

PREFACE TO THE METAPHYSICS OF KHAWAJA FARID

Khawaja Farid (1845-1901) is metaphysician in the tradition of Mohy-ud-Din Ibn 'Arabi. His thought is the melting point of the entire tradition which embraces Mansur Hallaj, Bistami and others. It tends to form a spiritual constellation. He makes his own original contribution to the fundamental idea envisaged by the tradition. He manifests an intellectual-spiritual-religious understanding of God, Man and Universe. The vertical and horizontal dimensions of his thought reverberate in totality. Existentiality permeates his whole thought. He inhabits the castle of Eastern metaphysics. One who is steeped in Western philosophy may find it difficult to appreciate this formless metaphysics. He is condemned to consider it as a system. Anything which is not systematic is repudiated to be unsystematic, arbitrary and unmethodical. But this constitutes the basic error of the contemporary world. The tradition, on the other hand, does not necessitate such categories. It rightly transcends them thereby providing an occasion for the poetic mode of metaphysics to flower on the sacred soil. The hymns recorded in the 'Adi Granth', for instance, by virtue of their poetic form succeeded in structuring the Golden temple of metaphysics.

Khawaja Farid's existential awareness posits the 'transcendental Unity of existence' (*Wahdat-ul-Wujud*) in a unique way. Existence in its undifferentiated form is the metaphysical Mystery. It is only known by the Absolute in its Absoluteness. However, when the Absolute in its Self-Manifestation turns to the world of the contingent objects then it gives rise to the hierarchical order of

the "existents". The gradation of Reality runs its own course. The lowest stage in this manifestation or theophany (*tajalli*) is that of the material world which is open to the empirical senses. The soul's quest for the Absolute reflects the presence of the Principle itself. The Absolute or the '*Haqq*' is the Unmanifest ground of manifestation; the Unmovable structure of change; the Formless foundation of forms; the Transcendent edifice of immanence; the Infinite support of finity; the Light source of luminosity and the Origin of the Divine Names, and Attributes, Rabb or Lord, Permanent Archetypes, Creation and Man. All reality is metaphysically of One (*Ahad*). Oneness is the metaphysical foundation of his thought. The root meaning of the word 'One' is not understood here in its ordinary numerical sense. Metaphysically speaking, it is not a quantitative number but a qualitative symbol of wholeness. It means the Transcendent or Supreme Unity which has no trace of the created. But it also seems many when perceived from the manifestation point of view. Divine Uniqueness (*al-wahidiyah*) appears in the differentiated form. Hy says :—

Behold !

It's the absolute Self
that's manifest in all
forms and shades and sounds and colours.

Behold ! It's no other than He
that exists !

The fall of Adam
or Satan's inducement
is only a legend that has falsely created
the inexistent 'good and evil'
while real Existence is really beyond
good and evil.

Whatever exists
or you think that exists
besides the almighty God

is but an illusion,
 a false perception of impure senses.
 So, don't associate your heart
 with the Other that never existed
 nor ever could exist.
 Ever since my birth
 my skill-less heart could never
 be attracted by otherwise obvious
 and oft-recommended Two-ness in things !
 Whatever you name as beautiful or ugly
 is mere projection of your own inward
 duality.
 Mark, it's One, the Real, The Beautiful,
 the changeless essence of transient shadows !

Again,

See, Punnal's present everywhere-
 All mystics mark and hear !
 'There is nothing resembling Him'
 Know only He is here.
 'The visage of your Lord endures,
 All else shall disappear.
 'To want for nothing, only God'
 Confirms the true fakir.
 That 'nought exists save God alone'
 Our faith is sure and clear.
 That 'all but God is vain and false'
 should be your one idea.
 Mere knowledge, lacking mystic art,
 Can only interfere' ²

He further delves on the idea in these beautiful verses:—

The world is but an idle dream.
 It shapes a film upon a stream.
 If you would know reality,

