

## Poetry of Bābā Farīd: A Historical and Thematic Analysis

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### Abstract

*Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn Mas‘ūd Ganj-i Shakar (569/1173-664/1265) is one of the celebrated Chishtī Sufis of the Indian subcontinent. Chishtī order is credited with several seminal literary innovations in Medieval Islamic India. Bābā Farīd is considered the father of Punjabi poetry. He also had a great command of other languages including Persian and Arabic. The present study explores the contemporary sources that interacted with Bābā Farīd’s couplets. An effort has also been made to explore the originality of the Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd included in the Guru Granth. The study is a unique endeavour to conceptualize and examine the thematic connection of Bābā Farīd’s poetry with his life, teachings, and metaphysical thoughts preserved in biographical compendia.*

### Keywords

Bābā Farīd, poet, Sufis, *ashlōk*, *Guru Granth*, meditation.

### Introduction

Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn Mas‘ūd Ganj-i Shakar (569/1173-664/1265), popularly known as Bābā Farīd, was one of the distinguished Sufi masters of the Indian subcontinent and belonged to the Chishtī Sufi order, which attained its apogee under Bābā Farīd and his spiritual successors (*khulafā*). The Chishtī shaikhs were the pioneers of Sufism in the Indian subcontinent. Khavājah Mu‘īn al-Dīn Ḥasan Chishtī (d. 1236 CE) is deemed

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the founder of the Chishtī Sufi order in South Asia.<sup>1</sup> Bābā Farīd and other Chishtī Sufis are credited with many literary innovations and genres in the Indian subcontinent, including Punjabi poetry, *samāʿ* (devotional music), the compilation of *malfūzāt*, *ishārāt*, and the *tadhkirah*. Several works are attributed to Bābā Farīd, including *malfūzāt*, titled *Rāḥat al-Qulūb*, *Asrār al-Mutaḥayyarīn*,<sup>2</sup> and *Asrār al-Awliyāʿ*, as well as a collection of Punjabi, Persian, and Arabic poetry. Additionally, two books, titled *Risālah-i Vujūdiyyah* and *Ganj-i Asrār*, as well as a commentary on *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*, are attributed to him. Bābā Farīd not only had great knowledge and command of Hinduism and its scriptures, but he was also the first Muslim saint to establish relationships with Hindu theologians and intellectuals.<sup>3</sup>

A plethora of hagiographical and poetic literature deals with Bābā Farīd. For example, Gurbachan Singh Khalsa's *Ṣūfī-i Aʿzam Ḥaẓrat Bābā Shaikh Farīd Ganj-i Shakar* (1985) is a concise biography of Bābā Farīd. The author maintains that the poetry preserved in the Sikhs' main sacred text the *Guru Granth*, titled *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd*, is authentically attributed to Bābā Farīd. However, Khalsa does not evaluate the connection between the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* and the life and teachings of the Shaikh. Additionally, Muneera Haeri's *The Chishtis: A Living Light* (2000) meticulously discusses leading Chishtī Sufis and maintains that Bābā Farīd wrote poetry in Persian, Arabic, and Hindi. However, like Khalsa, Haeri makes no systematic effort to explore the verses of Bābā Farīd in pre-*Guru Granth* literature. Moreover, no effort was made to critically evaluate Bābā Farīd's poetry and its compatibility with earlier hagiographical sources. Another limitation of the work is that Haeri did not rely on contemporary sources. Finally, Shahzad Qaiser's *Culture and Spirituality: The Punjabi Sufi Poetry of Baba Farid-ud-Din Masud Ganj-i-Shakar as Recorded in Guru Granth Sahib* (2016) is another scrupulous translation of the verses of Bābā Farīd preserved in the *Guru Granth*. However, as

<sup>1</sup> Although some prominent Sufis such as Shaikh Ḥusain Zanjānī (d. 1042 CE), ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān al-Hujvīrī (d. 1076 CE) (popularly known as Dātā Ganj Bakhsh), and Sakhī Sarvar (d. 1174 CE) arrived in northern India before the arrival of Khavājah Muʿīn al-Dīn Ḥasan, they did not make significant efforts to introduce Sufism in that region. Khavājah Muʿīn al-Dīn Ḥasan, therefore, led the foundation of a proper monastery and appointed his *khulafāʿ* in different regions. Khavājah Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī, an eminent *khalīfah* of Khavājah Muʿīn al-Dīn Ḥasan, carried on the mechanism of the Chishtī Sufi order with full zeal and zest which was later assigned to Bābā Farīd.

<sup>2</sup> Rukn al-Dīn Dabīr Kāshānī, *Shamāʿil al-Atqiyāʿ* (Hyderabad: Ashraf Press, n.d.), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-u'd-Din Ganj-i-Shakar* (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, 1973 [1955]), 105. Also see M. Abdullah Chaghatai, *Pakpattan and Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakar* (Lahore: Kitab Khana Nauras, 1968), 16.

with other translations, no effort was made to explore the poetry of Bābā Farīd in contemporary sources.

### Bābā Farīd as a Poet

Sufis have a unique relationship with poetry, and poetic verses occupy an important place in the literary and religio-spiritual history of Sufism. Bābā Farīd's spiritual predecessors were also keenly interested in poetry. For example, although the authenticity of the *dīvān* attributed to Khavājah Mu'īn al-Dīn Ḥasan is quite dubious, his Persian verses are preserved in an authentic source, titled *Surūr al-Ṣudūr*.<sup>4</sup> Bābā Farīd was a multilingual poet who composed poetry in Punjabi, Persian, and Arabic. Moreover, the frequent use of Hindivī diction has also been observed in his poetry. Amīr Khūrd (d. 1368/69 CE), in his masterpiece, titled *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, wrote down various verses of Bābā Farīd<sup>5</sup> and quoted some Hindivī phrases from his conversation.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Rukn al-Dīn Kāshānī (d. after 1337 CE) recorded both the Persian and Punjabi verses of Bābā Farīd in *Shamā'il al-Atqiyā'*.<sup>7</sup> Shaikh Zayn Badr 'Arabī described the Persian verses of Bābā Farīd in *Ma'dan al-Ma'ānī*. Additionally, Shaikh Bahā' al-Dīn Bājan Chishtī (d. 1506 CE), a popular Sufi poet of Gujrāt, mentioned a Punjabi couplet in *Khazā'in-i Raḥmat Allāh*. Likewise, Mīr 'Abd al-Wāḥid Bilgarāmī (d. 1608) described the Punjabi verses of Bābā Farīd in his masterpiece, titled *Sab'-i Sanābil*. Almost all these sources were written before the compilation of the *Guru Granth*. Moreover, some other well-known contemporary sources including *Fawāyid al-Fawād* explicitly demonstrate Bābā Farīd's great command of poetry.<sup>8</sup>

Numerous Persian and Punjabi verses of Bābā Farīd are available in post-*Guru Granth* compendia. Examples of these are Muḥammad Qāsim Farishtah's *Tārīkh-i Farishtah*,<sup>9</sup> Allāh Diyā Chishtī's *Siyar al-Aqṭāb*,<sup>10</sup> Ghulām

<sup>4</sup> Farīd al-Dīn Maḥmūd, *Surūr al-Ṣudūr wa Nūr al-Budrūr*, trans. Muḥammad 'Alī Hāshimī (Rajasthan: Maktabah-i Hāshimīyah, 1425 AH), 222-23.

<sup>5</sup> Amīr Khūrd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, ed. Chiranjī Lāl (Delhi: Muḥibb-i Hind Press, 1885), 363, 367, 464, 473, 476.

<sup>6</sup> Amīr Khūrd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, 183.

<sup>7</sup> Kāshānī, *Shamā'il al-Atqiyā'*, 146, 181, 407.

<sup>8</sup> Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, *Fawāyid al-Fawād* (Delhi: Maṭba'-i Ḥasanī, 1282 AH), 83.

<sup>9</sup> Muḥammad Qāsim Farishtah, *Tārīkh-i Farishtah*, trans. 'Abd al-Ḥayy Khavājah (Lahore: al-Meezan Publishers, n.d), 4:753.

<sup>10</sup> Allāh Diyā, *Siyar al-Aqṭāb*, trans. Muḥammad Mu'īn al-Dīn Dardā'ī (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1979), 193.

