

ARDAS

In Sikh life, *Ardas* is the most important and potent item. *Ardas* is derived from Persian word '*Arazdashat*', meaning a request, a supplication, prayer and application. In Sikh life, *Ardas*, in some form or other, is offered at almost every step, at the beginning and end of every work, ceremony, function, adventure, or even when going out and returning home.

It is important to determine and keep in mind to whom the *Ardas* is to be addressed. Sometimes people address the Guru even with different names connected with the place and purpose of the *Ardas*, sometimes to Guru Granth Sahib and sometimes, of course, to God, *Akal Purakh*, *Waheguru*. This reflects confusion of thought. We should be clear in our mind that according to the Guru's teachings, we have to pray to one Akal Purakh (ਪੂਜਾ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ). *Ardas* is, therefore, to be addressed only and solely to God Almighty. This has to be done by holding the Guru's Lotus Feet and supplicating under His protection, patronage, and following. Thus we get into the presence of *Waheguru*, the God-Guru. The more we get near Him and in His presence, the more effective and fruitful our request will become. The nearer we go the more we will be heard. It is then :

Ardas of the faithful never goes in vain.

ਬਿਰਥੀ ਕਦੇ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜਨ ਕੀ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥ (ਬਿਲਾਵਲ ਮ : ੫)

To whom the *Ardas* is to be addressed, there are very clear injunctions in the Holy Granth :

Offer your *Ardas* to the Giver of joy, the Destroyer of fear,

ਸੁਖ ਦਾਤਾ ਭੈ ਭੰਜਨੋ ਤਿਸੁ ਆਗੈ ਕਰਿ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥

When the merciful God extends His Grace, all affairs will be set right.

ਮਿਹਰ ਕਰੇ ਜਿਸੁ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਨੁ ਤਾਂ ਕਾਰਜ ਆਵੈ ਰਾਸਿ ॥ (ਸਿਰੀ ਰਾਗ ਮ: ੫)

He Himself knows and He Himself does and He Himself sets things right.

ਆਪੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਕਰੇ ਆਪਿ ਆਪੇ ਆਣੈ ਰਾਸਿ ॥

Nanak says; offer thy prayers in His august presence.

ਤਿਸੈ ਅਗੈ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਖਲਿਓ ਕੀਚੈ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥ (ਰਾਗ ਮਾਰੂ, ਸਲੋਕ ਮ: ੨)

When offering *Ardas*, before getting into His presence, it is essential to mould the mind and bring it into an attitude and mood of faithful devotion and gratefulness. To bring the mind into this mood, no essay or a thesis can be so effective as to melt the mind and mould it into proper mood as the fourth *Ashatpadi* of the fifth Satguru's *Sukhmani* :

Mortal, think of the wonders of the goodness of God !

ਰਮਈਆ ਕੇ ਗੁਨ ਚੇਤਿ ਪਰਾਨੀ ॥

From what base origins He has brought you out to be what you are !

ਕਵਨ ਮੂਲ ਤੇ ਕਵਨ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਾਨੀ ॥

How He made you, fashioned you and adorned you !

ਜਿਨਿ ਤੂੰ ਸਾਜਿ ਸਵਾਰਿ ਸੀਗਾਰਿਆ ॥

How He kept you safe in the fire of the womb !

ਗਰਭ ਅਗਨਿ ਮਹਿ ਜਿਨਹਿ ਉਬਾਰਿਆ ॥

When you were a baby He gave you milk to drink;

ਬਾਰ ਬਿਵਸਥਾ ਤੁਝਹਿ ਪਿਆਰੈ ਦੂਧ ॥

And in full grown youth He gave you tasteful food and comforts, and the sense to enjoy them.

ਭਰਿ ਜੋਬਨ ਭੋਜਨ ਸੁਖ ਸੂਧ ॥

You grew old, and there were friends and relations to attend on you,

ਬਿਰਧਿ ਭਇਆ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਾਕ ਸੈਨ ॥

And to feed and nurse you in your bed.

