

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

SIKH SELF-DEFINITION AND THE BHAGAT BĀNĪ

By

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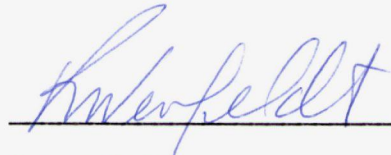
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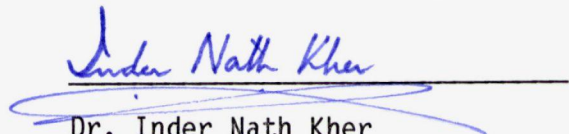
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Sikh Self-Definition and the Bhagat Bāṇī" submitted by Pashaura Singh in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the issue of Sikh self-definition in relation to the received tradition of the bhagat bānī included in the Guru Granth Sahib. There are a number of verses of the bhagats which have received direct comments from the Sikh Gurus. The author contends that the Gurus were deeply concerned to offer their self-understanding of true teaching, practice and community through responding to the verses of the poet-saints. Their comments were designed to emphasize agreement and disagreement, to clarify seemingly unintelligible passages of the bhagat bānī and to correct the views of the poet-saints which verge on the erroneous.

Chapter One begins with a brief introduction to the compilation of the Ādi Granth and discusses the traditional view of the place of the bhagat bānī in the Sikh scripture. It sets forth the purpose of this study to explore the concerns behind the Gurus' comments on the verses of the poet-saints. Chapter Two deals with the works of Shaikh Farīd, a poet representing the Sufi line of thought. The discussion of textual traditions attributed to Shaikh Farīd and his thought in the Guru Granth Sāhib sets the stage for the analysis of the Gurus' responses to the particular verses of the Sufi poet. The Gurus' comments on Shaikh Farīd's verses serve to highlight the points of agreement as well as disagreement between the Gurmat (Guru's view or doctrine) and the Sufi line of thought. Similarly, Chapter Three focuses on the works of Kabīr, a poet representing the Sant tradition of North India. The analysis of Gurus' responses to Kabīr's verses underlines the point that the Gurus were consciously marking the

boundaries between the Gurmat and the Sant tradition, in this case, the views held by Kabīr.

Chapter Four presents the conclusions of this study. It is concluded that the Gurus were deeply concerned to cultivate a particular Sikh view of spiritual life and community by way of editing and commentary on the received tradition of the bhagat bānī. It is also pointed out that true understanding of other traditions often entails not only acceptance, but also disagreement. As such, the process of integration of the bhagat bānī in the Guru Granth Sāhib was based upon the recognition of two major points: firstly, harmonization with Gurus' thought in broad outlines and secondly, highlighting of differences at essential points for the sake of Sikh self-definition.

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Finally, the dedication of this study to the loving memory of my teacher, Master Jaswant Singh Ji, is the least I could have done to pay my tribute to a noble person who was a great influence in shaping my career, and who was always enthusiastic about my academic progress.

To  
the loving memory of  
Master Jaswant Singh Ji

## PREFACE

In this study many terms and words from Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi and Punjabi languages have been used. Such terms as are common to Punjabi and other North Indian languages have almost all been transliterated in their Punjabi forms, that is, Śabad instead of Śabda, bānī instead of vānī, bhagat instead of bhakta, Salok instead of Śloka. The only exceptions to this rule are a few instances in which a Sanskrit or Hindi form has secured an established place in English usage, for example, bhakti, karma, raga, and sahaja. In almost all cases these terms are underlined only on their first occurrence, and are presented with the appropriate diacritical marks. However, the use of diacritics has not been retained in the case of the names of modern authors and quotations from other works. The most commonly used abbreviation in this study is GGS, which refers to the Guru Granth Sāhib.



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## CHAPTER 1

### BHAGAT BĀNĪ IN THE GURU GRANTH SĀHIB

#### Introduction

The sacred scripture of the Sikhs is commonly referred to as the Guru Granth Sāhib (GGS). Literally the word granth means "book". To this an honorific sāhib (Lord) is affixed to designate sanctity. The term guru (Enlightener) is normally prefixed as an expression of the Sikh belief in the Guruship of the scripture. The first canonical collection known as the Ādi Granth (original scripture) was compiled under the direct supervision of Guru Arjan (1563-1606), the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, who installed the sacred volume ceremonially in the inner sanctuary of the newly built Harimandir at Amritsar on August 16, 1604 CE.<sup>1</sup> The original manuscript bearing the date, "bhādon vadī ekam 1 sammat 1661 B.K./ August 1, 1604 CE" is still in existence lying at Kartārpur, in Jullunder district of the Punjab, in the possession of the Sodhī descendants of Dhīrmaḷ.<sup>2</sup> The distinctive feature of the Ādi Granth is that it contains the bhagat bānī, the utterances of fifteen medieval Indian poet-saints of sant, sūfī and bhakti origin,<sup>3</sup> along with the compositions of the Sikh Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the tenth and the last human Guru of Sikhism, prepared the final recension of the Ādi Granth by adding a collection of the works by the ninth Guru, Guru Teg Bahādur (1621-1675), to the original compilation. Before he passed away, Guru Gobind Singh terminated the personal line of Gurus and apotheosized the Ādi Granth as Guru eternal for the Sikhs when he "placed before it five pice and a coconut and bowed his head before it."<sup>4</sup> The Sikh scripture thus attained the

status and the final authority as Guru by a formal investiture at the hands of Guru Gobind Singh and it became the object of ultimate sacrosanctness for the Sikh community.

The preparation of an authoritative text was the most significant point in the process of institutionalization of Sikhism authenticating the faith and the way of life prescribed by the Gurus. With the compilation of the Ādi Granth, the Sikhs became the people of the book, in much the same way as Muslims, Christians and Jews are people of the book. It was the culmination of the process started by Guru Nānak (1469-1539), the founder of Sikhism, who had the vision to preserve his own bānī, the inspired Word, by committing it to memory in the first place and then possibly to writing during his lifetime. In his own hymns, Guru Nānak regards himself as God's mouthpiece and declares: "As the Lord sends the Word so do I deliver it, O' Lalo!"<sup>5</sup> Evidently such a deep consciousness of divine inspiration must have created an urgency to preserve the Guru's utterances (gurbānī) through oral as well as written traditions. The community of disciples (Sikhs) that first grew around him at Kartārpur in the Punjab in the early years of the sixteenth century had already started using his compositions in devotional singing (kīrtan) as a part of congregational worship.<sup>6</sup> It was quite natural for the first Sikhs to start memorising the Guru's hymns to express their faith by showing their allegiance to the revealed message of their Guru. As such, there came into being an oral tradition of transmitting the poetic compositions of the Guru which can be seen to be current among the Sikhs even today.<sup>7</sup>

However, there are some references in the traditional sources which point in the direction of the existence of a written tradition as

well during Guru Nānak's lifetime. Bhāī Gurdās (1558-1637), who was the nephew of Guru Amardās and compiler of the Ādi Granth under the direction of Guru Arjan, has recorded in his Vār (1, 32) that Guru Nānak used to carry a book (kitāb) of his own compositions with him on his missionary tours.<sup>8</sup> Although the manuscript of this collection is no longer extant, its mention by Bhāī Gurdās may indicate that he accepted a tradition that Guru Nānak was the first person to begin a written collection of his own works with the intention of perserving them in their original form. It is tempting to assume that he may also have collected some of the works by poet-saints when he visited the places associated with their memory. The evidence of the GGS reveals that Guru Nānak definitely had access to the compositions of Shaikh Farīd.<sup>9</sup>

A careful analysis of some of the lengthy poetical compositions of Guru Nānak suggests that he may have written them down in the first place in different parts of India and possibly abroad during his travels when he encountered different audiences and then revised them in the days of the Kartārpur period. For instance, his composition in the form of an acrostic containing the verses to match with the letters of the Gurmukhi (from the mouth of the Guru) alphabet in the GGS on page 432 is entitled Pattī Likhī, that is -- "thus was the tablet written" -- which may indicate that Guru Nānak may have written it down in his own hand. In this context, Cole remarks that "although the bani of Guru Nanak was sometimes spontaneous there is enough evidence in the Japji and the Siddha Gosht to indicate that he was capable of carefully planned and probably frequently revised composition."<sup>10</sup> Thus there are strong indications that the written tradition of the bānī must have

begun during the Kartārpur period when Guru Nānak consolidated the growing Sikh community by providing it with a collection of hymns and a leader designate. According to the Purātan Janam-sākhī, Guru Nānak bequeathed his bāñī recorded in a pothī (missal) to his successor when he formally bestowed the spiritual throne upon him.<sup>11</sup>

Guru Aṅgad composed only sixty-two verses of the bāñī during his period of Guruship (1539-1552). These are remarkably identical in style and thought with the hymns of Guru Nānak to such an extent that one can easily see that he was interpreting the deeper meaning of the teachings of his predecessor to his contemporary audience which consisted mainly of the disciples who had heard the living voice of Guru Nānak. Guru Aṅgad refers to the utterances of the Guru as amrit-bāñī (Nectar Word) which reveals the essence of Reality.<sup>12</sup> Tradition claims that he evolved the Gurmukhi script under the guidance of Guru Nānak for recording the compilation of the bāñī.<sup>13</sup>

By the time of the long-lived third Guru, Guru Amardās (1479-1574), there was a growing demand for the copies of the bāñī as the community was expanding far and wide throughout India. Bhāñī Gurdās even gives the names of the prominent Sikhs of the third Guru with their individual contribution for the cause of Sikhism and mentions those who made copies of Gurbāñī for the distribution among the Sikhs.<sup>14</sup> Soon there arose schismatic groups who were circulating spurious hymns composed under the name of Nānak ". . . either for the purpose of promoting their claims to be the true Sikhs or to bring the Guru into disrepute."<sup>15</sup> The following verse of Anandu (Bliss) composed by Guru Amardās gives the clear indication of the warnings against apostasy and false teachings:

Save for the True Guru's, all other Word is False:  
 Yea, False is the word that is not the True Guru's.  
 False are the utterers, false the hearers, false  
 the reciters.  
 They Utter the Lord's Name, but its meaning sinks  
 not in their Souls.  
 Their mind is lured away by Māyā, though  
 parrot-like, they utter the Lord's Name.  
 Says Nanak: "Without the True Guru's, all other  
 Word is false". 16  
 (GGS, M. III, Rāmakaḷī Anandu 24, p. 920)

In response to the serious threat of the spurious hymns becoming popular among the Sikhs and to provide the authentic versions of the bāṇī to the community Guru Amardās made the decision to collect the sacred works of his own composition and of the previous Gurus, together with the compositions of some of the bhagats. He prepared two volumes, the so-called Goindvāl pothīs, which are still extant with the descendents of the third Guru.<sup>17</sup> These were written during the period 1570-1572 CE by Bābā Sahansrām, son of Bābā Mohan and grandson of Guru Amardās.<sup>18</sup> The two-volume collection consists of 300 and 224 leaves respectively, making a total of 1048 pages, all written in one hand, except two hymns, presumably in Guru Rāmdās's hand, prior to his assumption of Guruship as indicated by the marginal note on page 94 of Volume II, "gulām mastān Jeth Chand", Jeth Chand being Guru Rāmadās's original name.<sup>19</sup> These pothīs contain the works by Guru Nānak, Guru Angad and Guru Amardās himself, as well as the hymns of Kabīr, Nāmdev, Trilochan, Saiṇ, Ravidās, Jaidev, Rāmānand and finally Shaikh Farīd.<sup>20</sup> However, it should be stated that these two volumes do not contain all the compositions of Guru Nānak. Some of the hymns of the second and the third Gurus are missing as well as are some of the compositions of the poet-saints.<sup>21</sup>

Although the Goindvāl pothīs provided a principal source for formulating the scripture, there were other collections of Gurbānī preserved by devoted Sikhs, which must have been available to Guru Arjan for inclusion in the Ādi Granth. There is evidence from the content-index of the original Kartārpur manuscript of the Ādi Granth where it is stated, "japu Guru Rāmdās jīu kiān dasakhatān kā nakalu",<sup>22</sup> "the text of the introductory Japu (of Guru Nanak) was copied from a manuscript written in Guru Rāmdās's own hand", which may well indicate that the fourth Guru also used to make copies of the collections of Gurbānī. During his brief ministry of seven years (1574-1581), Guru Rāmdās contributed a large body of sacred verse and expanded the range of the rāgas<sup>23</sup> (Indian musical measures) of Gurbānī adding as many as eleven to the existing system of nineteen rāgas in which Guru Nānak's hymns were supposed to be sung and according to which they were supposed to be arranged.

According to tradition, Guru Arjan had before him a vast amount of material gathered from the best available manuscripts when he started codifying the compositions of the Gurus and those of the poet-saints into an authorized volume. The real intention behind his decision was to create a scripture as a TEXTUS RECEPTUS for the Sikh community. According to an old text Mahimā Prakāś, Guru Arjan set to work with the announcement: "As the Panth (community) has been revealed unto the world, so there must be the Granth (Book), too."<sup>24</sup> By preparing a canonical text, he also wished to affix a seal on the sacred Word to preserve it for posterity and to frustrate thereby the attempts of the schismatic groups who were circulating spurious hymns for sectarian ends. Guru Arjan called Bhāī Gurdās to act as a scribe in the making

of the scripture.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, he had the help of Bhāī Buddhā (1506-1631), a surviving member of the Kartārpur community and therefore a valuable link with the living voice of Guru Nānak. Bhāī Buddhā's personal witness to the authenticity of the bānī must have played an important role to discriminate between genuine and apocryphal writings. Besides the compositions of the four preceding Gurus, Guru Arjan included his own compositions, almost equal in number to those contained in the Goindvāl pothīs. He also dropped seven hymns of Kabīr and two of Nāmdev available in the Goindvāl pothīs.<sup>26</sup> In the case of the bānī of Nāmdev, Guru Arjan seems to have made some alterations to do a recasting of certain hymns to fit them in the context of the teachings of the Gurus and to simplify the language of others originally composed in the Marāṭhī dialect.<sup>27</sup>

It is quite evident from the systematic arrangement of the scripture that Guru Arjan allowed his own genius to work behind the whole operation of editing and arranging the selected material in thirty different rāgas, or musical patterns, providing a definite structure for various poetic forms. By giving the scripture its distinctive form Guru Arjan seems to have indicated that faith should produce a balanced outlook, tempering both happiness and sadness. For instance, between pages 917 and 924 of the GGS are found both the Anandu, Guru Amardas's hymn of joy, and the Sadu, Sunder's dirge on that Guru's death. Another example is the inclusion of the Ghorīān, songs sung by ladies at wedding parties, and the Alāhanīān, laments put on adjacent pages under Rāgu Vadahansu.<sup>28</sup>

It should be emphasized that all the compositions were transcribed in the Gurmukhī script in a carefully laid out order. Cole and Sambhi



maintain that the use of a uniform script by Guru Arjan despite the variety of languages and dialects may have been one way of asserting catholicity.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the Gurmukhi script was used to assert the distinctive self-identity of the Sikh scripture. The works by the Gurus in the order of their succession were followed by those of the poet-saints in a proper sequence. Harbans Singh writes:

A genius unique in spiritual insight and not unconcerned with methodological design had created a scripture with an exalted mystical tone and a high degree of organization. It was large in size -- nearly 7,000 hymns -- containing compositions of the first five Gurus and fifteen saints of different faiths and castes, including the Muslim Sufi, Shaikh Farid, Ravidas, a shoemaker, and Sain, a barber. 30

The poet-saints whose verses are included in the scripture came from different religious traditions between the 12th and 16th centuries.

The following is the list of the contributors of the bhagat bānī in the Ādi Granth and the number of their hymns as given in the Guru Granth Ratanāvalī:<sup>31</sup>

1	Shaikh Farīd	116
2	Jaidev	2
3	Trilochan	4
4	Nāmdev	61
5	Sadhanā	1
6	Beṇī	3
7	Rāmānand	1
8	Kabīr	541
9	Ravidās	40
10	Pīpā	1
11	Sain	1

12	Dhannā	3
13	Bhīkhan	2
14	Parmānand	1
15	Sūrdās	1 (of one hymn only one line in <u>Rāg Sarang</u> )

Evidently the poet-saints were apotheosized when their hymns were included in the scripture along with the compositions of the Gurus. Their compositions have always been the part of Sikh worship in the Gurdwārās (the door or house of the Guru).

#### The Place of the Bhagat Bānī in the GGS

Traditionally, it has been maintained by both adherents and scholars that the compositions of medieval poet-saints were included in the GGS on the basis of ideological identity with the teachings of the Gurus. Harbans Singh holds that Guru Arjan "applied rigorous standards and took only such of the hymns of the saints as were in accord with the Gurus' in their tone and meaning."<sup>32</sup> It is recorded in the traditional sources that when some contemporary poet-saints -- Kāhnā, Chhajū, Shāh Hussain and Pīlo -- approached Guru Arjan for inclusion of their own compositions in the scripture, they were turned down because their hymns were found to be lacking in the universal vision, humility and deep humanitarianism, that was characteristic of the Gurus' teaching.<sup>33</sup> This traditional account of the rejection of the verses of the four poet-saints provided a sufficient reason for many scholars of Sikhism to hold that the selection of the bhagat bānī was made on the principle of conformity with the Sikh teaching. For instance, McLeod writes about the inclusion of the bhagat bānī in the GGS as follows:

This comprises the works of various religious poets (notably Kabir, Namdev, and Ravidas) which were evidently included in the Adi Granth because the beliefs which they express correspond to those of the Gurus. 34

Nirbhai Singh discusses the issue at length and gives three main arguments to explain the inclusion of the bhagat bāṇī in the GGS. First, the hymns of the bhagats bear testimony to their highly critical attitude towards brahminical rituals. Since the Sikh theology also stood against much of the brahminism of the day, it was natural for the canonizer to incorporate in the scripture some of the representative bāṇīs of the bhagats of the time. Second, since the bhagat bāṇī was being used by different groups for their sectarian ends, in order to preserve the bhagat bāṇī in its original form it was edited and included in the scripture. Third, the Sikh scripture includes the compositions of those bhagats who evolved their philosophy of spiritual development on the basis of their personal mystic experience.<sup>35</sup>

The first two arguments mentioned above acquire some validity when emphasis is placed upon the fact that at least six poet-saints represented in the GGS belonged to the śūdra caste. Besides the Julāhā (weaver) Kabīr, there was Nāmdev the cotton printer, Saiṇ the barber, Sadhanā a butcher, Dhannā the Jaṭ (peasant) from Rājputānā, and Ravidās the cobbler. All these refuted the claims of brahminical orthodoxy. That is why they were generally scorned by the learned and high-born and their compositions were ignored as being of no significance. Even a man like Tulsīdās, a brahmin born in CE 1543 and a contemporary of the Sikh Gurus, who was a vehement defender of the smarta tradition (the social and religious order taught in the Dharmaśāstras and the Purāṇas and based on the Vedas), writes of these saints and their

compositions as follows:

In this dark age with sakhis, shabads and dohas, with tales and stories, these devotees expound devotion, while scorning the Veda and Puranas. 36  
(Dohavali, 554)

Besides the saints mentioned above, Tulsīdās may have intended to include Guru Nānak and his successors as well because they also composed the three types of verses to which he referred. Tulsīdās considered all of them a serious threat to conventional Hinduism and accused them as follows: "they leave the path of devotion to Hari and dream up many new paths".<sup>37</sup> In the wake of such criticism, it is quite possible that the bhagat bāṇī was not recognized by the learned class of that age and that it was consequently often presented in inflated and divergent versions. This may have helped to prompt the urge to canonize the bhagat bāṇī.

However, it should be emphasized that there are also four brahmin saints -- Jaidev from Bengal, the celebrated Rāmānand, Parmānand and Sūrdās -- whose verses are incorporated in the GGS. Although a token representation is given to them, it is sufficient to justify the Sikh contention that the selection of the bhagat bāṇī was not made on the basis of any caste considerations. In Sikhism, the caste system is roundly condemned as an agent of institutionalized discrimination. Guru Nānak proclaims: "Recognize the Lord's light within all and inquire not one's caste as there is no caste in the next world."<sup>38</sup> The Guru clearly implies here that it is the Lord's light (jot) symbolizing spiritual enlightenment, not the caste (jāti), which gives worth to human beings. Moreover, the works by two Sufi mystics, Shaikh Farīd and Bhīkhan, are also included in the scripture. The internal evidence of the GGS clearly indicates that the Gurus recognized the inspired

nature of the bhagat bāṇī regardless of the caste and religion of the poet-saints included in the scripture. For instance, Guru Amardās proclaims:

Nāmā (Nāmdev) was a cotton printer and Kabīr a weaver, Yet from the Perfect Guru, they obtained salvation. Those enlightened about God realize the holy Word (Śabad); their ego and caste stigma are shed; Gods and men chant their words (bāṇī) -- None can efface them, brother. (GGS, M. III. Sirī Rāgu 22, p. 67)

To a point Guru Amardās seems to have acknowledged the fact that the poet-saints also had the experience of the divine Truth which they proclaimed in verbal form (Śabad or Word) in their compositions. In this context, Cole and Sambhi remark that "the principle of revelation is nowhere better demonstrated than by the inclusion of the Bhagat bani, as the non-Sikh material is called, in the Adi Granth".<sup>39</sup>

It may be suggested that by including the bhagat bāṇī in the scripture the Gurus may have intended in the first place to preserve the authentic record of what had been revealed to the medieval poet-saints. Perhaps one of the most significant reasons for the inclusion of the bhagats in the GGS is the fact that all of them seem to have developed their spiritual life by following the discipline of Nām-simaran, the meditation on the divine Name.<sup>40</sup> The Gurus repeatedly inspire their own audience with the example of the bhagats achieving God-realization through the transforming power of the divine Name.<sup>41</sup> Another reason for the inclusion of the bhagats may be that their beliefs are based on ethical monotheism. Cole elaborates the points of agreement as follows:

The features common to all of them are their belief in the one God who is ultimately beyond physical form and sectarian garb, their emphasis upon the

inwardness of true religiosity and their importance in the history of north Indian piety. All the main bhagats are represented. The most obvious reason for their inclusion is a wish to commend the Sikh Panth as widely as possible by demonstrating its catholicity. 42

Here Cole appears to be claiming that it was the intention of the Gurus to commend the Sikh Panth as widely as possible by including the bhagats in the GGS, and elsewhere he explicitly states that the Gurus had wished to bring together into the fold of Sikhism the disparate followers of the poet-saints.<sup>43</sup> This would appear to be too simplistic a view.

To a point it is true that the hymns of the poet-saints are included in the GGS because of a basic agreement with the beliefs of the Gurus. It is also true that Guru Arjan edited the bhagat material before incorporating it in the scripture and seemingly chose only those aspects of the bhagat bāṇī that were in basic agreement with the Sikh teachings. But these assertions may not tell the whole story. They tend to underscore the traditional view of absolute identity between the ideology of the bhagats and the Sikh Gurus. This is too simplistic a view of what may have been a complex phenomenon. There are, for example, some verses of the poet-saints included in the GGS which are juxtaposed with the comments made on those verses by the Gurus. The aim of this study is to explore in more detail the concerns behind the Gurus' comments on the verses of the poet-saints.

It will be my contention that the comments on the verses of the poet-saints are not always made because of agreement between the Gurus and the bhagats, but are sometimes made to register clear disagreement with the views of the bhagats. In both instances, that is, instances of agreement and disagreement, the comments of the Gurus serve to

highlight the self-understanding of the developing Sikh community. I will try to show that the comments of the Gurus serve to do three things:

1. To highlight the Gurus' self-understanding of particular themes contained in the verses of the poet-saints and to promote thereby a process of self-definition for the Sikh community. For instance, the Gurus provide the ideals of moderate living and disciplined worldliness for the Sikh community in their comments on the verses of Shaikh Farīd which emphasize the ideals of self-torture and asceticism.
2. To provide more clarity and understanding to the obscure texts of the bhagats so that they become intelligible. The aim here is to render the whole of the bhagat bāṇī coherent and its message meaningful to the Gurus' contemporary audience.
3. To voice emphatically the Gurus' differences from the vision of the bhagats and to correct views of the poet-saints which verge on the erroneous. For instance, the Gurus differ from the poet-saints on the issue of the primacy of divine grace over personal effort in the spiritual progress. The Sikh view of divine grace requires that one must have the belief that the whole of one's spiritual progress is a matter of divine grace, not of one's efforts alone. In their comments on the verses of the poet-saints, the Gurus emphasize that God's gifts are not ultimately dependent upon the merit of the individual. Ultimately divine grace is fundamental and is a mystery.