Sarvar Lāhōrī' *Khazīnat al-Aṣfiyā'*,<sup>11</sup> and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Badrī's *Gulzār-i Farīdī*.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, several Persian verses of the Shaikh have also been described in Chishtī *malfūzāt* titled *Mir'āt al-Āshiqīn*.<sup>13</sup> Other sources have made reference to Bābā Farīd's poetry, including Vālih Dāghistānī's *Riyāḍ al-Shu'arā'*, Raḥm 'Alī Khān Imām's *Tadhkirah-i Muntakhab al-Laṭā'if*, Mīr Ḥusain Dōst Sambhalī's *Tadhkirah-i Ḥusainī*, Aḥmad 'Alī Ḥāshimī Sandilavī's *Makhzan al-Gharā'ib*, Şiddīq Ḥasan Khān's *Shām-i Anjuman*, Khavājah 'Abd al-Rashīd Sarhang's *Tadhkirah-i Shu'arā'-i Panjāb*,<sup>14</sup> and Baldiv Singh's *Nasab Nāmah-i Ḥazrat Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar*. Interestingly, Baldiv Singh described the Persian verses of Bābā Farīd by referencing Khavājah Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nāgaurī.<sup>15</sup> Zahoor Ahmed Azhar's *Ma'ārif-i Farīdiyyah* also includes numerous Persian verses of Bābā Farīd.<sup>16</sup> Some verses recorded in the above-mentioned contemporary and later sources are mentioned below.

### ***Shamā'il al-Atqiyā'***

*Shamā'il al-Atqiyā'* is a book of *malfūzāt* composed by Khavājah Burhān al-Dīn Gharīb (d. 1337 CE), an eminent disciple of Khavājah Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā', compiled by Rukn al-Dīn Dabīr Kāshānī before 1337 CE. This book is seminal, particularly regarding its critical appraisal of early Chishtī *malfūzāt* and Bābā Farīd's poetry. However, *Shamā'il al-Atqiyā'* is rarely found in Pakistan. It is the first available source to preserve the Punjabi verses of Bābā Farīd as it was compiled almost three decades before *Siyar al-Awliyā'*. A Punjabi verse mentioned in it is as below:

<sup>11</sup> Ghulām Sarvar Lāhōrī, *Khazīnat al-Aṣfiyā'* (Lucknow: Newal Kishore, n.d.), 1:295.

<sup>12</sup> Muḥammad Ḥusain Badrī, "Gulzār-i Farīdī," in *Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i Shakar: Savānih, Tālīfāt, Muṭāla'āt*, ed. Muḥammad Ikrām Chughtā'ī (Lahore: Sang-i-Meel Publishers, 2007), 219.

<sup>13</sup> Sayyid Muḥammad Sa'īdī, *Pur Gōhar (Mir'āt al-Āshiqīn)*, trans. Ghulām Nizām al-Dīn (Lahore: Tasawwuf Foundation, 1998), 189. *Rāḥat al-Qulūb* also contains Persian verses of Bābā Farīd but its authenticity is debatable. Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā', *Rāḥat al-Qulūb* (Delhi: Maṭba'-i Mujtabā, 1891), 6, 16, 19, 23.

<sup>14</sup> S. A. H. Abidi, "Baba Farid as a Persian Poet," in *Baba Sheikh Farid: Life and Teachings*, ed. Gurbachan Singh Talib (New Delhi: Parnassus Publishers, 1973), 58-62.

<sup>15</sup> Baldiv Singh, "Nasab Nāmah-i Ḥazrat Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar," in *Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i Shakar: Savānih, Tālīfāt, Muṭāla'āt*, ed. Muḥammad Ikrām Chughtā'ī (Lahore: Sang-i-Meel Publishers, 2007), 605-06.

<sup>16</sup> Ḥāhūr Aḥmad Aḥzar, *Ma'ārif-i Farīdiyyah: Dīvān-i Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar* (Lahore: Ma'ārif al-Awliyā', 2005), 26-28.

جس کا سائیں جاگتا

سو کیوں سوئے رات<sup>17</sup>

One whose Lord is awake  
Why would he sleep at night!<sup>18</sup>

A Persian verse described by Kāshānī is as follows:

خون بہائے عاشقان در روز وصل

جلوہ معشوق باشد وقت ناز<sup>19</sup>

The blood value of the lovers pays off on the day of meeting (the Lord)  
The Beloved takes pride which is His manifestation<sup>20</sup>

### ***Ma'dan al-Ma'ānī***

*Ma'dan al-Ma'ānī* contains the *malḥūzāt* of Shaikh Sharaf al-Dīn Aḥmad Yaḥyā Munīrī (d. 1381), a popular Sufi of the Firdūsī clan from the Kubravī order in fourteenth-century India. These were compiled by his eminent *khalīfah* Shaikh Zain Badr 'Arabī in Persian between 749/1348 and 751/1350. The following verse of Bābā Farīd was mentioned by Munīrī in *Ma'dan al-Ma'ānī*:

کردی ضمائر سر ما بار دگر!

من چہ نہ کردیم خدا میداند<sup>21</sup>

My Beloved (God) has shunned me again!  
What I did, only He knows!<sup>22</sup>

### ***Siyar al-Awliyā'***

*Siyar al-Awliyā'* was the first hagiographical record of the Chishtī Sufis of India. It was compiled by Sayyid Muḥammad b. Mubārak 'Alawī Kirmānī, popularly known as Amīr Khūrd (compiled between 1351-1368 CE). Some of Bābā Farīd's verses recorded by Amīr Khūrd are mentioned below:

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<sup>17</sup> Kāshānī, *Shamā'il al-Atqiyā'*, 146.

<sup>18</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 407.

<sup>20</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>21</sup> Shaikh Zain Badr 'Arabī, *Ma'dan al-Ma'ānī*, trans. Sayyid Shāh Qasīm al-Dīn Aḥmad Sharafī (Bihar: Maktabah-i Sharaf, 2011), 633.

<sup>22</sup> Author's translation.

لو كان هذا العلم يدرك بالمتى  
ما كان يبقى في البرية جاهل  
فاحمد ولا تكسل ولاتك غافلا  
فندامة العقبى لمن يتكاسل<sup>23</sup>

If knowledge could be attained in the world only with intent,  
No one would have remained ignorant in the world.  
So, endeavour, do not be lazy and negligent.  
One who acted lazily (in life) will be ashamed in the hereafter.<sup>24</sup>

رضينا قسمة الجبار فينا  
لنا علم وللجهال مال<sup>25</sup>

We are content with our destiny wrought by the Mighty Omnipotent.  
We have the knowledge and the ignorant people possess wealth.<sup>26</sup>

تو گدائی دور باش از بادشاه  
تا نیاید بردل تو دور باش  
گروصال شاه میداری طمع  
از وصال خویشتن مجبور باش<sup>27</sup>

You are a beggar, maintain distance from the sovereign.  
So that he should not enter into your veins and sinews.  
If in reality there is a longing for meeting God,  
Wash away your hands from your own meeting like that.<sup>28</sup>

قبايش را شدم بنده كه چوں بيشاد بنشیند  
ولے خصم كمر بندم كه چوں بر پشت بر خیزد<sup>29</sup>  
I am the slave of his tunic.  
When he loosens its knots, he sits down.  
But I am the enemy of his waistband.  
As he gets up when he fastens it.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Amīr Khūrd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, 75. These verses are also attributed to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. See <https://www.aldiwan.net/poem30901.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>25</sup> Amīr Khūrd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, 75. This verse is also attributed to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. See <https://www.aldiwan.net/poem30929.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>27</sup> Amīr Khūrd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, 363.

<sup>28</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 473.

<sup>30</sup> Author's translation.

از نور جلال مرد مطلق خیزد  
 واز شوق خدا نگر چه رونق خیزد  
 این خاطر مردان چه عجائب بحرے است  
 چوں موج زندہ انا الحق خیزد<sup>31</sup>

A perfect man comes into existence with the light of glory.

See what a spectacle comes into existence with the fondness for the entity of God.

The hearts of the men [of God] are strong oceans.