ਮੁਖਿ ਅਪਿ ਆਉ ਬੈਠ ਕਉ ਦੈਨ ॥

O Lord ! this worthless man will not appreciate Thy goodness;

ਇਹੁ ਨਿਰਗੁਨੁ ਗੁਨੁ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਬੁਝੈ ॥
 Thy mercy alone will open his understanding.
 ਬਖਸਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਤਉ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੀਝੈ ॥
 By His Grace you live in comfort on the earth,
 ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਧਰਊਪਰਿ ਸੁਖਿ ਬਸਹਿ ॥
 And enjoy the company of your wife and children,
 brothers and friends.
 ਸੁਤ ਭ੍ਰਾਤ ਮੀਤ ਬਨਿਤਾ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਸਹਿ ॥
 His Grace provides you with cool water to drink,
 ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਪੀਵਹਿ ਸੀਤਲ ਜਲਾ ॥
 And soothing winds to blow on you, and priceless fire to
 serve you.
 ਸੁਖਦਾਈ ਪਵਨੁ ਪਾਵਕੁ ਅਮੁਲਾ ॥
 His Grace provides you different pleasure to enjoy.
 ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਭੋਗਹਿ ਸਭਿ ਰਸਾ ॥
 And all kinds of necessities to live with.
 ਸਗਲ ਸਮਗ੍ਰੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ ਬਸਾ ॥
 He has given you hands, feet, ears, eyes and tongue !
 ਦੀਨੇ ਹਸਤ ਪਾਵ ਕਰਨ ਨੇੜੁ ਰਸਨਾ ॥
 And yet you would leave Him Who gives these blessings
 and attach yourself to others !
 ਤਿਸਹਿ ਤਿਆਗਿ ਅਵਰ ਸੰਗਿ ਰਚਨਾ ॥
 This blind fool has fallen victim to ingratitude;
 ਐਸੇ ਦੇਖ ਮੂੜ ਅੰਧ ਬਿਆਪੇ ॥
 O Lord ! save him by Thine Grace.
 ਨਾਨਕ ਕਾਢਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਆਪੇ ॥
 He who keeps him safe throughout his life,
 ਆਦਿ ਅੰਤਿ ਜੋ ਰਾਖਨਹਾਰੁ ॥
 Is not loved at all by the boor.
 ਤਿਸ ਸਿਉ ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਨ ਕਰੈ ਗਵਾਰੁ ॥
 Whose service brings him wealth of earth and heaven !
 ਜਾਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਨਵ ਨਿਧਿ ਪਾਵੈ ॥
 How foolish of man that he should not feel drawn towards
 Him,
 ਤਾ ਸਿਉ ਮੂੜਾ ਮਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਲਾਵੈ ॥
 Who is ever and ever present before his eyes !

