

## **SHEIKH BABA FARID**

(1173 – 1266)

Bābā Farīd was born in 1173 or 1188 CE (584 Hijri) at Kothewal village, 10 km from Multan in the Punjab region of Pakistan, to Jamāl-ud-dīn Suleimān and Maryam Bībī (Qarsum Bībī), daughter of Sheikh Wajīh-ud-dīn Khojendī. He was a descendant of the Farrūkhzād, known as Jamāl-ud-Dawlah, a Persian (Tajik) king of eastern Khorasan.

He was the grandson of Shaykh Shu'aib, who was the grandson of Farrukh Shah Kabuli, the king of Kabul and Ghazna. When Farrukh Shāh Kābulī was killed by the Mongol hordes invading Kabul, Farīd's grandfather, Shaykh Shu'aib, left Afghanistan and settled in the Punjab in 1125.

Baba Sheikh Farid as he is called all over Punjab, India, and Pakistan was born at the time when Punjab was going through great crossroads. Tamur the Lame, Halaku (Son of Chengez Khan), etc ravaged Punjab about 100 to 200 years before he was born. The official language of India was Turkish and Persian. The Slave dynasty of Qutub-Ud-Din aibak was at that time being ruled by Sultan Balban. 200-300 years earlier to the West of India, sword of Islam had swept in the countries like Iran, Afghanistan, and Eastern Europe. In India too, Slave Qutubdin Aibak tried to subdue people through force, but could only create a rift between different communities. Then came the sufi saints from Arabia and other places to spread their message of love for Allah. Sufi saints like Khwaja Qutub-Ul-Din Bakhtiar Kaki, who was a Sayid of Jafiri Hussaini tribe, were very famous.

Khwaja Bakhtiar Kaki was Born around 1150 A.D. and studied under Abu Hifz, a celebrated doctor of Ush, he went to Ajmer and became a disciple of Muayan-ul-Din Hasan Chisti. In due time he proceeded to Dihli where Baba Farid met him and became his disciple. Emperor Sultan Shams-ul-Din Altmish was also his disciple. He died in A.D. 1235 and was buried in Dihli, where his tomb is held in devout reverence by pious Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. His descendants are called Chistis from the tribe of his priest. – Makhazan-ul-Tawarikh.

Genealogy of Baba Sheikh Farid ji is given in the Jawahi-r-Faridi (The gems of Farid), preserved at the shrine of Pak Pattan, by Ali Asghar of Bahadal, a town near Sarhind. Baba Sheikh Farid ji descended from Farrukh Shah, who was king of Kabul and kings of Ghazni and other states were subject to him. Baba Farid's Great Grandfather was son of Farrukh Shah, the emperor of Kabul. During that time, Baba Farid's Great Grandfather was killed when Halaku, the grandson of Chengez Khan invaded Kabul, he killed several princes and learned men, including several of Baba Farid's ancestors. Baba Farid's Grandfather Shaikh Shaib abandoned their country and took refuge in the Panjab in A.D. 1125. The Qazi of Kasur who was acquainted with the high position Shaikh Shaib had held there, treated him and his relatives with great respect and hospitality. After some time Shaikh Shaib proceeded to Multan where he deemed he should be less exposed to worldly influences or the temptings of ambition. He took his abode in Kothiwal, now known as Chawali Mushaikh, close to Dipalpur. He established in Kothiwal a private college for religious instruction and attracted much attention. His eldest son Jamal-ud-din married Bibi Miriam, daughter of Saiyid Muhammad Abdula Shah – a descendant of Ali. Bibi Miriam had three sons, Khwaja Aziz-ul-din, Farid-ul- Din Masaud (Baba Farid) and Khwaja Najib-ul-din, and one daughter Khatun Jamila.

When Baba Farid was a few years old his mother taught him his prayers. The boy asked him what was gained by prayer. His mother replied 'Sugar'. She used accordingly to hide some sugar under his prayer-carpet, and, when he had finished his prayers, draw it forth, and give it to him as a reward of his devotion. One day his mother forgot to put the sugar but after prayers, there was sugar under the carpet. From that day on, Bibi Miriam started calling his son Shakar Ganj, or the treasury of Sugar.

