CHAPTER VI

**Shaikh Farid-ud-din Ganj Shakar.**

**Shaikh Farid-ud-din Mas'ud,** popularly known as Baba Farid, an eminent mystic of medieval India, was born in 1175 A.D. at Kahtwal and died in 1265 A.D. at the age of ninety five, in Ajodhan — present Pakpattan. He was a man of scholarly taste and religious bent of mind. He completed his religious education very early in Multan and adopted in his youth a life of vigils, penitences and prayers which continued up to his last breath. He completed his course of mystic discipline at the feet of Shaikh Qutb-ud-din who granted him his Khilafat-Mama and appointed him as his successor after his death.

Shaikh Farid led a life of faqr (poverty) and tawakkul (Trust in God). He frequently observed fasts and his iftar (The food taken at the end of a day of fasting) was only a cup of syrup, half or two third of which was distributed among his companions. His character was the true mirror of his conduct. He preached what he practised. There was unity between his thought, words and deeds. His public life was in complete harmony with his private life.

Baba Farid's monastery (Khānqāh) was open to all irrespective of caste or creed. Rich and poor, officials and non-officials, old and young were received in the same way. A stream of visitors flowed to the monastery everyday.
but Baba Farid never tired of it. He attended to the problem of every visitor individually and tried his best to remedy his grievances. His long life of ninety five years was devoted to the upliftment of humanity from sin and superstition. He furnished the society of his day with an infinite moral force which removed the social, ideological and linguistic barriers between the various cultural groups of India.

Delhi, at the time of Baba Farid, was a great centre of Muslim culture. Many refugees from central Asia had settled there. They generally aspired for mundane honour and position. Allurements of court life had drawn them to Delhi. Distinguished theologians, such as Shaikh Badr-ud-din Gaznavi, Qadi Minhajus-Siraj, Maulana Nur Turk, Sayed Qutb-ud-din and others had been drawn to a life of politics. Shaikh Farid too, for a short time, breathed in that atmosphere. Soon his fame travelled extensively. The author of Fawa'id-ul-Fuad writes that after the Friday prayer people used to kiss the hands of Baba Farid in over whelming numbers.

But Shaikh Farid was not hankering after worldly honour. He was in search of some solitary place for his self training. Therefore he left Delhi and migrated to Hansi. At Hansi, he used to deliver sermons. But he could not escape the public eye even there. So he shifted to Kahtwal and from Kahtwal, he came to Ajodhan where he settled permanently. Very soon, in Ajodhan, the period of self discipline came
to an end and the seclusion (Uzlat) was changed into association (Subbat). The doors of the monastery were opened and every one was allowed to visit him without any discrimination. Sheikh Farid-ud-din devoted his long life there to enhance the moral and spiritual culture of society. His humanity sublimity of character and spiritual calibre helped in spreading the fame of chishti order to distant places. It crossed the boundaries of Punjab and reached every corner of India.¹⁰

For the expansion of the order and moral uplift of mankind, Baba Farid trained a group of disciples who were known as Khalifas among whom Sheikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya’s name is outstanding. They made the mystic cult popular among the Indian masses.

Sheikh Farid-ud-din is himself the author of any book. It has been said that Bahat-ul-Qulub is the collection of the sayings (Mufzuqat) of Baba Farid written by Sheikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya. But this work is a pure and simple fabrication.¹¹ Authentic books such as Fawaid-ul-Fuad, Khair-ul-Majalis, and Siyar-ul-Auliya bring home to us a series of facts about the life and thought of Baba Farid. I have tried to summarise his thought in the following pages.

Conception of God:

Baba Farid was a man of religion. He always conformed to the laws of Shariat and never ventured to transgress its limit. Upto his last moment, he continued to offer his
prayer regularly. During the night his soul was to depart for the world beyond he repeated his prayers thrice. He observed continuous fasts and laid great emphasis on this mode of discipline. In course of instructions he said to Shaikh Nizam-ud-din that fasting is half of the journey for the attainment of one’s goal. And the remaining half comprises prayer (Salāt), pilgrimage to Kaaba (Hij) etc. For him, religious knowledge and learning were a prerequisite to spiritual discipline. Hence his conception of God is deeply saturated with religious consciousness.