When they are in motion, the waves of “*Anā al-Ḥaqq*” rise in every direction.<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, there is a Punjabi verse found in *Siyar al-Awliyā’*. However, it is very difficult to understand and does not match with the poetry preserved in the *Guru Granth*. This is because Amīr Khūrd, whose father was Persian, spent most of his life in Delhi and had little knowledge of Punjabi.<sup>33</sup> Muḥammad Āṣif Khān has rightly pointed out that though Bābā Farīd composed some verses in Persian and Arabic, he composed most of his poetry in his mother tongue Punjabi.<sup>34</sup>

### Shaikh Bahā’ al-Dīn Bājan Chishtī’s *Khazā’in-i Raḥmat Allāh*

*Khazā’in-i Raḥmat Allāh* is a masterpiece of Shaikh Bahā’ al-Dīn Bājan (d. 1506). The book is a mixture of poetry, *malfūzāt*, and *tadhkirah*. It is a rare book and its only known manuscript is preserved in the Ādhar collection, the main library of the University of the Punjab, Pakistan. However, the page numbers and date of compilation are missing in that manuscript. It is surmised that it was completed in the last or the second-last decade of the fifteenth century CE. The book is very important for the history of the Punjabi poetry of Bābā Farīd. The author cited the following Punjabi *dōhā* (couplet) of the Shaikh:

سائین سیوت کل کئی ماس نہ رہیادیہ  
 تب لک سائین سیوسان تب لک ہوسون کہیہ<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 476.

<sup>32</sup> Author’s translation.

<sup>33</sup> Muḥammad Āṣif Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē* (Lahore: Pakistan Punjabi Adabi Board, 1978), 99-100.

<sup>34</sup> Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, 58-61.

<sup>35</sup> Shaikh Bahā’ al-Dīn Bājan Chishtī, *Khazā’in-i Raḥmat Allāh*, unpublished manuscript preserved in the Ādhar collection of the main library of the University of the Punjab,

One should stay devoted to the Lord  
And keep seeking His blessing till death.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Sab'-i Sanābil***

*Sab'-i Sanābil* is a well-known Sufi compendium of South Asia, compiled by Mīr 'Abd al-Wāḥid Bilgarāmī (d. 1608) in 1561. It records several Punjabi and Persian verses of Bābā Farīd such as:

ٹوٹی لپندی باوری دیندی کہری تلج

چو ہا کدھ نمائوے پچھے بندھتے جھجج<sup>37</sup>

Mere cap and robe do not ensure saintliness  
A mouse cannot fit in the hole with a strainer<sup>38</sup>

The same verse has also been mentioned in *Javāhar-i Farīdī*.<sup>39</sup> However, according to the *Adi Granth*, the above-mentioned verse was said by Guru Nanak. This means that there are still several verses of Bābā Farīd in the *Adi Granth*, which are wrongly attributed to the Sikh Gurus. This is because *Sab'-i Sanābil* was compiled almost forty years before the compilation of the *Adi Granth*. Other Punjabi verses are:

منان من منائیاں سرمٹھی کیا ہونے

کتھنیں بھیدیاں منیاں سرگ نہ لدھی کوئی

مونڈاں منڈ منڈائیاں سرمونڈیں کیا ہونے

کتھنی بھیدیاں سنڈیاں سرگ نہ لدھی کوئے<sup>40</sup>

What of the carcass when it's buried beneath tons of mud?  
How many sheep were shorn yet no *sarag* [a special breed of sheep] was found?  
Shaving heads is not tantamount to the achievement of spiritual destiny  
How many sheep were sacrificed yet no *sarag* was found?<sup>41</sup>

Lahore. Also see Muḥammad Bashīr Ḥusain, *Fahrist-i Makḥṭūṭāt-i Shūrānī* (Lahore: Idārah-i Taḥqīqāt-i Pākistān, n.d.), 300.

<sup>36</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>37</sup> Mīr 'Abd al-Wāḥid Bilgarāmī, *Sab'-i Sanābil*, trans. Muḥammad Khalīl Khān Barkātī (Lahore: Hamid and Company, n.d.), 142. Also see Mīr 'Abd al-Wāḥid Bilgarāmī, *Sab'-i Sanābil*, manuscript preserved in the library of Majlis-i Shūrā Islāmī, Tehran, 65.

<sup>38</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>39</sup> Nīthār Aḥmad Fārūqī, "Bābā Farīd kī Mubārak Zindagī," in *Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i Shakar: Savānīḥ, Tālīfāt, Muṭāla'āt*, ed. Muḥammad Ikrām Chughtā'ī (Lahore: Sang-i-Meel Publishers, 2007), 668.

<sup>40</sup> Bilgarāmī, *Sab'-i Sanābil*, 142. Also see Bilgarāmī, *Sab'-i Sanābil* (manuscript), 65.

Similarly, another Punjabi verse of Bābā Farīd is preserved in *Khulāṣat al-Awrād* compiled by Sayyid Imām al-Dīn of Bhakkar (d. 1567) which manifests matching themes in the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd*. The verse is

زندگی دوساہ نہیں، سمجھ فرید اتوں

کر لے اچھے عمل تے، ہو جا سرتنگوں<sup>42</sup>

O Farīd, be careful as life is too short

Do good deeds and spend your time in meditation<sup>43</sup>

Since Bābā Farīd spent most of his life in Punjabi-speaking cities, he did not communicate with the native people in Persian. For this reason, he composed most of his poetry in Punjabi.<sup>44</sup> It is keenly observed that sometimes he composed *aurād* in Punjabi.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, like Sayyid Imām al-Dīn of Bhakkar, ‘Alī Aṣghar Chishtī in his masterpiece titled, *Javāhar-i Farīdī* (compiled in 1623 just two decades after the compilation of the *Guru Granth*) described verses of Bābā Farīd which were thematically and linguistically similar to the verses of the *Guru Granth*’s *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd*.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Author’s translation.

<sup>42</sup> Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, 108.

<sup>43</sup> Author’s translation.

<sup>44</sup> Mōhan Singh Dīvānah, “Bābā Farīd Ganj-i Shakar, Shaikh Ibrāhīm, aur Farīd-i Thānī,” in *Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Mas’ūd Ganj-i Shakar: Savānih, Tālīfāt, Muṭāla’āt*, ed. Muḥammad Ikrām Chughtāī (Lahore: Sang-i-Meel Publishers, 2007), 629-30.

<sup>45</sup> Shaikh Muḥammad Chishtī, *Majālis-i Ḥasanah* (Lahore: Allāh Wālē kī Qaumī Dukān, n.d.), 7. Also see Kalīm Allāh Shāh Jahānābādī, *Kashkōl-i Kalīmī*, trans. Muḥammad Salīm Ismā’īl (Lahore: Maktabah-i Nubuwwat, 2001), 114. Also see Nithār Aḥmad Fārūqī, “Ḥazrat Bābā Farīd Silsilah-i Chishtiyyah Nizāmiyyah kē Malfūzāt main,” in “Ḥazrat Bābā Farīd Ganj-i Shakar, special issue, *Munādī* 83, no. 1 (2009): 25.

<sup>46</sup> For Example, see the following verse:

فرید ادھر سولی سر بنجرے تلیاں توکت کاگ

رہب انیون نہ باہڑے سو دھن اساڈے بھاگ

O Farīd, the body has become a skeleton and the crows pick at my soles.

But still, Lord has not been met with what luck Ah! Our souls.

‘Alī Aṣghar Chishtī, *Javāhir-i Farīdī*, unpublished manuscript, Kutub Khānah-i Chishtiyyah Fārūqiyyah of Pīr Ajmal Chishtī, Bahawalnagar, dated, 1291/1874, 205. The translation is of the author.

