

Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj (1188–1280): A Historical Study

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Abstract

This research paper assesses the life, teachings and Sufi legacy of Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj (1188–1280), who was a highly respected Sufi saint of the Chishtia Order and left a deep mark on the spiritual, social, and cultural life of medieval South Asia. In this section of the research, a qualitative analysis approach is applied to assess the crucial role played by Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj as he was born in Kothiwal, Multan, and later settled in Ajodhan (now Pakpattan), where he spent his life guiding people towards God and teaching moral and spiritual values. He lived a life of devotion, simplicity, and humility, showing that true closeness to God came through love, patience, and service to others. He also encouraged spiritual music, called Sama, as a way for people to feel God’s presence, following the example of great saints like Khwaja Moun-ud-din Chishti. His poetry, written in Punjabi in form of Shalook, Persian, and Arabic, carried deep spiritual lessons and practical advice for daily life. Through his verses, he spoke about God’s love, human mortality, humility, and ethical behavior. Stories from his life, such as his teaching that helping the hungry is like a “sixth pillar of Islam,” show how he combined spiritual wisdom with care for ordinary people. He taught that devotion is not just about rituals, but about compassion, kindness, and living a moral life. Baba Farid’s influence is still alive today. The question that has been answered through this research paper is that in what way his teachings, Punjabi poetry continued to inspire and attract towards his shrine in Pakpattan, a thousands of pilgrims every year, and the values he taught remain part of South Asian Sufi culture. Further, this study highlights his life, teachings, and poetry in the context of medieval Punjab, showing how Baba Farid’s guidance brought people closer to God while promoting love, service, and social harmony. He remains a timeless example of a saint whose wisdom touched hearts and shaped communities.

Keywords: *Baba Farid, Chishtia Sufism, Pakpattan, Sama, Punjabi poetry, Sixth Pillar, medieval Punjab*

Introduction

Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganjⁱ occupies a highly esteemed position in the Chishtia Order and holds exceptional spiritual importance in the region that is now Pakistan. Owing to his noble character, moral integrity, and spiritual influence, a large number of non-Muslim communities in Punjab embraced Islam during his time. His life and teachings played a decisive role in the peaceful spread of Islam through love, tolerance, and ethical conduct. The Chishtia Order was founded by Hazrat Abu Ishaq Shami (d. 940 CE), who was originally from Syria but settled in the town of Chisht, located near Herat in present-day Afghanistan.

Due to his residence there, he became known as “Chishti.” Hazrat Abu Ishaq Shami received spiritual training from eminent Sufi masters, including Hazrat Khwaja Abu Muhammad Abdal Chishti, Hazrat Khwaja Abu Yusuf Chishti, and Hazrat Khwaja Maudud Chishti. Through this spiritual lineage, the Chishtia Order was firmly established. Hazrat Faridu-d-din Ganj Shakar received the Chishtia *tariqat* through Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, who was among the most prominent representatives of the order in the Indian subcontinent. The Chishtia Order is particularly known for its emphasis on the love of God (*ishq-e-ilahi*), compassion for humanity, humility, and service to society. These values were deeply reflected in the lives of its elders, especially Hazrat Baba Farid. Every aspect of Hazrat Baba Farid’s life appears devoted to spiritual discipline, remembrance of Allah, and ascetic practice. Although he had access to worldly comforts and social honor—including marriage into a royal family—he remained detached from material desires. His household reflected simplicity, reliance on divine trust, and spiritual richness rather than worldly luxury. Thus, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj stands out as one of the rare Sufi saints who combined external honor with profound inner piety, embodying both spiritual wealth and moral excellence.

Review of Literature

Chishti Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi, 1190-1400: From Restrained Indifference to Calculated Defiance by Tanvir Anjum is a significant scholarly work that examines the history and role of the Chishti Sufi order during the early Delhi Sultanate. The book provides a detailed study of how Chishti Sheikhs navigated the political and social environment of medieval India while maintaining their spiritual autonomy. Anjum employs rigorous historical methodology, drawing from archival sources, chronicles, and Sufi hagiographies to trace the relationship between the Chishtis and the ruling authorities. The study emphasizes the strategies of restraint, negotiation, and moral independence adopted by the Chishti saints, highlighting their refusal to accept state patronage, titles, or wealth in order to preserve the sanctity of their spiritual mission. This approach allowed the Chishtis to remain influential while avoiding political entanglements, thereby safeguarding their spiritual credibility. The book is praised for filling a gap in South Asian historiography, especially from a Pakistani perspective, where scholarly research on medieval Sufism is limited. Anjum effectively demonstrates how the Chishtis combined spiritual guidance with social influence, shaping communities through ethical teachings and charitable practices while resisting coercion or co-optation by political power. Although the text is academically dense, its clarity and structured analysis make it accessible to scholars of religion, history, and Sufism. Overall, Anjum’s work is invaluable for understanding the institutional resilience and ethical framework of the Chishti Sufi order, offering crucial insight into the interplay between mysticism and political authority in medieval South Asia.ⁱⁱ