ਜੋ ਠਾਕੁਰੁ ਸਦ ਸਦਾ ਹਜ਼ੂਰੇ ॥
 How blind of him to think Him far away,
 ਤਾ ਕਉ ਅੰਧਾ ਜਾਨਤ ਦੂਰੇ ॥
 Whose service would exalt him in heaven.
 ਜਾਕੀ ਟਹਲ ਪਾਵੈ ਦਰਗਹ ਮਾਨੁ ॥
 The ignorant fool forgets the Lord,
 ਤਿਸਹਿ ਬਿਸਾਰੈ ਮੁਗਧੁ ਅਜਾਨੁ ॥
 This man will always be remiss, O Lord !
 ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਇਹੁ ਭੁਲਨਹਾਰੁ ॥
 Out of Thy infinite mercy take him under Thy protection.
 ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਖਨਹਾਰੁ ਅਪਾਰੁ ॥
 Thou art the Master; to Thee I pray.
 ਤੂ ਠਾਕੁਰੁ ਤੁਮ ਪਹਿ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥
 My body and soul are Thy gifts to start life with.
 ਜੀਉ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਸਭੁ ਤੇਰੀ ਰਾਸਿ ॥
 Thou art the Father, Thou the Mother, and we Thy
 children !
 ਤੁਮ ਮਾਤ ਪਿਤਾ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਤੇਰੇ ॥
 We draw manifold blessings from Thy Grace.
 ਤੁਮਰੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਮਹਿ ਸੂਖ ਘਨੇਰੇ ॥
 None knows Thy extent :
 ਕੋਇ ਨ ਜਾਨੈ ਤੁਮਰਾ ਅੰਤੁ ॥
 Thou art the highest of the high.
 ਉਚੇ ਤੇ ਉਚਾ ਭਗਵੰਤੁ ॥
 All creation is strung on Thy Will :
 ਸਗਲ ਸਮਗ੍ਰੀ ਤੁਮਰੈ ਸੁਤ੍ਰਿ ਧਾਰੀ ॥
 It has to accept all that comes from Thee.
 ਤੁਮ ਤੇ ਹੋਇ ਸੁ ਆਗਿਆਕਾਰੀ ॥
 Thou alone knowest what informs Thy purposes.
 ਤੁਮਰੀ ਗਤਿ ਮਿਤਿ ਤੁਮ ਹੀ ਜਾਨੀ ॥
 I am ever and ever a sacrifice unto Thee.
 ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾਸ ਸਦਾ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੀ ॥

To address an *Ardas*, no priest or any special person is required. Anybody, man or woman, old or young, can lead in prayer. No ceremony whether religious or secular is complete without it. Sometimes, some ceremonies and rituals contain nothing but *Ardas*.

This is, therefore, available to everybody, rich or poor, high or low. The *Ardas* varies in size and content. A man going out on horseback, with one foot in the stirrup, or stepping into an automobile, may mutter to himself, "O Lord, of the plume ! help Thy servants." Sometimes a few lines from the scriptures by way of thanksgiving are uttered before or after meals. A person coming home after the day's work when puts his foot inside the entrance door, with a deep breath of relief, invokes the Satguru's Grace by ejaculating just two words : "*Dhann* Guru Nanak", the Great Guru Nanak. The Satguru has given us the conception of the Supreme Being as a Personal God. A Sikh moves in Him like a fish in the water. It is through *Ardas* that a Sikh remains in constant touch and communion with God.

The *Ardas* which is addressed formally at Sikh gatherings is given below :

Hail the One Supreme being the God-Guru Who is always victorious :

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਿਹ ।

May God help us !

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਭਗਉਤੀ ਜੀ ਸਹਾਇ ।

Ode to God by the tenth Master.

ਵਾਰ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਭਗਉਤੀ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀ ੧੦ ।

Having first remembered God the Almighty, think of Guru Nanak.

ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮ ਭਗਉਤੀ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਕੈ ਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਈਂ ਧਿਆਇ ।

Then of Angad Guru and Amar Das, and Ram Das; may they help us :

ਫਿਰ ਅੰਗਦ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਅਮਰਦਾਸ ਰਾਮਦਾਸੈ ਹੋਈਂ ਸਹਾਇ ।

Remember Arjun, Hargobind and the Holy Har Rai.

ਅਰਜਨ ਹਰਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਨੇ ਸਿਮਰੋ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਹਰਿਰਾਇ ।

Let us think of Sri Harkrishan whose sight dispels all sorrows.

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਹਰਿਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨ ਧਿਆਈਐ ਜਿਸ ਡਿਠੇ ਸਭ ਦੁਖ ਜਾਇ ।

Remember Teg Bahadur, and untold prosperity shall hasten to our homes !

ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸਿਮਰਿਐ ਘਰ ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਆਵੈ ਧਾਇ ।

May they all help us everywhere.