If my contentions are correct, this will necessitate a change in the traditional view that selection of the bhagat bāṇī was made only on the

basis of ideological identity with the teachings of the Gurus. There is identity as well as difference. As such, the process of integration of the bhagat bānī in the GGS was based upon the recognition of two major points: firstly, harmonization with the Gurus' thought in broad outlines and secondly, highlighting of differences at essential points for the sake of Sikh self-definition.

There are only four poet-saints namely, Shaikh Farīd, Kabīr, Dhannā and Sūrdās, whose verses have received direct comments from the Sikh Gurus. The present study however will be limited to an examination of the works of Shaikh Farīd and Kabīr because they have received the maximum number of comments on their verses from the Gurus. The other two bhagats, Dhannā and Sūrdās, have three hymns and a single line attributed to them respectively in the GGS, and they have received only one comment each from Guru Arjan. Moreover, the verses of Shaikh Farīd and Kabīr were current among the masses all over the Punjab, attracting the special attention of the Gurus for comment on what constitutes true religious belief and practice. The procedure adopted in this study will be as follows: first, a brief biographical sketch of each poet-saint will be given; second, the issues related to the textual traditions attributed to the poet-saint will be discussed; third, the ideology of each poet-saint as it emerges in the GGS will be examined; and lastly, an analysis of the Gurus' responses to particular verses of the poet-saint will be given. This pattern will be followed in the discussion of the second and third chapters dealing with the bānīs of Shaikh Farīd and Kabīr respectively. The concluding chapter will sum up the discussion on the issue of Sikh self-definition in relation to the bhagat bānī within the GGS.



### Notes to Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>Harbans Singh, "Installation of Holy Granth Sahib in the Harimandir at Amritsar" in Fauja Singh, ed., The City of Amritsar (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1977), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Bhai Jodh Singh, Sirī Kartārpurī Bīr de Darsān (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>The word sant derives from sat, and thus designates one who knows truth or comprehends reality. It came to be applied to a particular devotional tradition of North India, which was radically different from the main bhakti tradition. For more detail of Sant ideas see the third chapter of this study. For a general introduction to the literature of Sant, Sufi, and bhakti origin, see Ronald Stuart McGregor, "Hindi Literature from its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century", in Jan Gonda, ed., A History of Indian Literature, Vol. VIII (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), pp. 10-132. For Sant ideas, see P. D. Barthwal, Traditions of Indian Mysticism based on Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1978).

<sup>4</sup>Harbans Singh, "The Guru Granth Sahib: Guru eternal for the Sikhs" in The Sikh Courier, Vol. 12, No. 14 (London: The Sikh Cultural Society of Great Britain, 1985), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>GGS, M. I, Tilāṅg 5, p. 722. The reference here means that the passage is from the hymn numbering 5, in measure Tilāṅg, by Guru Nānak, on page 722 of the Guru Granth Sahib. M. I stands for Mahalla (meaning body) first, which refers to the first Guru. In the GGS, the hymns by Guru Aṅgad, Guru Amardās, Guru Rāmdās, Guru Arjan and Guru Teg Bahādur are indicated by Mahallas 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9, respectively. All the Gurus use the name of "Nānak" in their compositions.

<sup>6</sup>Bhāī Gurdās, Vār (1, 38): "In Kartarpur he (Baba Nanak) made his home, . . . The words which he spoke brought light to his people, driving afar the darkness of untruth. Wisdom abounded in all that he uttered, joy beyond telling reigned endlessly supreme. Sodar and Arati were sung every evening, and Japji recited in the early morning hour. . . ." Cited in W. H. McLeod, Textual Sources for the study of Sikhism (Manchester: University Press, 1984), p. 65.

<sup>7</sup>The contribution of modern research in the area of oral tradition has now firmly established that scripture can be transmitted with relatively little change provided that certain conventions are observed. These include specific memory training, mnemonic devices, control over the recital by certain groups or members of the audience, and a normal preference for poetry rather than prose. See W. H. McLeod, Early Sikh Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 106.

<sup>8</sup>Bhāī Gurdās, Vār (1, 32): "Baba (Nanak) then proceeded to Mecca, decked in blue garments. He carried a staff in his hand, a book under arm, a waterpot and a prayer carpet for the call to prayer. . . ."

<sup>9</sup>Sahib Singh, Ādi Bir Bāre (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1977), pp. 93-100.

<sup>10</sup>W. Owen Cole, Sikhism and its Indian context 1469-1708 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), p. 224.

<sup>11</sup>Bhai Vir Singh, ed., Purātan Janam-sākhī (Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1971), p. 207.

<sup>12</sup>GGs, M. II, Sāraṅg Kī-Vār, 1 (16), p. 1243.

<sup>13</sup>On the margin of page 216 of Volume II of the original manuscript of the Goindvāl pothīs is written: "Guru Aṅgad gurmukhī akhar banāe bābe de agge śābad bhet kītā", "Guru Aṅgad formulated the Gurmukhī script and presented the collection of hymns to the holy Bābā (Guru Nānak)." The research on the origin and development of Gurmukhī script has shown that it was developed from various scripts like Sārdā, Tākārī or Laṇḍe, Bhaṭṭākṣarī and Siddha-mātrikā. Some of the Gurmukhī letters were used in rudimentary form in the north-western regions of the Punjab during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries of common era. However, the Gurmukhī script as in its present form was almost non-existent before Guru Nānak. It is suggested that Guru Nānak's composition Paṭṭī Likhī was the basis of the Gurmukhī alphabet. A comparative analysis of the Goindvāl pothīs and the Kartārpur manuscript of the Ādi Granth has revealed that before Guru Arjan the forms of the Gurmukhī letters were not uniform. Guru Arjan standardized the Gurmukhī script when he prepared the scripture. See Nirbhai Singh, Bhagata Nāmadeva in the Guru Grantha (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1981), pp. 130-4. Also see G. B. Singh, Gurmukhī Lipī dā Janam te Vikās (Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972), p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>Bhāī Gurdās, Vār (11, 16).

<sup>15</sup>W. Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 47.

<sup>16</sup>Gopal Singh, trans., Sri Guru-Granth Sahib, Vol. 3 (Chandigarh: World Sikh University Press, 1978), p. 877.

<sup>17</sup>One of the two pothīs is preserved with Bava Bhagat Singh Bhalla of Patiala. The second one is in the possession of a collateral family living in the village of Darapu, in Hoshiarpur district of the Punjab, and its photostat copy is lying with Punjabi University, Patiala. See Harbans Singh, The Guru Granth Sahib, p. 2. Also see Nirbhai Singh, op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>18</sup>Gurbachan Singh Talib, trans., Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Vol. 1 (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1984), p. XXIV.

<sup>19</sup>Jodh Singh, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>20</sup>Talib, op. cit., p. XXV.

<sup>21</sup>Nirbhai Singh has examined these volumes carefully and he makes the following observation: "After physical verification of these, we find that Vārān and many other Śābadas are not in the two available Pothīs. For example, some Śābadas of Bābā Farīd are contained in one of these Pothīs. And the internal evidence of the Scripture reveals that some Śābadas of Guru Amardāsa were composed in reaction to Bābā Farīd's Śābadas and Salokas. It may, thus, be easily inferred that there were some more Pothīs which might have not been preserved by the descendants of Guru Amardāsa." See Nirbhai Singh, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>22</sup>Jodh Singh, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>23</sup>Rāga (literally, "harmony"): melodic organization. Any given rāga specifies particular notes to be used against the drone. Tradition and long usage have endowed each rāga with its own spiritual significance. Ragas are composed to suit various moods. Some are appropriate to morning, others to evening, some to joy, others to grief. Some rāgas relate to different seasons. See W. H. McLeod, The Evolution of the Sikh Community (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 71, note 16. Also see Cole and Sambhi, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>24</sup>Harbans Singh, Installation of Holy Granth Sahib, p. 44.

<sup>25</sup>Kesar Singh Chhibbar, "Bansāvalīnāmā Dasān Pataśahīān Kā", in Parkh, Vol. II (Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972), p. 51.

<sup>26</sup>Jodh Singh, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>27</sup>Nirbhai Singh, op. cit., pp. 190-191.

<sup>28</sup>GGS, Rāgu Vadhansu, pp. 571-581. Also see Cole and Sambhi, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>29</sup>Cole and Sambhi, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>30</sup>Harbans Singh, The Heritage of the Sikhs (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1983), p. 45.

<sup>31</sup>Taran Singh, ed., Guru Granth Ratanāvalī (Patiala: Punjabi University), p. 14.

<sup>32</sup>Harbans Singh, Guru Nanak and origins of Sikh Faith (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1969), p. 14.

<sup>33</sup>Bhai Vir Singh, ed., Sikhān Dī Bhagat Mālā (Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1979), pp. 133-134. The work is attributed to Bhai Mani Singh, a contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh. Also see Talib, op. cit., p. XXVI.

<sup>34</sup>McLeod, Sources, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup>Nirbhai Singh, op. cit., pp. 128-190.

<sup>36</sup>Cited in Cole, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>38</sup>GGS, M. I, Āsā 3, p. 349.

<sup>39</sup>Cole and Sambhi, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>40</sup>Nam Simaran: "rememberance of the divine Name". "At one level this involves the practice of Nam Japan, or 'repeating the Name' a long-established convention whereby merit is acquired by devoutly repeating a sacred word or mantra. This helps the devotee to internalise the meaning of whatever he may be uttering and in this sense the practice is explicitly enjoined by the Gurus. The Gurus also insist that the discipline must be practised in a corporate sense, with devotees gathering as a congregation (satsang) to sing hymns of praise (kirtan). A third level which is also required of the loyal disciple is meditation. God as expressed in the name is to be 'remembered' not merely in the repeating of auspicious words or the singing of inspired hymns but also in deep contemplation of the divine mystery of the Name. All three practices constitute legitimate and necessary forms of Nam Simaran." Cited in McLeod, Sources, p. 40.

<sup>41</sup>GGS, M. III, Sirī Rāgu 22, p. 67; M. IV, Sūhī 8, p. 733; and also see M. V, Gūjarī 10, p. 498; Basant Dutukīān 1, p. 1192; Āsā 2, pp. 487-488.

<sup>42</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>43</sup>W. Owen Cole, The Guru in Sikhism (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982), p. 21.

## CHAPTER 2

BĀNĪ SHAIKH FARĪD JĪ KĪBiographical Sketch

Shaikh Farīd-u'd-dīn Masūd Ganj-i-shakar, popularly known as Shaikh Farīd or Bābā Farīd, is one of the earliest Sufis who belonged to the land of the Punjab. Much of the material concerning his life comes from hagiography. According to the Siyār-u'l-Auliya, one of the earliest such documents, written in CE 1351-1388, Shaikh Farīd was born in 569 A.H./1173 CE<sup>1</sup> at Khotwāl in the district of Multān. It is said that his grandfather, Qādī Shuaib, who belonged to a ruling house of Kabul, migrated to the Punjab in the middle of the twelfth century under the stress of the Ghuzz invasions. After a short stay at Lahore and Kasūr, the family of Qādī Shuaib settled down at Khotwāl, where he was appointed the Qādī (Muslim Jurist) by the Sultān, the Ghaznawid ruler of Lahore.<sup>2</sup> One of Shuaib's three sons, named Jamāl-u'd-dīn Sulaiamān, was raised at Khotwāl where Lehandī (western) Punjabi was the spoken language of the people. He married a Punjabi girl,<sup>3</sup> Qarsūm Bībī, the daughter of Shaikh Wajīh-u'd-dīn Khajendī of Khotwāl. Shaikh Farīd was the second of the three sons born to them.

Nizami has given a genealogical table which traces the descent of Bābā Farīd from Caliph Umar, which indicates that he belonged to the Sunni tradition of Islam.<sup>4</sup> He is believed to have been greatly influenced by his mother, an exceedingly pious woman, who prayed at lengthy vigils and who ". . . kindled that spark of divine love in him which dominated his entire being, and molded his thought and action."<sup>5</sup> Shaikh Farīd received his early education in the study of the Qur'ān at

Khotwāl and then proceeded to Multān, a famous centre of Muslim learning and piety, to undertake further studies in Islamic jurisprudence. There is a tradition that Shaikh Farīd had memorized the entire text of the Qur'ān and used to recite it once in twenty-four hours.<sup>6</sup> It is said that while in Multān he came in contact with a visiting Muslim saint, Khwājā Qutb-u'd-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī, the spiritual successor (khalīfā) of Shaikh Muin-u'd-dīn Chistī who established the Chistīya order of Sufism in India. In due course Shaikh Farīd became his disciple and got himself initiated into the Chistīya order.

Tradition has recorded that Shaikh Farīd performed extremely difficult ascetic practices as a part of his mystical discipline. Under the guidance of his master, he is said to have gone through the "chillāh-i-makūs", hanging upside down in a well and performing the prescribed prayers and recollections for forty nights.<sup>7</sup> Nizami has cited Shattari's statement recorded in the Gulzār-i-Abrār as follows:

All the Shaikhs of India are unanimous in declaring that no saint has excelled Ganj-i-Shakar in his devotions and penitences. 8

Baba Farīd's whole life is depicted in traditional sources as one long story of prayers, vigils and fasts. It is said that his constant fasting was miraculously rewarded -- even pebbles turned into sugar when he swallowed them, hence his surname Ganj-i-shakar, "sugar treasure."<sup>9</sup> Whether this charming legend is true or not, it shows the extreme importance Farīd placed on frequent fasting as indispensable for spiritual progress. Talib states that Bābā Farīd was called Ganj-i-shakar because he received the blessing from his master, who praised the sweetness of his disposition and remarked: "Thou shalt be sweet like sugar."<sup>10</sup>

After the death of his master Khwājā Qutb-u'd-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī in CE 1235, Shaikh Farīd became the head of the Chistīya order. He made the unique contribution of giving an "all-India status to the Chistīya order and disseminated its ideology far and wide."<sup>11</sup> Soon it turned into a powerful movement for the Islamization of the masses. It is generally assumed that the Chistīya order excelled the other Sufi orders, such as the Qādirīya, the Suhrawardīya and the Naqshbandīya, in popularity and influence in India. One of the main reasons for its success seems to be the fact that Shaikh Farīd used the local dialect, Multānī Punjabi or Lehandī, to reach the masses with his preaching. The two main languages of Islam, the Arabic of the Qur'ān and the highly sophisticated Persian of the literati and officials, were unknown to the non-elite, who thus were excluded from higher religious instruction.<sup>12</sup>

Shaikh Farīd settled on the river Sutlej at Ajodhān, where he established his khānqāh, the centre of Sufi fraternity, to propagate his mission. There he remained from about CE 1236 until his death on October 17, 1265 CE.<sup>13</sup> His home has been known, ever since, as Pākpaṭṭan, "the ferry of the pure". A number of Punjabi tribes there still claim to have been converted to Islam at the hands of Bābā Farīd.<sup>14</sup>

Schimmel states that "Farīd-u'd-dīn Ganj-i-shakar of Pākpaṭṭan is credited with having used a kind of Old Punjabi for his mystical songs."<sup>15</sup> These songs were intended to be recited or sung as a part of religious music in the Sufi worship. They influenced the population, particularly the women, who used to sing these simple verses while doing their daily work.<sup>16</sup> Thus Shaikh Farīd's poetic compositions in

the local dialect, the Multānī Punjabi, were transmitted orally to successive generations and these were written down, if at all, only at a very late stage. When Guru Nānak visited Pākpaṭṭan on his missionary tours he secured these compositions from Shaikh Ibrahim<sup>17</sup> (died in CE 1552), who was twelfth in descent from Shaikh Farīd. That Guru Nānak had in his possession works of Shaikh Farīd is quite evident from the fact that he made comments on some of his verses. The inclusion of Shaikh Farīd's works in the GGS does underline the high spiritual reputation and attainment that the Sufi poet may have enjoyed already in his own lifetime.

### Textual Traditions

The GGS collection of the bānī attributed to Shaikh Farīd includes four Śabads<sup>18</sup> -- two in the Āsā Rāgu with the heading "Āsā Shaikh Farīd jīu kī bānī", "Shaikh Farīd's utterances in the measure Āsā" (GGS, p. 488) and two in the Sūhī Rāgu under the title of "Rāgu Sūhī bānī Shaikh Farīd jī kī", "Shaikh Farīd's utterances in the measure Sūhī" (GGS, p. 794) -- and one hundred and twelve Saloks<sup>19</sup> gathered together in one long undifferentiated list in the epilogue of the GGS which follows the rāga section under the title of "Salok Shaikh Farīd ke", "Shaikh Farīd's couplets or stanzas" (GGS, pp. 1377-1384). To these, Guru Arjan has added eighteen Saloks of the Sikh Gurus in different places commenting on the ideas of Shaikh Farīd.

Although Shaikh Farīd is said to have composed verses in Arabic, Persian and in some local dialects which are found in the Sufi literature, he is generally known as the foremost of the Punjabi Sufi poets.<sup>20</sup> His compositions in the GGS are apparently the first recorded



versions available in the Punjabi language. The authorship of these works is, however, not without controversy. Macauliffe, for example, argues that since Guru Nānak was born in CE 1469 he could not have met the original Farīd. He also accepts the tradition that the Guru had two interviews with Shaikh Brahm (Ibrahim) at Pākpaṭṭan. Macauliffe then makes the following assertion without explication:

It is certain that it was Shaikh Brahm who composed the Saloks and hymns bearing the name of Farīd in the Granth Sāhib, though he used the name of the founder of his spiritual line as his poetical NOM DE PLUME. 21

Macauliffe's "certainty" is based on nothing but speculation. His main argument seems to be that Shaikh Ibrahim was the real author of the GGS verses because he met with Guru Nānak at Pākpaṭṭan. In other words, since Shaikh Farīd was not a contemporary of Guru Nānak he could not be the author of the verses recorded in the GGS. But his argument becomes questionable in light of the fact that Jaidev, Trilochan, Nāmdev, Rāmānand, Kabīr and a few other poet-saints too were not contemporaries of Guru Nānak and yet their verses have been included in the GGS. Further, how could Shaikh Ibrahim have wished to have his own compositions passed off as those of Shaikh Farīd? There is no such reference to using the poetical NOM DE PLUME of the spiritual ancestor in the entire literary tradition of the Punjabi Sufi poetry.<sup>22</sup> Macauliffe seems to have borrowed the idea of the "poetical NOM DE PLUME" from the writings of the Sikh Gurus and then made the assertion based on rough guess that the same would be true in the case of the Sufi tradition. However, Nizami has provided us with the list of seven spiritual successors (khalīfās) of Shaikh Farīd and twenty-five lineal representatives (sajjadāh nashīns) of his khānqāh at Pākpaṭṭan,<sup>23</sup> but

none of these ever used the NOM DE PLUME of Farīd. Incidentally, Shaikh Ibrahim is mentioned there as a sajjadāh nashīn at the khānqāh of Bābā Farīd and not as a spiritual successor of the Sufi poet.

Unlike Macauliffe's "certainty", Nizami thinks that Shaikh Ibrahim is "probably" the real author of the GGS verses. He gives three main arguments which could be used to deny Bābā Farīd's authorship. First, there is not a single reference in the Persian works to the fact that Bābā Farīd had left such a large number of Saloks; even Shaikh Nizām-u'd-dīn Auliya and his successors did not mention them. Second, the internal evidence suggests that the picture of Shaikh Farīd that will emerge from these Saloks will be more akin to the Shaikh Farīd of the apocryphal Malfūzāt.<sup>24</sup> Third, linguistic analysis of these Saloks reveals that they contain idioms and expressions of a much later date. Also, the NOM DE PLUME used is Farīd, but the Shaikh used to refer to himself as Masūd, not as Farīd.<sup>25</sup>

In fact, none of the above arguments is enough to deny Shaikh Farīd's authorship of the GGS verses. The reason why we do not come across any reference in the Persian sources regarding these verses seems to be the indifferent attitude adopted by the ulema (scholars) towards the poetical compositions in the local dialect. Since Persian was the court language in those days, the verses in the Multānī Punjabi attracted little attention. The fact is that no one recognized their true value until the verses by Bābā Farīd became part of the Sikh scripture. Moreover, Nizami neither defines clearly the kinship between the author of these verses and the apocryphal Farīd of the Malfūzāt, nor does he provide any examples to support the contention that Bābā Farīd used to refer to himself as Masūd in his compositions.

Furthermore, the language of the GGS verses is the mixture of Multānī Punjabi and a number of Arabic and Persian words. It might be possible that these verses had undergone certain linguistic alterations during the process of oral transmission. On the whole, Nizami's arguments do not make a strong case against Bābā Farīd's authorship of the GGS verses. Rizvi also maintains that "Nizami's arguments are unconvincing; perhaps some trained linguist might solve the problem."<sup>26</sup>

Nizami however feels that the GGS verses contain Shaikh Farīd's teachings and the traditions about his penances. In his latest article on Shaikh Farīd, Nizami writes as follows:

When Guru Nanak appeared on the scene, Bābā Farīd's sayings which contained the quintessence of the highest moral and spiritual values, were current all over. Some of these sayings found a place in the Guru Granth, while his numerous remarks, incantational phrases, litanies, wove themselves into the complex but attractive pattern of Indian legends. <sup>27</sup>

Nizami seems to have acknowledged the fact that the GGS contains Bābā Farīd's teachings. In that case, says Banerjee, the real authorship of the GGS verses should be attributed to Shaikh Farīd.<sup>28</sup>

Against the view held by some scholars who follow Macauliffe's line of argument, there are a number of scholars who maintain that Shaikh Farīd is the real author of the GGS verses.<sup>29</sup> Akhlaq Hussain Dehlvi denies the authorship of Shaikh Ibrahim on the ground that Ali Asghar, the author of Jawāhar-i-Farīdī (written in CE 1631), who descended from the same great grandfather as that of Shaikh Ibrahim, does not mention that Shaikh Ibrahim wrote any poetry at all.<sup>30</sup> Ali Asghar acknowledges only Bābā Farīd as a poet. Dehlvi further writes that "the ascription of Bābā Farīd's poetry to Shaikh Ibrahim is a modern innovation."<sup>31</sup> Further, eminent Sufi poets like Waris Shah (b.

CE 1729) and Mian Muhammad Bāksh paid tributes to Bābā Farīd only as one of the pioneers of Punjabi poetry.<sup>32</sup>

Jalali Naini holds that there is a strong point which goes in favour of Bābā Farīd as the author of GGS verses, and that is "the remarkable similarity between his discourses preserved in Asrār-u'l-Auliya and the Punjabi dohās (couplets or stanzas).<sup>33</sup> In the same vein, Grover remarks that the oldest Persian sources on Farīd, the Fawā'id-u'l-Fu'ād (written in CE 1308-1322), the Khair-u'l-Majālis (written in 1354-1355), and the Siyār-u'l-Auliya (written in CE 1351-1388), are in complete harmony with the Saloks incorporated in the Ādi Granth.<sup>34</sup>

On the face of things it is more plausible to accept the material recorded in the GGS as Shaikh Farīd's poetry for the following reasons. First, one must take into account the redactional standards applied in the preparation of the scripture by Guru Arjan, who very carefully approached the question of authorship of various texts. There is evidence that the fifth Guru did not include even the Prān Saṅgalī,<sup>35</sup> the composition attributed to Guru Nānak, due to questions concerning its authenticity. How could Guru Arjan have included the compositions under the name of Shaikh Farīd if they had actually been composed by Shaikh Ibrahim? Second, the religious themes in the GGS verses represent the earliest phase of Sufi thought in north-western India which is characteristic of Shaikh Farīd, who placed much emphasis on the faithful observance of the Muslim law for the sake of following the mystic path of love. By the time of Shaikh Ibrahim, a contemporary of Guru Nānak, Sufi Islam had lost its vision and was more interested in the politics of the rulers than the quest for God realization.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, each Śābad or Salok is, by its very nature, an independent verse. Shaikh Farīd often claims authorship of the verse by the simple device of using his own name "Farīd" in the verse itself, usually in the last line of the Śābad or at the beginning of the first (rarely of the last) line of the Salok. This accords with the general practice by the poet-saints of North India to use their own name in their works.

Notwithstanding the issue of the authorship of the GGS verses, what is important for the present study is that the texts are thought to have come from Shaikh Farīd. Evidently they represent a dominant Sufi line of thought prevailing in the Punjab in medieval times and attracting the special attention of the Sikh Gurus for comment on what constitutes true religious belief and practice. We will first look at the teachings of Shaikh Farīd as they emerge in the GGS. This will be followed by an analysis of the responses of Guru Nānak, Guru Amardās and finally Guru Arjan to the various aspects of Shaikh Farīd's thought.