Malfūzāt-e-Hazrat Baba Fareeduddin Ganj Shakar by Moeen-ud-Din is a classical collection of the sayings (*malfūzāt*) and teachings of Hazrat Baba Farid, compiled by his close disciples and later translated and edited by scholars. The text is organized into thematic chapters covering spirituality, conduct, asceticism, and mystical insights, drawn from oral transmissions within the Chishtī order. The strength of *Malfūzāt* lies in its authenticity and depth, as it reflects the direct spiritual guidance and lived teachings of Baba Farid, rather than later hagiographical expansions. It offers researchers a primary source for understanding his perspectives on devotional practice, moral refinement, and the inner dimensions of Islam. Because it includes episodes from his life—the advice he gave, the metaphors he used, and the spiritual admonitions he offered—it is indispensable for historical analysis of his Sufi pedagogy and interpersonal guidance. However, one challenge is its lack of critical historical apparatus (such as precise dating or external corroboration), making it more suited for spiritual insight than strict chronological history. Researchers must therefore contextualize these sayings carefully with external historical sources when constructing a life narrative. Nonetheless, for studies on Baba Farid’s ethical teachings, inner psychology of devotion, and Chishtī praxis, *Malfūzāt* serves as a foundational text that directly connects scholars to his voice and ethos.ⁱⁱⁱ

The research article, *Poetry of Bābā Farīd: A Historical and Thematic Analysis* by Muhammad Tanveer Jamal and Abdul Zahoor Khan provides a comprehensive scholarly study of the poetry of Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn Mas‘ūd Ganj-i Shakar (1188–1280), a prominent Sufi of the Chishtī order. The authors meticulously explore Bābā Farīd’s multilingual poetry, particularly in Punjabi, Persian, and Arabic, and examine its thematic resonance with his life, spiritual practices, and teachings. A central focus is the authenticity of the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* in the Guru Granth, where the authors systematically argue against claims that later figures, such as Ibrāhīm Farīd II, authored these verses. The study situates Bābā Farīd’s poetry within contemporary biographical sources like *Khulāṣat al-Awrād* and *Javāhir-i Farīdī*, emphasizing the importance of oral traditions, *samā’* (devotional music), and discipleship in preserving his work. The thematic analysis reveals Farīd’s intense devotion, renunciation of worldly fame, and universal love for humanity, illustrating how his poetry embodies both ethical guidance and metaphysical reflection. The authors highlight the poet’s preference for Punjabi as a medium of communication, demonstrating its significance in forming early Punjabi Sufi literary culture. Furthermore, the article critically engages with previous scholarship, noting limitations in the works of earlier translators and biographers, and underscores the need for continued textual and historical analysis. Overall, the study contributes meaningfully to understanding Bābā Farīd as both a poet and a spiritual guide, and it serves as a valuable resource for researchers of Sufi literature, Punjabi poetry, and medieval South Asian intellectual history.^{iv}

Kalām-i Bābā Farīd Ganj Shakar: Ma‘ Urdū Tarjamah: Farīd al-Dīn Mas‘ūd; trans. Muhammad Yūnus is a volume that presents Baba Farid’s Punjabi and Sufi poetry with a Urdu translation and commentary, making his verses accessible to a broad contemporary readership. It compiles a curated selection of his poetry—both in original form and rendered into Urdu—along with interpretative notes that unpack key Sufi symbols, moral lessons, and spiritual states embedded in the verses. As a translation project, it is noteworthy for preserving linguistic nuance, particularly where Punjabi spiritual idioms intersect with Islamic mystical vocabulary. Its accessibility is a major advantage for scholars and students who may lack proficiency in Punjabi or Persian but are interested in Farid’s devotional poetics and ethical messaging. However, this work is more anthological than analytical, offering limited contextual historical annotation and leaving interpretative expansion to the reader or instructor. For academic research, it functions best as a primary source companion, to be used alongside historical studies that reconstruct Farid’s life and milieu. The inclusion of historical background and textual references enhances its pedagogical value for courses in Sufi literature and South Asian Islamics, but further critical apparatus would improve its utility in rigorous historical scholarship.^v