Then listen carefully, mark and see
 That oneness is a mighty sea,
 Where pluralism's bubbles teem.
 Duality of base is bare,
 Which pride alone as child can bear ;
 It vanishes when picked of air,
 And all again does water seem³
 'Tis One who's manifest
 in all diversity
 of shape and content.
 Strange are His ways indeed,
 at times He chooses
 to shine in graces
 of a beautiful beloved,
 at times He likes
 to yearn and weep
 for the self same beauty,
 and yet by His divine decree
 at time He prefers
 to transcend these all
 and remain aloof !
 Behold the beauty,
 eternal and absolute,
 manifest in all
 from all directions,
 within and without.
 Indeed it's He
 who's eager to be
 in unison with Himself.
 and again it's He
 who cares the least
 for such reunion !
 Since love has tutored
 my soul, O Fareed,

my all illusory knowledge
 and pretended virtues
 have been shattered
 and dashed down to dust ;
 but thanks to Teacher,
 my kingdom of heart
 is filled with bliss !⁴

His basic commitment is expressed in the following verses :—

When taught the lesson 'All is He'
 Enlightenment I got.⁵
 Or perhaps I'am led to another state
 of awakening to the fact that all is He,
 the King of kings, that He is the moon
 of eternal light and we the clouds.
 Tear away the veil of cloudy I-ness
 and lo, here is the moon
 the face of eternal light
 smiling, illumining !⁶
 By knowing numbers all are One.
 Plurality is falsified⁷
 Except the One Reality
 All things will surely disappear.⁸

From here one learns that it is the knowledge of the Immutable which blesses man with a higher perception of the visible and the invisible domains. The strength of his metaphysics lies in discovering the eternal pearls of wisdom (*hikmat*) and placing them in the heart of temporal reality.

Whether 'existence' has primacy over 'quiddity' or otherwise remains an open question in the tradition. Shihab al-Din Suharwardi Maqtul, the founder of the illuminationist (*ishraqi*) school of metaphysics considers 'existence' as a mere concept which has no corresponding reality in the external world. It means "the princi-

pality or ontological fundamentality of quiddity" (*aslat al-mahiya*). Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra) and Mulla Hadi Sabzavari, on the other hand, understand 'existence' as actual presence of things. It is 'the principality or ontological fundamentality of existence' (*aslat al-wujud*). Khawaja Farid tilts towards the basis of '*aslat-al-mahiya*' but with this reservation that the Reality behind the existents" and "quiddity" is essentially the same.

A sage has observed : If it were possible to teach metaphysics to the people, no one would be an atheist. Khawaja Farid rose to the occasion and undertook the noble task of teaching the principle of Supreme Identity to the men of his times. He did not teach an abstract metaphysics for the people wanted a concrete experience of the absolute. They could not remain content with the merely Impersonal. Thus, he made them existentially commit with the personal aspect of the Absolute manifest in the form of *Rabb* or Lord. But such an immanence did not negate the transcendence of the Principle itself. Rather, all manifestation was reintegrated in the Source of all sources. Man occupied a vital place in the scheme of Reality. It was through him that the Absolute became conscious of itself. If man ceases to exist, then, the Self-Manifestation of the Absolute may become veiled. Hence, *Rabb* or Lord, in a certain sense is dependent on man. If there is no man or the universe, the reality of *Rabb* does not arise. Creation is the key to Mystery. Against this metaphysical background, Khawaja Farid points towards the microcosm and the macrocosm reality of man. He raises man from the fallen state and makes him prostrate before his own essential Self. Man, then understands his true vocation. This is the metaphysical meaning of the dictum 'know thyself'. He says :—

Where is the land from which you came ?

From what domain did you arise, Oh ?

Why do you wander sick at heart,

Whose dwelling in love's city lies, oh ?
 Why flee or seek the world's delights ?
 Why turn from life like one in pain ?
 Why, rubbing ashes on your limbs,
 Should you maintain a yogi's guise, oh ?
 Now of yourself take careful stock,
 And see things as they truly are—
 And whether He will come or not
 Fret not yourself with vain surmise, oh !
 You are identical with Him,
 Not just alike or similar :
 In essence and in attributes,
 Now learn yourself to recognize, oh ?
 Think deeply on these words of mine,
 And hearken in your inmost heart—
 Of both the worlds you are the lord
 Whose succour God alone supplies. Oh,⁹

He further says :—

Why you name yourself
 a part divided, a being
 unclaimed by whole ? when what you lack
 is what you are : a whole, a vast
 totality.

