CHAPTER V

SHAikh FARID-UDDIN: A SWEET-HEARTED MAN OF ALL AGES.
Shaikh Farid-ud-din: a sweet hearted man of all ages.

Baba Farid, one of the great souls among the Sufis of the mediaeval age and a great mystic, belonged to the Chisti school. He was born in the midst of the political turmoil in mediaeval India around 1173 A.D. and lived upto 1265 A.D. He was one of the great personalities with a large heart. Prof. K. A. Nizami, a great scholar from the Aligarh Muslim University refers to him thus: 'One of the most revered and distinguished of mediaeval Muslim mystics. He lived at a very significant period of hectic and restless political activity. At this a time when the entire country was resounding with the din and clatter of the Ghurian arms, he sat cool and taught lessons of human love and affection. He strove day and night to create the atmosphere of love in the discordent society'.

In making him what he became, his mother contributed most. His father Qazi Shuaib and mother Qarsum were deeply religious minded persons. They left Kabul and finally settled at a place Qasur near Lahore. His mother was an illustrious lady. She attained highest spiritual power through her long and nocturnal prayers. Once some burlyers

1. (The) Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar-K. A. Nizami, Aligarh University, 1955, P ...
2. (The) Spirit of Indian culture: Saints of India - Vivek Bhattacharyya, Delhi, 1980, P 114.
entered her house at the dead of the night with the intention of stealing. They felt ashamed when they saw her immersed in her prayer. They swore never to steal again; one of them, Jamali, turned into a saintly man later on. People used to visit him to receive his blessings.

Shaikh Farid was influenced by the teachings of his mother. He had lost his father in his infancy and was brought up by his mother. His mother arranged for his education. She trained him in a regular and systematic course of theological education for a considerable number of years. Shaikh Farid became a learned man even before attending his maturity. He acquired knowledge in the different branches of learning and this made him proud. Once during the course of his conversation with his mother, he was scolded roughly for his ignorance in the prideless spiritual life. Then she taught him the ilm-i-batni and advised him to avoid thinking too much of his worldly education or the ILM-i-Zahiri. Her philosophy of education was, "without the spiritual knowledge, all educational qualities are meaningless for a higher divine life."
People used to call him a mad man, but a mystic saint Jalaluddin Tabrizi recognised his real worth and blessed him.

His meeting with Shaikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki was contemporary to him. Once he had an opportunity to meet with the mystic Saint Qutbuddin. Farid conversed with him and lamented on his lapses in life. The savant consoled him and asked him to equip himself with the Islamic learning. So Farid busied himself with studies at Multan a seat of learning in mediaeval India. In Multan he memoried the whole of the Holy Quran and recited the verses at least four hours in a day and night. During his stay Multan, Khwaja Qutbuddin Bhaktiyar Kaki paid visit to Multan. Baba Farid hurriedly went to the mosque in view of getting a glimpse of him, his spiritual guide. He humbly kissed the feet of his preceptor in a prostrating posture and prayed to him for his blessing and composed a couplet and recited this in:

'He who is approved by you, is approved eternally
And no one is disappointed of your blessing
Your mere attention to any particles even for a while
Makes it better than a thousand suns'.

Shaikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki initiated and took him in his religious fold.
Baba Farid used to practise religious austerities to feel the pangs of other people. He continued his observance of fast three to ten days. Stone chips when put in his mouth used to turn into sweets he came to be called Ganj Shakar. He felt the presence of universal God in all living beings. 'He (God) could be felt only through proper cultivation of emotion'. He used Persian word 'Dard' or the feeling for others and said that it was the source of all spiritual virtues.

What strikes a biography of Shaikh Farid most is his excellence as a man. Truthful, honest, sincere, affectionate and considerate - he was a living embodiment of all the moral virtues which he preached to his disciples and visitors. His warm loving nature responded to the trifling of human sufferings. He had that loftiness of spirit which grows out of selflessness and which elicits spontaneous venerations. Persons having little understanding of the mystic principles and ideology have disfigured these saints by attributing meaningless miracles to them. Shaikh Farid's miracles were of a deeply sympathetic soul and his greatness was of morally perfect man. 1.