A thematically similar verse is the following:

فرید اتن کاجنجر تھیا، تلیاں کھونڈیں کاگ

اچے ک رہب نہ بوہڑیو، دیکھ بندے کے بھاگ

## Pre-Guru Granth Era, the *Adi Granth*, and *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd*: An Appraisal

The Nāth (Jōgī or yōgī ascetic school founded by Machandar Nāth and popularized by his prominent disciple Gōrakh Nāth in the tenth century CE) and Ismā'īlī Pīrs including Nūr al-Dīn Satgar (d. 1094 CE) used extensive Punjabi vocabulary in their poetry. This made many modern researchers consider the Nāth period the early period of Punjabi literature.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the folktales in Punjabi, including Rājā Pōras, Rājā Nal, Rājā Rasālō and Rājā Dhōl, are still popular among the Punjabi people<sup>48</sup> and this era is deemed as the mid-period of the ancient history of Punjab rather than the initial period,<sup>49</sup> reflecting the age of the Punjabi language. Bābā Farīd is described as the founder of Punjabi poetry<sup>50</sup> only because he was the first poet whose poetry remains intact to this day.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, he is perhaps the first true Sufi poet of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>52</sup> Other intellectual Chishtī Sufis also rendered great services to the vernacularization of Islam and Sufism—the production of Sufi literature in native languages—in the subcontinent. Amīr Khusrau of Delhi (d. 1325 CE), a celebrated Muslim poet and

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O Farīd, the body is dried up, it has become a cage, the crows are pecking away (its) plastering.  
Till now the Lord has not been met with, behold the lot of (his) servant!

Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, 235. The translation is of *The Ādi Granth*, trans. Ernest Trumpp (London: WM. H. Allen & Co., 1877), *shalok*, 90, p. 691.

<sup>47</sup> Dīvānah, “Bābā Farīd Ganj-i Shakar, Shaikh Ibrāhīm, aur Farīd-i Thānī,” 649-50. Also see Saeed Khawar Bhutta, “Qabl az Farīd Panjāb kē Adabī Rujhānāt,” *Journal of Research* 15 (2009): 159-176.

<sup>48</sup> Bhutta, “Panjābī main Zabānī Tārīkh kī Rivāyat,” *Bāzyāft* 13 (July-December 2008): 131-46.

<sup>49</sup> Shafqat Tanveer Mirza, *Adab Rāhīn: Panjābī dī Tārīkh* (Lahore: Punjabi Adabi Board, 1989), 11-13.

<sup>50</sup> Sarfarāz Ḥusain Qāzī declared Bābā Farīd as the *Bābā Ādam* of the Punjabi language. He claimed that Bābā Farīd was the first Punjabi Sufi poet in the subcontinent. Sarfarāz Ḥusain Qāzī, *Panjābī dē Ṣūfī Shā'ir* (Lahore: Aziz Book Depo, 1973), 167. Also see Balwant Singh Anand, *Bābā Farīd* (Lahore: Suchet Kitab Ghar, 2001), 74; Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur, eds., *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature, and Shrines* (New Delhi: Aaker Books, 2009), 197; Shafqat Tanveer Mirza, *Resistance Themes in Punjabi Literature* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1992), 220. Mirza added that Bābā Farīd was also the earliest Urdu poet and the founding father of Punjabi and Saraiki poetry. Bhutta also declared Gōrakh Nāth and Bābā Farīd as the founders of Punjabi poetry. Bhutta, “Qabl az Farīd Panjāb kē Adabī Rujhānāt”; Bhutta, “Panjābī Bārān Māh dā Adabī Pichōkar,” *Khōj* 29-30, nos. 1-2 (2007): 151-60.

<sup>51</sup> Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, 131.

<sup>52</sup> Anand, *Bābā Farīd*, 49; Qāzī, *Panjābī dē Ṣūfī Shā'ir*, 167.

musician, made profound use of Hindivī words in his poetry;<sup>53</sup> while Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, popularly known as Bandahnavāz Gaisūdarāz (d. 1422 CE), was proficient in Hindivī language. His *Mi'raj al-'Ashiqin* is considered the first prose work in Hindivī and was essential to the promotion of the language in the Deccan.<sup>54</sup> Such intellectual compilations of Sufis later provided a constructive ground for the emergence of Urdu. A Rifā'ī Sufi poet, Shāh 'Alī Muḥammad Jīv Gāmdhanī (d. 1565) of Gujarat, compiled a book of Hindivī poetry, titled *Javāhir-i Asrār Allāh*. Similarly, Ḥājī Najm al-Dīn Sulaimānī (d. 1870), a *khalīfah* of Shāh Muḥammad Sulaimān of Taunsa (d. 1850), compiled fourteen books and treatises in Urdu.<sup>55</sup> Likewise, Shāh Mīranjī Shams al-'Ushshāq (d. 1499) of Bijapur (Vijayapura), his son Burhān al-Dīn Janam (d. 1597), and Shaikh Maḥmūd Khūsh Dahan (d. 1617), a *khalīfah* of Burhān al-Dīn Janam, promulgated the Chishtī order's discourse and Islamic teachings among the native people of the Deccan through the native Dakhani vernacular instead of Persian. The vernacular exercised by the Sufis of Bijapur also established the ground for the rise of Urdu in the Deccan. Moreover, many Hindus converted to Islam in the Deccan as a result of the presence of Chishtī Sufi literature in the vernacular.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Shaikh Bahā' al-Dīn Bājan Chishtī played a vital role in the development of Punjabi (Gujari) in Gujarat, as he used numerous *dōhās* and Punjabi words in his poetry.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, due to a process of vernacularization of several holy texts, which saw the Qur'ān,<sup>58</sup> Bhagavad Gita, and Upanishads translated to vernacular languages by Indian Sufis,<sup>59</sup> the monopoly of Muslim 'ulamā' and Hindu Brahmins subsided.

<sup>53</sup> Maḥmūd Shīrānī, *Panjāb main Urdū* (Lahore: Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdū, n.d.), 124-25.

<sup>54</sup> Tanvir Anjum, "Vernacularization of Islam and Sufism in South Asia: A Study of the Production of Sufi Literature in Local Languages," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 54, no. 1 (2017), 213-15.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>56</sup> Richard Maxwell Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1996), 136-44.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>58</sup> In South Asia, Makhdūm Nūḥ (d. 1590), a Suhrawardī Ṣūfī of Hala in Sindh, was the first to translate the Qur'ān into Persian. Annemarie Schimmel, *Pearls from the Indus Studies in Sindhi Culture* (Karachi: Culture & Tourism Department, 2017), 55. Almost two hundred years later, Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762) also translated the Qur'ān into Persian. Mohammad Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967), 277.

<sup>59</sup> Ilyse R. Morgenstein Fuerst, "A Muslim Bhagavad Gītā: 'Abd al-Rahman Chishtī's Interpretative Translation and Its Implications," *Journal of South Asian Religious History* 1 (2015), 12.

*Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* has a total of 130 *ashlōks*. Among those, 112 are authentically attributed to Bābā Farīd, while the remaining 18 belong to different Sikh Gurus.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, 83 other verses of Bābā Farīd are recorded in various sources. Being a native of Punjab, Bābā Farīd wrote most of his poetry in the local language. There is a difference of opinion among historians regarding Bābā Farīd as a poet in general and the attribution of the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* to him. For example, Max Arthur Macauliffe was the first historian to claim that the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* belonged to Ibrāhīm Farīd II<sup>61</sup> (Ibrāhīm Ilyās Farīd II [1450-1575], a descendent and the twelfth *sajjādah nashīn* of Bābā Farīd). Later, he was followed by Lajwanati Rama Krishna who argued that a verse—whose translation is given below—supports the view that the author of *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* is Farīd II: “O Shaikh no life in the world is stationary. The seat on which I am seated has been occupied by many.”<sup>62</sup>

However, this argument is weak because Bābā Farīd discusses here human life in the mortal world. Moreover, the verse refers to the demise of his spiritual predecessors (like Khavājah Quṭb al-Dīn and Khavājah Mu‘īn al-Dīn Ḥasan) and other renowned Sufi personalities.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, K. A. Nizami, a celebrated scholar of the Chishtī Sufi order in South Asia, scrupulously examined the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* in the *Guru Granth*. Initially, he held that Ibrāhīm Farīd II was its author but he used the words of Bābā Farīd in his own verses.<sup>64</sup> Later, he declared Bābā Farīd as the real author of the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd*.<sup>65</sup> Waḥīd Aḥmād Mas‘ūd proclaimed that Bābā Farīd was not a poet at all and that the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* belongs to Ibrāhīm Farīd II.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, Khavājah Muslim Nizāmī attributed *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* to Ibrāhīm Farīd II and postulated that the presence of only one Punjabi *dōhā* of Bābā Farīd described in *Siyar al-Awliyā’* (mentioned above) is insufficient to regard Bābā Farīd as a Punjabi poet. He further argued that it does not match the language of

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<sup>60</sup> *Ādi Granth*, p. 685-94.