To you belong the gardens in
 paradise ; the singing-bird called
 nightingale, and the rose
 exist in you ;

Allah's throne on high,
 and the earth's surface
 belong to you ;

O you are high among those
 who are praised, in value
 invaluable.

when they crucified him,
 the man of victory ; Mansur,
 they made noise ; yes,
 his brothers made noise to mark
 rejoicing ;
 O remember who you are ?
 you vindicate the truth, and keep
 the spirit of truth
 alive : there is none to follow you—
 in this world, and in the worlds
 that lie between
 paradise and hell.
 why go over wastes and hills,
 when he you name
 is here and now
 with you.¹⁰

Again,

I am no more
 I and you remain no more,
 you and I exist no more,
 I am he :
 and, he I am :
 I loved him, and now
 he I am ;
 come, see and wonder ;
 how Heer has reached the highest
 excellence ;
 if you die in love,
 you shall rise as Heer has risen
 from dust to stars ;
 I met pain and sorrow,
 I met suffering, and how
 I stay in a world of peace ;

whoever dies in love
 and dies in life crosses the
 river of life ;
 I erased
 I and you, and found the pleasure
 of being in him ; and now
 there is none, but me,
 me throughout the world ;
 verily the man of victory
 is he, O Fareed, who at last
 discovers
 himself.¹¹

The Western philosophies of Man, in spite of their proud demeanor, fail to understand the metaphysical states of the hominid. Tradition teaches us that it is man's alienation from his essential Self which makes him alienated both from God and the universe. He becomes estranged, depersonalized and de-humanized. Without transcendence, immanence leads to permanent despair. This is the basic limitation of the total philosophies of existence. Man becomes the victim of finitude and is completely enslaved by human subjectivity. Even the existential freedom turns into a bondage. The existential metaphysics of Khawaja Farid, on the other hand, is based on phenomenology which in turn is structured on objective intellectual principles. Man by virtue of transcendence attains wholeness. Through his experience of dread, the metaphysical reality of nothingness opens invisible door to the fullness of Reality. Man has to make an ultimate choice ; a choice on which hinges the essence of his humanity.

Khawaja Farid points towards man's existential commitment with God. Since God is not an object, all conceptual attempts to comprehend Him prove to be futile. He cannot be chosen as an object among other objects. Rather, He is the pulse of the contingent

world. He has to be chosen in an absolute way reflecting inwardness, courage and passion. Choice entails anguish and without sufferings choice remains barren. Suffering heightens the existential awareness of God. Passion (*ishq*) is the locomotive of suffering. He portrays the torment in the following verses ;—

Since you departed, my Ranjhan,
 my whole existence is non-existence,
 my innermost self is an endless desolate waste
 All that was aglow in me
 is dark as death, and that which meant
 the fruit and flower of life to me
 is burnt to ashes.
 My rose-dreams are withered
 by the cruel wind of Time.
 To me all world has ceased to be.
 I cannot stay any more.
 The vulgar tongues do sting my heart.
 I must leave now, now and for ever.
 Ah, they are callous, these people around me !
 Maliciously united against a helpless soul
 my own playmates have found their joy
 in tearing my heart into pieces
 by cruel remarks uttered in no good faith.
 Alas ! I weep !
 I fain would die
 to-day, this moment
 rather than tomorrow.
 But live I must, it seems, to suffer
 the agony of love unrealized !
 O how I wish I could drown myself in the river
 or just could return to dust as dust !
 Alas ! The friend has broken all ties of love !¹²
 Distress torments me ill

