was attended by vast crowds, and the Sultan, Shamsuddin Iltutmish, and all the nobility attended it. From his tomb, some devotees felt they heard this message rising.

مرا رنده پذیرد از چون خویشدن
من آیم بجان گر تو آئی نه تن

(Think of me as alive as thou art thyself! As thou approachest with the body, I meet thee in spirit)

Sheikh Farid's devotion to his Master, as mentioned

¹ There is another variation to this verse, and it is associated with the death scene of more than one Sufi

کشدگان خنجر تسلیم را
هر زمان از عشق جان دیگر است

(Those slaughtered with the Dagger of Resignation, find a new life in love each moment)

earlier, was ideal His teachings towards Khwaja Qutbuddin are represented by a poet in the following quatrain, as reported in the 'Table Talk' of Sheikh Nasiruddin-Chiragh-i-Dehli, disciple of Sheikh Nizamuddin

مقدمول تو جر مقدمل جاويد نشد
 ور لطف تو هيچ بنده تو ميدي نشد
 عزت بکدام نره بيوست بے
 کان دره بد از هزار خورشيد نشد

*(Eternally blessed is he whom thou hast favoured,
 None hath ever despaired of thy grace,
 What dust-particle hath received thy blessing
 Without excelling in lustre a thousand suns?)*

Leaving Hansi, because of the vast concourse of men who came to pay him homage, he went over to Ajodhan This sequestered place pleased him because of its loneliness, as it gave him scope for his spiritual exercises without distractions There, too, the great ones of that area became devoted to him and entered the circle of his disciples He was also pestered by large crowds which came to have a glimpse of him He thought of moving to some other place But the Master had commanded him to stay right there So, he settled permanently in this place One day the Sultan, Ghiyasuddin Balban, came to pay him homage, which naturally brought in vast crowds This did not please him and he felt uneasy Just then he heard a voice from an Angel, saying 'Thou Sheikh, do not be upset about these crowds Bear with patience the tumult made by the people'. From that day on he never stopped anyone

from having a sight of him, and bore all with patience ¹

There is mention in Sheikh Farid's earliest accounts in Persian of his journeys to Delhi, his long stay several times at Hansi, which is about a hundred miles from the capital, as also of his visit on a pilgrimage to Ajmer, the seat of the great Khwaja Muinuddin, founder of the Chishtiya Order in India. The chronology of these journeys is not very clear, but as to the essential facts there need be no doubt. The *chilla* (or forty days' meditation and penance), was undergone in Delhi. There is also a tradition at Ajmer that it was undergone there. While there is nothing against the *chilla* being observed at this holy place, it may be that after undergoing his severest penance and receiving the benediction and badge of honour from the two saints—Khwaja Muinuddin and Khwaja Qutbuddin—Sheikh Farid need not have undergone another *chilla*. He was now a 'sheikh' or spiritual teacher in his own right, and could set up a centre of preaching and instruction.

The early Sufis were men of extreme piety and ascetic habits, shunning the ordinary comforts of life and keeping clear of the rich and the powerful. While, therefore, Sheikh Farid spent some time at Hansi, not too far from Delhi, it appears that there was possibly a desire on his part to go back and settle in the western parts, around Multan, where his father had established a home for the family at a place called Khotwal or Kothiwal. This was a wild and arid area, with few of the comforts of life. It was here that his preceptor Khwaja Qutbuddin commanded him to go and settle down. 'Go.

¹ *Fawaid-ul-Fuwad*

thou and set up settlement in some wasteland' (*wirana*).

So, Sheikh Farid selected a place called Ajodhan, close to the western side of the river Sutlej, on the banks of one of its tributary streams. This place is now in the Montgomery (Sahiwal) district of the Punjab (Pakistan) and is a fairly well-developed small town. It was at the junction of roads which led to Uch, Multan and the Derajat and thus had the potential of becoming a commercial centre. The stream had a ferry service across it. This ferry was called *Pattan* which is a word commonly used in Punjabi and many Indian dialects. Later, in honour of the great saint Farid who sanctified it, it came to be called Pak-Pattan (Holy Ferry). Today it is still called by that name. In *Guru Nanak's Life*, it is related that he met one of the successors of Sheikh Farid, named Sheikh Ibrahim (Brahm) at Pattan (that is, Pak-Pattan) ¹

Ajodhan or Pak-Pattan is situated in an area called *Bar* (jungle-land). The local people, still known as Janglis (with the 'a' lengthened out as in 'ah') are breeders of cattle and have somewhat primitive habits. They have an uncanny skill in cattle-lifting and the literacy rate among them is still low. They are Muslims by faith, having been converted during the centuries after the establishment of the Ghaznavid rule over portions of the Punjab. The British rulers colonized the area with a large number of ex-military men, mostly Sikhs, before and after the first World War, who were given free-hold land on concessional terms. Canals, newly made, brought prosperity to the area. Now

¹ A sketch-map showing the location of Pak-Pattan is appended to this monograph

the Sikhs have all emigrated to the Indian side of the border. *Siyarul Auliya* records that Sheikh Farid spent his entire life from his twenty-fourth year onwards at Ajodhan. Earlier, it appears from the same source that he wanted to settle at Lahore, 'which has a river by its side', but the command of the Master Qutbuddin decided the Sheikh in favour of the 'wasteland' of Ajodhan

After moving here, Sheikh Farid got built for himself a *kutchra* dwelling and sent his brother Sheikh Najibuddin Mutawakkil (literally, one depending implicitly on divine dispensation) to bring his mother to their new home. While mother and son were travelling through the wild, arid area, she felt parched with thirst. Water was not readily available. Sheikh Najibuddin left her and went to look for water. On his return he found no trace of his mother whom he had left under a wild drought-resisting tree of this desert-land. So, he concluded that some wild beast had devoured her. Sometime afterwards human bones were found in this place which, it was concluded, must have been Sheikh Farid's mother. These were put in a sack and brought to him at Ajodhan. Sheikh Farid got the rites for the dead performed over this sack of bones, and said prayers for invoking divine mercy on the departed soul.

At Ajodhan Sheikh Farid passed a life full of austerity and beneficent works. The area produced only wild trees and bushes of a drought-resisting character. The people were wild and given to tribal feuds. To settle among such people and in such an area was a voluntarily imposed trial by a man of God, such as others of his kind have imposed on themselves in the course of human history. As related

by his disciple, the famous Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya, who visited him at least three times at Ajodhan after an arduous journey undertaken from Delhi, very often there would be little to eat in his home, and the family and disciples would feel blessed if they could make a meal on *dela*, a wild sour-tasting berry growing on a leafless thorny bush. Another wild fruit found in this area is *peelu*, a sweet seed-like berry which matures during the hot months. The only trees are *jand* and *kikar*—both hard and drought-resisting and thorny. *Jand* bears a kind of bean, not unpleasant in taste, which is good feed for sheep and goats. There was little else in that hot place to gladden the eye.

Often Sheikh Farid would send out, in the manner of the mendicant that a Sufi should be, the begging-bowl called *Zanbil* to raise something through charity. This must have been in the beginning, for after the fame of his piety and his beneficent touch to relieve suffering spread, large crowds would come to visit him and bring to him offerings, called in Muslim parlance *futuh*. He maintained in the tradition of the Chishti saints, a Khanqah or hospice for itinerant Sufis and others, along with a prayer-house where strangers would be provided food and shelter and spiritual instruction and participation in the ecstasy which Sufistic communion would induce. Here Sheikh Farid also received visits from travelling scholars, other Sufis and dervishes and from large crowds seeking his blessing. He would sit on a cot or on the floor in the manner of the saints of India and instruct those squatting around. While his discourses would obviously contain a fair proportion of the spiritual terminology in Arabic and Persian, which had gained

currency within Islam both on its orthodox-ritualistic side and its sufistic tradition, his discourses would obviously be delivered in the language understood by the common folk.

This would in the first place be the Multani dialect of Punjabi, his native tongue, with an admixture of such medieval Hindi or Hindavi as was current in the areas around Delhi, where a part of his discipleship and the early days of his ministry were spent, particularly in the small town of Hansi, set within an area speaking a dialect related to Hindi. While Muslim tradition has preserved almost nothing of what he spoke during the long years of his ministry, and has reported all his conversations and discourses in literary Persian, it is obvious that this reportage is not the literal transcript of what he uttered. At the level of scholarship, he would naturally speak Persian to those who like himself belonged to the learned fraternity. But to the folk he would speak in their own language. That is what holy men in India, even when they have been learned, have done to this day. It is a part of his poetic compositions in his native Multani which has been preserved in the Sikh sacred scripture, the Granth Sahib, which is a fortunate accident. But of that more later.

CHAPTER IV

Some Glimpses of Sheikh Farid's Life During His Holy Ministry

SHEIKH FARID observed the utmost discipline and self-denial in the matter of food and clothing. It is said that he slept with only a small worn-out blanket which could hardly cover his body. During the fasting month of Ramadan he would break the day's abstemiousness from food and drink with only a small cupful of sherbet. Out of the jug of sweetened water that was brought for him he would distribute all except one small cupful among those who were present near him. These were generally the poor, who hardly had the wherewithal to get anything sweet to break their own fast with. He took his food on the bare ground and eschewed the use of any floor-mat or *sufra*, such as is customary among the more affluent Muslims.

When Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud came to Uch near Multan, he also made a decision to come to Ajodhan to pay homage to Sheikh Farid. The entire royal army came into the small town of Ajodhan to have a glimpse of the holy

man Since it would not be possible for the Sheikh to make himself visible to these thousands of men, a part of his cloak was hung from a roof. The crowds came and kissed this and took their leave. So great was the rush for worshipping of this emblem that it was torn to tatters. Then on the importuning of those eager to behold him, the Sheikh came himself into a mosque and told his disciples to make a ring round him, so that the crowds were kept at a distance, and the people might behold him and turn back. The disciples did as they were bid. Suddenly an old ferrash (chamber-servant) thrust himself through the cordon formed by the Sheikh's disciples, fell at his feet and drew the Sheikh towards himself to kiss his feet. With this the ferrash said, 'O Sheikh of Sheikhs Fariduddin, dost thou feel upset? Thou shouldst rather render thanks to God Most High for this blessing.' At these words of the ferrash the Sheikh cried out as though his heart were deeply touched and, blessing the ferrash, made apologies to him. Then the Sheikh discoursed on the necessity of man bearing a tender heart, and comport oneself towards others with kindness ¹

A story is told that on this occasion the Sultan also sent to Sheikh Farid the gift of some villages and some money through the Vizier Balban, who later became Sultan. The Sheikh kept the money and distributed it among the poor and the needy. The freehold of the villages he returned to the Sultan with the following verse

¹ This theme is prominently expressed in the Sheikh's *Bani* in *Adi Granth*.

شاہ مبارک وہ دھد مدت دھد

دارق ما دوق بے مدت دھد

*(The king grants us villages and lays us under obligation
Our Provider gives us sustenance free of obligation)*

Furthermore, he sent him this message, voicing his deep concern for the welfare of the people.

ملک بو زبیر خدا ترس صدم کن

(Put thy kingdom in the charge of a God-fearing Vizier)

This was an instance of the usual attitude of contentment and contempt for things of the world which characterized the best among the Sufis

Sheikh Farid was compassionate and forgiving. A necromancer once tried to harm him by the power of black magic. After a prolonged period of the Sheikh's illness and the failure of treatment it was discovered that this necromancer had made a figurine of the Sheikh and stuck needles into it and buried it in the earth. When it was taken out and the needles extracted, the Sheikh got well. The local chief of Ajodhan offered to put the necromancer to death, but the Sheikh forgave him and had his life spared.

A woman once came in terror to the Sheikh, complaining that a certain yogi, who had occult powers, forced her to make a daily gift of milk to him which she could hardly spare, on pain of pursuing her with his demoniac power. It is said that taking pity on the poor woman, the Sheikh dispelled the evil effect of the yogi's magic and she had no longer to pay the daily toll of milk to him.

Sheikh Farid does not appear to have been, however, too eager to practise those extraordinary powers which his spiritual and ascetic practice brought to him. As people approached him for amulets to ward off evil, he consulted his Master, Khwaja Qutbuddin, whether he should write out amulets as the people begged of him. The Khwaja replied: 'To fulfil peoples' desires is neither in my hand nor in thine. As an amulet is God's Name and the Word of God, so, write it out and hand over to whoever asks for it.' This enlightened attitude sets off these holy men from the general practitioners of charms etc. who claim occult powers for themselves. Khwaja Qutbuddin, while enjoining upon him the duty to go and settle in a deserted place, quoted this verse to point out to him the infinite mystery of God's blessing and the need for patience:

اے سساکرد کان ترا دارو ست
اے سسا شیر کان ترا آھو است

*(Many a lion to thee will prove inoffensive as deer,
Much pain and suffering will prove medicine to thy ills.)*

Some miraculous stories are related of him, which illustrate the great faith he inspired and the veneration in which the people held him. Once, it is said, a man who was coming on a pilgrimage to him, was joined on the way by a courtesan. She tried to seduce him. As his mind lost its self-control, he suddenly felt a resounding slap strike him on the face, and an invisible voice sternly reminding him that this deed did not accord with the holiness of him he was going to visit. This warning deterred him from the depravity in which he

was about to indulge. As he reached Sheikh Farid's presence, the Sheikh told him, 'It was a good warning thou didst get on the way.' This was one of those happenings which confirmed the people's belief in the miracle-working powers of the Sheikh.

Another incident related to a man who was asked to carry, on behalf of a chieftain, an offering of one hundred *tankas*¹ to the Sheikh. The man appropriated, however, fifty of these coins for his own use. As he reached the Sheikh's presence and offered the half that remained, the Sheikh smiled and, remarked, 'That was a fraternal fifty-fifty division that thou didst make.' The man felt ashamed at his act of misappropriation, begged forgiveness for his lapse and placed the rest of the amount before the Sheikh. Seeing his repentance, the Sheikh showered grace on him and took him into the circle of his devotees. Later, this same person was sent out by the Sheikh as a missionary towards Sistan.

Sher Khan, Chief of Multan and Uch, for some reason was on inimical terms with the Sheikh. He did not utter a word of bitterness or any revengeful feeling, but contented himself with this expression of saintly fortitude.

افسوس که از حال منیت نیست جز
آنگه حیر شود که افسوس خوری

*(Alas, thou knowest not the truth about me,
When thou dost know it, thou shall indeed repent).*

The Sheikh, in his absorption in God seldom thought of his

¹ A coin, of the value of a rupee.

family. This kind of indifference to their temporal relationships is characteristic of the great holy men. Sheikh Farid had a favourite son Nizamuddin, who was an officer in the Sultan's army. This same son later fell fighting against the Mongols in 1287. While away, he sent his respects to his father through someone going in the Sheikh's direction. As the message was conveyed to the Sheikh, he took quite some time to come out of his state of God-absorption and to identify as to who this person was who had sent him this respectful greeting.