#### Shaikh Farīd in the Guru Granth Sāhib

The image of Shaikh Farīd that emerges in his Śābads and Saloks in the GGS is that of an ardent followers of orthodox Islam. He prescribes the duty to observe the ritual prayer (namāz, nivāj in Punjabi) five times a day, to perform ablutions (wazū, ujū in the original text) before prayer and to go to the mosque (masīt) regularly. He places much emphasis on the "prostration before God" during the performance of ritual prayer which reminds one of the Qur'ānic verse: "Prostrate and draw near" (Sura 96:19). Like a stern Sufi Master, he even specifies the penalty for the offenders by saying that the head (sir) that does

not prostrate before the Lord should be cut off and used as firewood under the cooking pot. The theme is developed in the following three couplets:

O prayerless cur, Farīd, this is not good for you!  
You have never gone to the mosque at the five times  
of prayer.

Wake up, Farīd, perform your ablutions and say  
your morning prayer.  
Cut off the head which does not bow before the  
Lord.

What is to be done to the head which does not  
bow before the Lord?  
It should be burnt under the pot to serve  
as fuel to the fire. 37  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Saloks 70-72, p. 1381)

Here Shaikh Farīd clearly stresses the strict adherence to the shar'īat, the legal prescriptions of Islam. This may be seen to be in line with the development in the Sufi tradition after Al-Ghazālī who is credited with having made Sufism acceptable to the orthodox circles which were formerly unfriendly to mysticism in Islam.<sup>38</sup> Schimmel contends that the early Sufis observed the Muslim law faithfully because it was "the soil out of which their piety grew."<sup>39</sup>

The most forceful utterances of Shaikh Farīd are the ones in which human beings are urged to get right with a just God before death overtakes them and it is too late. This theme of urgency in the face of death and the fear of judgement comes from his own deep Islamic background. Shaikh Farīd often mentions the angel of death<sup>40</sup> (Izra'il or Malik) and takes death as a visible presence not to be ignored in the course of daily involvement in worldly pursuits. He asserts that the day of death is pre-determined and cannot be altered. In the very first Salok, with powerful symbolism, he describes how the angel of

death as the bridegroom comes to carry away his bride (soul), cracking the bones of the body, and how the soul has to cross over the eternal fire of hell on the bridge (pul sirāt, pur silāt in the original text) which is finer than a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword:

The day the life-dame is to be married, is  
pre-determined. Her spouse, the Angel of Death,  
whom we had only heard, comes and confronts her on  
that very day.  
Twisting and cracking the frame, he forces the  
frail life out.  
Explain this to your life that --  
'this pre-destined day can no wise be put off.'  
The life is the Bride, Death the Groom, who  
marrying her, will carry her off.  
The body, after bidding farewell to life, whom will  
she now embrace?  
The Bridge of Hell is narrower than hair's breadth.  
Have you not heard of it?  
The call is about to come, Farīd! Beware! and do  
not let yourself be robbed, unawares!  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok I, p. 1377)

The bridge of hell (pul sirāt) is an important element of belief in Islamic eschatology.<sup>41</sup> It signifies the traumatic experience which the wicked and the unbelievers undergo while crossing the bridge. Shaikh Farīd mentions the deafening shrieks of those who are condemned in the flaming hell and intends to use this as a deterrent to those who have gone astray from the path of God.<sup>42</sup>

Shaikh Farīd provides us with a passing glimpse of the souls (rūhān) waiting for ages between the time of death and the day of resurrection, when they will be sent to paradise or hell according to their desserts.<sup>43</sup> Arberry mentions a practice among the Sufis to perform "grave exercise"<sup>44</sup> as a part of their contemplative life. During the process, a Sufi would imagine that he is dead, that he has been washed, wrapped in his garment and laid in his tomb, and that all

the mourners have departed, leaving him alone to face the judgement. The whole idea behind the practice is to turn the mind from worldly pursuits towards devotion to God. It seems that Shaikh Farīd also attempts to awaken the minds of thoughtless people by bringing home to them the thought of the "grave" as follows:

Farīd, attach not thy heart on mansions and wealth;  
Keep in thy mind mighty death:  
Contemplate that place wither thou must go.  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 58, p. 1381)

Shaikh Farīd's emphasis on the death-theme is designed to make his audience realize the transitory character of human life, the fragile nature of worldly pomp and show and the brittle lure of carnal beauty. He repeatedly proclaims that human life along with nature is an evanescent phenomenon.<sup>45</sup> He further asserts that the objects of the senses are really poisonous even though coated with sugar.<sup>46</sup> Thus he tries to create in us, his hearers/readers, the sense of detachment from the things of the world and the objects of senses. However, Shaikh Farīd is aware that those who have been misguided by Satan (shaytān) will never rise above their carnal-self:

Despite the loudest warning against evil and  
constant exhortations to good, O Farīd;  
How can they, who have been led astray by Satan,  
turn their mind towards God?  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 15, p. 1378)

Shaikh Farīd employs the Islamic idea of Satan to explain human obduracy and heedlessness.

Throughout Shaikh Farīd's poetry the theme of impermanence of life is interwoven with the quest for an ever-permanent Reality. One gets the sense that love of God (ishq khudā'i) is at the heart of his spiritual experience. There is passion, yearning and the agony of separation in different phases of love. Moreover, there is the



predominance of asceticism in his way of love.<sup>47</sup> Shaikh Farīd frequently expresses his anguish over lack of fulfilment in the symbol of a suffering lover, which, according to Schimmel, is one of the salient features of Indo-Muslim poetry.<sup>48</sup> The Shaikh says: "I slept not with my Husband last night; my body is pining away: Go and ask the deserted one, how does she pass her nights awake?"<sup>49</sup> To yearn in longing and to feel the agony of separation (birhā) from the divine Beloved is itself regarded as the highest spiritual attainment in the verses of Shaikh Farīd. The theme reaches its climax as follows:

People continually talk of the agony of the  
 Beloved's separation but for me, O Love, it is  
 the Lord of Life.  
 For, the body in which such agony does not spring,  
 O Farīd, is just like a cremation-yard.  
 (GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 36, p. 1379)

Shaikh Farīd calls the state of separation "kingly" (birhā tūn sultān), the sovereign quality of the devotee, which drives the suffering lover to plumb deeper and deeper into the wonderful mysteries of the divine Beloved and thus creates the conditions of ineffable joy.<sup>50</sup> This theme of intense longing for the Beloved pervades the compositions of the Sikh Gurus.<sup>51</sup> The following Salok of Guru Aṅgad sounds very much like Shaikh Farīd's:

The head that bows not to the Lord merits casting  
 off.  
 Says Nānak: the body that is not charged with the  
 agony of separation (birhā) is worth being burnt.  
 (GGS, M. II, Sirī Rāgu-Kī-Vār, 1 (15), p. 89)

Shaikh Farīd stresses the cultivation of moral and ethical virtues as a pre-requisite to enter the mystic path of love. He insists that the devotees of God must be "true and righteous in their speech and should not utter falsehood."<sup>52</sup> The Dervishes (devotees) must show in their life the spirit of forbearance and resignation like the trees

which bear with equanimity the severities of weather and the sharp blows of the axe.<sup>53</sup> Shaikh Farīd further emphasizes that one should be contented with whatever one has received through honest means and should not go about for begging or depend upon somebody else for one's daily living:

Eat your own bare dry bread  
and drink plain cold water.  
Do not tempt your mind, Farīd,  
on seeing another's buttered bread.

Make me not sit at another's door,  
O Lord;  
If that is how You are pleased to keep me,  
then better take this life away.  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Saloks 29 & 42, pp. 1379-1380)

Shaikh Farīd is reputed to have passed his entire life in faqr (poverty) and tawakkul (faith) by strictly following the tradition of the Prophet, "I am proud of my poverty."<sup>54</sup> It is also a fact that no jagīrs (endowments of land) or grants were accepted by the Chistīya saints, for they did not want to deal with the worldly government. Whatever came to them either by presentation or futuh, they distributed among the deserving persons immediately and never tried to accumulate wealth.<sup>55</sup> Shaikh Farīd maintains that "such a one who shares with others even when indigent, is called a rare devotee."<sup>56</sup>

Shaikh Farīd lays stress on the cultivation of the virtues of humility, forgiveness and the sweetness of the tongue which form the basis of one's compassionate behaviour towards one's fellow beings.<sup>57</sup> One is required to overlook the faults of others.<sup>58</sup> There is no place for revengefulness in Shaikh Farīd's way of life. We are advised to kiss the feet of those who shower blows on us.<sup>59</sup> Further, we are required to do good even towards those who are themselves bad.<sup>60</sup> One is spontaneously reminded of the Sikh ethics according to which "one

who is good only when good is done to him and in adversity becomes adverse: Call him not a lover for he trades in love."<sup>61</sup> The following verse of Shaikh Farīd reveals his spirit of humanity:

Speak never a rude word to any one,  
as the True Lord abides in one and all:  
Break no heart --  
as every heart is a priceless jewel.  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 129, p. 1384)

It is clearly implied here that each person being a creature of God is worthy of equal respect and dignity. For Shaikh Farīd, humility is an important aspect of devotion towards God. He proclaims: "Be humble like the spear grass of the pathway if you aspire to seek a vision of God everywhere."<sup>62</sup> He further maintains that its perfect realization marks the state when one has the real knowledge and yet one is humble and innocent.<sup>63</sup>

The virtue of patience (sabr) is an important milestone on the Sufi path and is regarded as the "key to happiness". A Quranic verse declares that "God is with those who show patience" (Sura 2:103). Patience is to remain unmoved before the arrows of the divine decrees. It is the armour and the secret strength of the devotees. Shaikh Farīd compares this spiritual quality with the irresistible power of an arrow which never misses its mark. The theme is developed in the following three Saloks:

Make patience thy bow and bow-string;  
The arrow too of patience --  
God will not let it go off its mark.

Those who adopt patience and take upon  
themselves suffering --  
Such alone will be near God:  
They do not divulge their secret to anyone.

Patience is the ideal of life:  
If you hold on to it steadfastly,  
You will expand into the mighty river

and never then shrink into a small stream.  
(GGs, Shaikh Farīd, Saloks 115-117, p. 1384)

Shaikh Farīd asserts that patience is the sustenance of the devotees who do not reveal their secret spiritual strength to other people. Unlike Hallāj, he holds that the devotees must conceal themselves after having attained the highest state of mystic experience.<sup>64</sup> The state of sabr is in fact the expansion of the individual self which occurs when the Sufi experiences the union of the divine Beloved. It is the highest fulfilment in life. Avtar Singh refers to it as "equipoise-in-fulfilment" which is in congruence with the sahaja (equipoise) state in Sikhism.<sup>65</sup> The echo of the above cited verses of Shaikh Farīd can be heard in the following Salok of Guru Nānak:

Faith and forbearance is characteristic  
of those with purity of heart;  
Patience is the sustenance of angels.  
Only those perfected in devotion  
shall have sight of God --  
No place is there for braggarts. 66  
(GGs, M. I., Sirī Rāgu-Kī-Vār, 2 (2), p. 83)

For Shaikh Farīd, the ethico-spiritual progress made on the mystic path of love leads to a stoppage of wandering. One no longer resorts to the jungle waste as one realizes that God dwells in the heart.<sup>67</sup> This state of spirituality marks an end to the outward quest and directs itself to the inner ecstasy.<sup>68</sup> In his hymn in the Āsā Rāgu, Shaikh Farīd proclaims that the true devotees, who are soaked in God's love (ishq Khudā'i), experience the vision (didār) of their cherished Beloved:

They whose heart is sincerely in love with God,  
are true devotees.  
But they who have one thing in heart and another on  
tongue, are reckoned untrue.  
They who are soaked in God's love

remain inebriated with His vision.  
 But they who forget God's Name (Nām),  
 become a burden on the earth.  
 True devotees (Dervishes) are those  
 whom God Himself attaches unto Himself.  
 Blessed are their mothers who bore them;  
 fruitful is their advent into the world!  
 You are the Cherisher, Infinite,  
 Inaccessible, Unfathomable, O Lord!  
 I kiss the feet of those who have  
 realised the eternal Truth.  
 I seek shelter in You, O God!  
 You alone are the Bountiful Lord!  
 Pray bless Shaikh Farīd  
 with the charity of Your devotion!  
 (GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Āsā 1, p. 488)

Here Shaikh Farīd asserts that the true devotees (Dervishes) are the ones who love God with utmost inner sincerity of the heart, follow the way of truthful living and are blessed with divine grace. They meditate on the divine Name (Nām) to achieve constant awareness of the divine presence. The Sufi practice of divine recollection (bandagī or dhikr) corresponds to a large extent to the Sikh practice of Nām-simaran. Further, Shaikh Farīd elaborates on his understanding of God. Although God is transcendental in nature -- Infinite, Inaccessible, Unfathomable -- yet He is the Lord of love and grace who responds to the prayers of His devotees and is the supreme Cherisher (parvadiḡār) of sinners. Elsewhere, Shaikh Farīd envisions the One God as Judge, Dear, Real, Great and Omnipotent.<sup>69</sup> He frequently employs the Muslim names of God such as Allāh, Khudā'i, Rabb and expresses his Muslim beliefs and practices freely.

Thus the bānī of Shaikh Farīd in the GGS presents the picture of a Sufi who was a pious Muslim of orthodox views and was well known for his observance of Islamic rituals. As a mystic he seems to have discarded worldly pleasures to follow the life of perfect asceticism.

### Guru Nānak and Shaikh Farīd

Given the comments which Guru Nānak makes on Shaikh Farīd's verses it is quite evident that he not only had access to Shaikh Farīd's works but also studied them very carefully. He responds to Shaikh Farīd on vital issues such as the attitude towards life, the death-theme and after-life belief, the primacy of divine grace over individual effort and the theme of asceticism.

Shaikh Farīd's hymn in the measure Sūhī Lalit, a popular rāga with the Sufis, is full of deep remorse, in which he laments a life wasted in absorption with the worldly temptations, contemplates death, and finds that it is too late to change. The exhortation is addressed to the person who has lost the opportunity of remembering the Lord when there was yet time to do so, telling him/her to stop making waste of the limited moments at hand before "the soul departs crestfallen and this body becomes a heap of ashes". His verse reads:

You could not make a raft at the time when  
you should have made it. When the sea  
is full and overflowing it is hard to cross.

Do not touch the saffron flower with your hands,  
its colour will fade, my dear.

First the bride is weak and in addition her  
husband's command is hard to bear.  
As milk does not return to her breast so the  
soul does not enter the same body again.

Says Farīd, O my friends, when the spouse calls;  
The soul departs crestfallen and this  
body becomes a heap of ashes. 70  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Sūhī 1, p. 794)

Shaikh Farīd describes here the pitiable condition of the wayfaring soul that is alienated from the Lord, struggling to cross the stormy ocean of existence without the help of any raft. He seems to be saying that for want of timely action of making the raft of divine

recollection (bandagī), the end is going to be disastrous. He further warns the people against the transitory nature of worldly pleasures which, like kasumbhā (saffron flower), wither away into nothingness and result in throwing away the one and only opportunity of this life to save the soul. For Shaikh Farīd, death is a terrible and eternal extinction because terrestrial life like milk in the breast is gone for ever. Moreover, there is the implicit fear of judgement in the words "her husband's command is hard to bear" (śeh ke re bolā). Elsewhere Shaikh Farīd maintains that on the day of Judgement the great account book will be opened and each soul will face the Lord (Rabb) to explain how the time was spent during its sojourn on earth.<sup>71</sup> Shaikh Farīd uses the symbol of the swan (hansa) in his Śābad for the human soul which takes its reluctant flight leaving the body a heap of dust lying in the grave.

Guru Nānak composed a hymn in the same musical measure, Sūhī Rāgu, in response to Shaikh Farīd's, with the imagery of the original, expressing his own self-understanding of a life of spirituality based on divine grace through the practice of meditation on the Lord, and self-control. His verse reads:

Make meditation on the Lord and Self-control the  
raft by which you cross the flowing stream.  
Your path will be as comfortable as if there were  
no ocean or overflowing stream.

Your Name alone is the unfading madder with which  
my cloak is dyed.  
My beloved Lord, this colour is everlasting.

The dear friends have departed, how shall they meet  
the Lord?  
If they are united in virtue the Lord will join  
them with himself.

Once united the mortal does not separate again if  
the union is true.

The Lord puts an end to birth and rebirth.

She who removes self-centredness sews herself a  
garment to please her husband.

By the Guru's instruction she obtained the fruit of  
the nectar of Lord's word.

Says Nānak, O my friends my spouse is very dear to  
me.

We are the Lord's handmaidens. He is our True  
husband. 72

(GGS, M. I., Sūhī 4, p. 729)

The two hymns are not juxtaposed in the GGS because Guru Arjan chose to part them at the time of canonization of the scripture when he separated the hymns of the Gurus from other compositions. Nevertheless, it is quite evident from the use of marital imagery, the play upon the fading and unfading dye and the problem of crossing the ocean of existence that they belong together as Guru Nānak surely intended. Obviously one can link the key words such as berā (raft), sarvar (ocean), dholā (Beloved), śeh (Husband), bolā (word), melā (union), sahelīho (friends), which occur in both of the hymns. Traditionally these two hymns have always been held together and therefore Guru Nānak's hymn is understood to be a comment on Shaikh Farīd's.

The comparative analysis of these hymns clearly reveals that the tone and spirit of Shaikh Farīd's hymn contrasts with Guru Nānak's, at crucial points. Both seem to address two different aspects of life. Whereas Shaikh Farīd speaks of the negative aspect of lost opportunities in a vein of despair, Guru Nānak focuses on the positive aspect by providing the hope of the comfortable passage of the soul through the ocean of existence with the help of the raft of meditation and self-control and by asserting that it is never too late to turn towards God. Shaikh Farīd stresses the transitoriness of worldly



pleasures by using the imagery of the frail colour of the saffron flower<sup>73</sup> (kasumbhā), while Guru Nānak's accent falls on the eternal value of the divine Name (Nām) which is like the fast colour on the garments. In contrast with the stern and harsh words of the Beloved (śeh ke re bolā) of Shaikh Farīd's conception, Guru Nānak envisions the gracious Beloved who is "very dear to me" and whose words are sweet like nectar (śeh ke amrit bolā). It is the positive lure of the Divine in Guru Nānak's hymn that has received more stress than the fear of judgement in Shaikh Farīd's.

The dominant theme in both of the hymns is related to the issue of death and after-life belief. Whereas Shaikh Farīd talks about the unique opportunity of human life because of his Islamic background, Guru Nānak does mention rebirth (āvāgavan) having inherited this idea from his Indian religious background.<sup>74</sup> In this context, Talib writes:

To Shaikh Farīd death is eternal, as in Muslim belief. Life, like milk in the breast, is gone for ever; lovers never again shall meet. To Guru Nānak, through the Master's grace, with the capital of good qualities, union will inevitably occur again. Transmigration will be annulled. Here the Guru's belief in the unending process of life shows itself as against Shaikh Farīd's Muslim belief in death, after which only on judgement Day will the spirits rise to face their Maker. <sup>75</sup>

Guru Nānak's belief in the doctrine of rebirth is fundamentally different from the eschatological views held by Shaikh Farīd, especially his awesome description of flaming hell, the pul sirāt (bridge of hell), and the terrible retribution on unbelievers. The penalty for life devoid of devotion in Guru Nānak's view is vichhorā (separation from the Lord): "What terrible separation it is to be separated from God and what blissful union to be united with Him!"<sup>76</sup> Guru Nānak maintains that it is the sense of self-centredness (haumai)

which is the root cause of one's separation from God.<sup>77</sup> He further asserts that one can remove self-centredness through the Guru's instruction and put an end to birth and rebirth. For Guru Nānak, death is not something to be dreaded, but is a joy and "the privilege of the brave" to be welcomed when it comes, for it means a perfecting of one's union with God.<sup>78</sup> On the whole, Shaikh Farīd's tone is pessimistic, whereas Guru Nānak's is resonant with exuberance and optimism.

It should be evident from the above analysis that Guru Nānak intends to define his own understanding of the theme contained in the hymn of Shaikh Farīd. Through contrasting his views with those of Shaikh Farīd, he highlights his own vision of a life anchoring itself in divine grace through the practice of Nām-simaran and promotes thereby the process of self-definition or self-understanding for the emerging Sikh community.

Another major concern of Guru Nānak in responding to Shaikh Farīd's verses is linked to the issue of the primacy of divine grace over personal effort. Shaikh Farīd used to spend a major part of the night in vigils to follow the tradition of the Prophet whose spiritual ascension during the night (shab-i-mirāj) was the motivating force behind this spiritual discipline.<sup>79</sup> He says:

Prayer done in the first part of the night yields  
flowers, and that in the later bears fruit.  
They who keep awake (in God), are alone blessed  
with these bounties.  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 112, p. 1384)

Here Shaikh Farīd claims that God's gift (dāt) is available to the devotees who become deserving with their spiritual effort through night vigils. Nizami has cited a similar verse of Bābā Farīd in Persian recorded in the Siyār-u'l-Auliya which reads:

You will get honour in proportion to the pains that  
you undertake in your work.  
Keeping awake at night brings greatness. 80

Shaikh Farīd advocates the necessity of personal effort through various penances to win divine favor in spiritual life.

Guru Nānak clearly differs from the views held by Shaikh Farīd. For him, grace is to be regarded as God's free and sovereign act of self-disclosure.<sup>81</sup> In his commentary verse, he emphasizes the idea that God's gifts are not ultimately dependent upon the merit of the individual:

Bounties are all of the Lord;  
These cannot be forced out of His hand.  
Some do not get these even though awake;  
While others He Himself awakens to bless. 82  
(GGS, M. I. Salok 113, p.1384)

The nature of grace is such that it is a matter of Divine free choice which does not depend upon any kind of previous growth in spirituality. No amount of austerity can force it out of God's hands. Ultimately divine grace is a mystery which is absolutely beyond human reasoning and calculation. Thus while responding to Shaikh Farīd's verse Guru Nānak makes it amply clear to his own audience that individual effort is useless as an attempt to win God's favour. Nevertheless, effort in the form of good actions has its place in Guru Nānak's view of life.<sup>83</sup> Effort has spiritual and social worth, but one must recognize its limits and acknowledge the primacy of divine grace over personal effort.

The primary goal of the ascetic discipline, according to Shaikh Farīd, is union with the Beloved, which in classical Sufi terminology is equivalent to "subsistence" (baqā) within God. It is attained only through the process of fanā (annihilation) "wherein the soul is

stripped of all its desires, affections, and interests, so that in ceasing to will for itself it becomes an object of the Divine will, that is, the beloved of God; and that which loves it and which it loves is now its inward and real Self, not the self that has 'passed away'."<sup>84</sup> To achieve the highest stage of annihilation, a Sufi undergoes the severest ascetic discipline of self-torturing because "the suffering of the body is the subsistence of the spirit."<sup>85</sup> Shaikh Farīd describes the theme of suffering in the fire of love in the following Salok:

My body burns like an oven (tannūr);  
bones are aflame like the firewood.  
If my feet are tired, I would walk on my head,  
If I could meet my Beloved, thereby.  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 119, p. 1384)

Shaikh Farīd's ascetic discipline seems to have taken the extreme form of self-torture. However, it should be emphasized that the imagery of fire is often used in the Sufi poetry to describe the process of burning away of bodily passions and desires which goes back to ancient rites of purification through fire. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (CE 1207-1273), a contemporary of Shaikh Farīd, states that the oven (tannūr) of Love "serves to purify man as ore is refined in the crucible to become gold."<sup>86</sup> In a similar vein, Chittick says that a Sufi is the one who passes in and out of fire without suffering harm and ". . . having been annihilated by its flames, he has achieved subsistence."<sup>87</sup>

The ideals of self-torturing and asceticism which find expression in the above mentioned Salok of Shaikh Farīd, are diametrically opposed to Guru Nānak's emphatically stated beliefs of moderate living and disciplined worldliness. He severely condemns those wandering ascetics who "harm themselves by burning their limbs in the fire."<sup>88</sup> His

commentary verse rejects the ascetic streak of Shaikh Farīd and emphasizes self-realization instead of self-torture:

You need not burn your body like an oven  
nor feed its fire with your bones.  
Your head and feet have also done you no wrong.  
(So, why do you torture them through such  
austerities?)  
Behold the Beloved in your own heart, Farīd! 89  
(GGS, M. I, Salok 120, p. 1384)

The Guru clearly provides a corrective to Shaikh Farīd's view by asserting that one must seek the divine Beloved within one's own heart (andari pirī nihāli) without torturing the body through ascetic discipline. Elsewhere, the human body is regarded by Guru Nānak as the temple of the indwelling spirit of God: "The Body is the palace of God, His temple, His dwelling-place wherein He has shone light infinitely radiant: By the Guru's word one is summoned within the palace; there one meets with God."<sup>90</sup> The Guru thus places a positive value on the human body which should be used as an instrument of spiritual realization and service to humankind. In his comment on Shaikh Farīd's verse, Guru Nānak shows himself concerned to define for his own followers a path which excludes asceticism as described by Shaikh Farīd.