<sup>61</sup> Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Life of Shaikh Farīd I and the Compositions of Shaikh Farīd II Contained in Granth Sahib of Sikhs* (Lahore: Artistic Printing Works, 1903), 1-2.

<sup>62</sup> Lajwanati Rama Krishna, *Punjabi Sufi Poets: A.D. 1460-1900* (Karachi: Indus Publication, 1977), 7.

<sup>63</sup> Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, 63-64; Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Baba Sheikh Farid Shakar Ganj* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1974), 99; Anand, *Bābā Farīd*, 41.

<sup>64</sup> Nizami, *Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-u’-d-Din Ganj-i-Shakar*, 121-22.

<sup>65</sup> Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-u’-d-Din Ganj-i-Shakar*, rev. ed. (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-Delli, 2009), 87-91.

<sup>66</sup> Waḥīd Aḥmād Mas‘ūd, *Savānih-i Ḥazrat Bābā Farīd Mas‘ūd Ganj-i-Shakar* (Karachi: Pak Academy, 1965), 208-21.

*Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd*.<sup>67</sup> However, Macauliffe, Lajwanati Rama Krishna, Waḥīd Aḥmad Mas‘ūd, Muslim Nizāmī, Bābā Budhā Singh, Gōpāl Singh Dardī, Surrender Singh Kohli etc., did not have access to *Shamā’il al-Atqiyā’, Ma’dan al-Ma’ānī, Khazā’in-i Raḥmat Allāh, Sab’-i Sanābil*, and *Javāhir-i Farīdī*, sources which refute their claim.

Surprisingly, Macauliffe did not scrupulously study the *Janam Sakhī*, as he described a meeting between Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and Farīd II while skipping a meeting of Bābā Farīd and Guru Nanak described in the same *Janam Sakhī*.<sup>68</sup> This throws the entire authenticity of the *Janam Sakhīs* into question as these saints lived at different times. Furthermore, Muḥammad Āṣif Khān correctly argued that the contemporary sources corroborate that after his early life, Bābā Farīd used the pen name “Mas‘ūd” in his Punjabi poetry. Khān further maintained that sufficient sources substantiate that Bābā Farīd was a poet while no source affirms that Farīd II was a poet.<sup>69</sup> Finally, Bābā Farīd lived a long life of ninety-five years, while Farīd II died at the age of sixty. The following verses of the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* identify the same fact:

بڈھا ہو یا شیخ فرید، کنبن لگی دیہہ  
 جے سوورہیاں جیوناں بھی، تن ہو سی کھیہہ  
 Old-age has befallen you  
 Your body wholly shakes  
 Even if you be centurions  
 Body will be dust<sup>70</sup>

Additionally, Shaikh Ibrāhīm would not have used his direct predecessor’s name as his own title.<sup>71</sup> It was Khūrshīd ‘Ālām (d. 1901), another prominent Punjabi poet and a Chishtī Sufi, who used the title Ghulām Farīd (Slave of Farīd). There is indeed a huge difference between the language of Bābā Farīd in the thirteenth century and that of the Punjabi Sufis of the sixteenth century such as Shāh Ḥusayn (d. 1599), the

<sup>67</sup> Khavājah Muslim Nizāmī, *Anvār al-Farīd* (Pakpattan: Idārah-i Taṣawwuf, 1965), 390-97.

<sup>68</sup> Dīvānah, “Bābā Farīd Ganj-i Shakar, 632-33; Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, 55-78.

<sup>69</sup> Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, 55-78.

<sup>70</sup> Maqbool Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid* (Lahore: Majlis Shah Hussain, 1967), *shalok* 43, pp. 30-31.

<sup>71</sup> Maḥmūd Niyāzī, “Bābā Farīd kē Ashlōk,” in “Ḥazrat Bābā Farīd Ganj-i Shakar,” special issue, *Munādī* 83, no. 1 (2009), 93-95.

contemporary of Khavājah Ibrāhīm Farīd II.<sup>72</sup> More importantly, the *ashlōk* in the *Guru Granth* belongs to Bābā Farīd because it is entirely consistent with the teachings of the Shaikh found in hagiographical sources. Finally, Guru Arjan (d. 1606) explicitly proclaimed that it is the *ashlōk* of Shaikh Farīd (Bābā Farīd) rather than Shaikh Ibrāhīm (Farīd II).<sup>73</sup>

Guru Nanak collected Bābā Farīd's *ashlōk* from Ibrāhīm Farīd II, while Guru Arjan compiled it in the *Adi Granth* in 1604.<sup>74</sup> Guru Nanak was one of the devotees of Bābā Farīd and he also visited his shrine. He stayed at Ajodhan (Pakpattan) for a short time. His home became popular as *Tibba Nānak Sir* (Mound of Shrī Nānak) and still exists near Pakpattan. During his stay there, he visited Ibrāhīm Farīd II,<sup>75</sup> who regularly recited Bābā Farīd's *ashlōks*. Guru Nanak heard the cogent verses and requested Ibrāhīm Farīd II to give him a copy of the *Dīvān* of Bābā Farīd.<sup>76</sup> The request was approved after Ibrāhīm performed *istikhārah* (prayer of seeking counsel).<sup>77</sup>

Still, there is an important question of why no copies of the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* exist today? The answer is that Ibrāhīm Farīd II had the only manuscript of the *ashlōk* which he handed over to Guru Nanak. This handover took place before the advent of the printing press in India. At that time, the paper was rare. Perhaps more importantly, the oral tradition was preeminent in Punjab. The people of Punjab, from the very beginning, were famous for relying heavily on oral history. Even the Greek historians noted that instead of compiling a history of their heroes, the people of Punjab preferred to describe their stories in poetry and transmitted them orally from generation to generation.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, there is a rich history of oral tradition in Islam. The Qur'ān was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) orally, learning it by heart before

<sup>72</sup> Saeed Ahmad, "Baba Farid: The Pioneer of Punjabi Sufi Poetry," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature, and Shrines*, ed. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur (New Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 198; Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, 99.

<sup>73</sup> Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, 55-78.

<sup>74</sup> Anand, *Bābā Farīd*, 39.

<sup>75</sup> Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, 99; Qāzī, *Panjābī dē Sūfī Shā'ir*, 173.

<sup>76</sup> Muḥammad Sa'īd Shiblī, "Dhikr-i Sa'īd dar Sīrat-i Bābā Farīd" in *Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i Shakar: Savānih, Tālīfāt, Muṭāla'āt*, ed. Muḥammad Ikrām Chughtā'ī (Lahore: Sang-i-Meel Publishers, 2007), 363; Anand, *Bābā Farīd*, 40.

<sup>77</sup> Maula Bakhsh Kushta, *Tadhkira of Punjabi Poets* (Lahore: Maula Bakhsh Kushta & Sons, 1960), 35; Shiblī, "Dhikr-i Sa'īd," 363; Aẓhar, *Ma'ārif-i Farīdiyyah*, 30.

<sup>78</sup> I. Serebrykov, *Punjabi Literature: A Brief Outline*, trans. T. A. Zalite (Moscow: Nauka Publishing House, 1968), 10.

it was written down. Furthermore, the companions of the Prophet memorized the Qur'ān by heart. The same is the case with the *aḥādīth* of the Prophet. The process of the compilation of *aḥādīth* also heavily relied on oral traditions. Likewise, many examples of oral history are found in other civilizations. For instance, the fathers of history Herodotus and Thucydides heavily relied on oral tradition. The Hindu scriptures, including Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Ramayan, were all compiled in later periods from their initial composition based on oral tradition.<sup>79</sup>

Besides the *Guru Granth*, another paramount element that preserved Bābā Farīd's poetry is the oral tradition. Apart from the Muslim and Sikh devotees of Bābā Farīd, the Jasnathis (followers of Jasnath [d. 1506] a Hindu sect) considered his poetry an integral part of their religious discourse.<sup>80</sup> In this regard, they transferred the Punjabi poetry of Bābā Farīd orally from one generation to another. Additionally, *samā'* (*qawwālī*) is one of the fascinating features of the Chishtī order that also proved to be very fruitful in preserving the oral tradition of the Chishtī Sufis. This is because the *kalām* normally deals with the life, teachings, and miracles of a saint. Likewise, numerous *qawwāls* sing the *ashlōks* of Bābā Farīd preserved in the *Guru Granth*. Similarly, *The Dastak of Bābā Farīd* is also preserved due to the oral tradition.<sup>81</sup>

### Thematic Analysis

One of the key elements of Bābā Farīd's life was his unprecedented devotion to Allah and his gruelling meditations (*riyādāt*). Moreover, like his Chishtī masters, Bābā Farīd followed the key teachings of the order, renounced worldly fame, and inculcated a love for mankind irrespective of religion, class or creed. All of these attributes are interlinked. A thematic analysis of the poetry of the Shaikh and the hagiographical sources is as follows:

From a very young age, Bābā Farīd was inclined to vigorous meditation and arduous worship and had achieved a high spiritual level. Even in his childhood, he was known as *qāzī bachchah dīvānah* (the *qāzī's*

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<sup>79</sup> Bhutta, "Panjābī main Zabānī Tārīkh kī Rivāyat," 131-46; David Henige, *Oral Historiography* (London: Longman, 1982), 7-12.