Another time his wife came to him and wailed that their child had died of starvation. The Sheikh kept his composure of mind and only remarked, "What can this slave of God, Masaud do to stop the ordinance of God? Since he has left this mortal world, dispose of his body.'

His extreme asceticism often took the form of refusing to wear any new dress that was offered to him. Once, as a servant brought salt with a *dang* (pice) on credit, the Sheikh refused to partake of the food seasoned with it as, according to him, it would be a sin to indulge in such luxury on borrowed money.

CHAPTER V

Character and Teaching

SHEIKH FARID was an accomplished Islamic scholar in his day. For such period as was necessary, he received his education in various branches of theology at Multan, which was then a great centre of learning, and where at that period his cousin Sheikh Bahauddin Suharwardi presided over the religious life of the Muslims. Later he finished the process of his education at Delhi, which in those times 'boasted equality with Samarkand and Bokhara' as a centre of learning. Sheikh Bahauddin wielded vast spiritual influence, evidence of which may be seen in naming the town of Bahawalpur after him. He shared with Sheikh Farid the spiritual empire in those regions, though Sheikh Farid's influence spread over a much larger field through his great disciple, Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya, whose Dargah at Delhi is the annual resort of hundreds of thousands and has over the centuries attracted kings, ministers, poets and saints. Because of his learning, Sheikh Farid has been constantly

referred to as Sheikhul-Islam (The Supreme Divine of Islam) and Sheikh-i-Kabir (Supreme Sheikh or Divine) Living in a far away deserted corner of the Punjab, he attracted large numbers of devotees who came to him for blessing and instruction So great was the veneration in which he was held that more than a hundred years after his death, as the conqueror Timur swept across the vast Muslim world and entered India, he spared the town of Ajodhan where the Mausoleum of the holy Farid was situated. He bent his lance to the great holy man, and passed along

Much has been written by the Muslim hagiographers about the proselytization work of Sheikh Farid and the other Sufi saints of those times This no doubt is true But the method which these saints adopted was to appeal to the people's hearts and souls through their sweet words and the nobility of their lives Often Sheikh Farid and the other Sufis held spiritual discourses with the Hindu Yogis At these colloquies an atmosphere of spiritual communion prevailed and these holy men had much to learn from one another. It is recorded in several places that the yogic *praxix* or *pranayam* (breath-control) called by the Sufis *pas-i-anfas* was practised by a number of them. In the course of these mutual contacts, a common attitude towards spiritual problems developed, and moral and spiritual teaching, free from theological rancour, percolated from these saints, Hindu as well as Muslim, to the common masses In this background the conversions to Islam that came about through the Sufi saints were the result of a loving approach and true veneration. This was in a different context from the fanatical movement launched by the

theologians who, unsparing in their criticism of the Sufis, reviled them for their departures from strict orthodoxy

That the Sufis brought the healing touch to the strife-torn scene of religious hate and rancour in those times is evidenced by an incident which bears a deep symbolic character. Once someone presented a pair of scissors, which Sheikh Farid refused to accept. He said, 'Bring me instead a needle, for I am come to join and not to bring about cleavage.' This is in accordance with the famous aphorism in the *Masnawi* of Jalaluddin Rumi, the great thirteenth century mystic poet of Islam

تو برائے وصل کردن آمدی

ے برائے وصل کردن آمدی

(*Thou hast come into the world to join, and not to set asunder*)

The sweetness of conduct and the loving approach of the Sufis won all hearts. They kept, moreover, away from potentates and men of wealth. Asceticism was their creed. Any kind of commerce with the rich and the powerful would render a Sufi *persona non grata* with his Order. State employment called *shaghal* was strictly forbidden to them. With this purity of conduct, they could turn their back on kings and chiefs, and as in the case of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya, could stand up to tyrants.

Once someone approached Sheikh Farid for a letter of recommendation to Balban who held him in high esteem. The Sheikh was averse to cultivating persons in power, and to approaching them through flattery. The letter

which he addressed to the Sultan in Arabic is cryptic, and runs thus 'I have raised his matter to Allah, then to thee. If thou givest him anything, the true giver is Allah, though thou shalt earn thanks. If thou mayst withhold to give what he wants, the preventor too is Allah, and in that case thou shouldst be taken to be helpless.'

These teachings of Sheikh Farid are reflected in his *Bani*, brief as it is, which forms part of the Sikh Scripture. This emanates from those spiritual experiences and moral faith which the Sheikh's life-experience had instilled into him and made part of his inmost being. Of this, a somewhat detailed statement will follow in a later section of this book. The Muslim hagiographers who have written about the Sheikh, have in numerous contexts reported either his conversations, called *malfuzat* or have in the tabular or other form summarized the cardinal points of his teaching. The authenticity of such reporting need not always be taken to be beyond question, but the teachings ascribed to the Sheikh are generally such as would normally be associated with a Sufi of a high order, who belonged to the ascetic tradition of this creed. Among the statements about his teaching which have descended through these sources are these.

Zakat or charity is of three kinds. The first of these is the *Zakat* of Shariat (that is, that enjoined upon man by the common law of Islam). This is the giving away of five dirhams out of two hundred to those deserving charity. The second is *Zakat* of Tariqat or the Sufistic path. This consists in keeping five dirhams to oneself out of two hundred. The third, *Zakat* of Haqiqat or God-consciousness is to give away every dirham out of two hundred in

the way of God the Holy and the Prophet (Peace and Salutations on him) This last is enjoined, because to be a Dervish is to give all that is one's own and to be entirely without thought of self In this context the Sheikh made mention of Sheikh Shahabuddin Umar Suharawardi¹ to whom daily about ten thousand dirhams came and he gave away everything in charity, so that by nightfall not a copper coin remained with him A query was addressed to this Sheikh, as to the definition of wastefulness, by Sheikh Badruddin Ishaq, his son-in-law The Sheikh replied 'To spend with impure intention, not to spend in the way of God, is wastefulness But if one were to possess the whole world, and were to give it in the way of God, that would not be wastefulness'

Again, once when he was asked as to the characteristics of the true Hermit (Dervish) he replied

The true Dervish is one who shows compassion to others and rather than broadcast their faults, tries to cover them The Dervish must, furthermore, have these four qualities He must render his eyes blind so as not to observe others' faults Secondly, he must make his ears deaf, so as not to hear whatever is not proper His tongue must be mute, so as to abstain from speaking evil In the fourth place, he must be as though lame of foot, so as not to visit any place merely to fulfil his lower desires Whoever hath these four qualities, is a true Dervish, even though by his apparel he may be no different from ordinary men of the world If not so,

¹ The famous Sufi, founder of the Suharawardi Order

then God forbid, he is a liar, a highwayman and an egoist, without anything of the Dervish about him ' Then the Sheikh added, 'The essence of this path (i.e. of the Dervish) is ever to live with God in one's thoughts. Such a state is attained only if one shuns ill-gotten gains and avoids worldliness and the company of worldings '

(From *Siyar-ul-Aqtab*)

Speaking of *Rizq* (substance) he taught that the true devotee is one who does not strain over much substance. *Rizq* is of four kinds, viz (1) That which is predestined and is nowise subject to change, (2) that the pursuit of which involves greed and avarice, (3) that which is accumulated after legitimate needs are fulfilled, and (4) that which is covenanted by God and will inevitably come. The true seeker must nowise fall into sorrow and despair over worldly goods—the predestined must come from God. The true seeker, out of trust in God, must spend in the way of God what comes to him. The greedy hoarder will forfeit divine grace.

Taubah or turning away from the world is of six kinds of the Heart, which consists in keeping the heart free of lower passions, of the Tongue, in keeping this organ free from speaking ill, of the Eye, in not casting a glance at what is forbidden, in restraining oneself from cavilling and in not being complacent in the sight of aggression, of the ears, in shutting these organs to anything but remembrance of God, of the Hands, in restraining these from acquiring what is not legitimate, and lastly, of the Feet in turning one's steps away from evil temptations.

Such was the trend of his teaching, in which unworld-

liness and devotion to God are the pre-eminent elements. As said earlier, these principles are reflected also in his *Bani*, as it has been recorded in the *Granth Sahib*.

His view was asked with regard to certain women saints. Such a question would naturally arise in a man-dominated society wherein a woman's merit would be grudgingly acknowledged. There had been the Sufi lady Rabia for whom the Kaaba is said to have been lifted to be seen by her. There were then the contemporaries of Sheikh Farid, Bibi Sarah and Bibi Fatima Sam, Farid's own mother Qarsum Bibi, whose saintliness influenced his own life deeply. With regard to such ladies, Sheikh Farid remarked, they are really men whom God has created in the female form. Sheikh Nizamuddin, his great disciple, said on the same theme 'When a lion springs out of the thicket, no one stands to enquire whether it is male or female!' One lady, Bibi Fatima maintained the relationship of a sister with Sheikh Farid and his brother Sheikh Najibuddin.

Sheikh Farid's influence spread far and wide in his own lifetime. The Chishtiya Silsilah or Order of which he was one of the founders in India, acquired great influence among the masses because of the gentle, humane character of its teachers and their preaching done through the medium of music and song. The great rivals of the Chishtis, the Suharwardis carried on a more austere puritanical tradition and maintained little of that gentle touch of humanity which characterized the Chishtis. The inaccessibility and aristocratic manner of Sheikh Bahauddin Zakaria has been pointedly contrasted with the gentle humility of Sheikh Farid. Because of these qualities the Chishtis' influence

spread far and wide over the length and breadth of India. The Chishtiya Order is the Order confined almost exclusively to the sub-continent. Its centres are found in Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi in the north, besides Haryana and the Punjab, while in the Deccan its great centre is at Gulbarga where the famous Khwaja Gasu Daraz flourished. In Rajasthan the cardinal pilgrim centre, so to speak, of the Chishtiya Order is at Ajmer, which has maintained its pre-eminent position as a Muslim pilgrim centre in India. In Uttar Pradesh at Badaun, the birth-place of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya, his cenotaph is located (the real tomb being in Delhi). There are a number of families there, all claiming to have descended from him. Thanesar, Hansi, Kaithal, Panipat, Narnaul and Kilkheri—all except the last in Haryana—were great Chishtiya centres before the migration of the Muslim population from East Punjab as a result of the Partition of India in 1947.

In West Punjab a large number of centres of the Chishti Order are found, claiming till this day the veneration of millions of Muslims. The more important Chishti centres in that region, besides Pak-Pattan, are Muharsharif, Taunsa, Ahmadpur, Chachran, Mokhad, Jalalpur, Golra, Kot Mithan and others. The descendants of Sheikh Farid at Pak-Pattan are notables of the area and have been, through the centuries, revenue-collectors and recipients of large offerings. Part of this property came to them from state gifts in the days of the Sikh rule. All this, of course, is a far cry from the early asceticism of the founders of their Order. The hereditary Pirs, in most of the places mentioned, now maintain only ritual piety and shed little of that *mual* and

spiritual light which characterized their forebears. In most of these places semi-educated persons, interested mainly in the perquisites of the shrines, carry on a routine of religious ceremonial. This decline from the great traditions of the past is not confined to the Muslim religion, but is a common phenomena in our own country and elsewhere. The occupants of the holy seats have declined into recipients of unearned incomes. In British times and even earlier, they behaved as a part of the state system and, rather than heal the wounds of the suffering masses, participated in the spoils on which the regimes in those times rested.

Amidst this welter, however, the names of the great Sufi teachers like Sheikh Farid, Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya and Khwaja Muinuddin stand out as guiding stars, and serve as sources of inspiration to all seekers after the higher life. Great poets have attached themselves in piety to Sheikh Nizamuddin, such as Amir Khusrau, Ghalib and Iqbal. Alauddin Khalji and the princess Jahan Ara sought burial places near his tomb. Sheikh Farid continues to command veneration far and wide, over the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Kashmir, and Afghanistan. He has another set of devotees—the Sikhs—who venerate him for his *Bani* or sacred word in the Guru Granth Sahib. Such religious devotion symbolizes not only the greatness of the Sheikh but is also an honourable act of devotion on the part of the Sikh people themselves, who venerate Sheikh Farid's Word as they do Guru Nanak's own.

SHEIKH FARID AND THE TOWN OF FARIDKOT

The modern town of Faridkot which is situated close to

Bhatinda and would, in Sheikh Farid's time, be on the highroad leading out from Delhi and Hansi towards Multan, is traditionally associated with his name. Ajodhan would be about a hundred miles from this place. A credible story connects the name of this place, Faridkot (Fort of Farid) with the forced labour that this saint had to undergo there, in the time of the Chief named Mokal, who was then building a fort here. Now there are no traces of that old fort, but its existence eight centuries ago should not be doubted. Sheikh Farid, perhaps along with some of his disciples was, according to the current story, forced to carry bricks or earth for the ramparts of the fort. By a miracle it is said, the basket full of earth was lifted a cubit above the saint's head. This miracle naturally attracted a crowd and the chief, fell at the saint's feet and begged his forgiveness. Baba Farid is said to have blessed this town, which was named Faridkot after him. Faridkot is now a flourishing town and two memorials, said to be associated with Sheikh Farid, are preserved there. One is the Chilla or place of secluded meditation, which is in the crowded area of the town, the other is a spot outside, called Leer-mal, where Sheikh Farid is reputed to have stopped under some trees for shelter, while on his way. Here his tattered clothes hung on thorny bushes.

The general geographical features of this are similar to those of Ajodhan (Pak-Pattan). Faridkot now has an ample supply of canal water. So has the area in which Pak-Pattan is situated. But in those times each was a dusty waste with a flora of wild, drought-resisting and hardy bushes. The general landscape of the area is still unrelieved

and cheerless, with withering winds and dust-storms blowing frequently in the hot months. Water was scarce and was brought to the surface by the excruciating labour of man and beast. This situation is only partly remedied now. The people are hardy and are now catching up with the sophistications of civilization. Some of the atmosphere of the place is unmistakably caught in the hymns of Sheikh Farid preserved in the holy Granth which, besides being a rich spiritual treasure, could be a mine for historical study, if properly explored.