God, for him, was a living Person, having objective existence. He believed in personal bond between man and his God. He always acted with the conviction that God is before him. The verse, “I die for thee and I live for thee” which he often used to recite, when all alone, clearly reflects his attitude. He depended absolutely on God. He did not want to be oblivious of Him even for a single moment. Once he was walking for a little distance with the aid of a stick. All of a sudden, he threw away the stick and became restless. When the reason was asked, he replied that he was reprimanded because he was depending on something other than God.

God, for Baba Farid, was omnipotent. It was his firm belief that He was the only bestower. Recommending the case of a certain man to Sultan Ghiyath-ud-din Balban, he wrote,

“I put his case first before God and then before you. If you award him something, you will be thanked for it
because you are the agent for this award; but God, in the real sense is the real bestower. If you refuse it, then you are helpless in this matter, because God is the only refuser. 17

He, in the Khilafat-Namah which he gave to Shaikh Misam-ud-din Auliya, says, "God alone deserves all praises. He is the first and the last, the Manifest and the Hidden. Whosoever He elevates none can bring down and whosoever He throws down none can elevate. None can bring to light what He has concealed and none can conceal whatever He has revealed." 18

The above mentioned extract from the Khilafat-Namah shows that God according to Baba Farid, has Absolute Freedom in His actions. He has neither any compulsion nor any restraint on Him. Hence, it is clear that Baba Farid's God is not an abstract logical entity having no personality of its own. Nor is it the God of the Deists who after having created the universe retired from it. But his God is the God of the Quran and the traditions. He has objective reality, having a personality. He possesses absolute freedom. And He is the only sustainer of His creatures. His creatures have a close relation with Him. They love Him and endeavour to attain to Him.

Love of God:

The Summa Bonum of life for Shaikh Farid-ud-din,
is the attainment of God, as expressed in the verse, "In both the worlds, thou alone art the object that I cherish". For the attainment of this ultimate end, he prescribes the path of 'Love'. He attached so much value to love of God that he used to greet his visitors with these words, "May God give you pain (dard) of love. He held great admiration for the individual who was intoxicated with the love of God. He called such a person 'Faqīr' (mystic-dervesh).

The learned men (Ulema), according to him, are nobler than the common people, but the faqirs are the noblest of all. The faqirs occupy the same position in relation to the learned men (Ulema) which the full moon occupies in the constellation of stars. He laid down the following characteristics of a faqir:-

1. A faqir purifies everything, but nothing can make him dirty.
2. When he puts on any new clothes he takes them as his shroud.
3. He does not covet wealth. If any one lives in the hope of riches, he is an avaricious man.

Ethical Teachings:

Shaikh Farid-ud-din vehemently criticised excessive devotions to worldly life. According to him worldliness is an unrecognised calamity. A man who busies himself exclusively with feeding and clothing himself is the meanest of
all people. Misery is the by-product of mundane aspirations. So one should not pay undue attention to the demands of the physical self; the more one satisfies it, the more it demands.

He forbids his disciples from indulging in pride and arrogance. Pride, according to him, turns the whole world into an enemy. Hence a man should beware of pride. Particularly, he should not take pride in committing sin, and should not make his heart a plaything of the devil.

Knowledge and calibacy, according to Bābā Farid, are the divine gift for the individual. A man should endeavour to attain knowledge. But knowledge cannot be attained without effort. More desire to attain it (knowledge) does not make a learned. Had it been so no one in the world would have been illiterate. So one should not mind even humiliation and disgrace in the way of attaining knowledge.

The virtue of charity was ingrained in the nature of Shaikh Farid. Whatever unasked gifts (fatūḥ) came to his monastery, he at once distributed them among his visitors. The same spirit of charity, he wanted to inculcate in his disciples. His discussion of zakāt (alms) throws interesting light on his views on this issue. Zakāt, according to him, is of three kinds: Zakāt-i-Shariāt, Zakāt-i-Tariqat and Zakāt-i-Haqīqat. Zakāt-i-Shariāt consists in giving 5 dirhams out of 20; Zakāt-i-Tariqat means that one keeps 5 dirhams and gives 15 dirhams; Zakāt-i-Haqīqat means that all is given away and nothing is retained. He prescribed Zakāt-i-Shariāt for those who
became his disciples for spiritual betterment, yet carried on their worldly pursuits. But for his Khalifahs he prescribed Zakat-i-Haqiqat. Thus, the motif of Baba Farid was that one should not live for one's self but for others. So he instructed his Khalifahs to give away their entire property in the service of humanity at large.