<sup>80</sup> Sunita Zaidi, "Oral Tradition and Little Culture: Jasnathis in Historical Perspective," in *Popular Literature and Pre-Modern Societies in South Asia*, ed. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur (Delhi: Pearson & Longman, 2008), 172-73.

<sup>81</sup> Niyāzī, "Bābā Farīd kē Ashlōk," 93-95.

mad son) because he spent most of his time in meditation.<sup>82</sup> In adolescence, most of the time he remained silent and seldom talked. He kept himself busy in the worship of Allah in the mosque of Kathvāl.<sup>83</sup> Because of his habits and lifestyle, it was foretold that he would become a saint.<sup>84</sup>

Indian Muslim saints have a consensus that no saint excelled Bābā Farīd in devotion and piety.<sup>85</sup> He was famous for his profound meditation.<sup>86</sup> He was recognized as unparalleled in the field of renunciation of the world and worldly desires.<sup>87</sup> In his hours of long prostration, he would recite, “I die for Thee, I live for Thee.”<sup>88</sup> Such was his spiritual state and indulgence in the love of God that he would even sometimes fail to recognize his own sons.<sup>89</sup> His numerous *chillahgāhs* (places where a *chillah* was performed)<sup>90</sup> inside and outside India were popular.<sup>91</sup> His poetry inculcates the same message.

### ***Vigorous Meditation and Profound Devotion to Allah***

اٹھ فرید اوضو ساز، صبح نماز گزار

جو سرسائیں نہ نویں، سو سرکپ اتار

Arise Farid! Ablution for

And after morning prayer

A head unbowing to the Lord

<sup>82</sup> Hamīd Qalandar, *Khair al-Majālis*, ed. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (Aligarh: Muslim University Aligarh, n.d.), 219-20.

<sup>83</sup> Sayyid Muḥammad Akbar Ḥusainī, *Jawāmi' al-Kalim*, trans. Mu'īn al-Dīn Dardā'ī (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1980), 149.

<sup>84</sup> Majd al-Dīn Kāshānī, *Gharā'ib al-Karāmāt*, unpublished manuscript preserved in the personal collection of Ramaḍān Mu'īnī, Taunsa, Dera Ghazi Khan, 56.

<sup>85</sup> Muḥammad Ghauthī Shaṭṭārī, *Gulzār-i Abrār*, unpublished manuscript in Sulaimaniyyah Library, Taunsa, Dera Ghazi Khan, Pakistan, 49.

<sup>86</sup> Muḥammad Ḥusayn Murādābādī, *Anvār al-Ārifīn* (Bareilly: Maṭba'-'i Ṣiddīqī, 1872), 292-93.

<sup>87</sup> Ghulām Sarvar Lāhōrī, *Ḥadīqat al-Auliya'* (Lahore: Tasawwuf Foundation, 2000), 74.

<sup>88</sup> Qalandar, *Khair al-Majālis*, 224.

<sup>89</sup> Sijzī, *Fawā'id al Fu'ād*, 138.

<sup>90</sup> *Chillah* is a type of seclusion in which a person worships in isolation. It took its name from a Persian word derived from *chihil* meaning “forty” due to the fact that it typically lasts for forty days.

<sup>91</sup> Khavājah Muslim Niẓāmī, *Anwār al-Farīd* (Pakpattan: Idārah-i Taṣawwuf, 1965), 447-48; Ajmal Chishtī, *Chillahgāhīn* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publisher, 1999), 1-20.

Should better be not there<sup>92</sup>

جس کا سامنیں جاگتا

سو کیوں سوئے رات<sup>93</sup>

One whose Lord is awake

Why would he sleep at night!<sup>94</sup>

برہا برہا آکھئے برہا توں سلطان

فرید اجت تن برہ نہ اجکے، سوتن جان مسان

Separation is the king

It's the motivating force

One who hasn't tasted love

And the fire of separation

Is embodiment of grave<sup>95</sup>

بولے شیخ فرید پیارے اللہ لگے

ایہہ تن ہو سی خاک نمائی، گور گھرے

Says the Sheikh Farid!

Tread the path of God

Body will be dust

The grave will be your home.<sup>96</sup>

Other verses include the following:

رتے عشق خدائے رنگ دیدار کے

وسریا جن نام تے بھونیں بھارتھنے

The lovers true

Are dyed in hues

Of Lord's grace

Forgetful ones

Have wasted life

And are a burden

On the earth<sup>97</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 72, pp. 48-49. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 71, p. 690.

<sup>93</sup> Kāshānī, *Shamā'il al-Atqiyā'*, 146.

<sup>94</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>95</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 38, pp. 26-27. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 36, p. 688.

<sup>96</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, bani* 2, pp. 96-97.

فرید امن میدان کر، ٹوئے ٹھے لاه  
 اگے مول نہ آوسی دوزخ سندی بھاہ  
 Leave off your heart's plain  
 Remove the hills and dales  
 And then fearlessly move ahead  
 In fire of Hell set sails<sup>98</sup>

Bābā Farīd relied solely on Allah. He abandoned his stick (‘aṣā) during his severe sickness as he realized that he was relying on a stick instead of his Lord.<sup>99</sup> The verse mentioned below emphasizes a similar theme:

فرید ابار پر اے بیٹا سائیں مجھے نہ دیہہ  
 جے توں ایویں رکھی، جیو سریروں لہ  
 Lord! Save me from knocking doors  
 Begging from the man  
 If you have to force me do so  
 Better end my life's span<sup>100</sup>

### ***Renunciation of the World and Worldly Desires***

Bābā Farīd renounced worldly pleasures and led a very ascetic life. When he died, he left no inheritance.<sup>101</sup> Although he was often presented with agricultural lands and cash by the king and different governors, he always declined the former and accepted occasionally the latter. He always distributed the cash among the poor right away and never kept even a single penny at his *Jamā'at Khānah* for the next day.<sup>102</sup> Moreover,

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., *bani* 1, pp. 92-93; Also see Amjad ‘Alī Bhattī, *Kalām-i Bābā Farīd* (Rawalpindi: Rumeel House Publications, 2007), *ashlōk* 141, p. 86.

<sup>98</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 75, pp. 50-51. Also see 50-51 *Ādi Granth, shalok* 74, p. 690.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd Jāndār, *Durr-i Niẓāmī (Guftār-i Maḥbūb)*, trans. Muḥammad Yāsīn Niẓāmī (Lahore: Paigham al-Quran Publishers, 2012), 60.

<sup>100</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 44, pp. 30-31. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 42, p. 688; Sharīf Kanjāhī, *Kahē Farīd* (Islamabad: National Institute of Cultural Heritage, 1978), 60; Munshī Jīshī Rām Mushtāq, *Irshadāt-i Farīdī* (Lahore: Allāh Vālē kī Qaumī Dukān, 1951), *ashlōk* 46, p. 40.

<sup>101</sup> Sijzī, *Fawāyid al-Fawād*, 132.