CHAPTER VI

Disciples and Influence

SHEIKH FARID had, according to report, twenty Khalifas or senior missionary-disciples who carried his message to different parts of the country. Out of these however, three were considered the principal ones. At the head of Sheikh Farid's disciples stood the famous Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi who, after the death of the great Sheikh, became the successor to his spiritual throne or mission. Sheikh Nizamuddin was born at Badaun, a town some thirty miles from Bareilly which has, since almost the beginning of the Delhi Sultanate, been a centre of Muslim piety and learning. Iltutmish, before he became Sultan, was the *nazim* or governor of this province and some buildings are said to date from the days of his governorship. Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya is said to have lived first at Lahore, which had had Sufistic associations before the days of Sheikh Ali ben Usman Hujwiri (Data Ganj Bakhsh) who lived early in the eleventh century. Then Sheikh Nizamud-

din settled in Badaun. He received his learning in theology as well as in Sufistic spirituality from Sheikh Farid. At some time Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya must have moved to Delhi where he came under Sheikh Farid's influence. Such deep love and devotion developed in his heart for his Master Farid, that he visited him at least three times at Ajodhan after a hard journey, and shared with him all the hardships of his voluntary poverty.

The story of Sheikh Farid's life and his teaching is detailed in a book written between A.H. 719 and 722 by a disciple Hasan Ali, entitled *Fawaid-ul-Fauid*. Since Sheikh Nizamuddin died in A.H. 725, this book may be said to be an account or journal of the conversations of Sheikh Nizamuddin arranged under the dates on which Hasan Ali visited his master. It is said therein that when, after an unusually long interval, Sheikh Nizamuddin came to visit his Master Sheikh Farid, the latter expressed his love in a Persian couplet which runs as below:

اے آہن فراقت دلہا کدیا کردہ
سیلاب اشتیاقت چاہہا حراں کردہ

(*The fire of thy separation hath burnt hearts,
The flood of eagerness for thee hath rutned lives*)

Sheikh Nizamuddin learnt *Hadith* and a part of the Koran from Sheikh Farid, as also the famous book on Sufistic philosophy, entitled *Awarif-ul-Maarif*, written by Sheikh Shahabuddin Suharawardi.

Sheikh Nizamuddin was deeply compassionate and always thought of the suffering of others. It is said that when

he partook of food to break his fast he contented himself only with a little water or a morsel. With tears in his eyes he would say, 'With so many of the poor lying hungry all around, how can I taste this food?' To this day around his tomb in Delhi, crowds squat daily to be fed. He was so considerate that once when he was having his afternoon siesta, a dervish or mendicant came to meet him. He was turned back. Right at that time Sheikh Nizamuddin is said to have seen Sheikh Farid in a dream admonishing him and telling him, 'Even if you cannot give anything to a poor man, at least be kind to him. Is it proper to turn him back, thus broken-hearted?' On waking up he sent for the dervish and was most unhappy that his Master, Farid, had disapproved his action.

One piece of verse composed by a poet expressed Sheikh Nizamuddin's devotion to Sheikh Farid

داں دور کہ مدد تو داند را
در مرد نک دندہ نشاند مرا

لطف عامت عنایتے فرمود اسب
ورنہ کیم و حہ ام چہ حواند مرا

*(From the day that the world knows me to be thy slave,
I have been seated in the pupils of men's eyes,*

*Thy overflowing kindness hath shown me bounty,
Else who and what am I ? of what worth ?)*

His compassion and forgiveness is expressed in another piece of verse which is an eloquent evidence of his saintly

character In the original Persian it runs thus

هر كه مارا رسكه دارد راحتس بسيار باد
 هر كه مارا يار نمود آورد يار باد
 هر كه خارے افگند در راه ما ار دشمنى
 هر گلے كز باغ عمرس بشگند دے خار باد

*(Whoever offends me, my God give him comfort,
 Whoever turns against me, may God befriend him;
 Whoever casts a thorn in my path out of malice,
 May God grant him in his life roses free from thorns)*

Sheikh Nizamuddin bore an attitude of noble tolerance towards the followers of other faiths in that age when tolerance was not a common virtue. With a deeply understanding attitude, he is reported to have said in the words of the poet Amir Khusrau, with reference to the ceremonial of worship followed by certain Hindus

هر قوم راست راه دندے و فدلے گاهے

*(Every people has its own particular path, faith
 and object of worship)*

Sheikh Nizamuddin was venerated by vast multitudes. Among his fervent devotees recently was the poet Ghalib, who is buried by the side of his tomb. So are the poet Amir Khusrau and the princess Jahan Ara, daughter of Shah Jahan. He left, to carry on the faith, another great Sufi saint, Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Dehli.

Sheikh Nizamuddin is stated to have shown his indifference to royal favours and to have shown independence in

the face of tyranny Alauddin Khilji is said to have sought to associate him with some affair of state and sought his advice on religious matters. But Sheikh Nizamuddin, true to the Chishti vow of unconcern with worldliness did not fall into the trap and sent back word, 'What have dervishes to do with kings and their affairs? I am a dervish living away from the city and its concerns, and engage myself in praying for the welfare of kings and their subjects. If the king sends another message of this kind, I may leave this place. The earth is so vast.' When the Sultan sought to meet him personally, the Sheikh sent back word, 'The house of this humble man has two doors. If the king comes in by one, I shall go out by the other.' Allauddin's son, Qutbuddin Mubarak sought to harass the Sheikh, who dismissed the threat with the cryptic words '*Hunooz Dilli durast*' (Delhi is still a long way off). It is said that before Qutbuddin reached Delhi, he died. The words of the Sheikh have passed into a proverb, implying something like 'there's many a slip between the cup and the lip'.

The articles investing him with succession to Sheikh Farid were sent to him at Delhi, where he was at the time. By a strange coincidence among the great Chishti saints, none was present at the time of his Master's death. Sheikh Farid took his last parting from Sheikh Nizamuddin when the latter was leaving for Delhi. Divining that death was approaching, he got prepared a deed of succession or 'Khilafat Nama' in his favour, appointing him Imam or spiritual guide of the age. The articles of investiture were delivered to Sheikh Nizamuddin by a messenger.

Sheikh Nizamuddin, along with Khwaja Munuddin

Chishtī, is one of the two greatest names in the history of Islamic spirituality in India. He has been honoured by such appellations as 'Sultan-ul-Mashaikh' (King of Religious Preceptors) and 'Mahbub-i-Ilahī' (Beloved of Allah)

The other famous and trusted disciple of Sheikh Farīd was Sheikh Jamal-ud-dīn of Hansī. He was so greatly trusted by the master that he had ordered that no *Khilafat Nama* or deed ordaining any person as his missionary should be credited unless it had been confirmed by Jamal-uddīn. Once it happened that somebody carried one of Sheikh Farīd's *Khilafat Namas* to Sheikh Jamaluddīn, who, however, tore it off. As the man complained of this to Sheikh Farīd, he replied 'What Jamal has torn, Farīd cannot join.' It was out of love for Jamal-ud-dīn that Sheikh Farīd spent twelve years of his life at Hansī. Sheikh Farīd used to refer to him as his *Jamal* (Beauty). His self-effacement was so great that after coming under the influence of Sheikh Farīd, his life was entirely devoted to ascetic exercises. Once Sheikh Bahauddīn Suharawardī asked Sheikh Farīd to pass on Jamal-ud-dīn to him as his Khalifa. Sheikh Farīd was reluctant and replied, 'Who can part with his own *Jamal* (Beauty) to another?' However, as Jamal-ud-dīn in some weak moment went over to Sheikh Bahauddīn, Sheikh Farīd was unhappy and it was only after he showed full repentance, that was he taken back into favour. Jamal-ud-dīn pre-deceased his master and was buried at Hansī. His burial-place is now a centre of Muslim pilgrimage in that town and along with the tombs of some other Sufis, the area is called Chahar Qutub—because of these buried Sufis being looked upon as Qutubs (Sufis of

the highest Order) The son of Jamal-ud-din, named Burhanuddin when yet a child, was brought to Sheikh Farid at Ajodhan for his blessing by his nurse. Sheikh Farid wanted to appoint him Khalifa or missionary in place of his father. The nurse pointed out that he was yet a child (*bala*). The Sheikh replied, 'The full moon also is a child on the first night.'¹ This conversation between the two has been preserved in its original Hindi which was the language understood and spoken by educated persons all over northern India. This Burhanuddin became later a famous Sufi like his father.

Another great disciple of Sheikh Farid was Sheikh Alauddin Ali Ahmad Sabir of Kaliyar. He established his seat at Kaliyar near Roorkee which is visited every year by his devotees. He is a popular saint and is known as Piran-i-Kaliyar.

The Chishtiya Order spread its influence all over India. Its centres (Dargahs) are found in Bengal, Gujarat, the Deccan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar besides Delhi, Rajasthan and Punjab (as it stood before Independence). Among the great names of those who have held places of importance within this Order are Sheikh Abdul Quddus of Gangoh near Saharanpur, who flourished in the sixteenth century, Sheikh Salim Chishti, a descendant of Sheikh Farid, who had established himself at Sikri and whose prayer is believed to have given Akbar a son, Salim, who later became Jehangir. Others have been the eighteenth century scholars and religious leaders of Delhi, Shah Waliullah and Shah Kalimullah, themselves originators of great revival movements.

¹ Original in Hindi, "Poonam ka Chand bhi bala hota hai."

There were important Chishti centres in Thanesar and Hansi, before the migration of the Muslim population. It is in west Punjab, however, that a large number of centres of the Order are found, which command the veneration and allegiance of millions. The once powerful Suharawardiya Order, with its centres at Multan and Uch and the principalities (which got consolidated into the state of Bahawalpur), paled before the rising influence of the Chishtiya Order, with its centre at Pak-Pattan—sanctified by Sheikh Farid.

CHAPTER VII

Last Days And End

SHEIKH FARID died at the age of ninety-two (according to the lunar Muslim calendar at ninety-five) in 1265 (A.H 664) on the fifth of the month of Moharram. His mind was absorbed in God on the date that death came. He is said to have performed his prayer, and, perhaps forgetting that he had done so, he performed it again. During his lifetime he had become a legend and an institution. He was venerated far and wide and has continued to be so during these eight centuries. In his own lifetime he was honoured by the one hundred and one names being invented to designate him, each one pointing to some great quality in his character. In the course of time poets have paid tributes to him in different languages. One of the Persian poets has praised him in these words through a felicitous pun

پیر من پیریسست مولانا فرید
همچو او در دهر مولانا فرید

*(My preceptor is Maulana Farid, like him
God has not created another)*

He was venerated as a great teacher and one whose touch ennobled men. His chief appellation by which he is famous and distinguished is Shakar-Ganj (Treasury of Sugar). He has passed into the literature and tradition of the Punjab, and Muslims and non-Muslims cherish his memory. The famous poet Waris Shah in his *Heer* has said about him 'Even his servants acquired spiritual authority'¹. Another Punjabi poet, Mian Mohammad Bakhsh has saluted him as a great poet in these words

*Shair bahut Punjab Zamin de hoe danish wale
Awwal Sheikh Farid Shakarganj arif ahl vilayat
Hik hik sukhan zaban ohdi da rahbar rah hidayat*

(The greatest of poets is Sheikh Farid Shakar-Ganj whose soul was enlightened and who was a beloved of God, Each word he uttered is guide to a pure life)

This tribute is remarkable as coming from a Muslim of the early nineteenth century who showed awareness of the Sheikh having composed poetry. This aspect of him which is perpetuated in the memory of the people by his poetry of spiritual experience in Guru Granth Sahib, is generally not given prominence by the Muslims who have written on him. That Sheikh Farid was a teacher and also a poet in the language of his own people, lends his personality another lustrous element of greatness. For this reason, while he

¹ *Jinhde sevakan de ghar in pirian ne*

would continue to command the respect of people far and wide as a holy teacher, he has a special place in the hearts of the people of Punjab for being perhaps the earliest recorded poet of the Punjabi language. This binds in his love the Punjabi-speaking people everywhere, irrespective of their domicile or creed.

While there have been saints in our country, in the medieval times, who tried to bring love and sweetness into human relationships and kept the teaching of religion away from bitterness and strife, Sheikh Farid is the unique example of a Muslim saint being honoured by the Sikhs whose creed is different from the people whose teacher Sheikh Farid is believed to be. This makes him truly unique, as his name 'Farid' would imply. Till today he is perhaps, along with Guru Nanak who followed him three centuries after, the most famous saint of the Punjab, who brought light and sweetness to a people steeped in ignorance and spiritual darkness.

CHAPTER VIII

Sheikh Farid As A Poet

AS STATED earlier, Sheikh Farid's story is found in the writings and traditions of his Muslim devotees and biographers¹ They have mainly stressed his learning in Persian and Arabic, with such of his appellations as Sheikhul Islam and Sheikh-i-Kabir This part of his personality is, no doubt, truly conveyed and preserved in the writings of the Sheikh's Muslim biographers There is another aspect of his personality as the *Sufi Saint* which is expressed by the popular title of 'Baba' or Holy Father, who gave of his love to the people and used his healing touch to cure their sorrow and suffering People must have also come to him for miraculous cures and for escaping disaster and evil influences All this was the usual way of venerating Sufis and holy men of various Orders While the learning of Sheikh Farid has not been preserved because, as averred by his disciple Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya, in the Chishti tradition the

¹ There is a passing allusion to this in a work, *Jawahir-i-Faridi*

saints did not write books, his love for the people and his fatherly benevolence is preserved in the title of 'Baba', by which so many generations have remembered him and by which he is still remembered. This is the way all Muslims refer to him—an unusual phenomenon. As 'Shakar-Ganj' he is placed on a high pedestal as a Sufi with extraordinary powers which were bestowed on him by divine favour.

Sheikh Farid was born in the vicinity of the town of Multan in an area where the Multani variety of Punjabi is spoken since recorded time to this day. He inherited his learning in Persian and Arabic and also acquired and imbibed it from the atmosphere of learning around him, as from those numerous scholars who were at that time (in the last quarter of the twelfth century) migrating into India to escape the Mongol terror. Besides the place of his birth and Multan, he is known to have spent long years in Delhi, Hansi and also Ajmer, where the language would be some variety of Hindi or Hindavi. The common folk, as they came to the Sufi saints for spiritual instruction or blessing or with their problems, must have spoken in the local dialects. The saints must have replied to them in more or less the same dialects which, of course, would be embellished with some part of the learned vocabulary to convey the precise shades of religious thought. The religious terminology derived from Arabic and Persian must have thus become gradually familiar to the people from Sufi sources, just like the vocabulary of administration derived from the daily business of life.