ਸਭ ਥਾਈਂ ਹੋਇ ਸਹਾਇ ।

Note : The above six verses are taken from the beginning of *Bhagauti-ki-Var* by Guru Gobind Singh. There can be no alteration of any word or vowel in the above lines.

May the tenth King, Sri Guru Gobind Singh, the Lord of the plume, and protector of the Faith, help us everywhere.

ਦਸਵਾਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ, ਕਲਰੀਧਰ, ਪੰਥ ਦੇ ਵਾਲੀ, ਸਭ ਥਾਈਂ ਹੋਇ ਸਹਾਇ ।

Turn your thoughts to Guru Granth Sahib, the Spirit of the ten Gurus' reciting and meditating on the *bani*, O Khalsa, call on God.

ਦਸਾਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਦੀਦਾਰ, ਪਾਠ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਕਰਦੇ ਹੋਏ ਬੋਲੋ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ।

Note : In the lines hereafter composed by generations of Sikhs, the events of Sikh history and reference to important *Panthic* places and the hardships and sacrifices suffered are mentioned. In this proper matter of the *Ardas*, help and assistance to face sorrows and difficulties can also be sought. Its composition excepting a few words here and there depends entirely upon the man who is praying. Except the first seven and the last two lines, the rest of the subject of the prayer can be altered, shortened, omitted or added to. There is freedom in it. The matter given below is just a sample.

Sahib Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh, Fateh Singh, the Five Beloved Ones, the Forty Emancipated Ones, all the martyred Singhs, men and women; think of their deeds, O Khalsa, and call on God.

ਸਾਹਿਬ ਅਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ, ਜੁਝਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ, ਜੋਰਾਵਰ ਸਿੰਘ, ਫਤਹਿ ਸਿੰਘ, ਪੰਜ ਪਿਆਰੇ, ਚਾਲੀ ਮੁਕਤੋ, ਸਰਬ ਸਹੀਦ, ਸਿੰਘਾਂ ਸਿੰਘਣੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਕਮਾਈ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰਕੇ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਬੋਲੋ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ।

Those who kept the Name in their hearts, shared their earnings with others, offered their lives for the Faith, plied the sword and practised charity, who saw others' faults but overlooked them, think of the deeds of those faithful ones, O Khalsa, and call on God.

ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਿਆ, ਵੰਡ ਛਕਿਆ, ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਸੀਸ ਦਿੱਤੇ, ਦੇਗ ਚਲਾਈ, ਤੇਗ

ਵਾਹੀ, ਦੇਖ ਕੇ ਅਣਡਿੱਠ ਕੀਤਾ ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਿਦਕਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਕਮਾਈ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰਕੇ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਬੋਲੋ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ।

Those who, for their faith, allowed themselves to be cut up limb by limb, were flayed alive, had their scalps scraped off, were broken on the wheel, were sawn through but remained steadfast and submitted to Thy Will and upheld their Sikh faith with their uncut hair to the last breath; think of their great deeds, O Khalsa, and call on God.

ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਬੰਦ ਬੰਦ ਕਟਵਾਏ, ਪੁਠੀਆਂ ਖਲਾਂ ਲੁਹਾਈਆਂ, ਖੋਪਰੀਆਂ ਉਤਰਾਈਆਂ, ਚਰਖੜੀਆਂ ਪਰ ਚੜ੍ਹੇ, ਆਰਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਚੀਰੇ ਗਏ, ਤੇਰੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਵਿਖੇ ਸਾਵਧਾਨ ਰਹੇ, ਸਿਖੀ ਸਿਦਕ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਸਵਾਸਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਨਿਭਾਇਆ, ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਕਮਾਈ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰਕੇ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਬੋਲੋ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ।

May all the thrones of Sikh authority, all the temples, banners, mansions, flags, wealth abide for ever and ever; ਸਾਰੇ ਤਖਤ ਸਾਰੇ ਧਾਮ, ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਕੇ ਝੰਡੇ ਬੁੰਗੇ ਨਿਸਾਨ ਬਿਭੂਤੀ ਜੁਗੋ ਜੁਗ ਅਟਲ ।
May *Dharam* always dominate.