<sup>102</sup> Chishtī, *Javāhir-i Farīdī*, 215.

he ate wild fruit.<sup>103</sup> Sometimes his disciples residing at the *Jamā'at Khānah* had to beg for food.<sup>104</sup> The following verses demonstrate the same theme:

جے جے جیویں دنی تے، کھرے کہیں نہ لاء  
اکو کھپھن رکھ کے، ہور سبھو دے لاء

As long as you live, do not follow anything with fervour (except Allah)  
Just keep your shroud and give away all the rest.<sup>105</sup>

Bābā Farīd maintained that the wisest among the men is one who renounces the world.<sup>106</sup>

جے جاناں مر جائے گھم نہ آئے  
جھوٹھی دنیا گنہ آپ و نجائے

If we know, that, after Death  
We won't return  
This false world we should not love  
And lose ourselves<sup>107</sup>

Bābā Farīd always disdained big houses, palaces and lavish lifestyles. Once a devotee requested his permission for a grand construction in the *Jamā'at Khānah*. Bābā Farīd spruned the request.<sup>108</sup> The following verses address this theme:

فریدا! کوٹھے، منڈپ، ماڑیاں اسار دے بھی گئے

کوڑا سودا کر گئے، گوریں جا پئے

Farid, they built the manor-house  
The castle and the palace—  
These monuments of vain pursuit  
And rode the road to grave<sup>109</sup>

<sup>103</sup> 'Abd al-Rahmān Chishtī, *Mir'āt al-Asrār* (Lucknow: Newal Kishore: n.d.), 301.

<sup>104</sup> Qalandar, *Khair al-Majālis*, 150.

<sup>105</sup> Bhattī, *Kalām-i Bābā Farīd*, *ashlōk* 56, p. 118. The translation is of the author.

<sup>106</sup> Amīr Khūrd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, 74.

<sup>107</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, bani 2*, pp. 96-97. Also see Shahzad Qaiser, *Culture and Spirituality: The Punjabi Sufi Poetry of Baba Farid-ud-Din Masud Ganj-i-Shakar as Recorded in Guru Granth Sahib* (Lahore: Suchet Kitab Ghar, 2017), *shalok* 2, p. 299 and Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, *ashlōk* 2, p. 287.

<sup>108</sup> Nizāmī, *Anwār al-Farīd*, 214-15.

<sup>109</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 48, pp. 32-33. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 46, p. 688.

فرید! کوٹھے، منڈپ، ماڑیاں ایت نہ لایئے چت  
 مٹی پئی اتولویں، کوئی نہ ہوسی مت  
 Fall not in love with houses high  
 With castles big and strong  
 When dust, immeasured, covers you  
 No friends by you will throng<sup>110</sup>

Other verses read:

فرید! منڈپ مال نہ لایئے، مرگستانے چت دھر  
 سائی جائے سنبھال، جتھے ای توں ونبھناں  
 Spend not your wealth on houses high  
 On grave O concentrate  
 And look after the place which is  
 Your goal—the ultimate<sup>111</sup>  
 کچھ نہ بچھے، کچھ نہ سمجھے، دنیا کجی بھائے  
 سائیں میرے چنگا کیتا، نہیں تاں میں بھی ونجھاں آئے  
 It's a mystery deep and baffling  
 Worldly life—a hidden fire!  
 Allah hath done me a favour  
 Else I too would've burnt entire<sup>112</sup>

### ***Love and Care for Humanity and Religious Tolerance***

The creed of Bābā Farīd was love, peace, and non-retaliation.<sup>113</sup> He encouraged his disciples to banish enmity and hate from their lives, show kindness to all friends and foes, and give due share to the deserving.<sup>114</sup> An enemy can be made happy only through profound patience, great kindness, and compassion as manifested by the Shaikh during his life. He forgave the assassin who attempted to slay him,<sup>115</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 58, pp. 40-41. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 57, p. 689.

<sup>111</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 59, pp. 40-41. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 58, p. 689; Faqīr Muḥammad Faqīr, *Bōl-i Farīdī* (Lahore: Punjabi Adabi Academy, 1965), *ashlōk* 66, p. 108; and Mushtāq, *Irshadāt-i Farīdī, ashlōk* 65, p. 57.

<sup>112</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 6, pp. 4-5. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 3, p. 686; Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē, ashlōk* 3, p. 146.

<sup>113</sup> Dīvānah, "Bābā Farīd Ganj-i Shakar," 629.

<sup>114</sup> Sijzī, *Fawā'id al Fu'ād*, 90.

<sup>115</sup> Amīr Khūrd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, 80, 99.

pardoned the magician who paralyzed him,<sup>116</sup> and perennially condoned Qāḍī ‘Abd Allāh who invariably created problems for him and his family.<sup>117</sup> A similar theme is found in his verses mentioned below:

فرید اے تیں مارن مکیاں، تہناں نہ ماریں گھم  
 آپنے گھر جاییں، پیر تہاں دے چم  
 Farid! If you are dealt blows  
 Return not blow for blow  
 Kiss their feet and humbly  
 Then homewards better go<sup>118</sup>

فرید! برے دا بھلا کر غصہ من نہ ہنڈائے  
 دیہی روگ نہ لگ ای، پلے سب کچھ پائے  
 Do good turn to evil-doers  
 Let not anger rule your heart  
 No ailments afflict you then  
 You have all a man can have<sup>119</sup>

فرید ا تھیو پو ای دی د بھ جے سائیں لوڑیں سب  
 اک چھجیں بیالتائیں، تاں سائیں دے درواڑیں  
 And if Farid! You seek the Lord  
 Be the humblest grass  
 Cut and peeled and drenched and trampled  
 Softened into mass and woven  
 Into prayer mats  
 Only then it gains admission  
 In the house of the Lord<sup>120</sup>

Bābā Farīd was quite open towards all other religions and creeds and gave equal respect to all regardless of class or religion. He accepted

<sup>116</sup> Ḥamīd b. Faḍl Allāh Jamālī, *Siyar al-‘Ārifīn* (Delhi: Rizvi Publisher, n.d.), 39-40.

<sup>117</sup> Amīr Khūrd, *Siyar al-Awliyā’*, 84.

<sup>118</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 10, pp. 8-9. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 7, p. 686 and Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē, ashlōk* 7, p. 150.

<sup>119</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 81, pp. 54-55. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 78, p. 690; Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē, ashlōk* 78, p. 223.

<sup>120</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 19, pp. 14-15. Also see Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē, ashlōk* 16, p. 159 and *Ādi Granth, shalok* 16, p. 686.

Hindus as his disciples without forcing them to convert to Islam.<sup>121</sup> Such openness is also witnessed in his poetry. Moreover, his performance of *Chillah-i Ma'kūs* (hanging upside-down over a well), which he performed at Uchach,<sup>122</sup> is a Hindu practice that characterizes another example of his perception and appreciation of other religions. A similar theme can be found in his verses mentioned below:

فرید اسے توں دل درویش، رکھ عقیدہ ساہمنا

درہیں سستی دیکھ، متھاموڑ نہ کنڈ دے

O Farīd! If you possess a saint's heart, keep your faith open  
View all equally, don't turn your face or back (against any)<sup>123</sup>

Bābā Farīd articulated that a true *darwīsh* does not turn his face from or his back to the people of other religions and creeds. This shows his respect for non-Muslims. While talking about *Chillah-i Ma'kūs*, one of the disciples of Bandahnavāz Gaisūdarāz, asked him why Bābā Farīd's mouth never bled while he was hung downward in the well. The Shaikh replied that due to his hard meditation he had insufficient blood in his body and intestines, so his veins were dry.<sup>124</sup> Babā Farīd himself said:

فرید ارتی رت نہ نکلے جے تن چیرے کوئے

جو تن رتے رب سیوں تن رت نہ ہوئے

Not a drop of blood will yield

Body of a saint

Deep immersed in dye of God

He bears no other stain<sup>125</sup>

When Bābā Farīd arrived at Delhi after the death of his preceptor, it was Khavājah Badr al-Dīn Ghaznavī (d. 1259 CE), another famous *khalīfah* of Khavājah Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī, who continuously brought Bābā Farīd to the parties arranged by different disciples in which they presented numerous varieties of delicious food. Bābā Farīd—who loved

<sup>121</sup> N. N. Bhattacharyya, ed., *Medieval Bhakti Movements in India* (New Delhi: Munshi Ram Manoharlal Publishers, 1989), 77.

<sup>122</sup> Amīr Khūrd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, 68-70.