It is not conceivable that the saints would have spoken to the common people in Persian, though Persian would be

used along with Arabic in learned discussion, in administration, and in theological contexts. That some of these teachers or their devotees must have composed poetry of spiritual experience and moral exhortation in the language of the people is an incontrovertible fact. In the Punjab over the centuries and till today, Muslims have composed religious poetry of various genres in Punjabi. This contains *Hamd* (Praise of God), *Naat* (Praise of the Prophet), *Qissa* (Tales of Prophets, holy men) and devotional hymns and such other varieties of works on pious themes. As a matter of fact, even secular stories like that of *Heer* were given Sufistic slants, so that they are romances as well as allegories. One of the most popular stories in the Muslim world, that of Yusuf and Zulekha, is found in dozens of versions in Punjabi. Whole treatises on the Shariat and on Sufism have also been composed in Punjabi verse. Muslims have bowed with reverence, gone into ecstasies and shed tears of emotion over these compositions. It is, therefore, not difficult to conceive that a great Sufi and teacher like Sheikh Farid found time to compose poetry of his spiritual experiences in Multani Punjabi for the people among whom he spent the years of his childhood and youth and more than sixty years of his holy Ministry after he settled down at Ajodhan. Guru Nanak and his spiritual successors, the holy Gurus of the Sikhs, discovered a small fragment of this poetry and this has been preserved in the sacred Granth Sahib. For this chance preservation, generations of Punjabis, as of people everywhere who honour Sheikh Farid, should be grateful to the Gurus and to the Sikh tradition.

CHAPTER IX

Sheikh Farid's *Bani* In The Holy Granth

THE GRANTH SAHIB, the sacred scripture of the Sikh faith, contains the spiritual and devotional compositions in the form of poetry, of the first five Gurus of Sikhism and of a number of Bhaktas or saints drawn from various castes and creeds. Besides, there are the compositions of some Bards who attended upon Guru Arjun who was fifth in Guru Nanak's line and gave the final shape to the Granth Sahib. The most prominent among the Bhaktas represented in the Holy Book are Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev and Farid. Besides these, there are a number of others, including a Muslim Sufi, Sheikh Bhikhan of Kakori, who died during Akbar's reign. These compositions of the Bhaktas have been selected by the Guru for inclusion on their satisfying certain criteria. These are that these saints should be Unitarians and should not have faith in any deity besides God, the Creator. They must, moreover, not be believers in caste distinctions, must maintain a humanitarian attitude

and be free from adherence to objectionable practices of the kind found, for example, among the Shaktas and practitioners of black magic rites. They must be free from superstitions and should not mix false beliefs of any kind with their teaching. It was no objection to the compositions of any of these saints that they came, for example, from a faith different from the Guru's own, such as Islam. What was stressed was those aspects of religion which must bind mankind in tolerance, harmony and the higher morality of humanitarianism. Besides, these saints must have a spiritual vision, again coming from whatever tradition, which should establish an intimate relationship between man and God. A stress on surface conventions and rituals must be eschewed.

While making a collection of hymns, these compositions were taken from a wide range. The Gurus sought to provide for the Indian public a People's Bible which must build understanding and uplift thought and belief, and combat the influence of the creeds which promote hate and rancour. It is in this total context that the significance of the inclusion of Sheikh Farid's *Bani* or *Kalam* (sacred word) in the Granth Sahib may be viewed. As ordained by the Guru, every word recorded in the holy Granth from no matter what source, must have equal sanctity and be venerated as Holy Writ. The consequence of this is that when the hymns of Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev, Farid or any other saint, are recited or sung, no Sikh must sit at a higher place than the spot from where these are being enunciated. By being incorporated in the Granth Sahib each word has become the sacred *Bani*. For example, in Sikh holy assemblies and even in the Holy of Holies of Sikhism, Sri Hari Mandir at Amritsar

(The Golden Temple) Farid's words calling upon man to render *Namaz* (the Muslim Prayer) are recited or sung, and are listened to with reverence. Other themes in Farid are also expressed in terms of the Muslim tradition, though their appeal is universal. Its universality of appeal is the reason why the words of this great Muslim were selected. Nothing sectarian has been allowed to enter the Holy Book. But what is noticeable and is perhaps known to a very few people outside the circle of the Sikh people themselves, is the uniqueness of this vision of the Guru which drew upon all noble and exalted religious experience, from whatever source. All that has been selected has been invested with equal value and sanctity. It is thus a feature of the Sikh faith and its Scripture which has not had the opportunity to be sufficiently appreciated but which, in the face of the prevailing sectarian hate, is of inestimable value as an exemplar to mankind.

Guru Nanak in his earliest life-story, entitled *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, is recorded to have met Sheikh Ibrahim, called by the biographer Sheikh Brahm, twice at Patan or Pak-Pattan. The two held on either occasion spiritual colloquies and also travelled together. This story is told without precise detail, but the broad features are noticeable, that Guru Nanak met the reigning scion of the house of Sheikh Farid Shakar-Ganj and spent considerable time with him. It is undoubtedly from this source that the Guru acquired the *Bani* of Sheikh Farid in Multani Punjabi, written in the Persian Script in which all Punjabi compositions of Muslims were recorded. It is a strange and inexplicable mystery that no other source, except the Sikhs, has

cared to preserve the teachings of Sheikh Farid in his own spoken language. Even with his *gaddi* at Pak-Pattan in Pakistan, where his descendants still hold spiritual authority and carry on his tradition of Khanqah and Langar (Hospice-cum-Prayer House and Free Kitchen) his compositions are not available. These descendants are notables of the area and have been so for generations. Anyway, this intriguing phenomenon is at present difficult to resolve.

Guru Nanak acquired whatever of the spiritual compositions of Sheikh Farid that were available to him in the common language. He had little use for whatever was written in the learned languages, Persian and Arabic, because he was not preparing a system of Theology or Philosophy, but sought to bring peace to a world which was burning with suffering. Hate, ignorant bigotry and tyranny were rampant in the world around him and he made use of whatever means were available for giving to mankind the vision of a true religion and a pure heart. This naturally would require speaking to the people in words which they could understand. Saints have spoken in the popular tongue in contradistinction to scholars through the ages. Guru Nanak very carefully studied Sheikh Farid's compositions, as also did his successors. This is evidenced by the fact of their appending continuations, elucidatory comments or complements to certain portions of this *Bani*. Details of this may be studied from the text as preserved in the Granth Sahib. This has been done also in the case of the *Bani* of certain other Bhaktas, where the Guru thought it necessary to make additions. These additions are remarkable for the care with which the poetry in the original was

recorded and edited. One prominent example of this process is seen in the case of Sheikh Farid's hymns in the measure *Suhi*. In this measure occurs the famous hymns of Sheikh Farid, beginning with the words '*Bera Bandh na sakion bandhan ki vela*'

This hymn is full of deep compassion for man's neglect of his spiritual life, and is didactic not in a direct, crude manner, but through melting man's heart to realize the perilous state into which he has fallen, like an ill-equipped boat sinking. This hymn is given in full in the rendering of the *Bani* of Sheikh Farid appended to this book. Guru Nanak's response to his hymn is in the same measure and in similar imagery. In elucidating this poem fully, the author may seek the reader's indulgence to reproduce from his book, *Guru Nanak—His Personality and Vision*, page 59-60, a passage bearing upon this point

The haunting beauty of this lyric, whose magic and charm no attempt at translation can convey, could not deflect the Guru's mind, ever awake, from his ideal. He saw a pessimistic strain in Farid's accents. The man must some time, but it is never too late to seek the Portal of God, to turn his face towards Him. Good actions never go waste. Each such action goes, in current Indian parlance, into man's account, forming his soul, adding to his cycle of births or annulling it, if his actions be entirely free of the taint of passion. There was the implicit Muslim belief in a future heaven or hell in Farid's lyric. The Guru provided as sequel to it a corrective brimful of infinite faith in God. The Guru's hymn is recorded in the same

Suhu measure as Farid's lyric, on page 729 of Adi Granth

Equip thy boat with meditation and austerity,
 to find smooth passage,
 To such a boat the lake will be as though it is not,
 The tempest will not rise, the crossing will be
 without peril,
 Thy Name, Beloved, is the fast dye on my gown,
 Fast is the dye Thou hast given me,
 I have set out to have a sight of the Beloved,
 Shall I see Him ever?
 With true love in the heart, He will Himself make the
 call
 Those who are merged in Him shall not be cast off,
 He, the True Lord, shall annul transmigration, and
 keep the yearning Soul ever near Him
 Those who throw away egoism, their garments are
 acceptable to the Lord—
 They shall taste the fruit of His Word,
 To them the Lord's word shall be as Amrita.
 Saith Nanak My friends, the Master is the sweet
 Beloved,
 We are His hand-maids, He is our True Lord

“In the Guru's hymn, Farid's thought is presented in the inverted form, keeping the imagery of the original The lake is not tempestuous, the boat is not in peril, the colours on the garments are fast, instead of the frail Kasumbha colour of Farid's conception, the journey to

the Beloved is fruitful; His words instead of being stern and harsh are sweet as *Amrita*. Death in Farid is terrible, eternal extinction; in the Guru's hymn it is only the stepping-stone to abiding peace, *moksha* in the lap of the Lord."

CHAPTER X

Sheikh Farid's Poetry—A Brief Survey

THE POETRY of Sheikh Farid is deeply sensitive to the feeling of pity, the subtle attractiveness of sin and the terror of death in man's life and the waste of human life arising from man being so indifferent to God and to the beauty of goodness. His language has extraordinary power and sensitivity. This tragic waste of man's brief span of life in frivolous pursuits moves him to tender expression of pity and reproach. Withal he is deeply human and man's situation moves him to deep compassion as would be a man with eyes who saw a blind man standing on the edge of a precipice, about to take the fatal step into nothingness. He sings in a *Sloka*

Farid, Death is visible as the opposite bank of the river,
Beyond is said to be flaming hell, resounding with ear-
piercing shrieks,
Some there are who have realization of this,
Many go about wrapped in thoughtlessness,

Know that the deeds done in this world will bear
witness against us in the next

His message is forgiveness, humility and non-injury. As he says, each human heart is a precious jewel, to be lovingly cherished, and not to be rudely handled. As he contemplates old age with the weight of life lying behind, made in spiritual ignorance, he is moved to deep sorrow. This comes out in a number of verses

The voice of human suffering finds in him an expression heard seldom and only in the greatest poetry. His language is the authentic idiom of the countryside of south-western Punjab, where the major portion of his life was passed. Yet by a miracle of poetic creation this language has become in his hands full of subtle appeal, evoking tender emotions and stimulating the imagination. Its music is again of that soft variety which, by the very modulation of its tones, moves the heart into repentance, forgiveness and pity. As also stated elsewhere in this book, Sheikh Farid is a true son of the Punjab, expressing his poetic vision through symbols and images familiar in the Punjab countryside. Thus the village well, the pitcher, the line for drawing water, the ponds, the heron disporting on the bank of the pond, the village women timidly fording streams, the frail dye of *Kasumbha*—such images are employed by him in common with the generality of the Sufi poets and other moral teachers of the Punjab. These are also the symbols spread over the secular poetry of this region.

While the reader should study, with profound attention and reverence, the *Bani* of Sheikh Farid whose rendering

into English has been given at the end of this booklet, its themes may here be briefly summed up, even though these have to be culled by a study of the whole. The hymns and *Slokas* are each the expression of a separate moment of inspiration and are not arranged systematically or thematically. But in spite of this fact, or perhaps because of it, this brief volume of poetry holds such great power to sway the human mind, and when recited in the appropriate musical tunes familiar in the Punjab countryside, its appeal is irresistible. It leaves the heart bathed in holy tears, which take it through an ennobling and purifying experience. This power is normally experienced by the Sikh congregations in whose midst this *Bani* is recited as part of the Akhand or unfragmented reading of the Holy Book, the Granth Sahib. In all selections from the Holy Book forming the *Pothis* or Prayer-books of the Sikhs some *Slokas* from Sheikh Farid are invariably included. Bhakta Kabir's sayings also always figure in these, along with, of course, the compositions of the Gurus themselves. The reverence paid to each word thus included is equal and alike.

In volume this *Bani* is brief—about ten pages out of the entire Holy Book. That must be because more could not have been available to the Guru from Pak-Pattan. The main theme of Sheikh Farid's *Bani* is what in the Indian critical terminology would be called *Vairagya*, that is dispassion towards the world and its false attractions. The first step on the path of spiritual ascent and fulfilment of man in God is this *Vairagya* or dispassion towards the world and its false attractions. In Sufistic terminology this is called *Tauba* or turning away. This feeling is aroused in Sheikh

Farid through humility, the realization of the inevitability of death at the end of man's life which will come suddenly with a swoop as that of a hawk over a bird disporting carelessly on the edge of a lake. Men of God are like birds who pass their days in solitude and pick up food from pebbles, not turning away from Him (*Sloka* 101), or swans that touch not the coarse fare of things of this world (*Slokas* 64, 65, 66). Another such image is the *koel*, (cuckoo) whose darkened colour is ascribed to the sorrow of separation from the Beloved i.e. God. In another *Sloka* the very sensitiveness to such separation is called mighty like a king and the heart which does not feel such separation is dead like the cremation-ground (*Sloka* 36). Other powerful images raising in man a shudder at his own state of godlessness, may be seen in *Slokas* 98 and 100 in which awe, pity, and regret are mingled in a powerful vision, of the waste of the precious years of life.

Humility, asceticism and humanitarianism are the essential elements in the Sufi's course of moral and spiritual development, and all these are expressed in these *Slokas*. Particularly moving are the last two, numbered 129 and 130, in which tender solicitude for each human heart, however humble, is enjoined upon man. This universal principle of morality raises Sheikh Farid's teaching to a noble level where he has become the teacher of all mankind and not only of the Muslims or any other sect. Despite the terminology of Islam, such as the call to Namaz which figures in some of the *Slokas*, his call is a call to no sectarian prayer, but to devotion and seeking the purity of heart, irrespective of what creed one may follow. In some other *Slokas* such

as those numbered 19, 53, 61, 88 the highest conception of universal religion is embodied

In these, God is stated to dwell in the heart of the seeker and not in solitary and waste places. Man is called upon to seek a spacious creed like a lake, not a petty narrow sect, like a pond. The true dervish is not one who wears 'black' to look like a dervish, but one whose life is pure. The senses which keep the soul in a state of turmoil must be 'stilled,' the ears plugged to the world, so that one may come close to God. Moral teaching of a lofty and profound character is embodied in some *Slokas*, as for example in 23, where it is said with telling effect that acacia will not yield grapes nor rough wool yield soft silk. Forgiveness, non-injury is the theme in others (70, 84). Deep is the sorrow over those departed—one's parents—where are they? Where wilt thou thyself be? (*Sloka* 73)

In some *Slokas* the expression is sheer poetry whose significance is spiritual. These cannot be rendered properly into cold prose, as their expression is symbolical. Unless the mind is in tune with the experience the *Slokas* may only prove puzzling. Such are *Slokas* 6 and 7 under *Raga Asa* or the *Shabda* (Hymn) under *Raga Suhu*, which will bear quoting in full

Listen O Man, thou didst not look to the tackle of
thy boat when it was yet time
In the lake swollen with tempest, how shall it float?
Fugitive are pleasures like Kasumbha, burning away at
a Touch,
Touch it not, Beloved, lest it wither away

This frail life-female is atremble under the Master's
 stern accents
 Past is youth, never will the breast be brimful again of
 milk
 Never again the love-embrace,
 Saith Farid listen, sisters of my soul,
 One day life's swan shall take his reluctant flight!
 This frame will turn a dust-heap

The deeper secrets of the religious life again are embodied in *Slokas* 10, 107 and 112. Asceticism and the turning away from the world is the theme of the first ('assume coarse woollen wear'), apprehension of the Divine Presence of the next ('Thou hast forgotten God, but know God hath not forgotten thee'), and the subtle influence descending upon the soul, of the last i.e. number 112.