Shaykh ul Alam Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj, In this volume, Professor Saeed Ahmed situates Baba Farid within the broader tradition of Islamic Sufi wisdom, offering a translated and annotated collection of his teachings and poetry. A significant contribution of this book is its comparative approach, presenting Baba Farid’s thought alongside other major Sufis such as Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah, and Sultan Bahu, thus highlighting the continuities and divergences in their mystical expressions. Ahmed’s work is valuable for readers seeking a synthesized overview of Farid’s spiritual message in a contemporary commentary style, making it particularly useful for English medium scholarship and interreligious studies. One distinctive feature is the dual script presentation—Baba Farid’s verses in Shahmukhi Punjabi and Gurmukhi Sikh canon forms—along with transliteration and translation, enabling comparative linguistic and devotional study across communities. While not a strictly historical biography, it richly contextualizes Farid’s impact on South Asian spiritual culture, particularly in forging shared devotional traditions between Muslims and Sikhs. The book’s strength lies in its interdisciplinary accessibility, though professionals in Islamic history may seek supplementary critical historical texts to complement its broad interpretative emphasis.^{vi}

Baba Shaikh Faridudeen Ganj Shakar: Halat e Zindagi Aur Talimaat Gorbachan Singh Talib’s work focuses on the biography and teachings of Baba Farid, originally written in English and later translated into Urdu. Though relatively short, this book offers a compact biography that traces Farid’s life—from his ancestry to his spiritual training under Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, his

settlement in Ajodhan, and his enduring influence across communities. It includes selections of his poetry, especially those preserved in the Guru Granth Sahib, accompanied by critical commentary which situates his verses in historical and cultural context. Talib's narrative is particularly useful for introductory historical research, as it synthesizes scattered traditional accounts into a coherent life sketch, making it practical for students of South Asian Sufism. However, because of its brevity, it lacks extensive critical engagement with primary manuscripts and does not delve deeply into historiographical debates about textual transmission and dating. Nonetheless, its strength lies in presenting accessible biographical material and highlighting Farid's cross cultural legacy—especially his recognition within Sikh literature—which is often overlooked in purely Islamic historiography. It thus serves as an important bridge between devotional biography and historical overview.^{vii}

Research Methodology

This study on Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj adopts a qualitative historical research methodology aimed at reconstructing his life, spiritual teachings, and cultural contributions. The research is primarily documentary, relying on a critical examination of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include interviews of esteemed Scholars, classical texts such as *Malfūzāt e Hazrat Faridu-d-din Ganj Shakar*, his extant poetic compositions, and manuscripts preserved in libraries and archives, providing direct insight into his sayings, practices, and mystical philosophy. Secondary sources comprise scholarly books, articles, and translations that contextualize his contributions within the Chishtī Sufī tradition, the development of Punjabi literature, and South Asian religious history. A historical-analytical approach is employed to trace chronological events, interpret the socio-religious environment of 12th–13th century Punjab and assess Baba Farid's influence on subsequent generations of Sufis and poets. The major strength of the paper lies in textual analysis used to examine variations across manuscripts and translations, ensuring reliability and authenticity. In addition, thematic content analysis helps in categorizing his teachings into spiritual, ethical, and poetic domains, highlighting his pedagogical methods and mystical ideology. This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of Baba Farid's life and enduring legacy, situating him within both historical and cultural frameworks of South Asian Sufism.

Early Life, Family Background and Spiritual Formation:

Sheikh Farid-ud-din Shakar Ganj commonly known as Baba Farid, was born into a noble, learned, and spiritually distinguished family that enjoyed both social respect and moral authority. His lineage traced back to Sheikh Shahabuddin Ahmad, known as Farrukh Shah albeit Farrukh Shah, a former ruler of Kabul. His grandfather, Hazrat Qazi Shoaib^{viii}, was a respected jurist who migrated from Kabul due to political instability and Ghaznavid raids, eventually settling in the Kothawal region near the River Sutlej (present-day Chawli Mashaikh). There, he served with distinction as a Qazi, establishing the family's reputation for scholarship and piety. His son, Hazrat Qazi Jamaluddin Suleman^{ix}, inherited these qualities and became known for justice, asceticism, and moral integrity. Baba Farid's mother, Hazrat Bibi Qursam Khatun^x, was the daughter of Maulana Wajihuddin Bakhni, a learned scholar and descendant of Hazrat Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib^{xi}. She was renowned for her piety, devotion, and the acceptance of her prayers. Numerous spiritual accounts highlight her elevated rank, including an incident in which her supplication led to the repentance and spiritual transformation of a thief. Her influence deeply shaped Hazrat Baba Farid's spiritual temperament from childhood. Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj was born in Kothawal (Chawli Mashaikh), near present-day Multan. Historians differ regarding his year of birth, with dates ranging between 1188.AD and 1280.AD, though many scholars regard the earlier date as more reliable. His given name was Mas'ud, later known as Fariduddin Mas'ud, while the title "Shakar Ganj" became synonymous with his spiritual sweetness and divine favor. Multiple traditions explain this title, including accounts of sugar appearing beneath his prayer mat, dust turning into sweetness during ascetic practice, and symbolic incidents emphasizing spiritual compassion rather than physical miracles.^{xiii}