It should also be emphasized that Guru Nānak's comment on Shaikh Farīd's verse as mentioned above is followed by four Saloks (nos. 121-124) of the Gurus, inserted by Guru Arjan with the intention of highlighting the theme of self-realization versus asceticism. The first Salok (no. 121) by Guru Rāmdās is, in fact, an explication of Guru Nānak's view of seeking the divine Beloved within one's own Self. The fourth Guru asserts that one can attain the highest state of God-realization only through the guidance of the Guru.<sup>91</sup> In the next

two Saloks (nos. 122-123), Guru Amardās exposes the futility of human endeavour and the deceptive framework of a world of the spiritual make-believe.<sup>92</sup> He employs the symbols of the crane (baga or bagulā) and the swan (hansa) to contrast the hypocritical conduct of the ascetics with the spiritual attainment of the true devotees. The crane is a kind of heron whose white appearance seemingly symbolises purity, innocence and serenity. It stands perfectly still on the bank of a river, and appears deeply absorbed in meditation while it actually deals sudden death to unwary fish. Thus its "meditation" is broken for the sake of its belly! Guru Amardās may have intended to warn the Sikh community against the phoniness of the Sufi ascetics of his day.

The last Salok (no. 124) in this context is by Guru Nānak, which reads as follows:

What matters it whether he on whom God casts  
His graceful glance, be a swan or a heron?  
"If it pleases Him", says Nanak,  
"He turns a crow into a swan." 93  
(GGS, M. I, Salok 124, p. 1384)

Here Guru Nānak makes his viewpoint quite explicit that what matters in spiritual life is not the merit of the individual, but the functioning of divine grace. He uses the symbolism of the black crows turning into the white swans under a spiritual metamorphosis to point out that divine grace can elevate even the lowly and transform the worthless sinners into saints.<sup>94</sup> Guru Arjan seems to have consciously inserted this Salok here to reinforce Guru Nānak's view of spiritual life based upon divine grace and humility.

The primacy of divine grace is fundamental to Guru Nānak's theology which might be described as an attempt to articulate his personal experience of God. He repeatedly proclaims: "God is attained

by God's grace. All other ways and means are vain and false."<sup>95</sup> This constant refrain in his comments on Shaikh Farīd's verses provides a clear contrast between the way of Guru Nānak and the Sufi line of thought as represented by Shaikh Farīd.<sup>96</sup>

#### Guru Amardās and Shaikh Farīd

Guru Amardās follows the method of textual commentary started by Guru Nānak in highlighting the distinctive features of Sikhism in relation to the Sufi thought. He responds to Shaikh Farīd's verses on the following points: the right age to follow the path of God's love versus divine grace, the ascetic discipline and moral purity, and the theme of renunciation. His comments also serve to provide clarity in the understanding of an obscure text of Shaikh Farīd.

Shaikh Farīd places much emphasis on the right age for entering the Sufi path of love. He maintains that one must turn towards God in the youthful age when the hair is black, otherwise it will be too late:

They, who have not thought on God when their  
hair are black, O Farīd, rarely turn towards  
Him when their hair grow grey.  
Love your Lord, O man, while youth  
is still with you.  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 12, p. 1378)

Shaikh Farīd's views must have intrigued Guru Amardās who succeeded to the throne of Guru Nānak at the ripe old age of seventy-two. On the basis of his own personal experience, he rejects the belief that a person rarely turns towards God in old age. (dhaulīn rāvai koi), and offers the following commentary verse on Shaikh Farīd's:

If one has the mind, one can love God as well  
in old age as in youth.  
But the Lord's love does not come of one's  
own effort or desire even though  
all may aspire for it.

This cup of Love belongs to God and  
 He Himself gives it to him  
 whom He likes to bless.  
 (GGS, M. III, Salok 13, p. 1378)

Guru Amardās asserts that one can follow the path of God's love in any age if one has the right intention to do so. But one must know that one cannot succeed in the life of spirituality without the divine initiative. Guru Amardās further lays stress on the idea of divine free choice in the functioning of grace, which is in perfect harmony with the teachings of Guru Nanak. Thus he advocates the necessity of the divine grace, whereas Shaikh Farīd stresses making effort to love God in the right age of youthful life. In contrast to the views held by Shaikh Farīd, Guru Amardās seems to be highlighting the distinctive Sikh view of life based upon divine grace. Also in contrast to the Sufi poet he emphasizes a spirit of optimism that both young and old in his audience can enter the spiritual life based upon Guru's teachings.

Guru Amardās's second major concern in offering comment on Shaikh Farīd's verse is related to the issue of ascetic discipline and moral purity. In the following Salok, Shaikh Farīd makes the claim that if his body were cut, no blood would come out because those who are in love with the Lord have no blood in their veins:

Farīd, if any one were to cut my body,  
 not a drop of blood would ooze from it.  
 For, those who are imbued with God's love  
 have no blood left in their bodies.  
 (GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 51, p. 1380)

Here is an obscure passage of the scripture which for practical reasons is unacceptable in its literal meaning. Anand's interpretation that with years of penance and extreme devotion Shaikh Farīd's physical body ceased to play much part in his actions and that he felt he had become



ethereal and spiritual, does not seem to fit in the context of Sufi thought.<sup>97</sup>

There is a reference in the old text Jawāma-u'l-kilām regarding Shaikh Farīd's chillāh-i-makūs which reads as follows:

One day when Sayyid Muhammad Gesu Daraz was telling his audience about this chillāh of Bābā Farīd, a man asked: "How is it that blood does not run out of the eyes and mouth of the person who performs it and how food and other things do not come out of him?" The saint replied that there was no question of blood or food in the dried and emaciated body of saint-- reduced to mere skeleton by prayers and penitences. 98

Sayyid Muhammad Gesū Darāz (died in CE 1421) was a famous disciple of Shaikh Nāsir-u'd-dīn Chirāgh-i-Delhī, the disciple of Nizām-u'd-dīn Auliya who was the spiritual successor of Bābā Farīd. The above reference seems strongly to point towards a tradition in the Sufi circles that Bābā Farīd was a master ascetic who had no blood left in his body due to his penances. However, the metaphor of "blood" is employed frequently in the Sufi poetry to describe the mystical experience of annihilation when the Beloved slaughters the lover. Schimmel quotes from the poetry of Rūmī as follows:

Love is bloodthirsty; it becomes fat from drinking  
the blood of the lover...,  
and it also makes the lover drink his own blood,  
so that his task is  
"To become blood, to drink one's blood,  
To sit with the dogs at the door of faithfulness."

The lover becomes like a flask filled with blood and is finally transformed into "blood in the veins of Love, tears in the lover's eyes" and thus reaches the highest station on the path, that of complete transformation into Love. 99

The transformation of "blood" into "Love" represents symbolically the highest stage of annihilation on the Sufi path. In line with such

symbolism, it makes sense for Shaikh Farīd to say "those who are imbued with God's love have no blood left in their bodies."

Considering the fact that Shaikh Farīd's Salok might be misinterpreted, Guru Amardās offered a new interpretation of the word ratu (blood) with the modification that devotees do not have lobhu ratu (the blood of greed) in their bodies. The Guru says:

The body is all blood, it cannot exist without it.  
But they who are imbued with Lord's love,  
do not have the blood of greed in their body.  
When the fear of God enters the body, it becomes  
emaciated and the blood of greed departs from it.  
As the fire purifies the metal, so the fear of God  
casts out the impurities of evil inclinations.  
Those alone are beautiful, says Nanak,  
who are dyed with the love of God.  
(GGS, M. III, Salok 52, p. 1380)

It is quite evident here that Guru Amardās does not accept the tradition that Shaikh Farīd had no blood left in his body due to his austerities. He rather asserts that the original intent of Farīd's verse is that the devotees should experience the passing away of passions and desires when "the fear of God casts out the impurities of evil inclinations" (durmati mailu) and the blood of greed (lobhu ratu) departs from the body.<sup>100</sup> Although the bodies of the God-fearing devotees sometimes become emaciated (tani khīnu hoi), they look beautiful (sohane) because of their moral purity and spiritual strength. This is in line with the Sufi idea of the body's "becoming spirit": "The bodies of the purified ones become untainted, exactly like the spirit".<sup>101</sup> Thus with Guru Amardās's comment Shaikh Farīd's obscure couplet becomes intelligible and, in the process, the Sikh view of moral purity is defined for the benefit of the Sikh community.

Finally, it is commonly accepted that a Sufi is so called because he wears a coarse woolen garment, sūf (Arabic: "wool"), which was the

distinguishing mark of the first generation of Muslim ascetics. Although Shaikh Farīd roundly condemns the hypocritical conduct of those who wear the sūf,<sup>102</sup> yet he places much emphasis upon rejecting worldly dress and adopting a particular Sufistic dress or kambalarī (blanket):

I will tear my silken robe, says Farīd,  
and wear a blanket instead.  
I will adopt only such a dress  
which could lead me to my union with God.  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 103, p. 1383)

Siddiqui maintains that the Sufi attire represents complete renunciation and fortified faith in God and His Prophet.<sup>103</sup> Guru Amardās makes the following reflection on Shaikh Farīd's couplet:

Why need you tear your silken robe  
and wear a blanket, instead?  
You can attain God seated in your own home, says  
Nanak, only if you follow good intentions.  
(GGS, M. III, Salok 104, p. 1383)

Clearly this is intended as a corrective to Shaikh Farīd's view of renunciation. Guru Amardās's own understanding is that one does not need to renounce the life of the householder (ghar: literally "house", here household) to follow the path of spirituality. Elsewhere, the Guru proclaims that "family life is superior to ascetic life in a sectarian garb because it is from householders that ascetics meet their needs."<sup>104</sup> He uses the word nīyat for "intention", an essential part of Muslim prayer, to stress the point that one should follow good intentions and realize the Lord within while participating in worldly affairs.

However, in order to guard against the temptation to become too worldly, Guru Arjan adds a further comment as follows:

They who were proud of worldly greatness,  
wealth, youth and beauty, Farīd,

Are gone devoid of the Lord,  
 like sandhills devoid of rain.  
 (GGS, M. V, Salok 105, p. 1383)

Guru Arjan seems to be concerned to maintain a balance between the two extremes of renunciation and worldliness. In this context, Ray remarks: "To maintain a harmonized balance between attachment and detachment, between worldliness and other-worldliness, between the temporal and the spiritual, has never been very easy in human society; yet this was the task which Guru Nānak set himself to, and as one goes through the life and activities of the Gurus and the history of Sikh society one feels that they carried out this task admirably and well."<sup>105</sup>

In responding to Shaikh Farīd's verses, the Gurus reject not only the ideals of asceticism and self-mortification, but also indulgence in and love of worldly attractions. Rather, the emphasis is put on moderate living and disciplined worldliness. These are not seen as opposed to the spiritual path. Thus the Gurus' comments serve to accentuate major aspects of Sikh teachings for the benefit of the growing Sikh community.

#### Guru Arjan and Shaikh Farīd

Guru Arjan is generally assumed to have used much freedom in editing and arranging the bānī of Shaikh Farīd in the GGS. He has entered his responses at various points in Shaikh Farīd's verses, evidently with a concern to bring out more clearly the unique features of Sikhism for the benefit of his own contemporary audience. Attar Singh maintains that Guru Arjan took special pains to "restore social sanity to the views of Shaikh Farīd where they touch borders of nihilism and total

denial of life here and now".<sup>106</sup> The Guru's comments are focused on the following themes: the worth of human life, suffering in the world, level-headedness and human equality, divine recollection in the ambrosial hours, submission to the divine will and the way of God's devotees.

Guru Arjan's major concern is related to the pessimistic tone of Shaikh Farīd which finds its highest expression in the following Salok:

Farīd, if my throat had been cut on the  
           same day as my navel string,  
 I should not have fallen into such trouble  
           nor undergone such hardship.  
 (GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 76, p. 1381)

Here Shaikh Farīd seems to be cursing human life as worthless. This is contrary to the life-affirming principles of Sikhism. It is indeed surprising to note that Guru Arjan included this couplet of Shaikh Farīd in the GGS while he apparently rejected the hymns of a contemporary saint Pīlo who had denounced human birth in one of his couplets.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, Guru Arjan makes the following comment on Farīd's Salok:

This life is pleasant, Farīd,  
           This body is quite beautiful.  
 But rare are those who having been blessed by  
           these, love their beloved Benefactor. 108  
 (GGS, M. V, Salok, 83, p. 1382)

Guru Arjan asserts that human life is the most delightful (suhāvarī) experience that one can have with the gift of this beautiful body (suvannarī deh). Elsewhere, the human person has been called the epitome of creation: "All other creation is subject to man; man reigns supreme on this earth."<sup>109</sup> The Guru further proclaims that human life provides an individual the opportunity to remember God and ultimately to join with His essence.<sup>110</sup> But rare (virle) are the ones who seek

the divine Beloved while participating in worldly actions and delights. When one is oblivious to the gracious Beloved and merely eats and sleeps, then the diamond-worth life becomes worthless.<sup>111</sup> Thus in contrast with Shaikh Farīd, Guru Arjan places a positive value on human life and seeks to ignite the spirit of optimism among his followers.

For Shaikh Farīd, the life in the world is full of suffering. He uses the word dukkha, a well-known Buddhist and Hindu term which had already become a part of the language of the people of the Punjab, to describe the theme of the painful aspect of life as follows:

I thought I alone was in pain; but actually  
the whole world, O Farīd, is in trouble.  
When I looked around from the house-top,  
I found this fire had spared no home.  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 81, p. 1382).

The life in the world in Shaikh Farīd seems to be devoid of joy, containing and terminating in suffering (dukkha). Guru Arjan adds the following comment:

The world is like a beautiful garden, Farīd.  
In its midst, there are some poison-bearing  
plants, also.  
But those who are blessed with the Master's grace,  
do not suffer even a bit from them.  
(GGS, M. V, Salok 82, p. 1382)

The Guru asserts that as the poison-bearing plants also grow in a beautiful garden, so suffering is an inevitable part of life. Joys and sufferings are two aspects of worldly life which make life worth living.<sup>112</sup> The Guru further provides the hope that one may find the way through the grace of the Master (pīr) to accept pains and pleasures of life with equanimity. Whereas Shaikh Farīd regards the world with indifference or as a place of suffering, Guru Arjan equates it with a "beautiful garden". (bhūm raṅgāvalī, literally: "colourful earth"),

thus emphasizing for the Sikh community a positive attitude towards life in the world.

The highest state of ethico-spiritual progress in Shaikh Farīd is marked with the attainment of level-headedness in life. The theme is developed as follows:

Make your mind a plain, O Farīd,  
and level all its hollows and heaths.  
You may escape, thereby,  
the furnace-blast of hell, hereafter.  
(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 74, p. 1381)

The meaning of the phrase toi tibbe (hollows and heaths) in the original text is not clear. Sahib Singh maintains that hollows and heaths stand for the attitudes of "prejudice" and "pride" respectively.<sup>113</sup> In the same vein Grover states that Farīd ridicules the inhibitions in the mind based on caste complexes.<sup>114</sup> Shaikh Farīd may have intended that one can achieve the state of equipoise or level-headedness only after removing the evil inclinations of prejudice and pride from the mind. In fact, the hint for such an interpretation and therefore, a possible clarification comes from the following comment of Guru Arjan:

The Creator dwells in His creation,  
and the creation in its Creator.  
Whom should we call bad  
when there is no one without Him?  
(GGS, M. V, Salok 75, p. 1381)

The Guru stresses that each one is worthy of equal dignity and respect because the Creator (khālaq) dwells within all. This view seems to be in harmony with Shaikh Farīd's concept of the equality of human beings based on the belief that the "True Lord abides in one and all"<sup>115</sup> (sabhanā mai sachā dhanī). But this realization comes to one who achieves level-headedness in life by removing prejudice and pride from

the mind. One of Shaikh Farīd's sayings recorded in the Siyār-u'l-Auliya is: "If you want to make the entire world your enemy, develop pride."<sup>116</sup>

Finally, Shaikh Farīd used to follow the tradition of the Prophet who emphasized that prayer to God is the only means for the soul's release from the bondage of evil and her turning towards God. A Qur'ānic verse declares: "Keep up prayer at early morning, . . . surely good deeds drive away evil deeds" (Sura 11, 114). Shaikh Farīd insists that one must devote the later part of the night in divine recollection; if one does not, one is spiritually dead:

If you do not awake to pray, O Farīd, in the later  
part of the night, although alive, you are no  
better than the dead.

But listen! "even if you have forgotten God,  
God has not forgotten you."

(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 107, p. 1383)

Here one can hear the echo of the mystic idea implied in the vision of Ibn Arabi that "it is not man alone who is in search of God but God too has a longing for man."<sup>117</sup> This emphasis on the spiritual practice of devotion in the early morning hours is in congruence with the Sikh practice of meditation upon divine Name in the "ambrosial hours"<sup>118</sup> (amrit velā sach nau vadiāī vichāru). Consider, for example, Guru Arjan's comments in the following verses:

The Lord is ever lovely, Farīd.  
He is far beyond all need.  
To be dyed with Allāh's love  
is the truest embellishment.

Deem and bear pain and pleasure alike, O Farīd,  
clean yourself of evil thoughts;  
Consider whatever pleases Allāh as good;  
and then alone you shall gain access to His  
court.

The world dances, Farīd, as the mammon makes it  
dance. You too are dancing to his tune.



He alone escapes this dance  
who is under the protection of Allāh.

The heart is attached to this world  
which is of no use.  
The way of God's devotees is very hard  
and it is attained by perfect good fortune.  
(GGS, M. V, Saloks 108-111, p. 1383)

These verses make the following points. In the first place, Guru Arjan envisions the divine Beloved as the One who is ever lovely (kantu raṅgāvalā) and who is far beyond all need (vaḍā vemuhtāju). To offer loving devotion to such a Lord early in the morning is in fact the need of the devotee because it provides him/her spiritual nourishment. Secondly, the Guru asserts that one must abide by the divine will by accepting pains and pleasures alike and lead the life of moral purity along with early morning devotions. This seems to be in line with Shaikh Farīd's idea of the omnipotence of the divine will (rabb razā'i).<sup>119</sup> Thirdly, Guru Arjan maintains that the true way of life is not to dance with the world.<sup>120</sup> The phrase "tūn bhī vajjeh nāli" ("You too are dancing to his tune") provides an allusion to Shaikh Farīd's verse in which he states "I walk only in the way of the world".<sup>121</sup> Guru Arjan may be suggesting here that the contemporary followers of Shaikh Farīd are not indeed on the spiritual path but are following the world. He further maintains that rare are the ones who escape this dance with the help of divine grace. Finally, Guru Arjan asserts that even though awake, if one's heart is still attached to worldly life, there is little use of early morning devotions. The true devotees of God follow the hard way (gākharī) of spiritual life without being infatuated with the attractions of the world. They are the blessed ones who arise early and devote the "ambrosial hours" to meditation upon the divine Name.

Throughout his comments, Guru Arjan uses the Arabic word Allāh for God seemingly addressing Shaikh Farīd in his own terms. Guru Arjan seems to be concerned here to define for his own audience the true way of spiritual life. He further contrasts the way of God's devotees with that of the phony Dervishes, apparently the contemporary followers of Shaikh Farīd, who were supposedly infatuated with the attractions of the world.

### Conclusion

Evidently the bānī of Shaikh Farīd is recorded in the GGS in its true Muslim colour. Shaikh Farīd is allowed to have his own voice to express his Muslim beliefs and practices freely. There are basic agreements between his thought and that of the Sikh Gurus in the following aspects of spiritual life: the belief in One God, the basic equality of humankind, the doctrine of God immanent in human heart, the mystic path of love and the agony of separation, the cultivation of moral and ethical virtues, the divine recollection, the emphasis on earning one's own living through honest means and the sense of sharing, and the mystical experience of union with the divine Beloved.

There are also some disagreements between Shaikh Farīd and the Sikh Gurus on essential points. First of all, the Sikh belief in the doctrine of rebirth is fundamentally different from the eschatological views held by Shaikh Farīd which involve notions such as the resurrection, the flaming hell, the pul sirāt, and the terrible retribution on unbelievers. The Gurus lay stress on the graciousness of God in contrast with Shaikh Farīd's emphasis on the fear of judgement. There is vital difference in the attitude towards death

between Shaikh Farīd and the Sikh Gurus. For Shaikh Farīd, death is the most dreadful event which ends in eternal extinction of terrestrial life. But for Guru Nanak, death is not something to be dreaded, but is a joy to be welcomed when it comes. Shaikh Farīd's attitude towards life in the world is overall negative. He denounces human birth as worthless. By contrast, the Sikh Gurus place a positive value on human life which is valuable like a precious diamond. Whereas Shaikh Farīd regards the world as a place of suffering, Guru Arjan equates the world with a "beautiful garden" reflecting the divine being and the divine purpose. The Sikh Gurus stress the ideals of moderate living and disciplined worldliness in contrast with Shaikh Farīd's views of asceticism and self-mortification. The Sikh Gurus maintain that grace is a matter of divine free choice which does not depend upon any kind of previous growth in spirituality. But Shaikh Farīd advocates the necessity of personal effort through various penances to win divine favour. He further maintains that one must turn towards God in the right age of youthful life, otherwise it will be too late. By contrast, Guru Amardās asserts that one can follow the path of God's love in any age if one has the right intention to do so and if one is blessed with the divine grace. Whereas Shaikh Farīd stresses that one must adopt the sectarian Sufi dress and renounce the world to follow the mystic path of love, Guru Amardās places his emphasis on the ideal of the life of the householder. Further, Guru Arjan makes the assertion that one must create a harmonized "balance" between renunciation and worldliness. On the whole, Shaikh Farīd's tone is pessimistic, whereas the Sikh Gurus exhibit the spirit of optimism.

These disagreements suggest that the Sikh Gurus were consciously offering their own distinctive vision of spiritual life and community. Their comments on Shaikh Farīd's verses mark clearly the boundaries between the Gurmat (Guru's view or doctrine) and the Sufi line of thought based upon the teachings of the Sufi poet. While there is obviously some agreement between Shaikh Farīd and the Sikh Gurus, their comments seem to indicate the need to clarify seemingly unintelligible passages in Shaikh Farīd and to correct views which verge on the erroneous.

Notes to Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup> According to another text Fawā'id-u'l-Fu'ād, written in 1308-22 CE, Shaikh Farīd was born in 571 A.H./1175 CE.

<sup>2</sup> K. A. Nizami, The Life and Time of Shaikh Farīd-u'd-dīn Ganj-i-Shakar (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delhi, 1955), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ganda Singh, "Baba Farid -- A Real Saint" in Attar Sing, ed., Socio-Cultural Impact of Islam (Chandigarh: Punjab University, 1976), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Nizami, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> K. A. Nizami, The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. II (London: Lusac & Co., 1965), p. 796.

<sup>6</sup> Nizami, Life and Times, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 347.

<sup>10</sup> G. S. Talib, Baba Sheikh Farīd Shakar Ganj (New Delhi: National book trust, 1974), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> K. A. Nizami, Forward to Harnam Singh Shan, ed., So Said Sheikh Farid (Chandigarh: Punjab University, 1974), p. V.

<sup>12</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, As Through a Veil -- Mystical Poetry in Islam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 136.

<sup>13</sup> S. A. A. Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India Vol. I (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978), p. 140.

<sup>14</sup> Ganda Singh, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, p. 384.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>17</sup> McLeod maintains that there seems to be little doubt that Guru Nanak must at some time have met Shaikh Ibrahim, the contemporary incumbent of the Sufi line descending from Shaikh Farid, at Pāk Pattan. See W. H. McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 140. For a brief account of Shaikh Ibrahim's life see Lajwanti Rama Krishna, Punjabi Sufi Poets (New Delhi: Ashajanak Publications, 1973), pp. 1-11.