1. (The) Life PP 79-80
He was the preceptor of Shaikh Nizam-Ud-Din Auliya. He never thought of his miraculous power. He only thought of the well-being of the people at large. He was a man of pleasant personality. His heart was the above of complete absence of all hateful distinction and discriminations. All were equal to him, rich and poor, old acquaintances and new-comers. He embraced them equally with courtesy and warmth of affection.

Shaikh Farid was a man of peace. He behaved with others in a cool mood, even in time of provocation. He stayed unperturbed. He also developed cool-mindedness among his disciples. Prof. K. A. Nizami says: "One day he was sitting on his carpet when 'an insolent person' came to him and shouted: 'Why do you display yourself like an idol? I have nothing to do in this matter'. Replied the Shaikh with unruffled temper: "God has made me what I am 'No' replied the Shaikh. 'God has made everything that exists'. The man felt ashamed and went away.'

Teachings of Shaikh Farid

Baba Farid devoted his long life to the moral

1. Ibid .... 79-80 PP.
teachings of the degraded masses in the mediaeval age. His teachings were so impressive that his admirers did not like to put them in ink and paper. *Amir Khurd* collected his 500 sayings. 2.

A free translation of some of his sayings quoted by Amir Khurd is given below by Dr. K. A. Nizami:

1. Escaping from one's self is (a means of) attaining God.
2. Do not satisfy the demands of the physical self for the more you satisfy it, the more it demands.
3. Do not regard the ignorant as alive.
4. Give a wide berth to an ignorant man who poses as a learned one.
5. Do not utter a truth which resembles a lie.
6. Do not try to sell what people do not wish to buy.
7. Do not hanker after worldly self and glory.
8. Do not eat everybody's bread, but give bread to people (freely)
9. Do not forget death at any place.

2. Ibid.
10. Do not say anything as mere guesswork.
11. Whenever an evil befalls you consider it a punishment for your sins.
12. Do not boast of having committed a sin.
13. Do not make heart a plaything of the devil.
14. Keep your internal self better than the external self.
15. Do not strive to display yourself.
16. Do not lower yourself in an attempt to secure a high position.
17. Do not borrow anything from either the weak or upstarts.
18. Treat old families with respect.
19. Aspire for new (spiritual) attainments everyday.
20. As far as possible prevent women from developing the habit of using abusive language.
21. Consider good health a blessing.
22. Show gratitude but do not place the obligation of gratefulness on others.
23. While doing good to others think that you are doing good to yourself.
24. Give up immediately the pursuit of a thing which your heart considers bad.
25. Do not retain a slave who wants to be sold.
26. Be always on the look out for a pretext for doing good.
27. Do not fight or quarrel in a manner which leaves no room for reconciliation.

28. Consider levity and anger as a sign of weakness.

29. Do not consider yourself safe from an enemy however conciliatory he might be towards you.

30. Whoever fears you fear Him.

31. Do not place reliance on your strength.

32. Do not forget religion when in company of the rich.

33. Greatness consists in doing justice.

34. Be generous when you have wealth.

35. There can be no substitute for religion.

36. There can be no equivalent to time.

37. Show generosity to the righteous man.

38. Consider haughtiness necessary in dealing with the proud ones.

39. Do not entertain guests with extravagance.

40. When God visits you with some calamity, do not turn away from it.

41. Consider a durwesh who lives in the hope of riches as avaricious.

42. Entrust the country to a God fearing Wazir.

43. Defeat your enemy by consulting him and make him captive by your politeness.
44. Consider worldliness as an unforeseen calamity.

45. Be critical of your own shortcomings.

46. Acquire wealth by merit so that it may last ever.

47. Acquire knowledge through humility.

48. Do not lose your temper at the bitter words of the enemy and do not lose your shield by being overpowered with anger.

49. If you do not want to be held in disgrace do not beg for anything.

50. If you want to make the entire world your enemy develop pride.

51. Conceal your good and bad things.

52. Protest religion by knowledge.

53. If you want greatness associate with the downtrodden.

54. If you want ease and comfort, do not be jealous.

55. Accept affliction as present.

56. Work in a way that you may get (eternal) life after death.

These sayings of the Shaikh are not dry aphorisms. They epitomise the essence of morality and wisdom and are deeply steeped in mystic ideals. The Shaikh always tried to
impress, by precept and example, upon the minds of his followers that the supreme aim of a mystic's life should be to create love and affection in the hearts of the people. One day a man presented him a pair Scissors; "Give me a needle", he told the man, 'I sew (and join); I do not cut (and divide)".