The path of the moral life is made up of hard penance, the sternest self-denial. *Sloka* 60 speaks of men of God being forbearing like trees, 'which submit uncomplainingly to the axe'. *Slokas* 115 to 117 embody also the great theme of great patience and forbearance, of such value in the path of the moral ascent. 125 speaks of the snares of temptation threatening the bird of the soul. Sheikh Farid's expression of such themes proceeds from his rich experience of a life lived at the height of ideals.

Again, *Sloka* 30 brings up the image which is typical of Indian spiritual poetry, of the questing soul as the female in separation from the Beloved (*Birhan*)

The curious imagination may not be far wrong in tracing

through some portion of this *Bani* biographical touches of this great ascetic, devotee of God and moral teacher, Baba Farid, who passed through various phases of the quest after God and love for mankind.

Some of the recorded details of Sheikh Farid's life and allusions in the *Slokas*, as for example those numbered 28 mentioning the *roti* or flat-cake of 'wood' (rightly to be interpreted symbolically); and 44 in which even salt is looked upon as a luxury; 91 to 93 again are famous as the expression of extreme penance calling upon the pecking crow to keep away from at least the eyes, 'So I may have sight of the Beloved'. In several *Slokas* the poet emerges as an extremely old man—the man Sheikh Farid no doubt, who lived to be ninety-five.

But this *Bani*, whether autobiographical in the usual sense or not, is a highly precious treasure, embodying lofty spiritual experience, such as it falls to the lot only of the rarest souls among mankind to be blessed with, and to have the power to impart to others.

CHAPTER XI

Sufism—Its Traditions

ORIGINS AND INDIAN DEVELOPMENTS

SUFISM IS the generic name for Islamic mysticism, which has had such a full and glorious development in the evolution of its doctrines over more than a thousand years within the vast world of Islam, and has influenced the popular practice of this faith in all countries and among all peoples where it has taken root. One splendid feature of the development of Sufism has been the great poetry which it has inspired, particularly in Persia and those regions where the knowledge of Persian has percolated to poets and the common folk directly or indirectly. Sufistic poetry is one of the glories of Islam in its cultural aspect, and its echoes may be heard in the numerous languages which the followers of Islam speak in various regions of the world from the Muslim states of the Far East through Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and what is called the Middle East to the ends of Africa. This Sufistic poetry comprehends, within its range, work of such philoso-

phical depth as that by Attar, Jalaluddin Rumi, Hafiz, Iraqi, Ghani and Urfi in Persian, to the popular devotional hymns in numerous languages and dialects

While the greatest Sufistic poetry has been written in Persian, and the development of its doctrines was given a final and definitive shape by the great savants over the Arab world and Iran, in the Arabic and Persian languages, the practice and propagation of these doctrines also found full scope in India as its confines have been known through the ages and in its neighbour, Afghanistan. While the learned have debated and disputed fine points of the Muslim doctrine and the Shariat or Canon Law, the masses have found spiritual fare from the traditions of devotion set up by the Sufis who have, however, almost never strayed from the essential teachings of the Shariat. Sufism traced a parallel path of devotion to doctrinal Islam, never breaking loose from the anchor of the latter and never straying far from what would be approved by orthodox opinion. Seldom, only very seldom, has there been the propagation in Sufism of such deviation as would stand totally unapproved by orthodox opinion. Where that has happened, as in the case of Mansur-al-Hallaj (executed, ninth century at Baghdad), or Shams-i-Tabriz (martyred thirteenth century), or Sarmad (martyred at Delhi, 1661), orthodoxy has come down upon such heterodoxy and visited punishment. All three of these martyrs to Sufistic ecstasy have, however, been venerated by the generality of popular Muslim opinion and have been canonized. Mansur has become, all over the Muslim world and among people whose thought has to some extent been

influenced by Muslim traditions and culture, the archetype of the seeker, the man of esoteric experience and the martyr *par excellence*. That only shows the extent to which Sufism has entered the hearts of the people who have not allowed the anomaly of reconciling orthodoxy with Sufistic ecstasy and a kind of antinomianism to stand in the way of their emotional reaction. The Sufis of various grades and Orders have long (for over nearly a thousand years) divided with the Mullahs, the orthodox priests of Islam, authority and respect as spiritual guides and are one of the numerous grades of Muslim priesthood.

In India, Sufism entered as early as the eleventh century, in the wake of the Ghaznavid conquest of the Punjab and its neighbouring areas. Since then, owing to the operation of certain historical factors, among which must be counted the rise of the heretic Mongols who harassed the Muslim world from Samarkand and Bokhara all the way up till Baghdad, occurred the migration of Muslim scholars and religious guides from the neighbouring lands to our country which promised peace, stability and tolerance. Thus, centres of Muslim learning and Sufistic piety got established by the beginning of the thirteenth century right from Lahore, Multan, Sirhind through what is present-day Haryana to Delhi and beyond.

While the earliest generations of these Sufis retained a good deal of their Persian cultural atmosphere, in which they had been brought up, their succeeding generations became culturally acclimatized to our country, and, speaking our languages and delivering their messages in the languages of the common people, also inspired poetry

which could be understood by the masses. They also developed a symbolism and modes of expression which had taken their colouring from the soil of our country, while, of course, retaining the essential doctrine of Islam and that Sufistic philosophical system which had been evolved by the great thinkers in this tradition in Arab lands and Iran.

These Sufi teachers of India also carried on a good deal of commerce of thought and mutual exchange of spiritual experience with the Yogis and Bhaktas of India who proliferated into numerous sects and traditions during the centuries when Islam got established in India. This spiritual commerce resulted in a kind of synthesis at several levels—in some affecting the core on either side, while in others remaining a peripheral influence. But the masses absorbed the terminology and spiritual vision of each tradition, and became attuned to the composite spiritual and moral vision which, retaining in either case the distinctive overtones of its parent tradition, had at the same time common appeal. The Sufis thus participated in a process of religious evolution which brought a harmonious spiritual vision to our people and became the foundation of a national approach to religious issues, in which tolerance, harmony and humanitarianism were the prominent features. The Indian Sufis, thus, in course of time took on the character of the national religious teachers of India, with the Bhaktas and Yogis. The potent influence of what they taught, may still, after the lapse of centuries, be seen in the beliefs and reactions of the generality of our people. A study of Sufism in India, brief though as the present one is, is essential for an understanding of Sheikh Farid and the character

of his teaching as also for appreciating the reasons which led to the unique phenomenon of his *Bani* or sacred writings being accepted for inclusion in the scripture of the Sikh faith which, while it has a distinctive character, has at the same time spread tolerance and harmony. This fact stands out prominently in the history of religious belief and practice.

Before giving a brief statement of the main doctrines and teachings of Sufism, it would be pertinent to explain the derivation of the term *Sufi*, about which there have been divergent views in the Muslim world over the centuries. In this matter the consensus of opinion appears to be to fix its derivation from *Sufi*, a fabric woven from rough, black wool, worn in general by Sufis and hermits of various Orders. That this derivation is the real one, as against the one stated to be from *Safa* (purity) and *suffa* (a courtyard in which those close to the Prophet were believed to foregather) is borne out by the term *Pashmina-posh* (wool-wearers) by which the Sufis in Iran have been known. In Sheikh Farid's *slokas* too in *Granth Sahib*, there occurs a hint as to this derivation. Sloka 50 reads, in rendering, as follows:

Farid, those who carry the prayer-mat on their shoulder,
wear rough wool,
But bear daggers in their hearts and utter falsehood with
glib tongues,
Such are bright outside, and have the dark night in
their souls.

In popular Muslim hymnology the devotional attitudes

loves to refer to the Prophet as 'Kamlīwala' (wool-wearer) While this term abounds in songs (*naat*) at the folk level of expression, its use is also found in learned compositions, such as those of Iqbal in *Bang-i-Dara* and of Zafar Ali Khan, the great rhetorician and impromptu poet

Sufi, to designate a particular class of Muslim saints appears to have come into vogue after about two centuries from the rise of Islam In the Koran, Sura LVI-11 (*Waqia*) those especially devoted to God are called *Muqarrabun* (the near ones) Ali ben Usman Hujwiri, writing in the eleventh century, in *Kashful Mahjub*, the first philosophical treatise on Sufism in Persian, has been able to carry his comprehension of the essence of Sufism to the extent of distinguishing three grades of the claimants and practitioners of this creed There are besides the genuine Sufis, the class of ignorant devotees blindly pursuing the 'path', who have been called as a class, '*al mutasawwif-^{ul}-jahilan*' A claimant such as this would be one, who has not submitted to the discipline of a Pir (Preceptor) and not learnt from a Master, the limits within which the creed is to be practised Further on Hujwiri, apart from the Sufis truly so called, who have 'died' to the world and found a new life in God, mentions two other ungenune grades of claimants to the Sufistic state There are in the first place, those called *mutasawwif*, who seek to enter the Sufistic state of experience through a process of persistent struggle or *praxis* like the Hatha yogis of India Then there is the sophisticated class of poseurs called *mustasawwif*—those deliberately imitating the way of the Sufis for worldly advantages About this latter class it has been said the *mustasawwif* as compared

to the Sufi is no more than a fly, in relation to the generality of mankind, he is a veritable wolf ¹

Ali Hujwiri, in the opening part of his famous work, throws much light on the state of the Sufi's mind and character of which the prominent features are the quest after absorption into God, poverty embraced in contempt of worldliness, contentment and complete resignation to the Divine Will. To the Sufi, as said in Gita of the Yogi, a clod of earth and a lump of gold are alike. The Sufi's vision sees nothing but God, and whatever is not God ceases to exist for him. Such had been the development of Sufism, so that it threw up saintly men, who rose above the petty disputes of ritual and sought enlightenment and spiritual experience. While Sufis were found all over the Muslim world, its development on the doctrinal side had been particularly impressive in Iran, though much of its early expository literature was in Arabic, the language in which the learned carried on intellectual commerce.

In *Kashful Mahjub*, a number of the doctrines of Sufism are set down, reflecting not only the totality of Sufistic thought as it had developed till then, but providing also the seed for the main tradition for the future which has been developing puritanically and close to the path of Shariat and at the same time emphasising the pursuit of self-purification and enlightenment. *Ishq* (love, ecstatic devotion), *Reza* (resignation to the Divine Will, similar to the Renunciation of the fruits of Action in the Gita), and *Waraa* (abstinence, chastity), are some of the basic principles emphasised. The

¹The original of this affirmation is in Arabic.

mere scholar, whose approach to religion is intellectual, does not find honourable mention. The established value in Sufistic tradition has been to maintain varying degrees of a synthesis between learning and experience. A saying of a great Sufi, Yahya bin Maaz-ur-Razi is quoted with approval

Avoid contact with these categories among mankind—
theologians who are unmindful of their duty, scholars
whose declarations contradict their principles and claim-
ants to Sufism who are ignorant

Out of these, as defined in the text, the delinquent theologians are those who pursue the world, interpret the Shariat according to their convenience, and worship kings and tyrants, hovering round their portals, exalting worldly glory. Infatuated with their intellectual acumen they indulge in verbal hair-splitting. Further, they slander the venerable teachers of religion and lend support to their persecution and in general talk what is not justified. An ignorant claimant to Sufism is one who has not been in the company of a preceptor, and not been disciplined by him, but goes forth among mankind, raw, and wears blue¹ without acquiring insight. *Kashful Mahjub* recounts also twelve Orders of Sufis which had grown each with certain basic principles and postulates by the eleventh century. Out of these twelve, two are mentioned with a kind of anathema. These are believers in transmigration and other heretical doctrines

¹One of the colours favoured by Sufis for their wear

As Sufism developed and claimed more and more adherents, it not only proliferated into further sects or Orders but also absorbed doctrinal influences and postulates from the various pre-existing systems of thought. The germ of the Sufistic attitude of mind is, however, found in certain passages of the Koran itself, wherein the apprehension of Divine presence in the affairs and happenings of the world is communicated in rich, poetic language. This itself is the essence of mysticism—the vision called immanence which in Islam exists side by side with transcendence, which gets primacy in belief. Besides, there is that personal experience of God and the supra-sensual Reality which lies beyond the scope of formal religion, but conditions the mind and soul of the mystic. What the Sufi brought into Islam, was emphasis on this latter kind of experience of which the germ is traced to certain passages in the Koran and to the Traditions (*Hadith*) of the Prophet. To these two, numerous other influences were added through the centuries. Referring to the Koran, there is the affirmation that as the Angel came to the Prophet to deliver to him Allah's message or *Wahi*, he stood 'as near to him as two bow-lengths or even nearer'. During the Ascent or *Miraj* to have the Divine Vision, as the Prophet came within the Presence, and looked upon the effulgence, 'he set not his eyes on anything from the intensity of his desire to see nothing but Allah the All-Highest'. This is the embodiment of a great moment of vision.