ਧਰਮ ਕਾ ਜੈਕਾਰ, ਬੋਲੋ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ।

Grant to the Sikhs the gift of Sikhism and grant good understanding;

ਸਿਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿਖੀ ਦਾਨ, ਸੁੱਖਤ ਦਾਨ,

the gift of *keshas* and Thy Name with every breath;

ਕੇਸਾਂ ਸੁਆਸਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਯੰਤ ਨਾਮ ਦਾਨ,

the gift of faith and confidence in Thee. Grant the great gift of the love of Thy Feet.

ਸਿਦਕ ਭਰੋਸਾ ਦਾਨ, ਮਹਾਂ ਦਾਨ, ਆਪਣੇ ਚਰਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਬਖਸ਼ ।

Let us meet those persons of love in whose company we may remember Thy Name,

ਸੇਈ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਮੇਲ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਮਿਲਿਆਂ ਤੇਰਾ ਨਾਮ ਚਿਤ ਆਵੈ,

May we remember the God-Guru, the most exalted Master while keeping good health and may the Rememberance bring about peace and happiness everywhere.

ਸੁਖਾਲੀ ਸੁਆਸੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਮੰਤਰ ਰਾਜ ਚਿਤ ਆਵੈ, ਚਿਤ ਆਵਨ ਕਾ ਸਦਕਾ ਸਰਬ ਸੁਖ ਹੋਇ ।

May Your protection and indulgence extend to all the

Khalsa wherever they are;
 ਜਹਾਂ ਜਹਾਂ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ, ਤਹਾਂ ਤਹਾਂ ਰਛਿਆ ਰਿਆਇਤ,
 May victory attend our Charity and our Arms.
 ਦੇਗ ਤੇਗ ਫਤਹਿ,
 May the honour of His Nature be always upheld.
 ਬਿਰਦ ਕੀ ਪੈਜ,
 May the *Panth* always triumph,
 ਪੰਥ ਕੀ ਜੀਤ,
 May the Holy Sword help us.
 ਸ੍ਰੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਸਹਾਇ ।
 May the Khalsa be on the Ascent.
 ਖਾਲਸੇ ਜੀ ਕੇ ਬੋਲ ਬਾਲੇ,
 May the hearts of the Sikhs be humble but their wisdom
 exalted; their wisdom and respect be in the keeping of
 the Timeless-Person;
 ਸਿਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਮਨ ਨੀਵਾਂ, ਮਤ ਉਚੀ, ਮਤ ਦਾ ਰਾਖਾ ਆਪ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ,
 O Khalsa, call on God.
 ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਬੋਲੇ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ।

(Here the purpose and occasion for which the *Ardas* is addressed may be mentioned and the *Ardas* has to be concluded with the following two lines) :

Through Nanak may Thy Name for ever be on the ascent,
 ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਚੜ੍ਹਦੀ ਕਲਾ,
 And may all men prosper by Thy grace.
 ਤੇਰੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਸਰਬੱਤ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ ।

Some Notes and Explanation About the Above Ardas

This sample of the formal standard Prayer of the Sikhs is not a composition of any one man at any one time. It has been worked upon by the whole *Panth* for centuries from time to time. This standard Prayer took its form after the composition of *Bhagauti-ki-Var* by the tenth Satguru. Before that the *Ardas* began with one or other quotation from the Holy Granth such as :

He Himself knows and He Himself does and He Himself
 sets things right.
 ਆਪੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਕਰੈ ਆਪਿ ਆਪੇ ਆਣੈ ਰਾਸਿ ॥

Nanak says offer Thy prayers in His august presence.
 ਤਿਸੈ ਅਗੈ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਖਲਿਇ ਕੀਚੈ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥ (ਵਾਰ ਮਾਰੂ, ਸਲੋਕ ਮ: ੨)

or :