Shaikh Farid wanted his disciples to develop complete faith in God because this faith alone could bring about a concentration and intensification of human powers. One day, while learning on his staff, his mood changed and he threw his staff away. Shaikh Nizam-Ud-din was present at that time. He was surprised at the sudden change in the Shaikh's mood. When he enquired about the reason, the Shaikh replied: "I was reprimanded because I put faith in other than Him".

Baba Farid one day informed his audience that three questions were put to 700 saints and all of them gave the same reply. The questions and answers are as follows:

1. Who is the wisest? 'One who rejects the world' they replied.
2. Who is the most saintly? 'One who does not get changed at everything.
3. Who is the richest and the wealthiest of all men? 'One who is content'. Sayings of Baba Farid.
4. There is calamity in deliberation and safety in resignation to the will of God.
5. The 'Ulama are nobler than the common people and the Raqirs are the noblest all.

6. The Raqirs occupy the same place in the in the midst of 'Ulama which the full moon occupies in the midst of the constellation of stars.

7. The meanest of all people is one who busies himself exclusively in feeding and clothing himself.

8. Mystic music (Sama) moves the hearts of the listeners and breathes the fire of love in their hearts.

Baba Farid wanted his disciples to be free from pride and arrogance. He advised them to develop a spirit of humility in their relations with their spiritual guide and master. One day he narrated before his disciples the following story of Shaikh Abu Said Abul Khair.

"Once Shaikh Abu said Abul Khair was riding a horse. A murid, who was walking on foot, saw him, and rushed to kiss the Shaikh's knee. The Shaikh said: 'Lower still'. The disciple kissed the Shaikh's feet. 'Lower still' repeated the Shaikh. The disciple kissed the ground."
The Shaikh then remarked: 'In asking you to kiss still lower' my object was not to make you pay respects to myself. The lower you kissed the higher became your spiritual rank.'

A popular saint of the masses:

Baba Farid had a tremendous impact on the society and communicated with them in a simple manner; sophistication was absent in him. He used as the medium of communication colloquial language of Punjab and composed of songs for them. There are some beautiful songs composed by him as for example the following:

1. 

Farida Sakkar Khand NIGAT gurh
Makhiya manjha dudh /
Sabey bastu mithian rab na pujam tudh //
'Sugar, honey candy molasses and milk, all are sweet but none of these can compare with the sweetness of the Name of the Lord'
2. Farida Jangal kea bhabahi
bankmanda modeha
Bansi rab his liye jangal kia dhudhaka
'To what avail is you seeking Him amidst thorns
that prick your feet'. He dwells in your heart.'

3. Farida did rata is duni saw duni na
kitoi kamn
Ek rahay day rah gaye ek radhi gava ujarh

'He would is like into the sugar coated pill of
poison. Beware lest you lose in the game and pass away
empty handed'.

There is another composition of song by him which
resembles the echo of the Srimad Bhagavat Gita.

4. Farida dukh Sukh ek Kar dil de
Lah bikar
Allah bhaboo so bhala tan lobhi
darbar.

'A real saint is he who is indifferent to
suffering and comfort. The saints consider them under the
same category. The saints feel that whatever He does to them
is for their benefit'.

[tr. rendered by V. Bhattacharyya]
Baba Farid and the Guru Granth:

'Guru Arjan Dev compiled the Guru Granth in 1604 A.D. The Guru placed the sayings and songs of Baba Farid in a separate chapter with an adequate honour entitled 'Slok Shaikh Farid Ke.' (the couplets of venerable Farid). Baba Farid had a taste for poetry and he composed poems spontaneously in an urge of love. He used the local dialect of Multan to convey his message to the masses. Though he composed the poems in Multani dialect, he freely borrowed terms of religion and daily life from Arabic and Persian. Most of the slokas have their spiritual meaning with an immense social value. Not only the Sikhs but also Hindu and Muslim population still get inspiration from the writing of Baba Farid.

Though Baba Farid never visited Bengal, several places are named after him. The Faridpur district in Bangladesh is named after Baba Farid. There is also a place in the district of Chittagong, where a fountain is called 'Baba Farider Chasmah'. There is a small vault dedicated in his memory where both Hindus and the Muslims pray for the fulfilment of their desires.