The poet Saadi, in describing the Prophets' Ascent in Persian, makes Allah's messenger Gabriel confess to the Prophet at a certain point in the Ascent, close to the Divine

effulgence 'Should I fly beyond this by even as much as the tip of a hair, my pinions shall be singed in the effulgence of Divine glory' (*farogh-i-tajalli*) The Prophet, however, ascended to where even Gabriel dared not The declaration in the Koran about the Prophet that the heavens and earth would not be created, 'were it not for thee', is again expression of a high mystical vision Recounting the battle of Badr, fought and won by the Prophet, there is this mystical declaration, expressive of Divine intervention in happenings in this world 'When thou didst discharge thy arrows it was not thou who shot them, but Allah' (VIII-17) There is then the ineffable Divine Vision of Moses on Sinai in which he was 'struck as with a lightning flash'. Reminding man of Divine Immanence again, in the Koran it is said 'We are nearer to him than his jugular vein' Among the sayings of the Prophet is this one, expressive of moments of deep and intimate communion with God 'I have now and then some moments with Allah which are available neither to any angel, however close to Him, nor to any of the Prophets'

The Koran thus communicates frequent experiences which are mystical in essence, though, as Sufism developed, its mysticism got overlaid with much ritual and convention and the compulsive provisions of the Code of Islam (Shariat) The more sensitive souls, not content with the external shell of religion sought the intimate, personal experience of God, for which they at that period naturally made the Koran their guide Later, to supplement what mysticism was implicit in the original scripture and doctrines of Islam, came other philosophies—through all through Muslim

mysticism or Sufism never strayed far from the teachings of the Koran and from Shariat

There is also a sociological angle on the causes leading to the development of Sufism which is a valid direction in which some part of the impulse from which it grew may be sought. In the eighth and ninth centuries the overlaying of the Caliphate—in essence the theocratic leadership of Islam—with much pomp and worldliness, turned those not inclined to seek worldly power and glory to search for inner experience. Thus a succession of great names in Sufism appeared. Among these are Zul-Nun Misri, Junaid, Shibli, Hasan Basari, Rabia and Bayazid Bistami, to mention only the greatest. Then at the time of the Mongol incursions into the settled Islamic world, which had developed a great civilization, the second and more splendid wave of the development of Sufism began, which was mainly Persian in racial character. In this second period, in the background of Mongol tyranny and the establishment of non-Iranian ruling dynasties, even though these later turned Muslims, the Sufistic Persian mind turned inwards and developed great systems of spiritual and mystical thought and poetry of deeper experience. Besides, it saw over the centuries a succession of great teachers who, while they never let go of the hold of the basic teachings of Islam, infused into it the passion for emotional experience which is the quest of the individual soul for communion with the Highest. After these centuries from the eleventh on, Islam has by and large been coloured with Sufism, and particularly in the popular practice this element has generally been present in varying degrees. It is in this background that those developments

in religion took place in which Sheikh Farid, the subject of this booklet, figured so prominently

Further to give a brief, syncopated view of the developments in Sufistic thought from its earlier days up till the later phases, it may be noticed that the earliest philosophical system with which the newly-proclaimed Islamic creed came into contact was Greek philosophy. This philosophy provided to the Muslim thinkers, who were in most cases Arabophile non-Arabs, the entire vocabulary of thought of Islamic culture. Neo-Platonic philosophy had had a vast vogue in the Byzantine empire, which had been in a state of war as well as cultural communication with the Sassanian empire of Iran, to which the Caliphate of Baghdad was the successor. Sufism developed in this world, which culturally was deeply Hellenized.

Love, as a force parallel to asceticism, was brought into Muslim mysticism by Zul-Nun Misri and Bayazid-i-Bistami, both of them early fathers of the Sufi tradition. The spiritual quest was visualized as the quest for Reunion with the Beloved, who in the case of the mystic would be no mortal, but the Eternal Reality, God. The Love-theme implied naturally the yearning in separation and all the usual states of experience which go with passionate and romantic love. Love (called *Mahabbat* or *Ishq*—both Arabic) was exalted as the highest experience available to man, and was considered equivalent to worship, prayer, piety and any other process involved in faith. A volume of rich and highly appealing poetry, with its own universe of symbols and peculiarities of style, has developed in the course of centuries in the languages employed by Muslims

the world over, including those of India and Pakistan. Mystical poetry of spiritual love would employ the same kind of language and set expressions as the poetry of romantic love, and may very often be confused with it. This has been one of the reasons why puritan orthodoxy and formal religiosity have frowned upon the expression of Sufism through love, which involved quite often choric singing and even a kind of dancing, both held as reprobate practices in Islam. To cut short this part of the subject, which in its vastness and fascination is endless, a few examples may be mentioned from the high places in Sufi literature.

In *Gulshan-i-Raz* (the Secret Rose-Garden), a Persian scripture of Sufism of the fourteenth century, the author Mahmud Shabistari, has included a whole section interpreting in Sufistic terms the concrete sensuous symbols like the Beloved's lock of hair, lip, eye, cheek and other objects of desire. These are, of course, interpreted spiritually. But this mode is firmly and deeply established in the Muslim poetic tradition, and has been for nearly a thousand years the source of some of the most splendid poetry coming from this source.

Then, mention may be made of the great opening lines of Jalaluddin Rumi's *Masnavi*, which has been called, because of its deep and highly spiritual ethical exposition of Islam, the Koran in Pehlavi, that is, Persian. These opening lines here referred to are celebrated for their powerful expression of the philosophical Neo-Platonic expression of love as the sovereign spiritual mode—the yearning of the individual soul for its source in the Universal and the

Eternal and the wail of its suffering in separation Render-
ed into English, this piece runs

Listen to the story of the Reed,
And its plaint in separation
It says! Since the day I was uprooted from my
reed-bed,
Men and women have wept to hear my notes.
I have broken my heart to bits in separation,
So I may get the power to express the pain of love
Whosoever hath his vesture torn in love,
Is rendered free of all greed and evil
Blessed be thou Love, source of our joyful frenzy,
And physician of all our maladies;
Thou curest us of pride and false shame—
Thou who art for us Plato and Galen in one

Who hath been separated from a kindred soul
Is destitute though possessed of worldly goods
Our wings and pinions are the lasso of love,
Dragging us by the forelock to the Door of the Beloved ¹

Ishq, extended and spiritualized to mean yearning of the soul for the ultimate Reality and idealism and the supra-intellectual faculty questing after truth—has been one of the cardinal principles defining the Sufistic attitude. The saying of some Sufi is very often quoted in Sufistic thought from the Arabic *Al-Ishq yaharagu ma-siwa-Allah* (Love is a fire which burns away whatever is not of God) Devo-

¹ The present writer's translation

tion to God or the Prophet is invariably expressed in Sufistic poetry and hymnology in terms redolent of the passion of love, though of course this passion is here exalted and spiritualized. The accompaniments of the passion of love, such as frenzy, are themselves erected into values and spiritualized. The opening verse of a Persian *Naat* or Homage to the Prophet, with the symbolism typical of this genre runs

سر سلسلہ اہل حدوں مروئے محمد
محراب عبادت حم ابروئے محمد

(The experience of those given to divine frenzy begins with the passion for the tresses of Muhammad, The Arch of the House of Worship is formed by the bend of Muhammad's eyebrow)

In the hands of poets who have had only a tenuous grasp of Sufism, but were perhaps more inclined to express some form of antinomianism as against the rigidities of orthodoxy, *Rindi* or libertinism became one of the modes which on occasion might be assimilated to some kind of Sufism. This would, of course, draw upon itself the strong disapproval or even anathema from the orthodox. Terms like *Kufr-i-Haqiqi*, paradoxical in its composition and implying spirituality which because of its indifference to orthodoxy would look almost like infidelity to faith, became a set term and attitude and an alibi for all kinds of unorthodox conduct. But as repeated already, no one has dared to stray too far from orthodoxy either. So, the Sufistic stance ranges from piety and adherence to orthodoxy to expressions of antinomianism—all however, essentially within the orbit of Islam.

CHAPTER XII

Sufism In The Punjab

PUNJAB WAS, among the regions of India, the first to feel the influence of Sufistic teaching and to welcome the great Sufi teachers. As stated elsewhere, the famous Ali bin Usman Hujwiri, popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh, established himself in Lahore in the eleventh century after a long career of acquiring Sufistic learning and experience in Iran and Iraq, of which he makes mention at several places in his Sufistic compendium, *Kashful Mahjub*. This book was probably written by him at Lahore. He is stated to have entered Lahore in A. H. 431 (A. C. 1045) and to have died in A. H. 465 (A. C. 1077). Before him, a Sufi saint Khwaja Shah Hussain had been established in Lahore. Sheikh Farid came to offer homage at Sheikh Ali bin Usman Hujwiri's tomb in A. H. 600 (A. C. 1204-5). Earlier, in A. H. 580 (A. C. 1185) Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti had come there to offer prayers.

In the twelfth century, as stated in the course of this

monograph, an important Sufi centre had been established in Multan, which developed into a great centre of learning and piety. There were a number of other Sufi centres all over the area lying between the Sutlej and the Jamuna right up till Delhi. Sheikh Farid established his centre at Ajodhan in the early years of the thirteenth century, which became, in subsequent years, one of the great centres from which Sufism spread all over western Punjab. So, the people of Punjab have been familiar with the main features of the popular aspects of Sufism for several centuries. Its humanitarian attitude, its hospitality to strangers and community singing of devotional songs have been familiar in town and country alike, and Sufis of various Orders and levels have drawn to themselves both Hindus and Muslims both for faith-healing, fulfilment of cherished desires and for averting impending disasters. There have been the Sufis who have been venerated as teachers and spiritual guides, and there have been poets with Sufistic leanings, who have composed hymns and lyrics expressive of the Sufistic faith, ecstasy and emotional abandon in devotion. The latter have left a considerable store-house of poetry in Punjab,¹ which till now has been the vehicle for expressing the peoples' faith and spiritual dreams, even though in the aristocratic and learned circles it has been treated as only a rural dialect.

Popular Sufism in the Punjab and its neighbouring regions

¹ Bhai Nandlal, a poet who attended Guru Gobind Singh's assemblies composed very good Persian poetry with a strong sufistic flavour, which is considered sacred by the Sikhs and recited in their religious gatherings.

took on a good deal of its colouring from the soil. While the academic literature of Sufism continued to draw its tradition and imagery from Iraq and Iran, Sufism in Punjab tended to express the spiritual and moral truths the knowledge of which it inculcated among the people, in the idiom and imagery of the people themselves. The common folk tended to venerate the bhaktas, yogis, sadhus and sanyasis from within Hinduism and fakirs and dervishes from within Sufism, Islam alike. The result of this attitude was development of a vocabulary for the expression of spirituality which drew upon sources Indian and Perso-Arabian alike. People talked without discrimination of the power of 'Sadhus and Sants' and 'Pirs and Fakirs'—the first pair referring to those with Hindu adhesions and the latter, of course, to Muslims. Credally, while Islam kept to its beliefs and code, its popular presentation by the Sufis was not rigid. Moral truths with a broad humanitarian appeal were presented to the people—Hindus and Muslims.

In their 'practice' the yogis or bhaktas and the Sufis shared certain ideas in common. Thus *pranayam* (breath-control) was adopted in Sufi practice and called *pas-i-anfas*. *Maya*, the yogic term for the 'illusion' that conceals the Essence from the spiritual gaze, was called by the Sufis *hijab* (veil). For their ecstatic expression of devotional fervour, for which a parallel existed in Krishan Bhakti with its emotionally-charged eroticism, the Sufis too developed an idiom and style of devotion which has close resemblances with the moods of mundane love. While the germs of such an expression were already present in the development of Sufistic emotionalism in Persian poetry, in India it got further intensified because

of the presence of similar expressions of devotional fervour already developing through indigenous influences

Mutual influences between Sufism and Bhakti may be seen in the adoption of the language and mode of one by the other at various levels of expression and practice. The Sufis in India (and in Punjab) adopted certain indigenous key terms to express facts of experience or vital features of belief. For God as Beloved, the Indian-born names, *Sajan* or *Pi*, *Preetam* (*Priya*, *Pitam*) came to be adopted. *Birha* was adopted for *Hijr* (separation in love). For Sufis of a somewhat lower grade the name *Sain* (popular form of *Swami*) came to be adopted. From the Sufis the Indian Bhaktas adopted a large range of vocabulary of experience such as *mehram*, *dildar*, *jani* for the Beloved, *langar* for free feeding (originally the word means a place of shelter for travellers). As said earlier, the people employed parallel pairs of terms, one from each tradition, with impartiality, such as in *Pir-Fakir* or *Guru-Pir*, *Siddha-Pir* (both in Guru Nanak). *Murid* came to be adopted for any kind of disciple, Muslim or non-Muslim. In the compositions of the non-Muslim saints such pairs may be met with frequently, as for example Ram-Rahim, Bed-Kiteb, Puran-Koran, Abdali, Kalandar-Keshva (the last in Namdev). An eroding of prejudice, exclusivism and intolerance was thus steadily taking place.

The Indian mode of love poetry, secular or spiritual, was adopted by the Sufis in India, personifying the lover or devotee as the ardent, yearning female. The corollary of such a mode, in imagining the Beloved as the indifferent philanderer, given to dalliance with 'others' and of one's

confidantes in spiritual experience as *Sakhis* or *Sahelis* (female companions) with the whole world of the Indian erotic postures, came to be adopted by the Sufis in India. This may be seen in such early poetry as Sheikh Farid's represented here (e.g. *Rag Asa* 1, 4, *Suhi* 2, Hymn in *Suhi Lalit*, *Slokas* 1, 23, 24, 32, 34, 54, 63 and others). A medieval Muslim Sufi has expressed the experience of divine love in this mode:

*Sun sahelī pīram kī bata,
Yun mil rahī jūn doodh nabata*

(Listen my damsel-friend to my love-experience·

I am merged in Him as sugar-candy in milk)

(Quoted in *Akhbar-ul-Akhiyar*)

The mode is continued all through the medieval centuries, in Hindi as well as Punjabi. This is in contrast with the Persian mode of such poetry.

Sufis in India (the Punjab included) drew their imagery from the soil and the life of the folk among whom they lived, thus creating a people's literature of which the significance becomes in this way two-fold—as a source of spiritual inspiration and as a national literature. In the poetry of the Sufis of the Punjab (who are of course, all Muslims¹) the Punjab countryside may be seen to figure as the background. Living and composing in an age of agricultural-rural economy, they express their experience through the symbols of [the bride about to leave the parents' home, the auspicious

¹ Poetry of Sufistic cast has here and there been composed by non-Muslims, particularly during the last one century or so.

day of marriage—*saha*—(symbolizing union with God or death), the cranes flying in Kartik (October-November) the lightning-flashes of Savan (July-August), the female at the well, the pitcher for drawing water, the koel and the papiha with their plaintive cries; sesame grains running out from between cupped hands; the frail dye of Kasumbha; the swan, symbol of purity of soul, sweet invigorating buffalo-milk and so many more. This feature of Sufistic poetry not only brought religious experience to the masses, but also brought this class of holy men close to the hearts of the people. The consequence of this is, that Muslims like Bulleh Shah and Shah Hussain are the national poets of all the Punjabi people irrespective of their faith, and Shah Abdul Latif of Sindhis everywhere. A study of the symbology of the Muslim Sufis at the folk levels will reveal a rich fund of the love of the soil and the creation of an influence and atmosphere wherein creeds and labels are forgotten and the people share in a common impulse of love of God and humanity and holy ecstasy.