With joined hands, I pray to Thee,
 ਦੁਇ ਕਰ ਜੋੜਿ ਕਰਉ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥
 May it be granted if it pleases you.
 ਤੁਧ ਭਾਵੈ ਤਾ ਆਣਹਿ ਰਾਸਿ ॥ (ਸੁਹੀ ਮ: ੫)

or :

With the portion of Canto IV of the fifth Guru's *Sukhmani* mentioned before, beginning with :

Thou art the Master; To Thee I pray.
 ਤੂ ਠਾਕੁਰੁ ਤੁਮ ਪਹਿ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥

It appears the custom of offering *Ardas* must have begun with the rise of Sikhism and developed by and by into an established rule to get together for the purpose of praying in congregation. In *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, it is mentioned that if anybody wanted to get his wish accepted, he would come to a *sangat* of the Sikhs and ask them to pray for him. History tells us that even the Satguru had asked for *Ardas* being offered for him.

When offering a prayer, a Sikh is made to realise that he is a part of the *Panth*, the Khalsa, whose past and present history is full of sacrifices, successes, deeds and glories, referred to in the *Ardas*.

When we pray we stand face to face with God. The *Ardas* reminds us that to achieve the presence and communion we have to cover common ground with those who have approached Him and traversed with so much sufferings and sacrifices. We have to realise the picture of their steadfast faith and fortify our minds with their patient strength and devotion and resignation. *Ardas* is meant to refresh and lift our spirits high (ਚੜ੍ਹਦੀ ਕਲਾ), prepare us to be ready to do the Master's Will. To be a part of the gathering of God-conscious persons is the best way to do it. A Sikh *Ardas* begins with an invocation to God. The highest ideal of godliness, according to the Sikhs, was realised in Guru Nanak and his nine successors. Therefore, they are mentioned next. Then the Five Beloved Ones, who for their sacrifice were invested with collective Guruship by the tenth Guru; then the Guru's sons, who bravely

attained martyrdom and, though young, kept up the brave tradition of their forefathers; then other great men and women, who wore arms and practised charity, and in the face of unspeakable suffering kept their faith unsullied. This part of the prayer is the work of the whole community, past and present, and is most vigorous in style and language.

How many hearts in these long centuries it has soothed in affliction and braved in difficulties ! It bears the stamp of all that is best and most moving in Sikhism. It is the crystallisation of the Sikh Nation's history. It is a living monument to its greatness, which generation after generation of the Sikhs will repeat to themselves to keep alive the old fire in their midst.

When offering *Ardas*, some people, sometimes, feel shy to say out what they wish for. In Sikhism both spiritual and worldly responsibilities have to be fulfilled and advancement made. The Satguru has not only kept it open for a person to pray for his worldly demands, wishes, and advancement but has encouraged us to express and say out what is in our mind to the Almighty from Whom nothing is hidden. The fifth Guru in *Var Gajari* says :

Whatever there is in your mind to be submitted, say it out in *Ardas* to the Master.

ਜੀਅ ਕੀ ਬਿਰਥਾ ਹੋਇ ਸੁ ਗੁਰ ਪਹਿ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ਕਰਿ ॥

Giving up all your cleverness, surrender your mind and body to the Master.

ਛੋਡਿ ਸਿਆਣਪ ਸਗਲ ਮਨੁ ਤਨੁ ਅਰਪਿ ਧਰਿ ॥

The fifth Guru explains in plain words in *Rag Kahnra*, this idea as such :

O Creator, you are my Benefactor; there is everything in Thy Hand.

ਸਾਜਨੋ ਤੂ ਮੀਤੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਤੇਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੇਹੁ ॥

I crave for honour and crave for power and strength and wealth, goodly wife, riches, son, and body to work in.