<sup>18</sup> Sabad (Sabda): Any individual hymn from the GGS (Chaupada,

Tipada, Aṣṭpadī) is invariably called a Śābad, literally "Word". In the Sikh usage it designates both divine "Word" received from God, and the expression of that Word in a hymn or song of praise.

<sup>19</sup> Salok: Couplet or stanza. In the GGS we find Saloks of varying lines from 2 to 20. "Valmiki was India's first Sanskrit poet who spontaneously uttered words, which turned to have measures in two equal parts. As he had uttered "Śoka" (his feelings of sadness) at the spectacle of a hunter shooting down two birds, his couplet was called śloka. Śloka in Sanskrit also means praise. It has no rhyme. It was in the vernacular poetry that rhyme and flow entered. We have in Punjabi Salok, Sorathā, dohā, dūhā, dohrā, dupadā." Cited in, Mohan Singh Diwana, "Discoveries in Sikh Culture III", in Journal of Sikh Studies, Vol. II, No. 1 (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1975), p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> Nizami, Life and Times, p. 84.

<sup>21</sup> M. A. Macauliffe, The Sikh Religion, Vol. VI (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1978, reprint, first published, Oxford, 1909), p. 357.

<sup>22</sup> Attar Singh, ed., "Sheikh Farid & Punjabi Poetic Tradition", in Socio-Cultural Impact of Islam on India (Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1976), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Malfūzāt are collections of discourses made by Sufi saints to their disciples in public about good and moral actions. See Akhlaq Hussain Dehlvi, "The Poetical Work of Baba Farid" in Journal of Sikh Studies, Vol. V, No. 1 (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1978), p. 56-7.

<sup>25</sup> Nizami, Life and Times, pp. 121-122.

<sup>26</sup> S. A. A. Rizvi, "Indian Sufism and Guru Nanak" in Harbans Singh, ed., Perspectives on Guru Nanak (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1975), p. 219, Note 40.

<sup>27</sup> K. A. Nizami, "Shaikh Farid-ud-din Ganj-i-Shakar" in G. S. Talib, ed., Perspectives on Sheikh Farid (Patiala: Baba Farid Memorial Society, 1976), p. 29.

<sup>28</sup> Anil Chandra Banerjee, "Baba Farid and the Sikh Religion" in Talib, Perspectives, p. 171.

<sup>29</sup> Bhai Jodh Singh, "Shaikh Farid" in The Sikh Review Vol. XX, No. 226 (Calcutta: The Sikh Cultural Centre, Sept. 1972), pp. 37-42. Also see Balwant Singh Anand, Baba Farid (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1975), pp. 34-43, and Dehlvi, op. cit., pp. 49-58.

<sup>30</sup> Dehlvi, op. cit., p. 54. He cites the following Punjabi verse from Jawāhar-i-Farīdī:

Farīdā dhar sūlī sar piñjire talīān token kāg  
Rabb ajehūn bahure so dhan asāde bhāg

Which means -

"Farīd, 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."

This is parallel to the following GGS verse of Shaikh Farīd:

Farīdā tanu sukā piñjaru thiā talīān khundeh kāg  
ajai su rabb nā bahurio dekhu bande ke bhāg

Which means -

O Farīd, this body has withered into a skeleton  
and the crows peck at the soles of my feet:

Even now God has not come,

Behold my misfortune.

(GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 90, p. 1382)

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 53:

<sup>33</sup>S.M.R. Jalali Naini, "Baba Farid -- His Life, Works and Teachings" in Talib, Perspectives, p. 162.

<sup>34</sup>B. R. Grover, "Farid speaks the human Truth" in Talib, Perspectives, p. 153.

<sup>35</sup>G. S. Talib, trans., Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1984), p. XXVII.

<sup>36</sup>W. Owen Cole, Sikhism and its Indian Context 1469-1708 (London: Longman & Todd, 1984), p. 101.

<sup>37</sup>I follow Shan's translation of Shaikh Farīd's verses given in So Said Sheikh Farid, reworking here and there. Salok numbers are according to the GGS.

<sup>38</sup>S. Alam Khundmiri, "Some Distinctive Features of Indian Sufism", in Talib, Perspectives, pp. 181-9, see Note 10.

<sup>39</sup>Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, p. 106.

<sup>40</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Saloks 1, 48, 68.

<sup>41</sup>"The Bridge is a reality (one of the final testings of mankind before entering paradise). It is placed directly over hell, and people pass upon it. Paradise is beyond it. We ask safety of God (from the perils of crossing the Bridge)." See Kenneth Cragg & Marston Speight, Islam From Within (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1980), p. 122.

<sup>42</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 98.

<sup>43</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 97.

<sup>44</sup>A. J. Arberry, *Sufism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Publishers, 1979), p. 131.

<sup>45</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Saloks 84, 86, 102. Also see Shaikh Farīd's hymn, Āsā 2, GGS, p. 488.

<sup>46</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 37.

<sup>47</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Saloks 90-92.

<sup>48</sup>Cited in Guninder Kaur, "Shaikh Farid - Poet and Mystic" in *The Sikh Review*, XXXIII, No. 383 (Calcutta: The Sikh Cultural Centre, Nov. 1985), p. 48.

<sup>49</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 30.

<sup>50</sup>A Sufi named Bayezid used to say: "If the eight Paradises were opened in my hut, and the rule of both worlds were given in my hands, I would not give for them that single sigh which rises at morning-time from the depth of my soul in remembering my longing for Him." Cited in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 133.

<sup>51</sup>Cf. See Guru Nānak's *Bārah-māhā*, Tūkhārī Chhant, GGS, pp. 1107-1110.

<sup>52</sup>GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Āsā 2, p. 488.

<sup>53</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 60.

<sup>54</sup>Mohammad Noor Nabi, "A Chistīya Sufi Way of Life" in *The Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. VI, No. 2 (Patiala: Punjabi University, Autumn 1978), p. 71.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>56</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 128.

<sup>57</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 127.

<sup>58</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 6.

<sup>59</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 7.

<sup>60</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 78.

<sup>61</sup>Avtar Singh, *Ethics of the Sikhs* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1970), p. 192.

<sup>62</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 16.

<sup>63</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 128.

<sup>64</sup>The martyr-mystic Hallaj proclaimed "An-al-Haqq" (I am the Truth). Schimmel comments: "Having become Haqq it was necessary to



conceal himself, that is, to behave like God and not show himself for God Himself has called Himself the Coverer." Cited in Avtar Singh, "Sheikh Farid - His Relevance to the Study of Comparative Religion" in Talib, Perspectives, p. 200.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>66</sup> Talib, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 174.

<sup>67</sup> Shaikh Farīd, Salok 19.

<sup>68</sup> Avtar Singh, Sheikh Farid, p. 199.

<sup>69</sup> Guninder Kaur, "Shaikh Farid - Poet and Mystic" in The Sikh Review, Vol. XXXIII, No. 384 (Calcutta: The Sikh Cultural Centre, Dec. 1985), p. 42.

<sup>70</sup> Cited in Cole, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>71</sup> Shaikh Farīd, Salok 38.

<sup>72</sup> Cited in Cole, op. cit., p. 154-155.

<sup>73</sup> Guru Nānak also uses the imagery of saffron flower (kasumbhā) to stress transience of worldly pleasures as follows:

False is the colour of safflower:  
it lasts but for a few days.  
Without the Lord's Name,  
One is strayed by Doubt;  
thus is the False one beguiled. . . .  
(GGS, M. I., Sūhī Aṣṭapadī 2, p. 751)

In line with Shaikh Farīd, Guru Nānak here acknowledges the theme of transitoriness of worldly life, though always with the same insistent stress on the divine Name as the infallible remedy of its woes.

<sup>74</sup> McLeod, op. cit., p. 159. In this context, Jodh Singh maintains that Guru Nānak has accepted the doctrines of karma and rebirth. It is clear from his teachings that the soul is reborn after the death of the body in accordance with its deeds and this cycle does not come to an end, until the soul, destroying the wall of egoism, identifies itself with the Divine Essence within. See Jodh Singh, "Guru Nanak's Religious Thought" in Taran Singh, ed., Guru Nanak and Indian Religious Thought (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1970), p. 83.

<sup>75</sup> G. S. Talib, "Mul Mantra: An Untenable Koranic Parallel Examined" in Pritam Singh, ed., Sikh Concept of the Divine (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1985), pp. 197-198.

<sup>76</sup> GGS, M. I., Mārū I, p. 989. Cited in McLeod, op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>77</sup> The term "haumai" is a compound of two pronouns, "hau" and "mai", each meaning "I", and thus, "haumai" means "I, I". It signifies the powerful impulse to succumb to personal gratification so that a

person is separated from God, and thus continues to suffer within the cycle of rebirth. A detailed analysis of "Guru Nānak's conception of haumai" (ego or self-centredness) is given in Taran Singh, ed., Teachings of Guru Nanak (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1977), pp. 33-42.

<sup>78</sup> GGS, M. I, Vadhansu 2, p. 579. Also see McLeod, op. cit., p. 188.

<sup>79</sup> Shamsher Singh Ashok, "Shaikh Farīd - Jīvan Te Rachanā" in Jit Singh Seetal, ed., Shaikh Farid (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1970), p. 59.

<sup>80</sup> Nizami, Life and Times, p. 84.

<sup>81</sup> Cole, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

<sup>82</sup> Salok 113 is recorded in Sirī Rāgu-Kī-Vār, 1 (2), GGS, p. 83 as Guru Nānak's.

<sup>83</sup> W. Owen Cole, The Guru in Sikhism (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1982), pp. 50-52. There is no fatalism nor any passive acceptance of a predestined future in Guru Nānak's view of life. He proclaims: "With your own hands carve out your destiny" (GGS, M. I, Āsā-Kī-Vār, Paurī 20, p. 473). Guru Nānak's idea of "divine free choice" on the one hand, and his emphasis on the life of activism on the other, reflect his ability to hold in tension seemingly opposed elements. However, all human actions presuppose the functioning of divine grace. One must continue to perform disinterested actions at all stages of spiritual development to prevent a "fall from grace" and to set an example for others.

<sup>84</sup> R. A. Nicholson, The idea of Personality in Sufism (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970), pp. 24-25.

<sup>85</sup> William C. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Love - The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 184.

<sup>86</sup> Schimmel, As through a Veil, p. 107.

<sup>87</sup> Chittick, op. cit., p. 187.

<sup>88</sup> "Some harm themselves by burning their limbs in the fire. Without the Lord's Name the body is reduced to ashes. Of what worth is all this shouting and wailing. . ." (GGS, M. I, Vār-Malār-Kī, Paurī 15, p. 1285).

<sup>89</sup> Salok 120 is repeated as Guru Nānak's with minor verbal variation on page 1411 of GGS.

<sup>90</sup> GGS, M. I. Malar 5, p. 1256. Cited in McLeod, op. cit., p. 226.

<sup>91</sup> GGS, M. IV, Salok 121, p. 1384. This Salok is repeated in Kānare-Kī-Vār, 1 (15), GGS, p. 1358. The verse reads:

I seek my Friend elsewhere,  
 but lo, He is here, ever with me!  
 The Invisible Lord may not be seen by my ownself;  
 but the Divine Guide may  
 kindly show me a glimpse of Him.

<sup>92</sup> GGS, M. III, Saloks 122-123, p. 1384. These two Saloks are duplicated in Vadahansu-Ki-Vār, 2 & 3 (1), GGS, p. 585. The verses read:

Seeing the swans swimming,  
 the herons too were enthused with the  
 desire to swim likewise.  
 But lo, the poor cranes got drowned to death,  
 their heads below and feet upwards.

I took him for a great swan,  
 and therefore I associated with him.  
 Had I known that he was but a wretched heron,  
 I would never have touched him with my limb.

The hansa-birds (swans) symbolise the liberated souls. According to the legend, the hansas sporting in lake Mansarovar are gifted with such marvellous viveka (discernment) that they can separate milk mixed with water, drinking the pure milk and rejecting water. They are also supposed to feed on pearls which they pick out from that lake. Here Guru Amardās gives an interesting comparative parallelism of the cranes imitating the swans with fatal results. Similarly the phony Dervishes too are prone to pretend, to pose larger than their life-sizes.

<sup>93</sup> With a minor variation, this Salok appears among Guru Nānak's in Siri Rāgu-Kī-Vār, 2 (20), GGS, p. 91.

<sup>94</sup> Man Mohan Singh, "Bird images in Sheikh Farid's Poetry" in Gurbachan Sing Talib, ed., The Sikh-Sufi Quest For Harmony (Patiala: The Baba Farid Memorial Society, 1980), p. 27.

<sup>95</sup> GGS, M. I, Japji 32, p. 7.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Guru Nānak's comment, Salok 32, on Shaikh Farīd's Salok 31, GGS, p. 1379.

<sup>97</sup> Anand, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>98</sup> Nizami, Life and Times, p. 23.

<sup>99</sup> Schimmel, As through a Veil, p. 113.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Guru Nānak's use of the phrase "blood of avrice" in Rāmakaī-Kī-Vār, 2 (19), GGS, p. 956. Also see the following verse of Guru Amardās, which is parallel to Shaikh Farīd's:

If my body is crushed in a crusher,  
 it yields not a drop of blood.

For, my soul is a Sacrifice to the Lord:  
 it is deeply in Love with the True One.  
 Says Nanak: I live in the Presence of  
 my God, night and day.  
 (GGS, M. III, Sorāṭhi-Kī-Vār, 1 (5), p. 644)

- <sup>101</sup>Chittick, op. cit., p. 30.
- <sup>102</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 50.
- <sup>103</sup>Mahmud Husain Siddiqui, The Memoirs of Sufis written in India (Baroda: University of Baroda, 1979), p. 40.
- <sup>104</sup>GGS, M. III, Vadhansu-Kī-Vār, 1 (4), p. 587.
- <sup>105</sup>Niharranjan Ray, The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975), p. 45.
- <sup>106</sup>Attar Singh, op. cit., p. 10.
- <sup>107</sup>Gopal Singh, A History of the Sikh People (Chandigarh: World Sikh University Press, 1979), p. 185. Pīlo's verse reads: "They who have died at their birth are superior to us; They do not thrust their feet into the mire, and are not befouled therewith."
- <sup>108</sup>Saloks 82 and 83 of Guru Arjan are repeated in Rāmakali-Kī-Vār, Paurī 21, GGS, p. 966. They are the responses to Shaikh Farīd's Saloks 76-81. For convenience, we have juxtaposed Saloks 76 and 83 here because of the common theme.
- <sup>109</sup>GGS, M. V, Āsā 12, p. 374.
- <sup>110</sup>GGS, M. V, p. 15: "Through God's grace you have got the human body, Now alone is the opportunity to meet your Lord."
- <sup>111</sup>"Night was lost to sleep, day to eating, this life worth a diamond for a farthing goes." (GGS, M. I, Gaurī 18, p. 156.)
- <sup>112</sup>"Nanak, idle it is for man to ask for pleasure when suffering comes: Pleasure and pain are like robes which man must wear as they come." (GGS, M. I, Vār-Mājh-Kī, 2 (24), p. 149.)
- <sup>113</sup>Sahib Singh, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan Vol. 10 (Jullundur: Raj Publishers, 1971), p. 334.
- <sup>114</sup>Grover, op. cit., p. 155.
- <sup>115</sup>Shaikh Farīd, Salok 129.
- <sup>116</sup>Cited in Talib, Perspectives, p. 31.
- <sup>117</sup>S. Alam Khundmiri, "The changing concept of Man in Sufi Literature" in Talib, The Sikh-Sufi Quest for Harmony.

<sup>118</sup> GGS, M. I, Japji 4, p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> Shaikh Farīd, Salok 84.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Kabīr also takes on the role of a dancer who has performed so long that not another step is left in him:

Too many, many roles,  
these parts I've played,  
and now I'll part from them.

Too tired of all pretense,  
tuning, tuning the strings,  
and now it's over, done --  
thanks to the name of Rām.

I haven't another dance to dance  
and my mind can no longer  
maneuver the drum.

(GGS, Kabīr, Rāg Āsā 28, p. 483)

<sup>121</sup> GGS, Shaikh Farīd, Salok 2, pp. 1377-1378. The verse reads:

"The way of the saint is hard, O Farīd  
I walk only in the way of the world.  
I have tied and taken up my bundle of worldliness,  
where may I go to throw it away?"

Ram Singh maintains that it is not possible that Guru Arjan is suggesting that Shaikh Farīd himself is dancing with the world. Rather, the phrase "tūn bhī vajjeh nāli" ("You too are dancing to his tune") is either addressed to the general audience or to the phony Dervishes (dambhī dervish) of the day. See Ram Singh, "Farīd-bānī vich Guru-Salok" in Pritam Singh, ed., Shakarganj (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1982), p. 212.

## CHAPTER 3

BĀNĪ BHAGAT KABĪR JĪ KĪBiographical Sketch

There is a great deal of legendary material about Kabīr, but little is known concerning the historical facts of his life.<sup>1</sup> The occasional references which he makes in his works provide only glimpses of the actual details of his life. He was born in Banāras around the beginning of the fifteenth century and belonged to a family of weavers which had recently been converted to Islam. The earliest testimony about his birth and upbringing in a household of Muslim weavers is recorded by Ravidās, who is generally believed to have been Kabīr's younger contemporary, but who probably belonged to the following generation. Says Ravidās:

In whose family on the occasion of Īd and Bakr Īd,  
the cow is butchered;  
In whose family Shaikh, Shahīd, and Pīr are  
reverenced,  
Whose father acted in this way,  
the son following him - he, Kabīr,  
became reverenced in the three worlds. 2  
(GGS, Ravidās, Malār 2, p. 1293).

It should be emphasized that to be a Muslim in North India in the fifteenth century would mean to be still half Hindu, because the people -- usually low-caste Hindus -- who found it convenient to convert en masse to the religion of the conquerors to improve their social status did not necessarily forsake their former gods and practices.<sup>3</sup> In his own sayings Kabīr does not seem to identify himself as either a Hindu or as a Muslim; instead he refers to his Julāhā (weaver) caste and the family craft of weaving which he followed in his life. His social background as a low-caste weaver makes it likely that he was more or

less illiterate. It is however possible that he may have learned meditative and devotional practices in the company of the saints in Banāras, a widely recognized centre of Hindu religion, learning and culture.<sup>4</sup>

Like other saints represented in the Guru Granth Sāhib, Kabīr does not name and acknowledge any human Guru. He is generally believed to have been a disciple of the famous Guru Rāmānand.<sup>5</sup> But the traditional association with Rāmānand is highly improbable because it "involves chronological difficulties and the only references which Kabīr makes to Rāmānand are to be found in works of doubtful authenticity."<sup>6</sup> Vaudeville, for example, remarks:

The story of the way that the Julāhā Kabīr somehow managed to snatch the Rāma-mantra from Rāmānand appears to have been concocted with a view to hinduizing Kabīr. <sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the later Hindu followers of Kabīr made an attempt to provide their panth (sect) with a brahmin Guru to counter the criticisms of such smartas as the poet Tulsī Dās.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the Muslim followers of Kabīr claimed that he was a disciple and successor of Shaikh Taqqī, a famous Sufi of Suhrawardīya order, who is said to have lived in Jhūsī and died in CE 1429.<sup>9</sup> Chaturvedi examines the numerous references which Kabīr makes to a Guru and concludes that he probably considered all "saints" to be his human Gurus.<sup>10</sup> However, it is quite evident that Kabīr sometimes uses the word "Guru" not to refer to a human Guru, but to describe the Satguru (True Guru) within, the voice of God within the human soul.<sup>11</sup>

Although there has been an endless controversy over the issue of Kabīr's dates, current scholarship prefers to accept CE 1398-1448 as the dates of his birth and death.<sup>12</sup> All traditions agree that Kabīr

spent most of his life in Banāras and probably died in the village of Magahar. While there is ample evidence to show that both Hindus and Muslims were ready to assault Kabīr physically during his lifetime because of his vigorous attack on ritual and slavish outward observance in both Hinduism and Islam, they have since his death been ready to assault each other over the privilege of claiming him as their own.<sup>13</sup> The very fact that his sayings were included in the Guru Granth Sāhib along with the utterances of the Sikh Gurus and other poet-saints, and that at least two panthic traditions trace their origin to Kabīr, points to a reputation of high spiritual attainment which he may have enjoyed already in his own lifetime.

#### Textual Traditions

The GGS collection of Kabīr's utterances is the oldest document relating to Kabīr, going back to the third quarter of the sixteenth century, and it is the only one for which an early and precisely dated manuscript exists.<sup>14</sup> It includes 225 Śābads arranged under 17 different rāgas in which they are supposed to be sung. There are three longer Kabīr works to be found in the Gaurī Rāgu: "the fifty-two Letters" (Bāvan Akharī, GGS, pp. 340-3), "the Lunar Dates" (Thittīn, GGS, pp. 343-344), and "the Seven Days" (Vār Sat, GGS, pp. 344-345). The Saloks by Kabīr are gathered together in the epilogue of the GGS which follows the rāga section. There are 243 Saloks in the collection entitled Salok Bhagat Kabīr Jiu Ke, "Bhagat Kabīr's couplets or stanzas" (GGS, pp. 1364-1377), but of these five are by Guru Arjan (nos. 209, 210, 211, 214, 221), one by Guru Amardās (no. 220), three (nos. 212, 213, 241) may possibly be by Nāmdev and one (no. 242) by



Ravidās. Two extra Saloks by Kabīr are included in the Mārū Rāgu (GGS, p. 1105). A number of Saloks are duplicated in Vārs (GGS, pp. 509, 555, 947, 948) and are followed by the commentary verses by Guru Amardās.

The collection of Kabīr's sayings exceeds that of any other saint represented in the GGS. In the absence of any other reliable manuscripts dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the GGS tradition of Kabīr remains perhaps the most authentic part of his work.<sup>15</sup> Vaudeville remarks:

. . .the simplicity of the language and the naturalness of the style gives an air of authenticity to Kabīr's sayings in the Granth. 16

However, it should be emphasized that the GGS does not contain all the sayings of Kabīr. The fact that at the time of the canonization of the scripture Guru Arjan dropped seven hymns of Kabīr available in the Goindvāl pothīs clearly indicates that a selection must have been made out of the Kabīr material accessible to the Sikh Gurus.<sup>17</sup>

There are two other major collections of Kabīr's works, the Kabīr-granthāvalī (KG) and the Bījāk, representing the Dādū-panthī and Kabīr-panthī traditions respectively. The dates of origin of these two collections are uncertain, but both can be assumed to have taken shape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, rather later than the GGS.<sup>18</sup> Although there are a number of verses common to the three collections, each one taken as a whole, shows a different picture of Kabīr. Comparing the dohās (Saloks) of Kabīr in the GGS with those found in the KG, Karine Schomer concludes:

Thus we see that the dohās of Kabīr included and preserved in the GGS tradition tend to be those which encourage the "moods and motivations" appropriate to a solid, moral, God-fearing

religious community of house-holders. Utterances pointing to the ecstasies of mystical experience are not totally absent, but are strikingly few in comparison with those found in the KG. 19

Why the difference in the images? It may be that much of the KG material emphasizing asocial, amoral and ascetic ideals -- especially the deprecation of women -- was edited out in the formation of the GGS corpus of Kabīr utterances.<sup>20</sup> Of course, Schomer assumes that the KG material is authentic. Another possible explanation is that the KG may contain a large number of apocryphal verses, added later but attributed to Kabīr.<sup>21</sup> Similarly the Bījak might be regarded as a Kabīr-panthī recasting of the sayings of Kabīr rather than the original work of Kabīr.<sup>22</sup>

There are two important issues concerning the source of the collection of Kabīr's sayings in the GGS. First, it has been claimed in the later Janam-sākhīs that Guru Nānak met Kabīr in the course of his visit to Banāras.<sup>23</sup> But such an encounter was a clear impossibility. Even if the traditional date of Kabīr's death CE 1518 is accepted as factual, there is no sound evidence to suggest that Guru Nānak ever met Kabīr.<sup>24</sup> Second, it is commonly assumed that Guru Nānak knew Kabīr's sayings and hence he was the source of the Kabīr collection in the GGS. Sahib Singh discusses the issue at length and asserts that a comparative analysis of some of Guru Nānak's works and those of Kabīr clearly indicates thematic as well as verbal similarities which can be explained only by the assumption that Guru Nānak had access to at least some of Kabīr's works.<sup>25</sup> However, McLeod challenges this assumption by arguing that many of the resemblances which Sahib Singh perceives are too vague to warrant consideration as they concern common themes rather than actual correspondence.<sup>26</sup> He

then quotes five brief passages of less than two lines each which possess verbal correspondence and asserts that they may simply be proverbial expressions which may have come from the religious language of everyday life of Northern India. The following examples from the hymns of Benī, Kabīr and Guru Nānak will illustrate the point:

1. kahu Benī gurmukh dhiāvai  
binu satgur bāt nā pāvai (GGS, Benī, Prabhāti 1, p. 1351)
2. binu satgur bāt nā pāi  
kahu Kabīr samjhāi (GGS, Kabīr, Basant 3, p.1194)
3. kahu Nānak nisachau dhiāvai  
bin satgur bāt nā pāvai (GGS, M. I. Sahasakritī 1, p. 1353)

The expression bin satgur bāt nā pāvai, "without the True Guru, one does not find the way", is common to the hymns of Benī and Guru Nānak. Although it differs slightly in the case of Kabīr's hymn, the sense is retained. McLeod maintains that such examples are a type of epigram which could easily have gained common currency within the circle of the Sants. He concludes the discussion as follows:

The examples of verbal correspondence are sufficient to suggest that Guru Nānak may have known some of the compositions of Kabīr, but they do no more than establish it as a remote possibility. We may accordingly conclude that in all likelihood Guru Nānak and Kabīr neither met nor knew each other's works. 27

There are a few points which need to be made in the context of the present discussion. In the first place, Guru Nānak does not mention Kabīr in his works. Secondly, he does not comment on any verse of Kabīr as he does in the case of Shaikh Farīd. Thus there seems to be no reasonable ground to assert that Guru Nānak was familiar with Kabīr's works, and one must look elsewhere for the inclusion of Kabīr

in the GGS.