<sup>123</sup> Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, *ashlōk* 54, p. 314. The translation is of the author.

<sup>124</sup> Al-Ḥusainī, *Jawāmi' al-Kalim*, 412-13.

<sup>125</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 53, pp. 36-37. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 51, p. 689; Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē*, *ashlōk* 51, p. 194; Mushtāq, *Irshadāt-i Farīdī*, *ashlōk* 56, p. 49; and Faqīr, *Bōl-i Farīdī*, *ashlōk* 57, p. 102.

austerity, relied on simple food or even wild fruit, and confronted starvation most of his life—did not like such material involvements as he said, “Oh Mas‘ūd you are making fat your stomach by morsels of oily food and sweets; how you will procure your Lord’s blessing.” Finally, he left Delhi.<sup>126</sup> The following verse identifies this incident:

فرید اشکر، کھنڈ، نوات، گڑ، ماکھیوں، ماجھاددھ  
 سبے وستو مٹھیاں، رب نہ ہتچن تده  
 All the myriad kinds of sugar  
 Honey and the purest milk  
 Cannot reach, Farid, the sweetness  
 Of the name of Lord, my Lord<sup>127</sup>  
 رکھی سکی کھا کے ٹھنڈا پانی پی  
 فرید او کھ پرانی چو پڑی، نہ ترساویں جی  
 Eat unbuttered crumbs of yours  
 Thank the Lord for Adam’s ale  
 Buttered bread of others should not  
 Tempt you to go off the rail<sup>128</sup>

Similarly, historians stated that Bābā Farīd kept “wooden bread” with him during his asceticism to prevent others from offering him food, a fact explicitly mentioned by the Shaikh in his poetry:

فرید اروٹی میری کا ٹھدی، لاون میری بھکھ  
 جینہاں کھادی چو پڑی، گھنے سہن گے دکھ  
 As if wood is loaf of mine  
 Hunger is my curry  
 Those who eat the buttered bread  
 Shall taste grief and worry<sup>129</sup>

In *Javāhir-i Farīdī*, ‘Alī Aṣghar Chishtī maintained that as Bābā Farīd loved the seclusion, he spent decades in jungles for introspection and

<sup>126</sup> Qalandar, *Khair al-Majālis*, 187-88.

<sup>127</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 30, pp. 20-21. Also see Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē, ashlok* 27, p. 170.

<sup>128</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 32, pp. 22-23. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 29, p. 687.

<sup>129</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 31, pp. 22-23. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 28, p. 687 and Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē, ashlok* 28, p. 170.

meditation.<sup>130</sup> However, after securing the perfection of saintliness, he abandoned asceticism and opened his door to everyone, regardless of caste and creed. “Come to me one by one,” he told his visitors, “so that I may attend to you individually.”<sup>131</sup> Such teachings can be found in the following verse:

فرید ا جنگل جنگل کیا بھویں، ون کنڈا موڑیں  
 وسے رب ہیالئے، جنگل کیا ڈھونڈیں  
 Rambling through the thorny jungles  
 Seekest thou the Lord?  
 Vain is quest of thine, for sure,  
 Dwells in hearts the Lord<sup>132</sup>

One popular story found in the biographies of Bābā Farīd states that once there was a rainy season in Delhi and it was too difficult to travel. Bābā Farīd had great affection for his shaikh, but he had not visited him for the last seven days due to the heavy rain. Finally, he left to visit him but, on his way, he slipped and fell:<sup>133</sup>

فرید ا گلنیں چکڑ، دور گھر، نال پیارے نیو نہہ  
 چلاں تاں بھجے کسلی، رہاں تاں ٹٹے نیو نہہ  
 Muddy the streets with pouring rain  
 Far the house of Murshid mine  
 With him I’ve a rendezvous  
 Venturing out, my robe will soak  
 And if I don’t  
 My heart will break<sup>134</sup>

Another important incident, highlighted both in hagiographical compendia and in the poetry of Bābā Farīd, is that the Shaikh and his disciples frequently faced starvation, and sometimes salt was also unavailable at the *Jamā’at Khānah*. Once, the Shaikh discovered that a

<sup>130</sup> Chishtī, *Javāhir-i Farīdī*, 86.

<sup>131</sup> Nizami, *Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-u’d-Din Ganj-i-Shakar* (1973), 36.

<sup>132</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 22, pp. 16-17. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 19, p. 687; Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē, ashlōk* 19, p. 162; and Kanjāhī, *Kahē Farīd*, 38.

<sup>133</sup> Jamālī, *Siyar al-‘Ārifīn*, 46.

<sup>134</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 27, pp. 18-19. Also see *Ādi Granth, shalok* 24, p. 687 and Bhattī, *Kalām-i-Bābā Farīd, ashlōk* 27, p. 40.

disciple borrowed salt from outside. He chastised the disciple and chose not to eat that food.<sup>135</sup>

فرید اکتاں آناگلا، اکتاں ناہیں لون

اگے گئے سنبھاپن، چوٹاں کھاسی کون

Some knead flour of theirs with butter

Others are deprived of curry

Only after death we'll know

Who is the better of the two<sup>136</sup>

### Conclusion

Bābā Farīd was a multilingual poet and the founder of the Punjabi poetry and *ashlōk* genre. After a thorough and scrupulous discussion, it can be maintained that the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* in the *Guru Granth* genuinely belongs to Bābā Farīd and that the suggestion that Ibrāhīm Farīd II was its author is not correct. Interestingly, there are some contemporary sources of *Guru Granth*, including *Khulāṣat al-Awrād* and *Javāhir-i Farīdī*, that contained verses of Bābā Farīd linguistically as well as thematically akin to the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd*. *Khulāṣat al-Awrād* was compiled almost five decades before the compilation of the *Guru Granth*, while *Javāhir-i Farīdī* was written two decades after its compilation.

However, there is still a need for a critical and scrupulous study to keenly examine the *Adi Granth* and the *Janam Sākhīs*, as both seem not to be in their original form. For example, some verses of Bābā Farīd found in *Sab'-i Sanābil* and *Javāhir-i Farīdī* are wrongly attributed to Guru Nanak by Gurū Arjan. Additionally, while writing about the *Janam Sākhīs*, an impossible meeting between Bābā Farīd and Guru Nanak was mentioned. This highlights the fabrications added to the *Janam Sākhīs*.

Bābā Farīd wrote in Persian and Arabic, and there are several contemporary and later sources that preserved his poetry. However, he always preferred the Punjabi language for communication and poetry. Additionally, he taught *aurād* to his disciples in Punjabi.

Unfortunately, the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent do not have any manuscript of the *Ashlōk-i Shaikh Farīd* in Punjabi, as most of his Punjabi poetry is preserved in Gurmukhi. The reason behind this is that the only available manuscript of the poetry that Guru Nanak borrowed

<sup>135</sup> Amīr Khūrd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, 66; Jamālī, *Siyar al-Ārifīn*, 62.

<sup>136</sup> Elahi, *Couplets of Baba Farid, shalok* 46, pp. 32-33. Also see Khān, *Ākhiyā Bābā Farīd Nē, ashlōk* 46, p. 189; Faqīr, *Bōl-i Farīdī, ashlōk* 49, p. 98; and *Ādi Granth, shalok* 44, p. 688.

from Farīd II was not returned. Furthermore, this transfer of knowledge occurred before the printing press reached India and when paper was scarce. Moreover, it was the ancient tradition of the people of Punjab to rely on the oral tradition and memorize poetry orally. The same is the case with the poetry of Bābā Farīd. His devotees memorized his poetry but did not make proper efforts to compile it. Interestingly, his poetry has long become a substantial part of Jasnathi religious tradition, which orally transferred his poetry from generation to generation.

Finally, Bābā Farīd was a highly devoted Sufi. In this regard, he performed numerous arduous meditational practices including *Chillah-i Ma'kūs* and spent most of his time in contemplation and gruelling *riyāḍāt*. Another magnificent forte of his personality was impartiality, love, peace, and equal treatment of all. The teachings and philosophy of Bābā Farīd, both in poetry and biographical compendia, are compatible with each other as both proclaim the philosophy of profound devotion to Allah, renunciation of the world and worldly desires, and love and harmony without discrimination because of religion or class.

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