Raised in a deeply religious environment, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj memorized the Qur'an at a young age and developed habits of prayer, fasting, and self-discipline early in life. Recognizing the limitations of educational facilities in Kothiwal, his mother sent him to Multan at around eighteen years of age. There, under Hazrat Maulana Minhajuddin Tirmazi, he mastered the Holy Quran, Hadith, Tafsir, Fiq, logic, philosophy, Arabic grammar, and mathematics, displaying exceptional intellectual ability and sincerity. Later in life, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj experienced profound personal loss with the accidental death of his mother during a journey to Ajodhan.^{xiii} Accepting this tragedy with patience and submission to divine will, he demonstrated spiritual maturity and trust in Allah. These formative experiences—rooted in noble lineage, maternal piety, rigorous education, and personal trials—laid the foundation for Hazrat Baba Farid's enduring role as one of the most influential saints of the Chishtia order.

Stay and Preaching in Pakpattan and Meeting with the Perfect Guide:

Pakpattan, historically known as Ajodhan, was an important settlement situated near the Sutlej River along the major route connecting Multan and Delhi. Formerly a Rajput capital, the town was frequented by traders, travelers, and pilgrims, making it a strategically significant location for spiritual guidance and preaching. Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj, after residing for some time in Hansi and Kothiwal, ultimately chose Ajodhan as his permanent abode. Its combination of relative seclusion and accessibility rendered it ideal for contemplation, spiritual discipline, and the propagation of Islam. At the time of his arrival, the area surrounding Ajodhan was largely forested and sparsely populated, inhabited by polytheistic communities and known for its harsh terrain and wild animals.^{xiv} Seeking solitude without complete isolation, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj selected a grove of Karir trees in the desert outskirts of the town as his place of residence. This setting enabled him to devote himself to worship and meditation while remaining approachable to seekers of spiritual guidance. According to Sufi tradition, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj received repeated spiritual instructions from his mentor, Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, through dreams and visions, commanding him to settle in Ajodhan and guide people toward righteousness. He was reminded that patience, humility, and forbearance were essential virtues for a servant of Allah. In obedience to this divine and spiritual directive, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj established his Khanqah there, laying the foundation of Ajodhan as a prominent center of Chishti Sufi activity.^{xv}

The spiritual journey of Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj had earlier taken a decisive turn during his studies in Multan. While engaged in reading the book *al-Nafi*^{xvi} in a mosque, he encountered Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, who had come to offer prayers. Upon learning about the book, Hazrat Khwaja remarked that true benefit lies in beneficial knowledge. This brief exchange left a deep spiritual impression on Hazrat Baba Farid, awakening within him a profound inclination toward the inner path of Sufism. Recognizing his latent spiritual potential, Hazrat Khwaja showed him special affection. Although Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj initially returned to Multan on his mentor's instruction to complete his formal education, he later traveled to Delhi and formally entered the Chishti Order through *bay'ah*. As recorded in *Rahat al-Quloob* and *Fawa'id al-Salikin*, he witnessed unparalleled spiritual excellence in his guide. Through prolonged service, rigorous discipline, and unwavering obedience, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj attained elevated spiritual rank, eventually emerging as one of the most influential saints of the Chishti Order in the subcontinent.^{xvii}

Shajra-e-Tariqat (Spiritual Lineage)

The spiritual lineage (*Shajra-e-Tariqat*)^{xviii} of Hazrat Khwaja Fariduddin Mas'ud Ganj-e-Shakar traces his connection to the earliest Sufi authorities of Islam and ultimately to Amir al-Mu'minin Hazrat 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. This chain reflects the continuity of spiritual transmission (*Order*) within the Chishtia Order. Shajra-e-Tariqat (Chishtia Spiritual Lineage);

1. Hazrat Khwaja Fariduddin Mas'ud Ganj-e-Shakar

2. Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki
3. Hazrat Khwaja Mu‘inuddin Chishti
4. Hazrat Khwaja Usman Haruni
5. Hazrat Khwaja Sharif Zindani
6. Hazrat Khwaja Muhammad Ma‘dud Chishti
7. Hazrat Khwaja Abu Yusuf Nasiruddin Chishti
8. Hazrat Khwaja Muhammad Chishti Sayyid
9. Hazrat Khwaja Abu Ahmad Chishti
10. Hazrat Khwaja Abu Ishaq Shami
11. Hazrat Khwaja Mumshad ‘Ali Dinwari
12. Hazrat Khwaja Aminuddin Abi Masir al-Basri
13. Hazrat Khwaja Sadiduddin Hudhaifa al-Mar‘ashi
14. Hazrat Khwaja Ibrahim ibn Adham
15. Hazrat Khwaja Fudayl ibn ‘Iyad
16. Hazrat Sheikh Abu al-Fazl ‘Abdul Wahid ibn Zaid
17. Hazrat Hasan al-Basri
18. Amir al-Mu‘minin Hazrat ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib^{xix}