And roasts me on its grill,
 To gnaw my bones and flesh, sir¹³
 The path of love is path
 With thorns, with hills of darkness, and ways
 unmarked by signs ;
 remember and know !
 this sighless track of love
 is track of fear,
 of nameless dread ;
 the quest is hard ; to meet
 the sweetheart means to meet death,
 to live in death ;
 no help, no aid, except
 conviction ;¹⁴
 Each bone of mine and all my flesh
 Are smitten by love's steely edge.¹⁵
 Amidst my ever-growing woes,
 All joy is lost today.¹⁶
 What awaits me ahead
 is, alas ! a river of blood and fire
 and swim I can't, I weep in vain.
 Action and non-action both do fail me !
 I suffer in flesh and I suffer in soul
 and tears in no way express my agony.¹⁷

Suffering ultimately leads to joy which testifies man's intimate relation with God. Joy helps in inaugurating peace with oneself thereby ushering in the reign of peace in the entire universe. He expresses the state in the beautiful verses :—

With daily greater joy, Farid,
 My heart more cheerful ever grows.¹⁸
 My heart from all distress is free—
 I burst in joy from my chemise !¹⁹
 I have seen the eternal

flame of love illumine
 every street and bazar.
 each nook and corner.
 The eye of my soul has been opened,
 and all the innermost secrets
 have been revealed to me.
 Whenever I see
 I see the eternal light manifest,
 wherever I look
 I find but Tur or Aiman.
 The distance is gone
 and all is presence Divine,
 my heart is in perfect
 unison with the Beloved.
 Strange visions I have
 and voices I hear
 and stranger still.
 All is bliss and rapture.
 This is the Night of Union,
 this wonderful night !
 The Otherness
 has been burnt into ashes.
 At times I ascend to the heights,
 at times I descend to the lowest plains.
 What was previously all separation
 is all but harmony and unison now.
 Pain and gloom
 have been taken
 away from me !
 Uncertainty,
 illusions, deceptions
 have all been burnt into ashes ;
 the mere name of the Other
 has been washed from my heart.

Eternal light and eternal existence
 has made manifest itself to me.
 Whether at home or whether on wayside
 I can see Him now, see unchecked !
 Whenever I open
 my eyes, wherever I see,
 a secret is opened unto my soul.
 All seems rhythm and grace and beauty.
 Now, Fareed, every pain
 is a melody of soul to me.
 The doctrine of 'All is He'
 has opened new vistas
 and given new life to me.²⁰

The search for God and the quest for one's real Self is identical. The absence of God implies the absence of man from his essential Self. Likewise, man achieves fulfillment in the Presence of God.

Khawaja Farid enlightens us on the stages of existence which in the spiritual terminology, are commonly known as the "Stations of *Qalb*". Man descends to the infinite depths of his existence in order to achieve corresponding ascendance to the celestial heights. Extinction (*fana*) is likened to the milestones in process of journey to the Ultimate whereas subsistence (*baqa*) is understood as the point of destination. In other words, extinction or evanescence is withering away of any individual limitation in the way of self-realization which ultimately leads to subsistence in the Formless. In this voyage, the presence of the precipitator (*murshid*) becomes exceedingly imperative. He knows the art of untying the knots of the unrealized possibilities of human existence. He is the archangel of of his disciple (*murid*).

Since the European languages are bound to the subject-object structure of reality, they are inherently limited in conveying the total message of 'Oneness' or "Unification". Even the concept of "transcendental Unity of existence" remains in the twilight

zone. However, they can be treated as feeble pointers towards the Reality in issue. The traditional languages, on the other hand, are relatively successful in understanding the quintessence of metaphysics. In the Divine Realms, poetry is more successful than prose in deciphering the code of essences. Khawaja Farid's 'diwan' in the Sirai language is vital enough to teach the celestial truth. It has the requisite lens to perceive the metaphysical landscape. The language is so pleasing that one wishes to plunge in the Sea of Eternal Harmony. It has a great symbolic import. The 'diwan' abounds with symbols, allegories, parables, similies, analogies, metaphors and images. One feels the All-Pervasiveness of Divinity. And in the contemporary world what else one can aspire for.

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18. *Fifty Poems of Khawaja Farid*, translated by Dr. C. Shackle, p. 134.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
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