A mention of Kabīr is made for the first time by the third Guru, Guru Amardās, who says: "Nāmā (Nāmdev) was a cotton printer and Kabīr a weaver, yet from the Perfect Guru, they obtained salvation."<sup>28</sup> It was Guru Amardās who inserted a number of Kabīr's Saloks in his own Vārs and responded to them in his commentary verses for the sake of defining true teaching, practice and community from the viewpoint of Sikhism. Perhaps it was he who may have collected the works of Kabīr during his first 60 years of wandering as a spiritual seeker before coming into the fold of Sikhism. This assumption is further strengthened by the traditional account of his life which states that he made an annual pilgrimage to the Ganges twenty times while still a Vaiṣṇavite.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, there is the fact that Kabīr's works were first recorded in the Goindvāl pothīs under the care of Guru Amardās. The inclusion of Kabīr in the GGS should therefore probably be dated to Guru Amardās. Beginning with him the verses of Kabīr were regarded by the Gurus as significant enough to be used for comments on what constitute true religious belief and practice.

It should be emphasized that the major concern in the present study is not with the issue of the source of the Kabīr collection in the GGS, but with the understanding of the Gurus' concerns behind their comments on Kabīr's sayings. We will first look at teachings of Kabīr as they emerge in the GGS. This will be followed by an analysis of the responses of Guru Amardās and Guru Arjan respectively.

#### Kabīr in the Guru Granth Sāhib

Like most of the poet-saints of the GGS, Kabīr's thought is firmly

rooted in the teachings of the Sant tradition of Northern India.<sup>30</sup> The Saints were a group of mystical poets who believed in the one supreme God beyond all form and sectarian garb. They believed in the basic equality of human beings and thus rejected all social distinctions based upon the caste system. They shunned the outward symbols of religious life including images, formal religious exercises, pilgrimages and ritual bathing associated with the ideas of pollution and purity. They also challenged the authority of the scriptures, the priests and the sacred languages, and expressed their beliefs not in the traditional Sanskrit, the language of the privileged few, but in the vernacular which enabled the common people access to and equal participation in religious discourse. Their emphasis upon the doctrine of one supreme reality immanent in everyone meant that spiritual experience, enlightenment and attainment of liberation lay within the reach of everyone.<sup>31</sup> The only requirement for the individual was to offer his/her loving devotion not to an avatāra (incarnation of a deity, usually Viṣṇu), but direct to the supreme God himself through strictly inward meditation on the divine Name.

The distinctiveness of Kabīr's thought lies in his reassertion of the Sant teachings in the light of his own personality and experience. Kabīr claims to have had an enlightenment experience which came to him after he had passed through stages of spiritual crises and bewilderment.<sup>32</sup> He describes it metaphorically as follows:

Kabīr, the Satguru is the true Hero,  
 who loosed off a single arrow;  
 The moment it struck, I fell to the ground  
 and a wound opened in my breast.  
 (GGS, Kabīr, Salok 194, p. 1374)

Here the archer is the True Guru (Satguru), the divine teacher within

the human soul, and his arrow is the Śābad, the inner Word through which he communicates with those who seek him out. The doctrine of the Word which Kabīr employs to refer to the enlightenment experience or the means of reaching it, is central to the teachings of the Sikh Gurus as well.<sup>33</sup>

In another hymn in the Gaurī Rāgu, Kabīr describes his spiritual awakening more clearly: "Lo! my brethern, a storm of divine knowledge hath come; the screens of doubt have all been blown away, and even the ropes of mammon have not been left. . . ."<sup>34</sup> In both cases, Kabīr maintains that revelation comes at the divine initiative and it comes with suddenness which pierces every layer of delusion in the mind of the individual whose total life is then transformed. This new life of spirituality is to be found in mystical union with the Divine.

In his hymn in the Prabhātī Rāgu, Kabīr elaborates on his understanding of God. God is universal and is present everywhere especially in the human heart. He condemns the sectarian notions of both Hindus and Muslims who try to keep God confined to their respective holy places as follows:

If Allāh lives only in the mosque,  
then whose is the rest of the world?  
For Hindus, He lives in the idols;  
There is no reality in both.

O Allāh and Rām, I live by Thy name,  
Shower thy grace on me, O Lord.

Harī lives in the South  
and Allāh in the west. 35  
Search in the heart, in the heart alone:  
That is His real abode.

Twenty-four days for the brahmins,  
thirty days for the qāzīs --  
a month each year for fasting to find the Treasure,  
eleven for other works.

What avails the Hindus to bath (at Jagananāth)  
 in Orīssā, what the Muslims to bow their heads  
 in a mosque?  
 With a heart full of fraud they chant prayers;  
 What avails them to go on a hajj (pilgrimage)  
 to Kaaba?

The men and women Thou has created, O God,  
 are all in Thy form.  
 Kabīr, is child of Rām and Allāh, and  
 accepts all gurus and pīrs.

Says Kabīr, listen, O men and women,  
 take refuge in the one God;  
 O mortals, only repeat God's name,  
 and then shall you be assuredly saved.  
 (GGS, Kabīr, Prabhātī 2, p. 1349)

Kabīr here emphatically states the oneness of God, His omnipresence and in a typical mystical tone takes the human heart (dil) to be the abode of God. Thus the individual must find the truth in his/her own body and mind by repeating God's name with utmost inner sincerity of the heart, which is the only means of attaining salvation.

Given this understanding of God it is not surprising that Kabīr vigorously attacks the outward observance and sectarianism in both Hinduism and Islam of his days. Hindus abstain from grains on ekādasī (giās in the original text), the eleventh day in each lunar fortnight, roughly twenty-four days a year. Muslims fast during daylight hours in the month of Ramadān. Again, Hindus visit the pilgrimage centre at Jagananāth Purī in Orīssā in the south for ritual bathing to remove accumulated karma and Muslims trudge to Mecca to pay their homage to Kaaba. Kabīr condemns both Hindus and Muslims, especially the brahmins and the qāzīs, as hypocrites for the way in which they divorce moral conduct and religious practice. He uses the formulaic phrase dil meh kapat -- with a heart full of fraud -- to underline the phoniness in traditional religion.

Further, Kabīr recognizes the basic equality of human beings on the ground that they are created by the same God<sup>36</sup> and are "all in Thy form". Each person is somehow in God's form and is worthy of equal dignity and respect. Kabīr may have intended to resolve the historical tension prevailing in two major religious communities of India -- Hindus and Muslims -- who were making exclusive religious claims. Kabīr, however, declares his independence from the sectarian categories of Hinduism and Islam by identifying himself to be a child of one God who is known by different names such as Allāh and Rām. Moreover, he seems to have shown equal regard to the devout leaders of the two faiths -- gurus and pīrs -- who may have influenced him with their piety.

Throughout his poetry, Kabīr seems to have rejected the authority of the scriptures of both Hinduism and Islam. He asserts that the Vedas and the Semitic texts (kateb) are a pretence which cannot stop the wanderings of the heart.<sup>37</sup> At points he is unequivocal in his rejection of the religious texts:

I have discarded the writings of the  
 pandits and the mullas  
 And used nothing out of them.  
 With purity in heart thou canst  
 see the Master.  
 Kabīr found Him searching the self.  
 (GGS, Kabīr, Bhairo 4, p. 1159)

Kabīr here claims to have attained the enlightenment experience through self-realization. He is quite explicit that the source of his spiritual development is not some external authority, but his own personal mystic experience.

Kabīr places much emphasis upon the inwardness as true religiosity and denounces all external observance as futile.<sup>38</sup> He maintains that



mere rituals, rites and ceremonial worship are of no use in bringing about salvation:

If by wandering naked one could achieve yoga,  
 Then all the animals in the forest would get  
 salvation.  
 It is no use going naked or being clad in skins,  
 If one does not know God within.  
 If one could swim across by shaving one's head,  
 Then why doth no sheep get salvation?  
 If one could get across by continence,  
 Why could not an eunuch achieve the supreme state?  
 Saith Kabīr, hearken, O brethren.  
 None was saved without Rām Nām.  
 (GGS, Kabīr, Gaurī 4, p. 324)

In the last verse, Kabīr recommends the spiritual discipline of meditation on the divine Name as the only means of attaining salvation. Kabīr shows a preference to use the word "Rām" for God. It should be noted that this "Rām" is not the deity of popular Hindu mythology, incarnation of Viṣṇu and hero of the Ramāyana epic. In a number of poems Kabīr explicitly repudiates this anthropomorphic Rām. For Kabīr, Rām is primarily a sound, a mantra consisting of the long and short syllable "Rā-ma".<sup>39</sup>

Kabīr sarcastically condemns the hierarchical social values of the caste system under which human beings are in principle unequal, and the ideas of purity and pollution associated with the caste. He challenges the brahmin as follows:

None knew his family or caste in the mother's womb,  
 All have sprung from the seed of Brahman.  
 Say, O pandit! since when hast thou become a  
 brahmin?  
 Do not waste thy life in the pride of birth.  
 If thou art a brahmin, born of a brahmin woman,  
 Why didst not thou take birth in a different way?  
 How art thou a brahmin and how am I a sūdra?  
 Doth milk flow in thy veins and blood in mine?  
 Saith Kabīr, he who reflects on Brahman  
 is called a brahmin in our vocabulary.  
 (GGS, Kabīr, Gaurī 7, p. 324)

Milk, for all its white appearance seemingly symbolizes purity whereas blood symbolizes impurity or untouchability.<sup>40</sup> Kabīr argues with merciless logic that either brahmin and śūdra are both polluted or are both clean. He uses the common argument against untouchability that everyone is born in the same way from the same stuff, the Brahm bindu (seed of Brahman). Śūdras are therefore not polluted in relation to brahmins. Kabīr thus ridicules the absurdity of the claim made by brahmins that they enjoy special status because of their birth in a particular caste. In his radical reinterpretation he points out that a true brahmin is the one who meditates on God.

For Kabīr, the way of devotion is solitary one. In the following Salok, he cautions the devotee not to take anyone along while following the saintly path to union because that would delay his/her own spiritual progress:

Kabīr, If you start off to join the Sādhū,  
           take no companion with you  
 And never retrace your steps,  
           whatever may come in your way!  
 (GGS, Kabīr, Salok 116, p. 1370)

The word Sādhū may mean "the Saint" par excellence, who is the Satguru, or it may be taken in the plural, meaning "Saints" in general. Although Kabīr implies that the way of devotion should be pursued with determination inspite of the difficulties it entails, he seems to be stressing individual salvation as the goal of spiritual endeavour. The Sikh Gurus, by contrast, place emphasis on collective emancipation as the goal for the seeker. In his Japjī, Guru Nānak says:

Those who meditate on the divine Name,  
           their toiling journey is rewarded,  
 With redeemed faces, Nānak,  
           they take along to salvation many more.  
 (GGS, M. I, Japjī, p. 8)

It seems evident here that individual salvation is not Guru Nānak's ideal. The stress here is on altruistic concern for the humanity as a whole (sarbat dā bhalā).<sup>41</sup>

Kabīr's emphasis on solitariness is seen in his views on mendicity as a means of acquiring merit in spiritual life. He says:

Kabīr, it is pleasant to beg (madhūkarī),  
You receive grains of many kinds --  
None has a claim over you,  
And you enjoy a great country, a great kingdom.  
(GGS, Kabīr, Salok 168, p.1373)

Madhūkarī literally means "honey-making" and it refers to the normal way for a mendicant to sustain himself, by collecting uncooked food grains from a number of house-holds. Vaudeville writes that the praise of mendicity as a way to freedom both material and spiritual is already found in Nāth-panthī literature. She quotes the following verse from the Gorakh bānī:

Mendicity is my Cow of Plenty,  
and the whole world is my field.  
By the Guru's grace, I obtain alms --  
and, when the end comes, no burden (of karma)  
on my head. 42  
(Dohā, 108)

Kabīr seems to have been influenced by the Nāth-panthī tradition with regard to his emphasis on the practice of living by alms. Prabhakar Machwe maintains that "though Kabīr was a weaver and weaving was his parental occupation, his heart was not in this profession, neither as a craft nor as a means of earnings."<sup>43</sup> Perhaps Kabīr renounced the family craft of weaving at some stage in his life and reverted to madhūkarī to sustain himself. This seems to be implied in the following hymn from the Gūjarī Rāgu:

Kabīr's mother sobbed and wept;  
How will these children live?  
Kabīr has given up the warp and weaving;

He has enshrined the Name of God in his heart.  
 For the time I put thread in the shuttle.  
 I forget the beloved Rām.  
 I was stupid of understanding and  
     a weaver by caste.  
 But I have earned profit of the Name of Harī.  
 Listen, O my mother, saith Kabīr,  
 Rām will protect us and them both.  
 (GGS, Kabīr, Gūjarī 2, p. 524)

The hymn clearly describes the sorrow of Kabīr's mother because her son had given up his weaving to devote his full time to meditation on the divine Name. Kabīr seems to have withdrawn himself from various concerns of the well being of his family.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast with Kabīr, the Sikh Gurus are strongly opposed to begging. They consider it degrading and denounce those self-styled religious leaders who live by alms. For instance, Guru Nānak says:

Those who call themselves gurus and pirs  
     but go about begging for alms --  
 Never fall at their feet  
     to show them reverence.  
 He who eats what he earns through his own labour  
     and gives some of what he has in charity;  
 Nānak says: he alone knows  
     the true way of life.  
 (GGS, M. I, Sarang-Kī-Vār, 1 (22), p. 1245)

Guru Nānak asserts that the true way of spiritual life requires that one should live on what one has laboured to receive through honest means and that one should share with others the fruit of one's exertion. Thus there is no place for mendicity in the Sikh view of life.

Finally, the theme of love of the Divine and the anguish of separation (birhā) pervades the compositions of Kabīr in the GGS. Vaudeville writes: "In Kabīr's poetry and in the Sant tradition generally, the notion of virhā (or birhā), a tormenting desire of the soul for the absent Beloved, bears a resemblance to the Sufi notion of

ishq."<sup>45</sup> Kabīr describes the painful longing of the soul who has not yet obtained the beatific vision of the divine Beloved as follows:

Once the snake of birhā is in the body,  
no mantra can control it:  
He who is separated from Rām will not survive  
but if he does, he will go mad.  
(GGS, Kabīr, Salok 76, p. 1368)

To dislodge a venomous snake from its hole, to bring it under control or to cure a snake bite, yogis use appropriate mantras, that is, magic spells.<sup>46</sup> Kabīr employs the symbol of snake to describe the lovelorn condition of the devotee which resembles that of a man under the influence of a deadly poison. Kabīr thus stresses the arduousness of the path of love which involves long periods in the anguish of separation. He maintains that very few ever reach their goal and experience the union with the divine Beloved.

#### Guru Amardās and Kabīr

Guru Amardās, who was only ten years younger than Guru Nānak and who outlived him for 35 years, seems to have seriously studied the works of Kabīr. He makes comments on some of Kabīr's verses and joins issues with him on vital points such as the primacy of divine grace over personal effort, the ideal of jīvan-muktī (spiritual liberation within lifetime) and the means to attain liberation.

In one of his couplets, duplicated in the Rāmakaḷī-Kī-Vār, Kabīr seems to be resenting that he has not been blessed with divine favour in spite of his stern asceticism. The theme is developed by using the symbol of henna as follows:

Kabīr, to make my henna,  
I have crushed and ground my own self,  
Yet He never had a word for me  
and never let me embrace His feet.

(GGS, Kabīr, Rāmakaḷī-Kī-Vār, 1 (2), p. 947)

In India, the leaves of the henna (mehandī) plant are ground with catechu to make a reddish-orange paste used by women to decorate the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet. This is always done at the time of marriage. Here the wife-soul complains that, having surrendered her body and soul to win her divine Husband's favour, she has not yet been able to win Him over.<sup>47</sup> Kabīr seems to have lost patience because of his failure to get the reward (divine grace) for his spiritual efforts.

On the other hand, the Sikh view of divine grace requires that one must have the belief that the whole of one's spiritual progress is a matter of divine grace, not of one's efforts alone. Efforts are to be made with the spirit of total surrender to the divine will (hukam) and without seeking any reward. There is no room for any kind of grumbling at any stage of spiritual progress. Thus we have Guru Amardās's response to Kabīr's verse as follows:

Nānak, henna have I become,  
that the Lord at me may cast His glance;  
Himself to beat, Himself to pound it to powder;  
Himself to His limbs to apply me.  
This cup of Love belongs to God and  
He Himself gives it to him whom He likes to bless.  
(GGS, M. III, Rāmakaḷī-Kī-Vār, 2 (2), p. 947)

Guru Amardās makes it amply clear that grace is a matter of divine free choice which determines the fundamental spirit in which the whole of the spiritual progress is to be viewed by the devotee. Each and every action right from the beginning is performed with the belief that grace is a constituent of it and it makes the act a totality. Avtar Singh has termed it as a "coeval theory or simultaneous concomitance theory of grace and action".<sup>48</sup> It is the divine grace that occupies a

position of primary importance in the thought of Guru Amardās, although human effort is always required in response to the divine initiative. In making a contrast with Kabīr's view on the issue of human effort and divine grace, Guru Amardās accentuates the distinctive Sikh viewpoint.

The second major concern of Guru Amardās in responding to Kabīr's verses is related to the ideal of the jīvan-mukta, "one liberated while living". Kabīr repeatedly proclaims that one who attains liberation within one's lifetime must of necessity be a jīvat-mirtak, "one dead while alive". He states: "There are very few men, indeed who, while living, are as if dead: Free from fear, they are absorbed in the praise of God, wherever they look, they see but Him!"<sup>49</sup> Thus the true devotee is the one who has "died" to the world and obtained the state of jīvat-mirtak, which coincides with the sahaja experience.<sup>50</sup> Vaudeville writes that the mysterious sahaja state, which Tāntrikas conceive as perfect bliss (mahāsukha), is for Kabīr, only to be bought at the cost of one's life.<sup>51</sup> The idea is developed in Kabīr's Śālok as follows:

Says Kabīr: such is the touchstone of God  
that the False ones are proclaimed False.  
And, he alone passes the Lord's Test who  
Dies (to his self) while yet alive. 52  
(GGS, Kabīr, Rāmakaḷī-Kī-Vār, 1 (4), p. 948)

The touchstone (kasautī) is a kind of black stone used by the jewellers to test gold; rubbed on the kasautī real gold leaves a golden mark on it.<sup>53</sup> Kabīr employs the symbol of kasautī to assert that none can really succeed in the life of spirituality to win divine approval with any kind of pretence. Only through the process of "dying to the self" while remaining physically alive can one reach the ideal of spiritual attainment during one's lifetime.

Evidently Kabīr expresses himself in terms which are not readily understandable. One can raise the questions: What is the meaning of the phrase "living dead" (mari-jīvā or jīvat mirtak) in Kabīr's usage? How does one attain the state of spiritual liberation within one's lifetime? These seem to have been issues for Guru Amardās, for he makes the following two comments on Kabīr's verse:

How is one to still one's mind,  
 how is one to die (to the self)  
 When one accepts not the Word uttered (by the  
 Guru), and Ego one leaves not?  
 It is by the Guru's Grace that one abandons  
 'I-amness', and is thus Emancipated while alive.  
 Nānak: he, whom the Lord so Blesses,  
 him He Meets and, thereafter, he suffers no Pain.

Everyone says, "I die to the self, but how is one  
 to be Emancipated while yet alive?"  
 Yea, if one disciplines (the mind), through the  
 Lord's Fear, and cures his Maladies with the  
 Lord's Love,  
 And Sings the Lord's Praise, seated in the Peace of  
 Poise and Swims across the Sea of tumultuous  
 Existence.  
 Then, Nānak, through the Guru, one Attains to the  
 Lord, if upon one be His Grace. 54  
 (GGS, M. III, Rāmakalī-Kī-Vār, 2 & 3 (4), p. 948)

Guru Amardās clearly defines his own vision of the mystic theme of "dying to the self" contained in the obscure verse of Kabīr. On the basis of his personal experience of human nature he asserts that haumai (ego or self-centredness) is the root-cause of one's maladies and this needs to be slain so that one becomes "dead while alive". Only then one can attain the state of spiritual liberation within one's lifetime by accepting the Word (Śabad) through the Guru's grace. Further, Guru Amardās proposes a spiritual prescription which includes the singing of God's praises, disciplining the unstable mind through the fear of God and achieving the state of poise (sahaja) through loving devotion. This may be in line with Kabīr's ideal of jīvan-mukṭī. However, Guru



Amardās seems to have felt the need for clarifying comments on Kabīr's verse emphasizing the idea that spiritual liberation can be had only if one dies to the self by means of the Word (Śābad) of the Guru.<sup>55</sup>

Another theme, related to the issue of spiritual liberation within lifetime, is the question of transmigratory existence. Kabīr does accept the doctrine of karma and rebirth, although there is an allusion to the belief that human life provides the one and only chance of liberation.<sup>56</sup> He describes the circular motion of the wheel of time which is always depicted as being gripped in the teeth and claws of death:

Kabīr, dying, dying, the world keeps dying,  
but none knows how to die.  
He who dies such a death  
will never have to die again.  
(GGS, Kabīr, Bihāgare-Kī-Vār, 1 (17), p. 555)

Kabīr maintains that because one was born one will die, and because one dies one will be born again. However, one can find deliverance from this condition if one dies "such a death" (to one's self).

In his comment in the Bihāgare-Kī-Vār, Guru Amardās elaborates on the meaning of the phrase "such a death" (aisī marnī) in Kabīr's verse as follows:

I know not how to Die (to my self):  
what this (strange) Death is!  
If one forsakes not the Lord from the Mind,  
one Dies spontaneously (to the self).  
Everyone is afraid of death  
and wants to live eternally,  
But he who Dies in life, by the Guru's grace,  
he alone knows the Lord's Will.  
Nānak: he who Dies thus, lives eternally  
and forever. 57  
(GGS, M. III, Bihāgare-Kī-Vār, 2 (17), p. 555)

Guru Amardās clearly implies here that one may attain the ideal of "living dead" through the Guru's grace (Gur parsādī) by constantly

remembering the Lord. Then one comes to realize the functioning of the divine will (hukam) in one's life. By bringing one's life into harmony with the divine will (hukam), of which karma is a part, one finds the effects of an adverse karma obliterated.<sup>58</sup> In this way one transcends the condition of death and transmigration. Guru Amardās further asserts that one's quest for eternity can end only if one can overcome the fear of physical death. Thus one can find the secret of eternal life (sad jīvan) by liberating oneself from the fear of dying again and again. In offering his exegesis of Kabīr's verse, Guru Amardās, in the first instance, is agreeing with Kabīr on the ideal of "dying to the self". But beyond Kabīr, he is also making a point that even that achievement ("dying to the self") is something which comes by the grace of God. This serves to underline the Gurus' continuing emphasis on the primacy of the divine grace. In effect, Guru Amardās is agreeing with Kabīr but he is also concerned to emphasize the Sikh teaching of divine grace.