ਮਾਨੁ ਮਾਂਗਉ, ਤਾਨੁ ਮਾਂਗਉ, ਧਨੁ ਲਖਮੀ ਸੁਤ ਦੇਹੁ ॥

The tenth Satguru has, in his prayer *Chaupai*, that we daily recite during *Rehras* in the evenings and also read while *Amrit* is being prepared, given us the lead on this point when he says :

O God, extend Thy Hand and protect me.

ਹਮਰੀ ਕਰੇ ਹਾਥਿ ਦੇ ਰੱਛਾ ।

And may my desires be fulfilled.

ਪੂਰਨ ਹੋਇ ਚਿੱਤ ਕੀ ਇੱਛਾ ।

May my heart be ever attached to Thy Feet.

ਤਵ ਚਰਨਨ ਮਨ ਰਹੈ ਹਮਾਰਾ ।

Deem me Thy own and cherish me.

ਅਪਣਾ ਜਾਣ ਕਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਰਾ ।

Destroy all my enemies.

ਹਮਰੇ ਦੁਸਟ ਸਭੇ ਤੁਮ ਘਾਵਹੁ ।

With Your Protective Hand save me.

ਆਪੁ ਹਾਥ ਦੈ ਮੋਹਿ ਬਚਾਵਹੁ ।

O Creator, may my family and my servants and disciples,

Sikhs, all live in peace and happiness.

ਸੁਖੀ ਬਸੈ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰਾ । ਸੇਵਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਭੈ ਕਰਤਾਰਾ ।

In the Sikh prayer, most of the sufferings and martyrdoms referred to are the happenings during the conflict with the Mughal rulers. It will be worth noting that no where in it are there any signs of bitterness or revenge. There is even no reproach or curse on the enemy, only the sufferings are enumerated. In the end of the *Ardas*, we pray for the good and welfare of everybody without distinction of caste or creed, friend or foe.

The background and explanation of some of the words used in *Ardas* is listed below :

Bhagauti

Bhagauti means God. It does not mean goddess Durga. In this *Var*, *Bhagauti* is described as the Creator of Durga and others like Brahma, Vishnu, Shiv, Ram, Krishan, etc. The tenth Satguru has used the word *Bhagauti* for Sword or God, and God is often referred to as Sword. He has very clearly said in *Rag Kalyan* :

Worship none but the Creator, not a thing made by Him.

ਬਿਨ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਨ ਕਿਰਤਮ ਮਾਨੋਂ ।

Know that He Who was in the beginning, unborn, invincible, and indestructable, is God.

ਆਦਿ ਅਜੋਨਿ, ਅਜੈ, ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ, ਤਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਮੇਸਰ ਜਾਨੋ ।

Call on Sangat

When this call is made the whole gathering exclaims *Waheguru* in response with religious fervour.

The Four Sons of the Tenth Guru

Sahibzadas Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh received martyrdom during the battle of Chamkaur on December 22, 1704, and Sahibzadas Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were taken to Sirhind where they were tortured and bricked alive and martyred on December 27, 1704.

Five Beloved Ones

They were the first Five Persons to offer their heads to the Satguru at his call and were the first to be initiated as the Khalsa. The Guru himself received initiation from them. The Guruship was thus transferred and entrusted to the Khalsa under the Supreme instructions of *Gurbani*. This was in 1699.

Forty Emancipated Ones

In 1701, during the siege of Anandpur, some Sikhs deserted the Guru. On reaching their homes, their women reproached them and made them repent. Finally, forty of them were taken back by Mai Bhago (Lady Bhag Kaur) and at Muktsar, they were all killed while fighting the enemy. Later when the Satguru came to know of it, he was greatly moved and at the request of a dying Sikh, Bhai Maha Singh, he tore up the paper on which they had written their disclaimer that he was not their Guru, and thus forgave them.

Takhts

Takhts are seats of Sikh religious authority. They are situated at Amritsar (Akal Takht), at Anandpur (Takht Kesgarh), at Nanded (Takht Hazur Sahib) and at Patna. Now the fifth one has been created at Talwandi Sabo (Takht Damdama Sahib).