Travel, Spiritual Formation, and Attainment of Caliphate:

In Islamic and Sufi tradition, travel (*safar*) occupies a central place as a means of acquiring knowledge, contemplating divine signs, and cultivating spiritual refinement. For saints and seekers, journeys were not undertaken for leisure or comfort but as a disciplined spiritual exercise through which both outward knowledge (*ilm*) and inward realization (*ma‘rifat*) were attained. Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj exemplified this tradition by devoting a substantial portion of his early life to extensive and demanding travel, enduring hardship with patience, humility, and complete reliance upon Allah. His journeys extended across the Indian subcontinent and the wider Islamic world, including Sivistan, Ghazni, Kandahar, Balkh, Bukhara, Badakhshan, Chisht, Damascus, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Mecca, and Medina, as well as regions of present-day Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkestan, and Arabia. In each place, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj sought the company of eminent Sufis and scholars, learning the principles of Sharia, the disciplines of Tariqat, and the ethics of spiritual conduct. A particularly formative encounter occurred in Baghdad with Hazrat Sheikh Shahabuddin Umar Suhrawardi, whose strict spiritual discipline, generosity, and detachment from worldly possessions deeply influenced Farid’s own outlook.^{xx}

After years of travel and spiritual training, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj returned to Multan, where his inner maturity was tested by Hazrat Bahauddin Zakaria Suhrawardi. This encounter symbolized his readiness for greater responsibility. Subsequently, he proceeded to Delhi and pledged allegiance (*bay‘at*) to Hazrat Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, entering a state of intense spiritual absorption that marked his complete submission to the spiritual path. During this period, he also received the blessings of Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti, who foresaw his future role as a luminous guide of the Chishtia order. With the approval of his Murshid, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj was appointed as a caliph (*khalifah*) of the Chishtia Order.^{xxi} Despite attaining spiritual authority, he remained devoted to humility, discipline, and service, faithfully continuing his mentor’s mission and emerging as a lasting source of guidance for generations of seekers.

Zauq-e-Sama (Passion for Spiritual Music)

Hazrat Faridu-d-din Ganj Shakar had a profound fondness for Sama (listening to spiritual music), a practice of special importance in the Chishtia Order of Sufism. The Chishtia emphasize Sama as a means of purifying the heart, attaining divine proximity, and experiencing spiritual ecstasy. This inclination was not unique to Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj alone; his Murshid, Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, and other eminent Chishti Sufis, including Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, also considered Sama a vital component

of spiritual cultivation and propagation. Hazrat Muin-ud-din Chishti, in particular, laid the foundation for the practice of Sama in India and Pakistan, inspiring subsequent Chishti saints to adopt it.^{xxii}

Hazrat Baba Farid's Malfuzat (discourses) contain numerous references to Sama, emphasizing its spiritual benefits and encouraging disciples to engage in it with sincerity. In *Rahat al-Quloob*, it is narrated that a discussion on Sama took place in his gathering, which included notable Sufi figures such as Sultan al-Mashaikh Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, Hazrat Sheikh Jamaluddin Hansvi, Hazrat Badruddin Shams Dabir, and Maulana Shamsuddin Burhani. Hazrat Sheikh Jamaluddin Hansvi remarked that Sama serves as a source of comfort for the heart, invigorating the lovers of Allah and allowing them to immerse in the river of divine acquaintance. Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj explained that it is customary for lovers of the Divine to experience joy and spiritual rapture upon hearing the name of the Beloved. When questioned about the phenomenon of listeners fainting during Sama, he referred to the writings of Imam Ghazani, stating that when the call of the Beloved is raised, all present—regardless of religion, including Hindus, Jews, and fire-worshippers—experience a spiritual alignment. Some are immediately drawn into prostration, expressing the unity of hearts and tongues in submission to Allah, while the prophets, saints, the truthful, and the righteous partake in this collective spiritual ecstasy. Thus, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj not only practiced Sama but also recognized it as a powerful method of spiritual elevation, reinforcing the Chishtia principle that music and poetry, when aligned with divine remembrance, serve as instruments of divine love and inner transformation.