CHAPTER XIII

The Poetical Compositions of
Sheikh Farid In Multani Punjabi*

IN RAG ASA

*In the Name of the One Indivisible Supreme Being Realized
through His Grace*

Those alone are true devotees whose heart is sincerely in
love with God.

The ones whose heart is belied by their tongue are false,
inconstant ¹

The true devotees soaked in God's love are ever in ecstasy

* Here the entire composition of Sheikh Farid, as it is recorded in *Granth Sahib*, the sacred book of the Sikhs, is given in English rendering. Certain features of the original, like 'Pauses', are omitted, as they would only puzzle the uninitiated reader. The opening invocation' in each case and the name of the Rag (musical measure) are as in the Sacred Book

¹ Literally of unbaked clay

of realization;

Those indifferent to Him are a burden on earth 1(1)

The true devotees are those whom God attaches unto
Himself,

Blessed is their birth, truly fruitful their life (2)

Thou art the Cherisher—unfathomable, inaccessible,

I worship¹ at their feet who have realized Thee (3)

Lord, I seek shelter in Thee,

Thou alone the bestower of forgiveness

Grant to Sheikh Farid the charity of Thy devotion. (4-1)

Thus saith Sheikh Farid—My loved friends, attach your-
selves to Allah

A day will come when this body must turn to dust, and lodge
in the lowly grave (1)

Listen Sheikh Farid, union with Allah may come about,
Shouldst thou restrain the cries of these cranes of desire,
frisking about in thy mind (1)

Should one realize that death is inescapable,

After which return is barred,

One will then not lose the higher life, in pursuit of this
worthless world (2)

Let thy words be ever what is truthful and pure·

Shun what is false;

Let the disciple ever tread the path shown by the master (3)

¹ Literally. KISS.

Splendid heroes¹ cross over the stream,
 The timid female takes heart from their sight.
 Those indifferent to God shall have their golden frames
 sawn through (4)

Listen thou Sheikh². none ever got eternal life in this world;
 Many before our day have warmed this our seat.

The flying cranes of autumn; the forest-fires of summer;
 the lightning flashes of Sawan³—
 Neither these nor the long joyful embrace of long winter's
 nights shall last ⁴(6)

Consider well, what is evanescent must go from hence.
 Long is the labour of joining hearts in love;
 A moment may see them cast asunder ⁵ (7)

Asked the earth the sky, tell over count of the great ones
 who have been
 Said the sky, they all bide time in graves, bearing the burden
 of God's reproaches (8-2)

Adi Granth —(Page 588)

¹ In this great poetic symbol, 'heroes' are devotees of God, and the 'female' stands for persons of weak spiritual power

² Refers here to himself, as well as the haughty class of Muslim divines that went by this name

³ The rainy month, July-August

⁴ Here is a warning, as also in a number of other slokas, against expectation of the perpetuation of life and its pleasures

⁵ The import here is mystical, as referring to devotion to God.

IN RAG SUHI

*In the Name of the One Indivisible Supreme Being Realized
through His Grace*

In fever of anguish I burn and in fits of regret rub my hands;
In my frenzy of passion seek I the Beloved
Beloved, Thou hast taken some offence at me
I am to blame for this, nor He.
To the Beloved's true value was I indifferent
And now when youth is past, am fallen into regrets. (1)

Thou Koel sable-winged, what hath darkened thee?
Sorrow of separation from the Beloved hath singed my wings.
To one separated from her Lord, what comfort?
Through His grace alone may she find union (2)

In life am I a lone female by an unfrequented well,
Bereft of friends and companions
God in His grace may join me to holy company.
As I look around, God alone I find my Succourer (3)

Our path through life is cheerless—sharper than the sword,
narrow in extreme.

Over such a path doth my way lie
Listen Sheikh Farid, contemplate thy departure hence—
The hour of dawn is arrived. (4-1)

IN RAG SUHI LALIT

Listen O man, thou didst not look to the tackle of thy boat
when it was yet time
In the lake swollen with tempests, how shall it float? (1)

Fugitive are pleasures like Kasumbha,¹ burning away at a touch.

Touch it not, beloved, lest it wither away (1)

This frail life-female is atremble under the Master's stern accents

Past is youth, never will the breast be brimful again of milk; never again the love-embrace (2)

Saith Farid Listen, sisters of my soul!

One day life's Swan shall take his reluctant flight!

This frame will turn a dust-heap (3-2)

Adi Granth—Page 794

SLOKAS OF SHEIKH FARID

The day this life-female shall be claimed² is pre-ordained; The Angel of Death³ ye have heard speak of, will show his face, and draw this frail life out, twisting and torturing the frame to the marrow in the bones

This day pre-ordained shall nowise be put off—tell this to thy life

This life is the bride, death the bridegroom who will carry her away in wedlock,

On whose shoulder will the body weep after giving away the bride with its own hands?⁴

¹ A flower yielding a reddish dye easily washable—symbol of frailty

² That is, by Death, figured here as the bridegroom

³ Malak, here Malakul-Maut—the Angel of Death according to Muslim belief

⁴ The imagery in this Sloka is of the giving away of the bride, who in India is customarily loth to leave the parents' home

On the other side of Death is the bridge,¹ narrower than
hair's breadth, over the chasm of hell, full with deafening
cries,

Listen Farid Terrible will be the hubbub there—let not
thyself be robbed through thoughtlessness (1)

Sheikh Farid, hard is the way of God's devotees,
Wretched that I am, I follow only the way of the world;
Burdened with this bundle of worldliness, where may I
cast it off? (2)

(Related to the above is the reflection contained in
the next Sloka)

Worldliness is a hidden fire clouding thought and vision,
I thank the Master for this gift of indifference,
Else would it burn me through (3)

Farid, had I known the store² of life so slender, sparing
would I be of scattering it about,
Did I know the Beloved so indifferent, less would I show of
woman's vanity (4)

(Theme continued)

Did I know the knot of love so frail, firmer would I tie it:

¹ According to Muslim belief, Sirat, an extremely narrow path
passing over hell, which the righteous alone can cross over

² Original, *til*, grains of sesame

Note Guru Nanak himself and his successors in the third and fifth
place, Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjan Dev, have appended
their notes' to Sheikh Farid's slokas, as may be seen from
the text following

Lord, none to me is dear as Thou—thus have I determined
after life's sojourn. (5)

Farid, if thou be possessed of true¹ wisdom, blacken not the
record of thy life,
Look into thy heart² (what thy deeds are) (6)

Farid, strike not back those that strike thee;
In utter humility and forgiveness³ turn towards thy home (7)

Farid, time when thou couldst garner merit, wast thou en-
grossed in the world,
Now with Death approaching,⁴ must thou be loaded for
departure the moment thy sack is full. (8)

(Related to the above in theme are Slokas upto 13)

Look Farid, what hath befallen thee;
Thy beard hath turned grey,
The end⁵ is approaching, the past is far behind (9)

Look Farid, what hath come to pass life sweet as sugar is
turned to bitter poison,⁶
In this state to whom but the Lord may I carry my tale of
sorrow? (10)

¹ Original, *latif* (Arabic subtle, fine)

² Literally, thy shirt-collar (*girivan*)

³ Literally, kiss their feet

⁴ Literally, with foundations of death getting firmer

⁵ Literally, the next world.

⁶ Loss of pleasures is meant

Farid, thy eyes have grown feeble¹, thy ears lost power to hear,

This body is now like a ripening stalk, changing colour (11)

Farid, those who thought not on God in their days of vigour,² rarely may they turn to Him while gone grey,

Devote thyself to the Master while youth is still on thee (12)

(The next Sloka contains a comment on the above by Guru Amar Das, third in Guru Nanak's line of Apostles)

Farid, the Master may be served in youth or old age, as one may turn to Him

This devotion comes not of man's own effort or desire

This cup of the Master's love comes to whoever

He chooses to bless (13)

Farid, I saw eyes that once captivated the world—

Eyes that would at one time not bear a daub too bold of collyrium,

Pecked at by birds (14)

Farid, despite the loudest shrieking warnings against evil, And exhortation to good,

For the heart led astray by Satan what turning away? (15)

Farid, wouldst thou seek the Master of All,

Look to the grass under thy feet

Be like it cut and trampled³ (16)

¹ Literally, thin

² Literally, while with black hair

³ Humility and penance are implied

Farid, speak not ill of the earth—its merit is great,
 While living, it is trampled by us;
 Dead, it covers us over (17)

Farid, love of God and greed go not together
 With greed love is rendered impure
 Such love is frail as leaking straw roof against rain (18)

Farid, why wanderest thou over wild places, trampling
 thorns under thy feet?
 God abides in the heart, seek Him not in lonely wastes (19)

Farid, once these frail legs of mine scoured over hill and
 desert,
 Today the prayer-jug¹ at hand is removed a hundred
 miles ² (20)

Farid, in separation from the Master the nights seem end-
 lessly long,
 My sides are burning in pain
 Cursed is the life of those that have sought other than Him.
 (21)

Farid, may my flesh burn over red embers of fire,
 If ever I kept back anything from the friends of my heart.³
 (22)

Farid, the ignorant peasant seeks luscious⁴ grapes while

¹ Kuza small earthenware jug for water for ablution before namaz, the Muslim prayer

² Original—*koh* (kos)

³ May imply keeping back one's worldly goods or secrets of the heart

⁴ Dakh Bijouri a fine variety of grape.

sowing thistles;¹
 And seeks to wear silk while carding and spinning rough
 wool (23)

Farid, the lanes are muddy, the Beloved's home far,
 Yet my love for Him is deep;
 If I stir out, my cloak² will get wet,
 If I stay back, am I false to my love (24)

Let the cloak be drenched through, let it rain never so
 much—
 Go I must to meet the loved One³
 So my love prove not false (25)

Farid, I feared a touch of dust soiling my turban, simple
 heart!
 A day will come when dust will eat too into this head (26)

Sugar, sweets, candy, butter, rich creamy⁴ milk—
 Lord, nothing for Thy devotees approaches the joy in
 Thee (27)

Farid, my subsistence is on a dry crust of bread⁵,
 Hard will be the lot of those seeking to indulge their
 palate with delicacies (28)

¹ Original kīkar—acacia tree

² Literally, woollen sheet or blanket (*kamali*)

³ Plural in the original, but the sense rendered is meant

⁴ Literally, buffalo's milk, favoured in Panjab, and rich with cream.

⁵ Literally, flat-cake of wood (This sloka may perhaps give some biographical detail At one shrine a pan-cake of wood is actually kept as being Sheikh Farid's sustenance during his penance!)

(Theme continued)

Friend, eat thy hard crust of bread, take simple cold water:
Envy not the delicacies another is enjoying (29)

This night I couched not with my Lord,
My limbs are all in torture with unfulfilment
I ask the woman cast off,
In what agony must thy nights be passed? (30)

(Theme continued in Slokas 31 and 32¹)

She who finds comfort neither in the husband's home nor in
the parents';
Neglected by her Love—what kind of wedded wife would
she be? (31)

In the Husband's home or the Parents', she is her Lord's—
the Lord inaccessible, unfathomable,
Saith Nanak, the happily married wife is one on whom her
Lord's favour falls (32)²

Man's life is like a gaily-decked female,
Perfect in toilet and make-up in care-free sleep;
In the end the fragrance of musk is gone
Foul odours³ alone remain (33)

I fear not loss of youth were not the Beloved's love lost;
Many a youth hath withered away for lack of love's sus-
tenance. (34)

¹ The import is mystical in Slokas 30 to 32

² This Sloka is of Guru Nanak's composition, containing comment
on the foregoing Sloka of Sheikh Farid

³ Original *hing*—asafoetida

Farid, anguish is my bed, suffering the bed-strings,
 Separation from the Beloved my bed-sheets
 Such is my life,
 Cast Thy glance of compassion on it, Lord (35)

(Theme Continued)

Sorrow of the Beloved's separation is the Lord of Life:
 Saith Farid like to the cremation-yard is the heart that
 knoweth not such sorrow (36)

Farid, the world's pleasures¹ are poison-shoots coated
 with sugar
 Some there are who spend their days cultivating these,
 Others uproot them from the field (37)

Farid, one part² of the day didst thou waste in wandering,
 part in sleep,
 When God asks thee to render thy account,
 What wilt thou say was thy life's aim? (38)

Farid, hast thou noticed the Bell beaten without blame?
 What may then be the fate of us sinners? (39)

(Theme continued)

See the bell beaten every hour, every quarter-hour,
 Friend with beautiful frame sound as the Bell's,
 Without devotion will thy life's night be one of torment (40)

¹ Interpreted generally as referring to woman

² Literally, four pahars, constituting half of the length of day and night

Sheikh Farid hath gone old, all atremble his frame,
 Though life's span be a hundred years,
 In the end will it turn to dust (41)

Lord, Farid begs this of Thee,
 Give me not to hang on another¹ for favour;
 Should such be Thy will, take then this life out of me (42)

See the blacksmith with axe slung on shoulder,
 A pitcher of water on his head,
 Seeking to cut down a *van* tree,
 Saith Farid to thee, friend blacksmith;
 Spare this tree,
 Under this I seek my Beloved Lord,
 To thee it may yield no more than charcoal² (43)

Farid, some there are who have excess of meal³
 Others do not have even salt for it⁴
 In the Beyond alone will it appear,
 Which is subjected to hard blows for a life of sin (44)

Those who commanded drums to be beaten for them
 Umbrellas to rise over their heads;
 Trumpets to proclaim their glory—
 Ultimately have they been laid to rest in the graveyard—
 Buried under the earth, helpless (45)

¹ Literally, at another's door

² This graphic description is variously interpreted, but the sense suggested here appears to be meant

³ Stands for worldly goods in general

⁴ This may be an 'autobiographical' touch

(Theme continued)

Saith Farid, those who erected vast mansions, halls and
bov'ers—

Their commerce in the world false,
Ultimately the grave their abode (46)

Saith Farid, thy quilt hath numerous stitches to keep it
together,

But none to thy own frame,
Friend, however revered and great,¹ all must depart when
their turn cometh (47)

Saith Farid, the Angel of Death steals in,
Despite our two burning lamps,
He comes and takes the fort, denudes the vessel,
And leaving, extinguishes the lamps (48)

Farid, see how cotton and sesame are crushed in the press;
so also sugarcane,
How paper and the pot are put into flames—
Even such will be the punishment of evildoers (49)

Farid, those who carry the prayer-mat on their shoulders
and wear rough wool,²
But bear daggers in their hearts and utter falsehood with
glib tongues—
These are bright outside but have the dark night in their
hearts (50)

¹ Original—Mashaikh, Sheikh—men of Muslim holy Orders.