The main obstacle on the path of spiritual liberation, according to Kabīr, is the unstable nature of the mind. Kabīr often speaks of the passion driven mind (man), equating it with a mad killer-elephant which is out of control:

Kabīr, the Door of salvation is narrow  
like the tenth of a mustard seed!  
Mind is an elephant gone mad:  
how could it go through (that Door)?

If I find that Satguru  
who be pleased to favour me,  
Then the Door of salvation will be open to me,  
"easily" I'll come and go.  
(GGS, Kabīr, Gūjarī-Kī-Vār, 1 (4), p. 509)

Vaudeville interprets mukti duārā, the door of salvation, as an allusion to the opening called brahmarandhra in Yogic language.<sup>59</sup> But

in Kabīr's usage, it seems to symbolize the extreme difficulty one must encounter to reach the ultimate goal of one's spiritual journey, for a huge creature like an elephant cannot pass through a door as narrow as the tenth of a mustard seed. Kabīr maintains that by the grace of the True Guru (Satguru) one can attain total freedom from the delusion of the mind and enjoy the sahaja state.

In his commentary verse in the Gūjarī-Kī-Vār, Guru Amardās gives his own interpretation of the theme of Kabīr's verses in terms which are more intelligible. That is, he substitutes the word haumai (ego) for Kabīr's maigal (elephant):

Says Nānak: "The Door of salvation is narrow,  
but he who is meek, passes through it.  
But, if the mind is inflated with Ego,  
it can pass not through it?"  
Meeting with the True Guru, departs one's Ego,  
and one is filled with the Light of God.  
This Soul is (then) forever Emancipated,  
and it merges in the Peace of Poise. 60  
(GGS, M. III, Gūjarī-Kī-Vār, 2 (4), pp. 509-510)

Guru Amardās asserts that one's mind becomes deluded under the influence of ego (haumai manu asathūlu hai). The moment one becomes a free egoless person through one's union with the True Guru, one comes to realize that "this soul is forever emancipated" (ehu jiu sadā muktū hai). The state of liberation, in the fullest sense, is an enlightening experience of a real fact which had always been there, but veiled from the Self by ego (haumai). Explaining the meaning of the phrase ehu jiu sadā muktū hai in the verse of Guru Amardās, Diwana writes:

We are ever free; who bound or fettered us? Only  
we have to perfectly, unshakably, rest in, blend  
with this Truth. Even the best of Vedantins, old  
or medieval, have not expressed it so simply and  
succinctly in two lines. 61

Thus the Guru clearly defines his own vision of the realization of ultimate truth as something spontaneous and simple (sahaja) which is already there in every body, in every heart. It is the recognition of one's own true Self which requires complete honesty and utter humility. This is the meaning of the phrase nānā hoi so jāi -- "he who is meek, passes through (the door of salvation)". It would seem that both Kabīr and Guru Amardās characterize the sahaja state, the ultimate human experience of bliss and peace, as the ideal of all spiritual endeavour. However, Guru Amardās seems compelled to comment on Kabīr's verse perhaps in order to clarify how the sahaja experience is to be understood by the Sikh community, which may in turn develop its sense of independent identity.

Finally, there is Kabīr's theme of self-withdrawal from active life in the world. His autobiographical hymns in the GGS clearly state that "Kabīr does not care for his profession" and "he has ruined the whole business".<sup>62</sup> His wife complains that "our daughter and sons have nothing to eat" because Kabīr has renounced his ancestral trade of weaving and "he no longer speaks of his beam and shuttle".<sup>63</sup> There is a sense in which passivity is raised to the level of normative behaviour for the mystic:

Kabīr, whatever I propose, God Disposes;  
 so why propose and scheme?  
 For, what God Proposes, He does;  
 and Does He what one cannot even dream? 64  
 (GGS, Kabīr, Salok 219, p. 1376)

Rather than accepting the divine will with a positive attitude, Kabīr here seems to want to escape from life, giving up all proposing and scheming for the sake of making a living.<sup>65</sup>

This escapist attitude is directly opposed to the Sikh view of action-oriented life in the world and a joyous acceptance of the divine will in every situation whether favourable or not.<sup>66</sup> For the Gurus, creative activity in the world is the yardstick of one's progress in the life of spirituality. Guru Amardās responds to Kabīr's view as follows:

He Himself puts care (chintā) in us,  
 He Himself makes us carefree (achintu):  
 Nānak, give praise to that One  
 who takes care of all.  
 (GGS, M. III, Salok 220, p. 1376)

The word chintā in the present context means "care and anxiety" that one experiences in one's life while participating in worldly affairs. Guru Amardās asserts that one should put one's faith exclusively in the indwelling God who looks after everyone in their mundane concerns. Thus by submitting to the divine will cheerfully one can become carefree (achintu) and gain confidence to cope with any situation of anguish and despair, because every happening is then seen to be coming from God. The acceptance of anxiety (chintā) is in itself regarded by the Guru as an act showing a positive attitude towards life. Clearly this is a corrective to Kabīr's view of self-withdrawal defining Guru Amardās's personal view of the spirit of optimism, or the need to confront life with positive attitude.

However, in order to guard against the excessive indulgence in the things of the world, Guru Arjan adds a further comment as follows:

Kabīr, man mediated not on Rām,  
 he wandered, following his desires,  
 Whilst given to sin, he died:  
 in one moment, his life span was over.  
 (GGS, M. V, Salok 221, p. 1376)

Here, the Guru describes the nature of unregenerate man<sup>67</sup> who is so attached to his passions for worldly pleasures that he forgets the Divine and wastes his entire life in sin. The remark is clearly intended to explain the Sikh view that life in the world must be based on the remembrance of the divine Name. Otherwise the diamond-worth life becomes worthless.<sup>68</sup> The emphasis then is on a harmonized "balance" in life by avoiding the extremes of self-withdrawal and excessive indulgence in the things of the world. Thus the Gurus' comments serve to highlight the distinctive Sikh way of life for the benefit of the Sikh community.

#### Guru Arjan and Kabīr

It may be assumed that as canonizer of the scripture Guru Arjan will have engaged in the business of editing the bāṇī of Kabīr to bring it into harmony with the moods and motivations of the Sikh Community. Like Guru Amardās, he has entered his comments to define the distinctiveness of the Sikh view at various points in the verses of Kabīr. His dialogue with Kabīr is centred on the themes of urgency in the face of death, the company of Sants and sinners, the dignity of regular labour as a part of spiritual discipline and the supremacy of enlightened intellect over the mind.

Karine Schomer has suggested that the GGS verses of Kabīr point to religious themes which are more supportive of a sense of religious community and social morality rather than of individualistic mystical religion.<sup>69</sup> Accordingly one finds the theme of urgency in the face of death duly stressed time and again in Kabīr's verses. There is the sense in which human beings are urged to settle their accounts with a

just God before death overtakes them and it is too late. The theme is developed as follows:

Kabīr, putting off paying, the day has passed,  
the interest goes on mounting --  
Man has not adored Hari or cleared his debts  
and lo! Death has arrived!  
(GGS, Kabīr, Salok 208, p. 1375)

The payment of old debts refers to the destruction of past karma.<sup>70</sup>

Kabīr maintains that one who keeps on postponing the ultimate concern of liberation from the condition of bondage accumulates a further load of bad karma. In this way one has surely wasted one's entire life without clearing the account (khatu) of karma. Not only does one experience separation from God, but karma keeps on mounting in much the same way as interest does in the case of bad debts.

Kabīr's verse is followed by six commentary Saloks (nos. 209-214), inserted by Guru Arjan, which are intended to be reflections on various ideas of Kabīr. For the sake of convenience, the discussion of these passages will be organized according to the religious themes. First of all, Guru Arjan responds to the above mentioned Salok of Kabīr as follows:

Kabīr, man is like a barking dog,  
running to get a bone. . .  
By good luck, I obtained the Satguru  
who made me drop it.  
(GGS, M. V, Salok 209, p. 1375)

Guru Arjan asserts that the self-willed persons are like dogs who are always running after the vile pleasures (karāṅg, literally "carrion") of this world. They bark falsehoods and their account of karma is not torn up. The Guru then mentions his personal experience of having been delivered from the attractions of the world by the grace of the True Guru. The point is that without God as True Guru (Satguru), none can

succeed in attaining release from the bondage of karma. Guru Arjan is telling Kabīr that it is the grace that overcomes karma, not one's own efforts.

The second important theme in Guru Arjan's comments, is related to the company of saints and sinners. Kabīr repeatedly stresses the value of associating with righteous and saintly people for the cultivation of proper devotional conduct.<sup>71</sup> This is in line with the Sikh concept of spiritual fellowship (sādh saṅgat) in which God as Guru is mystically present.<sup>72</sup> However, Kabīr is strongly opposed to any kind of association with the sinners. He describes them in what will have seemed dreadful terms as the meat-eating, liquor-drinking, Devī-worshipping Sākta: "Do not associate with Sāktas, flee from them: By touching a blackened vessel, one is sure to get stained!"<sup>73</sup> For Kabīr, the sinners are totally lost and for them the door of salvation is closed. Hence one must stay away from the bad moral influence of sinners. In this context, Guru Arjan makes the following two comments.<sup>74</sup>

Kabīr, though the earth belongs to the holy,  
thieves have taken possession of it,  
Yet the earth feels not their weight,  
and for them (thieves) it is all gain!

Kabīr, on account of the husk,  
rice is beaten with a pestle:  
So if one sits in the wicked's company,  
Dharamrāj will take him to task! 75  
(GGS, M. V, Saloks 210-11, p. 1375)

Guru Arjan may be suggesting here that the presence of sinners (thieves) in the company of the holy can in no way affect the saints as they look on all things with "equanimity". Moreover, the company of the holy is all gain for the sinners because they may turn towards God by accepting the good moral influence of saints. In contrast with Kabīr,



Guru Arjan seems to keep the company of the saints open for the sinners. This serves to underline the optimistic Sikh view that it is never too late to turn towards God and that every sinner is a potential saint. This seems to be the reason why Guru Arjan accepted only the first line of Sūrdās's hymn in the Sāraṅg Rāg and edited out the rest of the hymn. Because, like Kabīr, Sūrdās also describes the obduracy and heedlessness of sinners in the formulaic expressions: "You can't pierce a stone with an arrow", and "If you dye a blanket black, the colour will never change".<sup>76</sup>

However, in his second comment, Guru Arjan seems to warn against the dangers of keeping bad company. He employs the symbol of edible rice (chāvala) to make the point. The edible rice is obtained by beating the unhusked grains with a long pestle; the husk here symbolizes the wicked: on account of its association with it, "good" rice undergoes the punishment of being pounded with the pestle.<sup>77</sup> Guru Arjan does accept Kabīr's view to a certain extent that one must stay away from the bad moral influence of sinners. He clearly implies that when one starts accepting the bad moral influence in the company of the wicked, one is sure to suffer the consequences of such association. He shows himself concerned to apprise his own audience that if one wants to keep company, one should do so with discernment and associate with saintly people to cultivate virtues in life. In his comments, Guru Arjan seems to move toward a balanced approach towards the company of sinners. That is, one should neither flee from them nor indulge excessively in their company.

Another important concern of Guru Arjan is linked with the issue of the dignity of regular labour as a part of spiritual discipline.

Kabīr is reputed to have abandoned his weaving to follow the path of devotion.<sup>78</sup> Guru Arjan inserts, perhaps consciously, the following two Saloks in Kabīr's verses which compose a short dialogue between the Mahārāshtrīan saint Nāmdev and his contemporary saint Trilochan, both of whom preceded Kabīr. The verses read:

"O Nāmā, Māyā has deceived you,  
said his friend Trilochan:  
Why do you keep printing cotton cloth,  
instead of meditating on Rām?"

Said Nāmā: "O Trilochan,  
with your mouth, invoke Rām,  
With your hands and feet, do all your work,  
keeping your soul fixed on Nirāñjan! 79  
(GGS, Nāmdev, Saloks 212-13, pp. 1375-1376)

Vaudeville maintains that these two Saloks can scarcely be attributed to Kabīr.<sup>80</sup> They are probably the compositions of Nāmdev because they reflect his views as expressed in his hymn in the Rāmakaḷī Rāgu that work and worship should go hand in hand.<sup>81</sup> However, they definitely also point to the Sikh concept of disciplined worldliness which emphasizes that one must live on what one has laboured to receive through honest means (kirt karni) and engage in the discipline of Nām-simaran. One can see in this a corrective to the views held by Kabīr, in this case through the use of the name and compositions of Nāmdev, who may have enjoyed high spiritual reputation before Kabīr.<sup>82</sup>

Guru Arjan then makes a final comment on this discussion:

Kabīr, I have nobody,  
and I belong to no one:  
I remain absorbed in that One  
who is the Creator of this world. 83  
(GGS, M. V, Salok 214, p. 1376)

Guru Arjan asserts here that freedom from attachment while remaining in the midst of temptations to attachment should be the proper pattern of living for the true devotee. The emphasis is a dual one -- absorption

in God on the one hand and recognition of the world as God's on the other.

Throughout his comments in Saloks (nos. 209-214), Guru Arjan seems to be concerned to emphasize the distinctive Sikh way of life based on the principle of earning one's living through honest creative labour, meditating on the divine Name, associating with the company of the saints which even promotes the spiritual life of the sinners, and remaining above worldly attachments. Thus he responds to the issue, originally raised in the verse of Kabīr, that one can attain release from the debt of karma by following the path of the Guru.

Finally, there is a hymn of Kabīr in the Gaurī Rāgu which is entitled Gaurī Kabīr jī kī nālī ralāe likhiā Mahalla V, that is, "Kabīr's hymn in the measure Gaurī to which Guru Arjan's composition is added". This title clearly indicates that Guru Arjan's comment is added to the hymn.<sup>84</sup> It reads:

Such is the wonder that Kabīr has beheld:  
People churn water under delusion of curd.  
Each morn, the donkey feeds on green shoots,  
Thereafter has hearty laughter, then brays and dies.

There is a mad he-buffalo that is intractable -  
Leaping while grazing, and ultimately going to hell.

Saith Kabīr: Now this sport has become manifest,  
That the sheep is sucking at the lamb's teat.

By Divine contemplation has such realization  
to my intellect (mat) appeared:

Saith Kabīr: By the Guru's guidance  
has this enlightenment come.<sup>85</sup>

(GGS, Kabīr & M. V, Gaurī 14, p. 326)

This hymn is one of Kabīr's paradoxical (ultabāmsī) sayings. Linda Hess maintains that the meaning of ulta is more like "reversed" --rather than "upside-down". Typical ultabāmsī expressions are based on reversals of roles, personalities, laws of nature: a rabbit eats a

lion, a quail conquers a hawk, an arrow strikes the hunter, or fire burns in water, rain falls from the earth to sky.<sup>86</sup> In the present case, the sheep is sucking at the lamb's teat, people churn water under the delusion of curd. Kabīr seems to have inherited this language of paradoxes and enigmas from the Sahajiyas and Nāths and adopted to his own purpose.<sup>87</sup> These ulṭabāmsī statements of Kabīr are designed to stir up his audience with surprises (acharaj) so that he can further play with his hearers/readers and create in them the sense of immediacy of experience.

Sahib Sing interprets that "sheep" and "lamb" in Kabīr's hymn stand for "intellect" (mat) and "mind" (man) respectively.<sup>88</sup> In fact, the hint for such an interpretation comes from Guru Arjan's comment in the last verse. Kabīr asserts that when the intellect (sheep) is following the sensual mind (lamb), the people cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, the real and the unreal. That is why they are wasting their lives in futile activities (churning water) instead of "invoking the divine Name which is like milk".<sup>89</sup> Being pervaded by sensuality, they behave like animals such as the donkey and he-buffalo which symbolize foolishness, lust, vanity and violence. Kabīr seems to be amazed at the way the people are knowingly committing sin.<sup>90</sup> It happens because the intellect is being led by the deluded mind. Guru Arjan adds his comment that by divine contemplation (Rām ramat) the intellect (mat) is illumined with divine knowledge and it no longer follows the directions of the mind (man). Rather, the mat now has the upper hand because it follows the guidance of the Guru and keeps the unstable mind under control.<sup>91</sup> Thus with Guru Arjan's comment Kabīr's paradoxical hymn becomes intelligible and in the process one gets a

glimpse of the Sikh view of the supremacy of the enlightened intellect over the mind (man nīvān mat uchī).<sup>92</sup>

### Conclusion

As in the case of Shaikh Farīd, it would appear that the bānī of Kabīr is recorded in the GGS in the first instance because of basic agreement with the beliefs of the Sikh Gurus -- the belief in One God beyond all form and sectarian garb, the basic equality of human beings, the doctrine of the Word, the spiritual discipline of Nām-simaran, the doctrine of God as True Guru immanent in human soul, the company of the saintly people, the worthlessness of a life empty of devotion to God, the mystic path of love, the emphasis upon true inner religiosity and the ideal of spiritual liberation within life. Both Kabīr and the Sikh Gurus reject social distinctions based upon the caste system and criticize the pretensions of brahmins and mullāhs. Both shun the outward display of religiosity including images, pilgrimages, fasting and ritual bathing associated with the ideas of pollution and purity.

However, as in the case of Shaikh Farīd, there are some disagreements between Kabīr and the Sikh Gurus on essential points. Kabīr remains a solitary spiritual seeker who does not seem to have a sense of social mission or the idea of an organized religious community. By contrast, the Sikh Gurus seem to have a strong sense of mission which compels them to proclaim their message for the ultimate benefit of their audience and to promote socially responsible living. While as a mystic Kabīr can afford to run away from the sinners (sāktas), the Sikh Gurus cannot do so and they keep their doors open for them principally because of their sense of mission. Kabīr regards

mendicity (madhukarī) as a means of acquiring merit in spiritual life and this may have been the reason for renouncing his traditional family craft of weaving. In contrast with kabīr, the Sikh Gurus are strongly opposed to begging. They stress the dignity of regular labour as a part of spiritual discipline. Whereas Kabīr seems to be resentful because of his failure to win divine favour inspite of his stern asceticism, Guru Amardās seems to correct his view through his comment that grace is a matter of divine free choice which does not depend upon any kind of previous growth in spirituality. In Sikhism, divine grace and human effort go together in spiritual life, because human effort too is a matter of divine grace. Kabīr sometimes gives the impression of self-withdrawal from active life in the world and appears to be complaining against the divine will betraying a type of negative or escapist attitude. The Sikh Gurus, on the other hand, stress the spirit of optimism to confront life with a positive attitude and to create a harmonized "balance" by avoiding the extremes of self-withdrawal and excessive indulgence in the things of the world.

At issue, it would seem, is the concern to mark out very carefully the boundaries between the Gurmat and the Sant teachings, in this case, the views of Kabīr. This is clearly evident in the Gurus' comments on the verses of Kabīr. These comments serve to point out basic agreement and disagreement between the Gurus and Kabīr where this exists, to clarify anything that might be unintelligible in Kabīr or construed in a wrong way, and to correct views of Kabīr that border on the erroneous. Supporting this is the possibility that a great deal of Kabīr material may have been edited out at the time of the canonization of the scripture.

Notes to Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup>For legendary accounts of Kabīr's birth and life, see Muhammad Hedayetullah, Kabir: The Apostle of Hindu-Muslim Unity (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1977), pp. 157-165. Also see Ahmad Shah, The Bijak of Kabir (New Delhi: Asian Publication Services, 1979), pp. 1-28.

<sup>2</sup>Charlotte Vaudeville, Kabir, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 29. Most of the time I use Vaudeville's translations of Kabīr's Saloks.

<sup>3</sup>Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh, The Bijak of Kabir (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1979), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>David C. Scott, Kabir's Mythology (Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1985), p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>Hazariprasad Dvivedi, Kabir (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1985), p. 125. Also see Rām Kumar Varma, Kabir: Biography and Philosophy (New Delhi: Prints India, 1977), pp. 23-25.

<sup>6</sup>W. H. McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 156. The reference to Ramanand is found in Rabindranath Tagore, One Hundred Poems of Kabir (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd. 1967), p. 36: "I became suddenly revealed in Benares, and Ramananda illumined me. . . ."

<sup>7</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>8</sup>W. Owen Cole, The Guru in Sikhism (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1982), p. 10. Tulsidas's view is discussed by Raymond Allchin in his critical introduction to Kavitavali (Allen & Unwin, 1964), pp. 47-49.

<sup>9</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

<sup>10</sup>Parashuram Chaturvedi, Uttari Bharat Ki Sant-Parampara (Allahabad: Leader Press, 1964), pp. 159-61. An allusion to this view is found in Kabīr's verse: "The men and women Thou has created, O God, are all in Thy form. Kabīr is the child of Rām and Allāh, and accepteth all Gurus and Pirs" (GGS, Kabīr, Prabhāti 2, p. 1349).

<sup>11</sup>McLeod, op. cit., p. 156.

<sup>12</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., pp. 36-39. A fuller discussion of Kabīr's dates is to be found in Chaturvedi, op. cit., pp. 709-733. Chaturvedi decides in favour of CE 1448 as the date of Kabīr's death. His conclusion is based on the fact of a memorial in Magahar which is said to bear a date equivalent to CE 1450 (see Archaeological Survey of India (New Series): The Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North Western Provinces and Oudh, vol. II, p. 224). Vaudeville follows Chaturvedi's line of argument and prefers to accept the view that Kabīr

lived in the first half of the fifteenth century. Also see P. D. Barthwal, Traditions of Indian Mysticism based on Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1978), pp. 252-253.

<sup>13</sup>Hess & Singh, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Karine Schomer, "Kabīr in the Guru Granth Sāhib: An Exploratory Essay" in M. Juergensmeyer and N. G. Barrier, eds., Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series & Graduate Theological Union, 1979), p. 76.

<sup>16</sup>Scot, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

<sup>17</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 58. Also see William J. Dwyer, Bhakti in Kabir (Patna: Associated Book Agency, 1981), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., pp. 56-59. The Bijak is found in two major recensions. The Kabīr-granthāvalī is based on the so-called Pañchavāṇī manuscripts, none of which is earlier than 1774 CE.

<sup>19</sup>Schomer, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>20</sup>Schomer, op. cit., pp. 80-86.

<sup>21</sup>W. H. McLeod, "Guru Nanak and Kabir" in Punjab History Conference, 1st Session, November, 1965 (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1966), p. 92.

<sup>22</sup>McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, p. 156.

<sup>23</sup>Schomer, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>24</sup>McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, pp. 85-86.

<sup>25</sup>Sahib Singh, Bhagat-Bāṇī Steek, Part 4 (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1980), pp. 26-43.

<sup>26</sup>McLeod, Guru Nanak and Kabir, pp. 89-90.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>28</sup>GGS, M. III, Sirī 22, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup>Mohan Singh, A History of Punjabi Literature (Jullundur: Bharat Prakashan, 1971), pp. 45-46.

<sup>30</sup>The Sant tradition is examined in McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, pp. 151-158 and Vaudeville, op. cit., pp. 97-110. See also Ronald Stuart McGregor, "Hindi Literature from its Beginning to the Nineteenth Century" in Gonda, Jan., ed., A History of Indian Literature (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), pp. 38-60.

<sup>31</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 13.



<sup>32</sup>Hedayetullah, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>33</sup>McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, pp. 191-194.

<sup>34</sup>GGs, Kabīr, Gaurī 43, p. 331.

<sup>35</sup>By "South" Kabīr may have meant the Jagananath temple at Puri, Orissa, which is evident from rest of the hymn. The phrase "Allah in the West" refers to Indian Muslims' attitude to their holy place in Mecca which is to the West of India.

<sup>36</sup>GGs, Kabīr, Prabhātī 3, pp. 1349-1350: "The Lord created Light; of His creation are all men. One light generated the entire world, Who is then good and who bad?"

<sup>37</sup>GGs, Kabīr, Tilāṅg 1, p. 727: "Thy Vedas and the Semitic Texts are a make-believe, O dear, (if) cease not the outgoings of the heart. But if one keeps one's heart whole even for a moment, lo, there is before him the Presence of the Lord." See Gopal Singh, Trans., Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Vol. III (Chandigarh: World Sikh University Press, 1978), p. 696; Hereafter referred to as SGGS. Also see, Hedayetullah, op. cit., pp. 287-289. For Guru Nānak's rejection of religious texts, see McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, p. 161.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. Guru Nānak's denunciation of external observances in McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, pp. 208-213.