Offering the Heads

In practice, this became offering their lives for the faith and

cause. After the fifth, ninth and tenth Satgurus and, four Sahibzadas, who sacrificed their lives, there were innumerable Sikhs who followed their example, led by the Five Beloved Ones. Most of them met their end while wielding the sword for the *dharam*. Sikh history is full of their valorous deeds.

Practice of Charity

The foundation of it was laid at the very inception of Sikhism. The first Satguru when settled down at Kartarpur on the banks of the Ravi, started the system of *langar* where the visitors who came for his audience and anyone who was hungry could take their meals free. During the second Satguru's time this system became known far and wide. The third Satguru gave such an importance to *langar* where everyone ate sitting in a line irrespective of caste or creed or being high or low, that an injunction was issued that everyone who came to have the Satguru's audience, must first have food in *langar*. Even when Emperor Akbar came, he too sat in *langar*, took his meals and then saw the Guru. This system has spread to almost all the Sikh worship places, gurdwaras of note throughout the world wherever Sikhs happen to be. Besides gurdwaras, some important Sikhs also were enjoined by the Satguru to run such institutions. For example, the sixth Satguru enjoined upon Bhai Rup Chand to run such an institution when establishing the centre of Sikh Mission at Bhai Rupa village in the Malwa area under his charge. Upto this day, besides Bhai Rupa itself there are several of Bhai Rup Chand's descendants who are running such institutions. Two such *langars* at Dyalpura Bhai ka and at Bagrian are especially known. The big long spoon, *karchha*, with which *dal* is distributed, which was given to Bhai Rup Chand along with a double-edged sword by the Guru, *khanda*, are in my proud possession amongst some other sacred relics at Bagrian.

Cut up Limb by Limb

This refers to the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh in 1738. He was the most learned and revered Sikh of the time. He had been initiated into the Khalsa order by the tenth Satguru himself. At the time of his martyrdom, he occupied the high position of

granthi, in charge of the Golden Temple, where he was sent by Mata Sundri, the widow of Guru Gobind Singh. In 1738, Bhai Mani Singh sought permission from the Lahore authorities to hold the Diwali fair. This was granted on the condition that a tax of Rs. 5,000/- will be paid to the treasury of the Governor of Lahore after the fair. Bhai Mani Singh smelt a rat and coming to know that it was a deceitful ruse to destroy the visiting Sikhs whom Bhai Sahib had invited from far and near. The fair was consequently not held. Bhai Mani Singh was arrested for not paying the tax. He was, as usual, offered the alternative of either to accept Islam or meet his death. He stoutly refused to barter his religion, for his life. His body was ordered cut limb by limb.

Scalps Scraped off

Bhai Taru Singh was a resident of Poohla in the Bari Duab. He was a pious young man of 25 and devoted to the *Panth*. Whatever he could produce, he offered to his Sikh brothers who had taken refuge in the forests. This was taken as treason. Being betrayed by one Harbhagat Naranjania of Jandiala (now in district Amritsar), Bai Taru Singh was arrested and taken to Lahore in 1750, where he was asked to embrace Islam or to cut his *kes* (hair). Rather than allow his *kes* cut, he suffered forcible descalping.

Broken on the Wheels

This refers to the martyrdom of Subeg Singh and Shahbaz Singh and others. Shahbaz Singh was a boy who used to study in a school under a *Qazi* who wanted to convert him to Islam. The boy refused. They put pressure on his father, Subeg Singh, but he too stoutly refused. Both the father and son were broken on the torture-wheel in 1743.

Sawn Alive

Bhai Mati Dass, was a devoted follower of the ninth Satguru, Guru Teg Bahadur. He was one of those who accompanied the ninth Guru to Delhi where the Satguru was beheaded and Bhai Mati Das was sawn alive. This was in 1675.