² This was the usual wear of the Sufi (from *suf*, wool)

Farid, my body is macerated in penance—
 Not a drop¹ of blood will ooze from it if cut,
 Those dyed in God² have no blood left in them. (51)

(Added by Guru Amar Das)

This frame is all blood,
 Without blood a body may not be,
 Fear of God emaciates the body;
 Banishes from it the blood of greed;
 As fire purifies metals, so does fear of God cast out impuri-
 ties of foul thinking,
 Nanak, those alone are beautiful who are soaked in God's
 dye³ (52)

Farid, seek a vast lake wherein thou mayst find what thou
 seekest—God's Name;
 Why seek a filthy pond, muddying thy hands⁴? (53)

Saith Farid, in youth this life-female loved not the Lord;
 Grown in years, she died.
 In the grave her soul walleth;
 Lord Thee I failed to meet. (54)

Listen Farid, the hair on thy head, thy beard and thy lips
 all are greyed,
 Thou thoughtless madman, wake up!
 Why art still at thy idle pleasures? (55)

¹ Original, ratti, a grain's weight

² Here is a pun on ratte (dyed) and rat (blood).

³ The dye as symbol for the spiritual life is also used in the Koran-sibghatu-Allah.

⁴ Lake is a great teacher or creed, pond a petty or narrow one

(Continued)

Farid, how long this play of thoughtless pleasures ?

Wake up to serve the Master !

Thy few days of life are fast slipping by (56)

Farid, set not thy heart on mansions and bowers,

Under the immeasurable heap of earth none will thy
succourer be (57)

(Continued)

Farid, love not mansions and wealth,

Keep in thy mind mighty Death,

Contemplate alone where thou hast perforce to go (58)

Farid, give up what brings thee no merit,

Lest thou be disgraced at the Court Divine. (59)

Farid, serve the Master, throw off all doubt from thy mind.

Men of God need to be forbearing like trees (60)

Farid, despite my black wear and clothing full of sins am I,

In the world's eyes I yet a Dervish appear (61)

The crop destroyed by water will not revive if soaked again
in water

Saith Farid As this, one bereft of God will find no respite
from sorrow (62)

When a virgin, her heart fondly thought of marriage,
Marriage brought with it entanglements.

Alas, impossible it is for the state of virginity to return ¹
(63)

On the marge of the pool of the world have alighted Swans,²
They dip not their beaks in it,
Spreading their pinions for flight ever (64)

(Theme Continued)

The Swan hath alighted in the field of chaff,
People scare it away;
The ignorant multitude not knowing,
The Swan pecks not at chaff (65)

Gone are the birds which brought life to the pools,
The entire pool will flow off, leaving alone the lotuses ³ (66)

Farid, in the grave a stone thy pillow,
The earth thy bed, the worm will eat thy flesh,
For aeons wilt thou lie on one side, unchanged (67)

Farid, the beautiful pitcher of the body is broken
The firm cord of breath is snapped,
In what home Izrael, Angel of Death,
Finds entertainment tonight? (68)

(Theme continued)

Farid, such is the end the beautiful pitcher will break;
the firm cord be snapped

¹ The meaning is mystical The Seeker whose heart is divided between the world and God will ever be full of regrets

² Symbol for men of God

³ Symbol for men of God

To what end were born those who were merely a burden on earth? (69)

Farid, thou shameless¹ truant from prayer,
Worthless is thy tenor of life
Never hast thou come to the House of God to pray²

(Continued)

Wake up betimes Farid, perform thy ablutions, engage in prayers,
A head not bowing before the Lord merits not to remain on the shoulders (71)

What worth the head obstinate in God-denial?
Worthy such head to burn under the pot,
To be fuel to the fire. (72)

Consider Farid, where are thy parents who begot thee?
Gone on a never-ending journey—
Yet thy heart still is unmoved to see thy own end. (73)

Farid, make thy mind straight, free of ups and downs of passing passions,
Then mayst thou escape the furnace-blast of hell. (74)

(Theme continued by Guru Arjan Dev)

Farid, the Creator is manifest in His creation, the creation is in Him,

¹ Original, *kuttia*—thou dog!

² Literally, never turned up in the mosque for thy daily prayers

Cavil not at any one—He pervadeth all (75)

Farid, if while cutting my umbilical cord, my throat were
a little gagged,
Life would then escape these trials, this suffering. (76)

Gone are those pearly teeth, those quick-moving feet, those
sparkling eyes, vigilant ears¹
A loud cry hath arisen from the flesh at departure of such
companions (77)

Farid, return thou good for evil, bear no revenge in thy
heart
Thus will thy body be free of maladies,
And thy life blest (78)

Farid, this bird of life is a passing guest;
The world a lovely garden:
Hear the drum of departure beaten since dawn,
Get ready for the journey hence (79)

Farid, at midnight is scattered fragrant musk,
Those asleep share not this blessing²
What union for those with eyes slumber-oppressed³? (80)

Farid, I had imagined alone I were unhappy,
Behold, the entire world is by suffering gripped,
From my house-top I saw, this fire hath spared no home (81)

¹ The epithets herein are added to suit the rendering

² Original, will obtain nothing

³ A noble mystical state of joy and communion is expressed in this Sloka, one of the most beautiful in this collection

(Theme continued by Guru Arjan Dev in Slokas 82 and 83)

Farid, this world is so inviting
 In its midst is a garden-spot of poison-bearing plants,
 This poison injures not those blessed with the Master's
 grace (82)

Farid, this life is full of delights with this body beautiful.
 Rare are those that seek the Beloved and not the world (83)

Mighty river, erode not thy banks, thou too art answerable
 to thy Maker
 But what power in the river to flow this way or that?
 God's will alone guides its course (84)

Farid, thy long life hath thus been passed
 Thy days sorrow-filled, thy nights lying on thorns
 Now towards the close the Pilot shouts
 "Thy boat's in jaws of storm" (85)

(Theme continued)

The long river of life flows on, bringing down the sandy
 banks,
 Yet the boat is safe from the storm, if the Pilot be heedful (86)

Farid, scores profess to be my friends, but true friends
 see I nowhere,
 For one true and devoted friend my heart yearns as in
 smouldering fire ¹ (87)

¹ Literally, fire made from cow-dung

Farid, the senses¹ keep always a tumult around the soul,
 causing pain and anxiety,
 Let me plug these ears—
 Blow storm never so loud (88)

Farid, in this life is joy in God, attractive like the ripe dates
 and rivers of honey of paradise,
 Realise these, for with each passing day is the grip of
 Death tightened (89)

Farid, penance hath left my body a skeleton², crows peck
 at my soles,
 God still hath not revealed Himself—such is my destiny (90)

(Theme continued in Slokas 91 and 92)

Thou Crow pecking at my emaciated body, eating away
 its flesh,
 Pray touch not these two eyes, so I may have sight of the
 Beloved (91)

Pray Crow, peck not at my body, fly off from where thou
 art settled,
 Swallow not the flesh of this body wherein is lodged the
 Beloved. (92)

Farid, the lowly grave makes call to man to come to this
 everlasting abode—

¹ Literally, body

² The Sloka and the next two are related in theme. This imagery is found elsewhere too in the spiritual poetry of India. Sloka numbered 90 resembles one ascribed to Sheikh Farid in *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, a seventeenth century book on Chishtī Sufis.

Saying, come to me thou must, fear not death (93)

These eyes have seen the vast world vanish into eternity,
Each is caught in his own trials,
Nor am I free from mine (94)

Listen Man, shouldst thou ennoble thyself,
Then mayst thou have union with the Creator and have
true bliss,
Whoever is for God, the world will be for him.¹ (95)

Life is like a tree growing on the river's bank—how long
may it last?
How long may the unbaked pitcher retain water? (96)

Farid, lofty mansions have been deserted—
Their inmates gone to occupy abodes under the earth,
In the lowly graves abide the dead
Tell the proud ones of the world. Engage in prayer, for
the Departure is at hand (97)

Farid, Death is visible as the opposite bank of the river;
Beyond is said to be flaming hell, resounding with ear-
piercing shrieks,
Some there are who have realization of this,
Many go about wrapped in thoughtlessness,
Know that the deeds done in this world will bear witness
against us in the next (98)

Farid, life is like a crane sporting on the river's bank,
Suddenly on it hath swooped the swift hawk,

¹ The original is in the first person, as from God

As comes this hawk from God, all sporting is forgotten;
God sends on man what never he thought or imagined. (99)

This body weighing three and a half maunds¹ is sustained
by food and water,

Man comes into the world with a vast store of hopes,
As visible Death approaches, smashing through all doors,
Those loving friends and brothers perforce surrender thee
to him

Behold Man, departing this world borne on shoulders of
four pall-bearers,

Farid, only the good deeds done in this life stand by us in
the next (100)

Farid, I am a sacrifice to those birds² who pass their days
in solitary places;

Picking food from pebbles, living on sandy mounds, yet
turning not away from God (101)

Farid, behold! seasons change, woods are shaken in storms,
trees shed leaves,

Scour the world over, no escape wilt thou find from
change (102)

Farid, tear thy clothes to strips, assume coarse woollen
wear

Assume whatever wear will bring thee near to the
Beloved (103)

(Theme continued by Guru Amar Das)

¹ The 'maund' in early times weighed less than now

² Hermits living in solitude are meant

Why tear off thy silken robes, why wear wool?
 Saith Nanak, within the course of daily life in the home
 mayst thou attain to the Beloved, if thy heart be sincere.
 (104)

(Continued by Guru Arjan Dev)

Farid, those proud of worldly greatness, wealth and looks
 Will of the Beloved remain deprived, as sandhills of
 rain (105)

Listen Farid, frightening are the faces of those indifferent
 to God

In this world would they suffer,
 Hereafter shall they not be honoured (106)

Farid, though alive, art thou no better than dead—
 Thou hast not arisen from sleep at dawn to pray,
 Thou hast forgotten God, but know God hath not forgotten
 thee (107)

(Theme continued by Guru Arjan Dev uptill Sloka 111)

Listen Farid, the Lord abides ever lovely, eternally fulfilled
 The purest of wears comes to those dyed in God's dye
 (108)

Listen Farid, bear joy and sorrow alike, cleanse thyself
 of evil thoughts,

He alone shall enter the Court Divine whose will is bent to
 Allah's will (109)

Listen Farid, the world is subject to all kinds of stresses,
 so is each man.¹

¹ Original, thou

He alone escapes this who is under Allah's¹ protection,
(110)

Farid, our hearts are dyed in the world that is worthless,
Hard is the way of life of God's devotees:
This may come by the greatest good fortune² (111)

Prayer done in the first part of night is like the flower,
Prayer continued later in the night the fruit thereof,
These blessings of the Lord descend upon those who keep
vigils in prayer (112)

(Theme continued by Guru Nanak)³

The Lord's blessings may not be forced out of His hand
Some may not get these though awake,
On some He may confer these shaking them out of
slumber (113)

Thou who lookest for bliss with thy husband,
What is lacking to give thee joy, with all thy charms?
Listen, the truly blessed in marriage look for joy nowhere
but in obedience to the Spouse (114)

Make forbearance thy bow and bow-string,
The arrow too of forbearance—
God will not let it go off its mark (115)

¹ Note the Guru's use of the orthodox Muslim name of God, Allah

² Original, *Karma*, which implies fortune made by one's meritorious actions

³ Sloka 113 is ascribed in *Puratan Janam-Sakhi*, probably the earliest biography of Guru Nanak, to him. In Siri Rag, on page 83 of *Adi Granth* also this Sloka is recorded as Guru Nanak's

(Theme continued for two Slokas)

Those who adopt forbearance and take upon themselves
suffering—

Such alone will be near God their secret strength none will
know. (116)

Make forbearance thy life's ideal, learn hard this lesson,
Thus wilt thou become a mighty river, not a petty channel
(117)

Farid, know the ascetic's path is hard,
This devotion thou hast is only of the surface,
Rare is the man who truly treads it (118)

In separation from God my body burns like the oven,
My bones flame like firewood
I would walk till I be dead tired,
Would walk on my head,
To find union with the Beloved (119)

(Theme continued by the holy Gurus)

Thou needst not burn thyself like the oven nor put in
flames thy bones
Why torture thy poor limbs? Behold! the Beloved in thy
own heart ¹ (120)

I seek the Lord elsewhere—Behold! He is here with me
Saith Nanak, the Inaccessible may not be approached,

¹ With minor verbal variation this Sloka occurs among Guru Nanak's own on page 1411, *Adi Granth*

But the Divine Guide may grant thee a sight of Him.¹
(121)

The sight of graceful Swans on water excited in cranes the
desire likewise to swim,
The poor Cranes got only drowned, head downwards.²
(122)

I sought companionship with one whom I took for a Swan
I would shun him had I known him for a wretched Crane.
(123)

(Theme continued by Guru Nanak)

Talk not of Swans and Cranes—His grace alone suffices
Saith Nanak, should He so wish, He may turn Crow to
Swan³ (124)

On the marge of the Lake sits a solitary bird, with numerous
snares around
This body is caught amid waves of desire—God's mercy
alone may save it! (125)

What the world, what the qualities, what rich jewels of
speech?
What wear to adopt, the Lord's love to win? (126)

(Theme continued by Guru Nanak)

¹ This Sloka is of the composition of Guru Ram Das (vide *Adi Granth*, Page 1318, Rag Kanra)

² Slokas 122 and 123 appear as of the composition of Guru Amar Das in Rag Wadhans, on page 585, *Adi Granth*

³ With a minor variation, this Sloka appears among Guru Nanak's in Siri Rag, page 82 of *Adi Granth*

The word is Humility, the quality Forgiveness;
 Sweet speech the jewel
 Sister, wear these ever—then alone will thy Lord by thine ¹
 (127)

One who is wise yet innocent as a child
 Mighty yet forbearing as though without might,
 One who shares with others his store though slender—
 Rare is a devotee with such qualities (128)

Speak never a rude word to any—the Lord Eternal abideth
 in all
 Break no heart—know each being is a priceless jewel. (129)

(Theme continued)

Each heart is a jewel, evil it is to break any,
 Shouldst thou seek to find the Beloved, break no one's
 heart. (130)

(Page 1377-1384 *Adi Granth*)

¹ *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, already referred to, ascribes this reply to Guru Nanak, in the colloquy between him and Sheikh Brahm (Ibrahim)

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