<sup>39</sup>Hess and Singh, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>40</sup>GGs, M. I, Vār-Mājh-Kī, 1 (6), p. 140: "If blood stains the garment, it becomes polluted. . . ." Also see Guru Nānak's emphatic criticism of the notions of purity and pollution in GGS, M. I, Āsā-Kī-Vār, 1-3 (18) and 1 (19), pp. 472-473.

<sup>41</sup>Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, The Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrine (New Delhi: Bahri Publications, 1983), p. 39: "The Bhakti movement could not play a revolutionary role on the sociological level owing, inter alia, to its individualistic mystique; the stress here was on individualistic salvation in the world hereafter realizable through the mystical union with God. . . . On the other hand Sikhism enlarged the conception of salvation by investing it with collectivistic, societal dimension." In the same vein, Ray remarks: "Neither the leaders of the Bhakti movement nor of the Nathapantha and the Sant synthesis attempted to do what Guru Nānak did, not in any systematic manner at any rate. These leaders seem to have been individuals working out their own problems towards achieving their personal religious and spiritual aims and aspirations." See Niharranjan Ray, The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1975), p. 40.

<sup>42</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 305.

<sup>43</sup>Prabhakar Machwe, Kabir (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1968), p. 13.

<sup>44</sup>Jodh Singh, Kabir (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1971), pp. 11-15.

<sup>45</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 146.

<sup>46</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 160.

<sup>47</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 318.

<sup>48</sup>Avtar Singh, Ethics of the Sikhs (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1970), p. 249. See note 83 in Chapter 2 for a discussion of the understanding of divine grace and human effort in the Gurus.

<sup>49</sup>GGs, Kabīr, Salok 5, p. 1364.

<sup>50</sup>Sahaja: Literally, "simple, spontaneous, natural or easy". It is a term for enlightenment experience associated with Tantric Buddhism (the Sahajayana School). For Kabīr, the sahaja experience is the condition of ultimate, inexpressible beatitude (sahaja kī akatha kathā hai nirārī). See GGS, Kabīr, Gaurī 48, p. 333. For more details on the concept of Sahaja, see Ray, op. cit., pp. 81-99. Also see Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 310.

<sup>51</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 146.

<sup>52</sup>SGGS, Vol. III, p. 904.

<sup>53</sup>Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 258.

<sup>54</sup>SGGS, Vol. III, pp. 904-905.

<sup>55</sup>Cf. GGS, M. I, Gaurī 7, p. 153: "If one dies by means of the Word one dies not again. Without such a death how can one be perfected" -- cited in McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, p. 220.

<sup>56</sup>GGs, Kabīr, Salok 30, p. 1366: "A human birth is hard to get and it comes but once: The ripe fruit fallen on the ground will never return to the branch." Here Kabīr's belief in the unique opportunity of human birth reflects his Muslim background or the verse seems to be intended for the Muslim audience, but elsewhere he explicitly states his belief in the doctrine of rebirth. See GGS, Kabīr, Māru 4, pp. 1103-1104; Gaurī 13, pp. 325-326. Also see Scott, op. cit., pp. 183-185.

<sup>57</sup>SGGS, Vol. II, p. 543.

<sup>58</sup>For the Gurus, the law of karma is not inexorable. It is subject to the higher principle of hukam (divine order or will). See McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, p. 205. Also see W. Owen Cole, Sikhism and Its Indian Context 1469-1708 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), p. 77.

<sup>59</sup>Brahmarandhra: Literally, "hole of Brahman". According to

Tāntric tradition, this is conceived as a small hollow within the pericarp of the "thousand-petalled lotus" (sahasrāra chakra or padma), that is, the hole in the skull situated above the end of the spinal channel. The human body is said to contain thousands of naḍīs, which are the "channels" of the five prāṇas, the vital "winds" or "breaths". Among these channels three play a particular role in Haṭha-Yoga: the sūśumnā or the innermost channel situated within the spinal chord, the īḍa-naḍī and the piṅgala-naḍī, respectively located on the left and the right of the spinal chord. The vital energy in the Yogi's body is conceived as a female serpent, the kuṇḍalinī-śaktī, resting at the muladhāra chakra, the base of the spine between the anus and the genitals. She is awakened by various techniques of haṭha-yoga and passes to the brahmarandhra via the various chakras (lotuses) in the spinal channel (sūśumnā-naḍī), where she unites with the Paramśivā (the primal teacher or the Adi Nath of the Yogis). This merging of Śiva and śakti within one's own body is the final goal of Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga, when the yogi experiences mahāsukha (supreme bliss) and enters the mysterious sahaja state. The brahmarandhra is also sometimes referred to as the "dasam duar" ("tenth door"). For more details, see Vaudeville, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-132 and 318. Also see McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, pp. 191-192. For an insightful analysis of the Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga, see Harold Coward, Jung and Eastern Thought (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 109-124.

<sup>60</sup>SGGS, Vol. II, pp. 501-502.

<sup>61</sup>Mohan Singh Diwana, "Discoveries in Sikh Culture - III" in Journal of Sikh Studies, Vol. II, No. 1 (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1975), p. 91.

<sup>62</sup>GGS, Kabīr, Bilāvalu 4, p. 856.

<sup>63</sup>GGS, Kabīr, Goṇḍ 6, p. 871.

<sup>64</sup>SGGS, Vol. IV, p. 1308.

<sup>65</sup>Kabir's "approach to the world" is discussed in detail in Daljeet Singh, The Sikh Ideology (New Delhi: Guru Nanak Foundation, 1984), pp. 105-III.

<sup>66</sup>Ahluwalia, *op. cit.*, p. 37. Also see Jagjit Singh, The Sikh Revolution (New Delhi: Bahri Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1981), pp. 87-92.

<sup>67</sup>"Unregenerate man" is the expression used by McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, pp. 177-178: "This is the condition of pride, of self-centredness, of sin, and so of death and transmigration. This is the condition which must be transcended if man is to attain release from transmigration". In Sikh writings, the word manmukh ("self-willed") is used for "unregenerate man".

<sup>68</sup>GGS, M. I. Gaurī 18, p. 156: "Night was lost to sleep, day to eating: This life worth a diamond for a farthing goes."

<sup>69</sup>Schomer, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>70</sup>"Karma -- popularly understood as a sort of bank account-cum-Mastercharge, where your current balance may be either a credit or a debit (good karma, bad karma) -- is actually the principle of cause and effect. The root meaning of karma is activity or doing. The karmic principle could be stated, "You are what you do"; or, in the context of time, "your actions determine what you become". Actions include thinking and all other functions of the mind. Karma is logical and inexorable. Because you think the way you do, you act the way you do, and your actions reinforce or prove the validity of your thinking. . . ." Cited in Hess and Singh, op. cit., p. 155. Karma is also understood as a predisposition which safeguards the notion of free choice.

<sup>71</sup>GGs, Kabīr, Salok 130, p. 1371: "Do not leave the way of the Sants, follow in their path: Just seeing them, man is purified, Meeting them, he invokes the Name." Cited in Schomer, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>72</sup>The concept of Sādh Saṅgat is fundamental to the teachings of the Gurus. Guru Arjan spells it out in detail in the seventh octave of Sukhmanī as follows:

Faces shine in the company of the faithful;  
There, in their midst, sin's filth is washed away.  
Pride is conquered in the company of the faithful;  
There, in their midst, God's wisdom stands  
revealed.  
God dwells near in the company of the faithful;  
In the calmness of their presence all doubt is laid  
to rest.  
There one obtains that precious jewel, the Name,  
And striving by their aid one finds that  
blissful peace with God.  
Who can hope to utter the wonder of their glory  
The glory of the pure and true in union with the  
Lord.  
(GGs, M. V., Sukhmanī 1 (7), p. 271)

Cited in W. H. McLeod, trans. and ed., Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism, (Manchester: University Press, 1984), p. 112.

<sup>73</sup>GGs, Kabīr, Salok 131, p. 1371. Also see Schomer, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>74</sup>These two Saloks are duplicated in GGS, M. V, Rāmakaṭī-Kī-Vār, 1 & 2 (20), p. 965.

<sup>75</sup>Dharamrāj is a form of Yama, the god of death. See Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 322.

<sup>76</sup>John Stratton Hawley, Sūr Dās -- Poet, Singer, Saint (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), p. 135. Surdas's hymn reads:

SOUL, TURN YOUR BACK ON THOSE WHO SHUN THE LORD.

Tell me, what good is there in giving cobras milk?  
 Serpents can never surrender their venom.  
 Why waste camphor by feeding it to crows  
 or squander the water of the Ganges on dogs?  
 Why array an ass in an aromatic scent?  
 Why bejewel a monkey or dress it in clothes?  
 Do you really think an arrow can pierce a fallen  
 stone, even if you empty your quiver of them all?  
 Once you've dyed a blanket black, says Sūr,  
 there's no point hoping for a different hue.

The first line is found in the GGS, p. 1253, followed by a comment by Guru Arjan -- Sāraṅ Mahalla V Sūrdās -- which stresses that "The men of God abide ever with God. . . ." See SGGS, Vol. IV, p. 1198.

<sup>77</sup> Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 328.

<sup>78</sup> GGS, M. V, Āsā 2, p. 487.

<sup>79</sup> Nirañjan: the One God who is wholly apart from all that is false, the One who is Himself Truth. See McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, p. 186.

<sup>80</sup> Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 328.

<sup>81</sup> GGS, Nāmdev, Rāmakaḷī 1, p. 972.

<sup>82</sup> Nāmdev is mentioned by Kabīr together with Jaīdev as a great saint of "the Kali age". See GGS, Kabīr, Bilāvalu 7, p. 856. Also see Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>83</sup> This Salok is repeated in GGS, M. V, Rāmakaḷī-Kī-Vār, 2 (19), p. 965.

<sup>84</sup> Kabīr uses the formula "kahu Kabīr" ("Saith Kabīr") in the last verse of each Sabad, which constitutes a kind of signature or "stamp" (mudrika) to claim the authorship of the hymn. See Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 62. In the present case, his hymn ends with the verse containing the mudrika:

kahu Kabīr paragaṭu bhaĩ khed  
lele kau chūnghai nit bhed

Which means

"Saith Kabīr: Now this sport has become manifest,  
 That the sheep is sucking at the lamb's teat."

The additional verse is the composition of Guru Arjan which is a reflection on Kabīr's paradoxical hymn. It reads:

Rām ramat mati paragaṭī aāī  
kahu Kabīr guri sojhī pāi.

Which means

"By Divine contemplation has such realization  
to my intellect appeared:  
Saith Kabīr: By the Guru's guidance has this  
enlightenment come."

It should be noted that Guru Arjan often uses the name of Kabīr while commenting on his poetry. For more details, see Sahib Singh, Siri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan, Vol. II (Jullundur: Raj Publishers, 1972), pp. 868-869.

<sup>85</sup>Gurbachan Singh Talib, trans., Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1984), p. 682. I have reworked the translation.

<sup>86</sup>Hess and Singh, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>87</sup>Hess and Singh, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>88</sup>Sahib Singh, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan, Vol. II, pp. 868-870.

<sup>89</sup>"Invoking Hari's Name is like milk, and all other activity like water: A few Saints are like Hamsa birds, able to distinguish the Essence". Cited in Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 287.

<sup>90</sup>"The mind is aware of all, knowing, it does wrong: Will you fare any better, if you fall into a well, lamp in hand?" -- GGS, Kabīr, Salok 216, p. 1376.

<sup>91</sup>Kabīr may have said this: "This body is the pitch-dark forest and Mind is an elephant gone mad; The jewel of Wisdom is the goad but few are the Saints who can apply it!" -- GGS, Kabīr, Salok 224, p. 1376.

<sup>92</sup>The phrase has become part of the Sikh prayer: "Lord, grant to Thy Sikhs a humble mind, Grant to Thy Sikhs high thinking Wisdom, May God Himself by the Light of our thoughts. . . ."

## CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Guru Nānak and the succeeding Gurus were deeply concerned to establish the distinctiveness of a relatively new and developing religious community as well as their vision of the correct spiritual life for that community. They were attempting to establish self-identity of the Sikh community through the creation of their own authoritative scripture, the Ādi Granth. The Ādi Granth provided a framework for the shaping of the Sikh community and hence it was a decisive factor for Sikh self-definition. Part of the Ādi Granth was the received tradition of the bhagat bānī which was edited and commented upon by the Gurus sometimes to highlight agreement, sometimes to clarify, and sometimes to highlight disagreement with the ideas of the poet-saints. Niharranjan Ray, for example, remarks:

. . .the Sikh Gurus took consciously a series of steps directed towards marking themselves and their followers out as a community with an identity of their own, clearly distinct from both the Hindus and Muslims. They were critical of both these communities, on more counts than one, and the Gurus from Guru Nānak downwards never felt tired of repeating this fact of their lives, times without number, by pointing out where they differed. 1

It should be emphasized that the disagreements with the poet-saints on essential points are very important in the process of Sikh self-definition. This is a fact which has been ignored in the traditional view which holds that selection of the bhagat bānī was made only on the basis of ideological identity with the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. The present study has revealed that there is identity as well as clarification and difference.

The concern for self-definition can be seen on the one hand in the textual commentary on the verses of Shaikh Farīd, a poet representing the Sufi line of thought, and in the second instance, in the commentary on the verses of Kabīr, a Sant poet. This process had already begun with Guru Nānak through his treatment of the verses of Shaikh Farīd. In his comments, he rejected the ideals of self-mortification and asceticism held by Shaikh Farīd, and emphasized that one must seek the divine Beloved within one's own Self by following the path of Nām-simaran, and exhibit a spirit of optimism toward life as well as toward death. He made the assertion that life of spirituality is a matter of divine grace, which occupies the position of primacy over personal effort. He was quite explicit in stating his own belief in the doctrine of rebirth over against the Sufi belief in the bodily resurrection on the day of judgement. In this regard Guru Nānak made a very clear distinction between the Sikh teachings and the teachings of the Sufi line of thought. His intention was to define clearly what it means to be a Sikh in relation to commonly held Sufi beliefs. By making a contrast with the ideas of Shaikh Farīd, he was consciously marking the outlines of the new Sikh community growing around him at Kartārpur in the Punjab in the early years of the sixteenth century. Although Guru Nānak would heartily agree with Shaikh Farīd's emphasis upon ethical monotheism, it is frequently the disagreements with the Sufi poet on essential points that mark clearly the boundaries of the Sikh community. Thus the process of Sikh self-definition began with Guru Nānak perhaps as a result of a deliberate policy.<sup>2</sup>

Guru Amardās adopted the method of textual commentary which was in line with the approach of Guru Nānak to bring out more clearly the



distinctive features of Sikhism in relation to the ideas of both Shaikh Farīd and Kabīr. By his time the Panth was growing steadily throughout India. He was concerned to lay stress on the ideal of the life of the householder as opposed to the Sufi ideal of renunciation and sectarian garb. Perhaps he was responding to the threat of the ascetic teachings of Sirī Chand, Guru Nānak's surviving son. He provided a corrective to Kabīr's view of self-withdrawal by defining his own personal view of action-oriented life in the world. He emphasized the spirit of optimism for both young and old by asserting that one can follow the path of God's love in any age if one has the right intention to do so and if one is blessed with divine grace. Some of his comments may have come in response to the questions raised by his audience with regard to the seemingly unintelligible passages in Shaikh Farīd and Kabīr. Although both Kabīr and Guru Amardās share in common the ideal of spiritual liberation within life, yet there seems always to have been the belief and the assertion made by the Guru in his comments that liberation can be had only through the cultivation of the way of the Guru, that is, if one dies to the self by means of the Word of the Guru. It may have been the intention of Guru Amardās to point out that sahaja experience which Kabīr or any other bhagat may have enjoyed already in his own lifetime was now available to the disciples who follow the path of the Guru. Guru Amardās further stressed that even entry to the path of the Guru comes by God's grace. Thus he continued the process of self-definition begun by Guru Nānak by responding to the verses of Shaikh Farīd and Kabīr.

The process of textual commentary was carried to its completion by Guru Arjan in the Ādi Granth. He was responsible for the whole

operation of the formation of the canon. He included the bhagat bānī in the scripture in the first instance because of basic agreement between the poet-saints and the Sikh Gurus on the following points: the belief in One God beyond all form and sectarian garb, the basic equality of humankind, the spiritual discipline of Nām-simaran, the doctrine of God immanent in the human soul, the mystic path of love and the agony of separation, the company of saintly people, the emphasis upon true inner religiosity and the mystical experience of union with the divine Beloved. Both the Gurus and the poet-saints reject social distinctions based upon the caste system and criticize the pretensions of brahmins and mullāhs. Both shun the outward display of religiosity including images, pilgrimages, fasting and ritual bathing associated with the ideas of pollution and purity. In the second instance, Guru Arjan must have regarded the presence of the bhagat bānī in the Ādi Granth as important for the process of Sikh self-definition. That is perhaps why certain verses of the bhagat bānī are juxtaposed with the Gurus' comments so that the Sikh view of life and community stands out with clarity. Guru Arjan's major concern in responding to the verses of the poet-saints was to create a harmonized "balance" between two extreme viewpoints -- self-withdrawal and excessive indulgence in the things of the world. He was clearly concerned to restore social sanity to the views of Shaikh Farīd where they verge on nihilism and total denial of life here and now. He provided a corrective to Kabīr's view of mendicancy as a means of acquiring merit in spiritual life by stressing the dignity of regular labour as a part of spiritual discipline. Guru Arjan's comments were also designed to clarify some of the seemingly unintelligible passages in the bhagat bānī.

There is evidence that at the time of the canonization of the scripture Guru Arjan dropped seven hymns of Kabīr and two of Nāmdev available in the Goindvāl pothīs.<sup>3</sup> This may indicate that a selection must have been made out of the bhagat material accessible to the Sikh Gurus. The recording of only the single line of Sūrdās's hymn in the Sāraṅg Rāg may suggest that Guru Arjan edited out the rest of the hymn.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, there were four contemporary poet-saints -- Kāhnā, Chhajū, Shāh Hussain and Pīlo -- who wanted their compositions to be included in the scripture. According to tradition their hymns were rejected by Guru Arjan because of clear disagreements on issues such as the claim that human person is somehow complementary to God, the place of woman, the denunciation of human birth and the quietist attitude towards life.<sup>5</sup> It can be assumed from the editing process that the quest for self-definition may have led the Sikh Gurus to narrow their options and select the bhagat material which conformed most to the moods and motivations of the Sikh community. For instance, the following verse of Kāhnā which tends to self-deification was apparently rejected by Guru Arjan as rank blasphemy:

I am He, I am He  
Whom the Vedas and Puranas sing,  
but whom none hath found by search. 6

The Guru argued that although the seeker's soul could merge in the Supreme Soul as a drop in the ocean, the drop could not claim to be the Sea.<sup>7</sup>

The theme of the deprecation of women in the verses of the KG, also could not have been acceptable to the Gurus. Kabīr seems to have inherited his misogynist bias from Nāth-panthī tradition, which regarded women as tigresses who were always seeking men to prey upon

and suck their vitality out of them.<sup>8</sup> He refers to woman as "kālī  
nāgini" (a black cobra), "kunda naraka kā" (the pit of hell), "jūṭhanī  
jagata kī" (the refuse of the world),<sup>9</sup> and describes her as nothing but  
an impediment to the life of spirituality:

Woman ruins everything when she  
comes near a man:  
Devotion, salvation and divine knowledge  
no longer enter his soul. <sup>10</sup>

There is no place for such tirades against women in the teachings of the Gurus. Sikhism is usually regarded as a religion of the family. Its basis is the householder mode of living. Thus Guru Nānak raised a strong voice against the position of inferiority assigned to women.<sup>11</sup> Guru Arjan did not include the compositions of the contemporary bhagat Chhajū in the scripture possibly because he had decried women as evil.<sup>12</sup> In the same vein Schomer points out that the exclusion of Kabīr's verses deprecating women must be related to the fact that the GGS was compiled for a religious community of householders rather than the solitary spiritual seekers.<sup>13</sup>

The editing process itself underlines the process of self-definition, but even the verses of the poet-saints that were included in the GGS needed comments by the Gurus at certain points. The basic concern of the Gurus' comments appears to be not so much with the goal of the mystical union with the Divine or the sahaja experience itself, but with the spiritual practice leading towards that goal. Thus the Gurus were deeply concerned to cultivate a particular Sikh view of true teaching, practice and community by way of editing and commentary on the received tradition of the bhagat bānī. In the process, they pointed out that true understanding of other traditions often entails not only acceptance, but also disagreement. As such, the

process of integration of the bhagat bānī in the Guru Granth Sāhib was based upon the recognition of two major points: firstly, harmonization with Gurus' thought in broad outlines and secondly, highlighting of differences at essential points for the sake of Sikh self-definition.

Notes to Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> Niharranjan Ray, The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1975), pp. 47-48.

<sup>2</sup> The motif of self-definition can be seen to be at work in Guru Nānak's Siddha Goṣṭi (GGS, pp. 938-946), Āsā-Kī-Vār (GGS, pp. 462-475), and various other compositions. In this context, Cole remarks: "... Guru Nānak accepted the religious language of Islam and Hinduism when it suited him, but that the truth which he wished to express was his own. It is in his personal experience, not in the thought forms which surrounded him, that the key to understanding Guru Nānak is to be found." See W. Owen Cole, Sikhism and its Indian Context 1469-1708 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Bhai Jodh Singh, Sirī Kartārpurī Bīr De Darśan (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968), p. 124.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 113. Also the hymn of Mīrā Bāī in Rāgu Mārū is included in the original Kartārpur manuscript, but is crossed out with the same pen. See W. H. McLeod, The Evolution of the Sikh Community (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 76-78, and his article "Sikh Scriptures" in M. Juergensmeyer and N. G. Barrier, Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series and Graduate Theological Union, 1979), pp. 101-102. The Mīrā Bāī hymn was apparently struck from the Ādi Granth, possibly because it might be seen as implying support for the Vaiṣṇava ideal of Kṛṣṇa bhakti.

<sup>5</sup> Bhai Vir Singh, ed., Sikhān Dī Bhagat Mālā (Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1979), pp. 133-134).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 133. Also see M. A. Macauliffe, The Sikh Religion, Vol. III (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1978, reprint, first published Oxford, 1909), p. 62. A similar verse of Kabīr is found in the KG:

I am in all, all in me,  
there is none else but I.  
I have expanded into the three worlds,  
rebirth and death are my sport.  
The six systems of philosophy  
describe but my garb.  
I am the unapproachable,  
without form, without outline;  
I myself called myself Kabīr,  
I myself revealed myself.

Cited in P. D. Barthwal, Traditions of Indian Mysticism based upon Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1978), pp. 34-35. Also see Bijak, Ramaini 21: "I make, I kill, I burn, I eat, I fill the land and water. Spotless is my name." Perhaps these apocryphal verses were added by Kabīr's later followers who wanted to show him as a perfect Vedantin. If this is correct, they would

definitely be in contrast with the tone and spirit of the GGS verses of Kabīr. See GGS, Kabīr, Saloks 203-204, p. 1375.

<sup>7</sup>Gopal Singh, A History of the Sikh People (New Delhi: World Sikh University Press, 1979), p. 185.

<sup>8</sup>Ray, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>9</sup>KG 30.2, 30.16 and 30.20. Cited in Karine Schomer, "Kabir in the Adi Granth" in Sikh Studies, p. 83. Also see Ch. Vaudeville, Kabir, Vol. I (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 295-9.

<sup>10</sup>KG 30.7. See Vaudeville, op. cit., p. 296.

<sup>11</sup>GGS, M. I, Āsā-Kī-Vār, 2 (19), p. 473. Guru Nānak's verse reads:

Of woman are we born, of woman conceived,  
to woman engaged, to woman married.  
Woman we befriend, by woman is the civilization  
continued.  
When woman dies, woman is sought for.  
It is by woman that order is maintained.  
Then why call her evil from whom are great men  
born?  
From woman is woman born,  
and without woman none should exist.  
The eternal Lord is the only one, O Nānak,  
Who depends not on woman.

<sup>12</sup>Bhai Vir Singh, op. cit., p. 134. Chhajū's verse reads:

Look thou not on woman,  
even though she be cut out of paper;  
Like a plundering band of Baloches  
She will take thee away and kill thee.

<sup>13</sup>Schomer, op. cit., p. 84.

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