

Chapter – 57

Baba Freed Ganj Shaker

(1173 - 1265 AD)

Baba Sahib's real name is Fariduddin Masood. His father's name is Jamaluddin Suleiman. He was born in Khotwal or Khoti-wal, near Multan. His initial education was held in Khotwal. Then he reached to Multan where he continued his further education. He was about 18 years of age that he met with Khawja Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki. He pledged allegiance with him. After that he wanted to go to Delhi with him. He also traveled with him for about three miles, but Bakhtiar Kaki told him that he should complete his essential education first and then come to Delhi. So, he followed his advice and studied abroad in Qandhar for five years and then he reached Delhi.

Within a few days, Hazrat Bakhtiar Kaki also enriched him with spiritual wealth. It was in Delhi that he received the privilege of meeting his grandfather mentor Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti. After the death of his mentor, Baba Farid first came to Hansi then Khotwal and finally settled in Oudhan. The name of same Oudhan was later changed to Pak Patan. According to the instructions of Moinuddin Chishti, he did the work for the expansion of Islam in the Western Punjab very nicely. Rather, by the training of such personalities as Sultan al-Mashaikh Nizamuddin Auliya and Sheikh Saber, he built the Chishtia Chain on a broad and stable scale. There are now two major branches of the Chishtia Chain that are called the Chain-Nizamia and the Chain-Sabria. In fact, he may be called the Second Founder of the Chishtia Chain.

Baba Fariduddin gained fame with the title of "Ganj-Shaker" (*treasure of sugar*). Actually, he was very fond of eating sugar. Many wonders are attributed by him but the greatest wonder was that he spend his whole life in worship and kept himself away from all world luxuries. He hated the court of kings and the then occurring quarrels of civil life. He lived in the jungle wearing torn old clothes. Most of the days he used to go for Fasting. Uncountable people followed him because of his piousness and dedication. He was very much respected by the Kings of that time. Large tribes became Muslim on his hands.

Baba Farid Ganj Shaker was an elderly man performing Itikaf most of the time. His one of the Itikafs was very famous which was performed in a well located at Chawla Paser, Multan. The local people still identify this place of Itikaf and give a lot of respect. During his stay in Lahore, Baba Sahib also made a hut on a hill near the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh and performed Itikaf over there. This mound is still called "Baba Farid's Mound".

Although Sheikh Sahib was a scholar but we do not find his regular writings. However, he had compiled the "Letters" and "Sayings" of his mentor Bakhtiar Kaki. His own collection of Sayings has been compiled by his Caliph Nizamuddin Auliya under the name "Maratib-ul-Quloob". The study of Baba Sahib was very extensive. It can be well deduced by reading his letters. Apart from that, from his sayings one can judge how deep his knowledge was. He got a lot of fame in his lifetime, not only in the Subcontinent but also in the countries distant apart. Ibn Battuta, a well known Moroccan Tourist, has mentioned Sheikh Sahib in his itinerary.

Baba Fariduddin died at the age of 95. Even today, his followers come to Pak Patan from different parts of the country to celebrate Urs (*annual ceremony*) on 5th of Muharram.