Hazrat Baba Fariduddin Ganj Shakar occupied a central place in the Chishtī understanding of Sama (spiritual listening) as a transformative practice that purified the heart and drew the seeker closer to Allah. For him, Sama was not entertainment but a disciplined spiritual state rooted in ma'rifah (divine recognition), obedience, and love. He explained that individuals respond differently to the divine call manifested through music and recitation, classifying them into four spiritual categories: those who accept with both heart and tongue and experience ecstasy; those who accept inwardly without outward expression; those whose acceptance is verbal but spiritually hollow; and those who reject both inwardly and outwardly. This classification highlights that true Sama requires sincerity, inner awareness, and divine knowledge rather than mere physical participation.^{xxiii}

Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj emphasized that spiritual ecstasy (wajd) was inseparable from recognition of the Beloved. Worship devoid of knowledge and love remains spiritually ineffective, a view supported by Imam Zahid's interpretation of the Quranic verse: "*And I did not create the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me*" (Al-Dhariyat: 56), where worship is understood as knowing and loving Allah. Sama, therefore, becomes a reflection of this inner realization. Historical gatherings described by Baba Farid—such as those involving Sheikh Jamaluddin Hansavi and Sheikh Badruddin Ghaznavi—demonstrate that profound ecstasy could coexist with strict observance of obligatory prayers, illustrating the harmony between devotion and discipline within Chishtī practice.

Counseling his disciple Nizam-ud-din Aulia, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj described piety as the candle of the heart, illuminating the inner self. He explained that those absorbed in Sama become detached from worldly awareness, likening their state to lovers oblivious to all else. His recollections of extended Sama gatherings under Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki and Khwaja Hamiduddin Nagori further affirm that true ecstasy does not negate Shariah but deepens commitment to it. The poetry recited in such assemblies consistently distinguished eternal divine love from transient worldly desire, reinforcing the Chishtī doctrine that genuine love demands unwavering surrender.^{xxiv}

Hazrat Baba Farid's own experiences with poetry reveal the profound spiritual power of words. Whether listening to Qawwals, hearing verses read aloud, or recalling early encounters with devotional recitation in childhood, he consistently entered prolonged states of absorption. These moments underscore that Sama, poetry, and silence alike can become vehicles of divine disclosure when the heart is prepared. Once he was listening to the following verses and remained the state of absorption for days.

Persian verses:

آن عشق کہ بود کم نہ گردد^{xxv}
تا با شد از آن قدم نہ گردد

The love that is true never diminishes;
As long as it exists, it never retreats from its path.^{xxvi}

عشقی کہ نہ عشق جاوداں است
بازیچہ شہوت جوان است

Love that is not eternal love
Is merely the fleeting play of youthful desire. (اسرار الاولیاء)^{xxvii}

Urdu Translation:

عشق میں کمی واقع نہ ہو۔ جب تک زندہ رہو قدم واپس نہ ہوں۔ وہ عشق جو عشق لازوال نہیں وہ جوان کی ہوسناک خواہش ہی کہا جا
سکتا ہے۔^{xxviii}

Persian Verses:

عشق تو بہم جان مرا رسوا کرد
Your love has brought disgrace to my very soul.^{xxix}

داندہ طلب جمالی تو شیدا کرد^{xxx}
In seeking your beauty, it has made me utterly enthralled.^{xxxi}

دروے کہ ز عشق تو بدل پنہاں بود
The pain that was once hidden in my heart because of your love.^{xxxii}

آن جملہ ز شوق تو رخ پیدا کرد^{xxxiii}
Has now, through your longing, become manifest upon my face. (اسرار الاولیاء)^{xxxiv}

Urdu Translation:

اے محبوب! تیرے عشق نے میری جان کو رسوا کر دیا۔ تیرے حسن کی طلب میں میں اسے وارفتہ بنا دیا ہوں۔ وہ درد تیرے عشق کی
وجہ سے دل میں پوشیدہ تھا۔ تیرے اشتیاق نے اب میرے چہرے پر ظاہر کر دیا۔^{xxxv}

English Translation:

O Beloved! Your love has brought my soul to disgrace. In seeking your beauty, I have become completely enthralled.
The pain that was hidden in my heart because of your love has now appeared on my face through longing for you.

Persian verses:

من آن نیم کہ از عشق تو پائے پس آرم اگر، بہ تیغ کشندم در تو نگذارم
I am not the one who could ever retreat from your love;
Even if they cut me to pieces with the sword, I will not abandon your threshold.^{xxxvi}

مپرس از شب ہجراں چگونہ می گذرد، مبادا بیجکے را قوی است دشوارم
Do not ask how the night of separation passes,

For it is a hardship so intense that few can bear it.^{xxxvii}
من از جمال تو اے سرد باغ تا دیدم ہوس، نہ شد کہ گہی دل ردد بلغزارم

O garden of beauty and elegance! Since I beheld your form,
My desire for any other garden has never arisen.^{xxxviii}