When Baba Farid was 16 years old he went to Hajj and stayed in the house of Abdul Rahim Ansari. Since, Baba Farid use to talk in Punjabi, an unkempt faqir on hearing Farid's language foretold the Boy's subsequent greatness. After Farid came back to Punjab, he was sent to Khwaja Qutub-ul-Din Bakhtiar Kaki at Delhi to learn theology. Qutub-ul-din finding Baba Farid deficient in scholarship send him to the shrine of Abdul Shakur of Sarsa, near Dihli to finish his education. On that occasion Baba Farid repeated the following:-

O Farid, thou hast not walked in God's way ;  
therefore He hath no appeared unto thee  
Who is there who hath knocked at God's door  
for whom it hath not been opened  
Lost thy life on the way of the Friend  
if thou desire to be even as those holy men.

The high reputation Farid obtained in Dihli soon became irksome to him. He therefore made his way to Hansi, where he remained for some time. Meanwhile Khwaja Qutub-ul- Bakhtiar Kaki died at Dihli and Baba Farid paid a second visit to that city, and assumed the mantle of his late spiritual guide. He ultimately left it in the keeping of Jamal-ul-Din of Hansi and thence proceeded to Ajodhan, the present Pak Pattan. The manner in which the name of Ajodhan changed to Pak pattan was that a canal which derived its water from the Satluj passed near the town. It was usual for all who visited Baba Farid to wash their hands and feet there. The place then became known as Baba Sahib ji da Pak Pattan, or Farid's cleansing ferry.

Baba Farid after some time, in accordance with his mother's advice, went to forest, and lived there as an anchorite for some years on leaves of trees. On his return, when his mother began to comb his hair, Baba Farid complained that the operation caused him pain. His mother replied that he must have caused similar pain to the trees when he robbed them of fruit for food. Then he set out on another pilgrimage . This time, so as not to hurt any living thing, he tied a wooden cake to his stomach, and, it is said, subsisted on the imaginary sustenance it afforded him for this vow. Then when Baba Farid ji returned, his mother finding him that he had not lost all remnants of pride, dismissed him to do penance for a third period of some years. This time, it is said, he caused himself to be suspended by the feet in a well. He composed the following couple in reference to these circumstances.

Farid, thy body is on the stake;  
thy head hath become a cage;  
the crows peck at thy feet

If God come to me even now, happy shall be my lot.

Sheikh Farid ji made Pak Pattan a great center of Sufi Thoughts. People from all over India and Middle east would come to see him. He always used his language, that was Punjabi spoken by common people, even though he was highly learned and educated in Arabic, Persian, etc. His all couplets are written in Punjabi, with Persian script. He generally rejected offerings of money, but would accept gifts of food, etc for public kitchen. Baba Farid Ji went to Dihli again and was received with a most hospitable reception. Emperor Nasir-ul-Din Balban introduced him to his family. Baba Farid ji looked to Emperor's daughter Hazabara and asked Emperor to marry her to him. Thus Hazabra was married to Baba Sheikh Farid ji, but only after Emperor Balban promised to not give any costly gifts, Baba ji distributed all her jewels, etc to Faqirs.

Baba Farid ji visited a city called Mokhalpur, now it is called Faridkot in honor of the Baba Farid ji, it is the Indian part of Punjab. Then he turned towards the Punjabi mountains where he converted a tribe. Baba Farid ji remained there for six months and then he locked up the house in which he had dwelt, saying that his successor would open it, and then returned to Pakpattan. As his successor Diwan Taj-ul-Din was returning from a pilgrimage to Makka and Madina, he happened to visit that part of the country. He asked people their tribe name, they said they were descendents of Qutub-ul-Alam Baba Farid Shakarganj. And thus Taj-ud-din opened up the door of Baba Farid ji's hut hundreds of years later.

Baba Farid ji died of Pneumonia on the fifth day of Month of Muharrim, A.D. 1266. The date of Baba Farid jis death is commemorated by chronograms (a) Farid Asari (b) Auliye Khudai. He was unique, a saint of God. Baba Farid ji were buried outside the town of Pak pattan at a place called martyrs grave. His torch of Sufi thoughts were carried by his successor and subsequently. Several others such as Bhagat Kabir, Baba Guru Nanak Dev ji, etc were affected by the teachings of the great Saint. Baba Guru Nanak Dev ji's contemporary was a Baba Sheikh Farid ji Sani, or the second Sheikh Farid ji, 6th in succession of Baba Farid Shaikh Shakarganj. Thus Baba Sheikh Farid ji Shakarganj can be truly called the founder of Punjabi literature, making Punjabi culture old than Hindi, Urdu and other languages of current times. It was much after Baba Farid ji that Kabir, Tulsidas, Mira Bai, etc started using common language of people of India. Baba Sheikh Farid ji is where Punjab and Punjabyat started