اگر دہندم بفردا بہشت با ہمہ، چیز بچہ نخرم من کہ مست دیدارم
Even if Paradise and all its delights were offered to me on Judgment Day,
I would not accept them, for I am intoxicated with the longing for your vision.^{xxxix}

Urdu Translation:

میں ایسا عاشق نہیں ہوں کہ تیرے عشق سے گریز پائی اختیار کروں۔ اگر مجھے تلوار سے ٹکڑے ٹکڑے کر دیں، تیرے دروازے کو
نہ چھوڑوں گا۔ شب جدائی کا حال نہ پوچھ کہ کیسے گزرتی ہے، یہ کسی شخص کے بس کی بات نہیں۔ اے باغ حسن و جمال کے سرو
خراماں! جب سے تیرے جمال کا دیدار کیا ہے، مجھے گلزار میں جانے کی خواہش نہیں ہوئی۔ قیامت کے دن اگر مجھے بہشت اور اس
کے تمام وسائل پیش کیے جائیں تو میں اسے قبول نہ کروں گا، کیونکہ میں تو صرف دیدار کا مست ہوں۔^{xl}

I am not the kind of lover who turns away from your love. Even if I were cut into pieces by a sword, I would not leave your door. Do not ask how the night of separation passes; it is a pain too hard for anyone to endure. O graceful cypress of beauty and elegance, since I have seen your beauty, I no longer desire to walk in any garden. On the Day of Judgment, even if Paradise and all its pleasures are offered to me, I will not accept them, because my only longing is for your vision.^{xli}

Sufi-Thematic Interpretation:

The selected verses reflect the profound spiritual dimensions of Sufi love, highlighting its intensity, permanence, and transformative power. A central theme is the enduring nature of true love, which neither diminishes over time nor retreats in the face of hardship, contrasting with ephemeral worldly desires and youthful passions. The poems emphasize the lover's unwavering devotion and self-sacrifice, portraying a commitment so deep that even threats of death or prolonged separation cannot deter it. Another prominent theme is the spiritual intoxication of the lover, whose longing for the beloved surpasses all material pleasures, including Paradise itself, illustrating the Sufi principle that ultimate fulfillment lies in the vision of the Divine rather than in temporal rewards. The verses also depict the duality of Sufi experience, where internal pain and hidden longing manifest outwardly, revealing the transformative effect of love on both heart and outward behavior. Furthermore, the poetry underscores patience, surrender, and moral steadfastness, showing how spiritual trials refine the soul and deepen attachment to the beloved. Overall, these verses embody the essence of Sufi metaphysics, portraying love as a force that reshapes the human self, elevates spiritual consciousness, and leads the seeker toward ultimate union with the Divine.

Analogy of Bread as the Sixth Pillar of Islam In Shalok Fareedi:

Shalok Fareedi^{xlii} refers to the poetic form used by Baba Farid, derived from the Punjabi term Shah-Lok, meaning “the words of a Sufi’s mouth.” These short, devotional verses are written in Punjabi language and convey deep spiritual and ethical teachings in simple, accessible language. They emphasize love for God, moral conduct, humility, and devotion, making Sufi wisdom understandable to ordinary people. One of the main collections of these Shaloks is Bol Fareedi by Dr. Faqeer Muhammad Faqeer,^{xliii} which preserves and analyzes Baba Farid’s Shalok poetry, highlighting their spiritual, ethical, and cultural significance. Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj Ganj Shakar wrote poetry in multiple languages, including Punjabi, Persian, Arabic and some local dialects. His verses reflect deep spirituality, moral guidance, and the mystical experiences of a Sufi. Here is example of one verse associated to Baba Farid,^{xliv}

فریدا پنج رکن اسلام دے چھیاں بے ٹک
جے نہ لبھے چھیاں تے پنجے جانڈے مک^{xlv}

English Translation:

O’ Farid, the five pillars of Islam are essential, but sixth is bread;
If one fails to uphold the sixth, all five are lost.^{xlvi}

Analysis

This verse uses a metaphor of bread to highlight the essential and nourishing nature of the five pillars, showing that neglecting the bread among them undermines the whole structure of religious practice. Islam is founded upon five pillars—Kalima, Salat, Sawm, Zakat, and Hajj—which Hazrat Baba Fariduddin Ganj Shakar strictly observed throughout his life.^{xlvii} Yet, through a profound moral analogy, he demonstrated that compassionate service to humanity is the living soul of these pillars. In Ajodhan, a proud and learned Mullah, contemptuous of dervishes, once challenged Hazrat Baba Farid’s spiritual authority. When asked about the pillars of Islam, the Mullah confidently listed the five. Baba Farid gently added that he had heard of a sixth pillar: bread. Enraged, the Mullah dismissed this as ignorance and left in arrogance. Years later, the same Mullah set out for Hajj and, after seven years, survived a shipwreck only to be stranded on a barren island. On the brink of death from hunger, he encountered a mysterious bread seller who refused charity and instead demanded the reward of the Mullah’s acts of worship—first Hajj, then fasting, prayers, Zakat, and finally all his religious

merit—in exchange for bread and water. Desperate, the Mullah agreed, even signing a written document surrendering these rewards. Only then was he saved and returned home. Humbled, he came to Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj and narrated the ordeal. Smiling, Baba Farid reminded him of the “sixth pillar” he had once mocked. Producing the very document the Mullah had written on the island, Baba Farid revealed the spiritual reality behind the test. Overcome with remorse, the Mullah repented and entered Baba Farid’s circle of devotion. This narrative powerfully conveys Hazrat Baba Farid’s teaching: ritual worship and knowledge, without mercy and service, are incomplete. Bread symbolizes care for the hungry, relief for the suffering, and practical love for creation. In this sense, feeding humanity stands alongside prayer and pilgrimage as an essential expression of true Islam.^{xlvi}

Death of Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj:

Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj departed from this world on the 13th of Muharram, 1280AD.^{xlix} He devoted his entire life to spiritual discipline, devotion, and service. Despite severe physical weakness in his final hours, he ensured that all prayers were performed in congregation and, according to Maulana Badruddin Ishaq, offered the Isha prayer three times with full consciousness and sincerity, reflecting his unwavering devotion to Allah. Before his passing, he instructed his disciples that the spiritual trust (Order) received from Hazrat Khawaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki should continue through the saints. After performing ablution, he prostrated, softly reciting “Ya Hayyah, Ya Qayyum,” and surrendered his soul to God. News of his demise spread rapidly, drawing vast crowds to Pakpattan, necessitating his burial outside the city. His son and Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia, received divine intimation of his father’s death through a dream and hastened to attend the final rites.

Conclusion

Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Shakar Ganj (1188–1266), commonly known as Baba Farid, is one of the most revered saints in the history of South Asian Sufism. His life and teachings reflect a remarkable combination of spiritual devotion, ethical conduct, and service to humanity. Born in Kothiwala, now called Chawli Mashaikh, he grew up in a family known for its piety and learning. His mother, Bibi Qursam Khatun, played a key role in shaping his early spiritual and moral character. Under her guidance, Baba Farid developed habits of prayer, fasting, self-discipline, and devotion from a very young age. His intelligence and dedication were apparent early, as he memorized the Holy Quran and studied subjects like Hadith, Tafsir, Fiqh, logic, philosophy, Arabic grammar, and mathematics, especially under the tutelage of Maulana Minhajuddin in Multan.

Baba Farid’s spiritual education was further enriched by his travels across the Indian subcontinent and beyond. He visited Ghazni, Balkh, Bukhara, Baghdad, Mecca, and Medina, where he met eminent saints, scholars, and spiritual guides. These journeys not only strengthened his knowledge of Sharia, Tariqat, and metaphysical thought but also deepened his moral character and spiritual discipline. Through the guidance of his mentor, Hazrat Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, and the blessings of Hazrat Muinuddin Chishti, he matured into a spiritual leader capable of guiding others on the path of divine love, humility, and detachment from worldly desires. Upon settling in Ajodhan (modern Pakpattan), Baba Farid became a source of spiritual guidance for the community. He established centers for worship, teaching, and social care, serving people with compassion, patience, and practical attention to their needs. He emphasized love for God, ethical behavior, and service to humanity, often using simple yet powerful analogies, such as describing bread as the “sixth pillar” of Islam, to convey his spiritual message in an understandable way.

Baba Farid is also renowned for his Shalok poetry, written in Punjabi. These short devotional verses, known as Shalok Fareedi, come from the Punjabi term Shah-Lok, meaning “words of a Sufi’s mouth.” They express profound spiritual truths, moral lessons, and devotion in simple, accessible language, making Sufi teachings understandable to ordinary people. One important collection of his Shalok is *Bol Fareedi* by Dr. Faqeer Muhammad Faqeer, which preserves and explains Baba Farid’s poetic legacy. His poetry has had a lasting influence on South Asian literature, spirituality, and culture, with some of his verses included in the Guru

Granth Sahib, reflecting his cross-cultural impact. The reverence of his shrine in Pakpattan, the continued prominence of the Chishtia order, and the ongoing engagement with his poetry and *Malʿuzāt* testify to Baba Farid’s enduring spiritual, social, and cultural influence. His life exemplifies the synthesis of scholarship, mysticism, moral conduct, and community service, showing that spiritual excellence is inseparable from ethical living and care for others. Baba Farid remains a guiding light for generations, inspiring devotion, humility, and moral responsibility, and establishing himself as an enduring figure in Islamic history and the Sufi tradition.

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