



ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥
ਔਸਟਰੇਲੀਅਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਐਸੋਸੀਏਸ਼ਨ
Australian Sikh Association Inc

AUSTRALIAN SIKH ASSOCIATION CHARITABLE TRUST A.B.N. 96 150 419 027
(REGISTERED UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS ACT, 1991. No. CNF. 15093)

SIKH CENTRE (SYDNEY)

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SHAHEED ESSAY COMPETITION

Topic: *Martyrs of Sikhism*
Last date: Thursday 7th June 2007
Submit to: Australian Sikh Association Inc
8 Meurants Lane Glenwood NSW 2768 Australia

Australian Sikh Association Inc (Gurudwara Sahib, Glenwood/Parklea) invites you to write an essay on the life and time of a Martyr of Sikhism. A *Shaheed* who gave his/her life for Sikhism causes.

To encourage participation, the following prizes will be awarded:

- 1st prize iPod 30GB, Video/Photo/MP4, to watch and listen to Gurbani
- 2nd prize Portable DVD player, to watch Sikhism and Gurbani
- 3rd prize Prepaid Mobile Phone, to be in touch.

In addition books on Sikhism and Trophies will be awarded. All participants will be awarded certificates and at least first three winners will get an opportunity to present their essay during prime time Diwaan.



The essay should be in no more than 1500 words divided into the following parts. Each part will be separately scored and added:

- a) Who is a Shaheed, how you differentiate Martyrdom of a Shaheed from the death of other average persons. (300 words)
- b) Date, place, life, situation and the reasons/circumstances of the Martyrdom of your chosen Shaheed (500 words)
- c) What can one learn from this martyrdom? How has this martyrdom helped to keep Sikhism alive and prosper in today's world? How Sikhs of today can change their life from this lesson. (700 words)

INSTRUCTIONS

Please strictly follow the following points for your essay to be considered:

1. Please choose one of the Martyrs/Shaheds of one of the last two centuries i.e. the nineteenth or the twentieth century only.
2. Please choose any Shaheed that gave his/her life for Sikh causes for your essay and follow the prescribed word limit for each section.
3. There is no entry fee or age limit. Winners will be announced on Sunday 10th June 2007 at Shaheed Diwas celebrations. Decision of judges will be final.
4. Entries can be submitted in Punjabi or English.
5. Please write your full name, date of birth, full address and telephone number at the bottom of your essay.
6. Submission can be made by:
 - a. Email to info@asainc.org.au
 - b. Post to Australian Sikh Association Inc, PO Box 834 Blacktown NSW 2148
 - c. Delivery at Gurudwara Sahib Parklea (Glenwood) (either at the letter box near the fence or in the box kept near the entry to the main hall)

INTRODUCTION

During the 400th Anniversary year of the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Sahib, the fourth successor of Guru Nanak, **Australian Sikh Association Inc (Gurudwara Sahib, Glenwood/Parklea)** is organising an essay competition on the life and period of Sikh Shaheeds. Our aim is to encourage Sikhs of today to learn from the supreme sacrifices made by the Sikh Martyrs, because of which we have the freedom to practice our respected Sikhism. It is a challenge for all Sikhs to live as per the principals dictated by Sikh Guru Sahibaans and pass on such rich heritage to the following generations. It will be great if all parents and grand parents can tell stories of courage and sacrifice of our Shaheeds to their children like Mata Gujri Kaur jee did to instil the Sikh spirit in young Sahibzadas.

It is in order to attain this objective an initiative is being launched as a humble attempt to encourage you to research the Sikh principles and deeds of Martyrs of Sikhism, write an essay and win a great prize / medal / certificate. Like every year, ASA will commemorate Shaheedi Diwas on Sunday 10th June 2007. On this solemn occasion, we encourage you to research the life and time of great Sikh martyrs wherein you will find some great episodes of our golden history. We pray that Almighty Waheguru will enrich us and encourage us to live pure (Sachee - Suchee) life.

MARTYRS IN SIKHISM

One who lives courageously in the face of death is called a Shaheed (Martyr). A martyr (Shaheed) is a person who chooses to suffer death rather than renounce religious principles. He or She makes great sacrifices or suffers much in order to defend or promote a belief, cause, or principle. The cause of death is not related to any personal gain or benefit. History underscores a deep reverence for Sikh inclination for martyrdom or Shaheedi, a profound esteem is featured in the contemporary Sikh prayer, Ardaas for them. It is a Sikh tradition that accommodates fearless resistance to despotic authority. Martyrdom became a defining trait and obligation of the Khalsa. So instinctive was their self-sacrifice that enemies admired them as fearless. They gave their life so that truth, justice and Sikhism could prevail in this world. Sikh concept of martyrdom as a consequence of the social, religious, and political environment is indeed unique.

Upon the Guru's refusal to embrace Islam to escape death, the fifth Guru of the Sikh followers was subjected to inhumane torture and killed. Guru Sahib immersed himself in constant meditation throughout this ordeal and accepted 'Will of God' a spiritual hallmark of the philosophy of this Sachaa Patshah. The purest of the pure Guru-Atmaa, that had been longing for its re-union with Parm-atmaa finally found its ultimate flight on 30th May 1606. Thus, the martyrdom tradition of Sikhism began with the martyrdom of the Guru himself. From this point forward, Sikhism began to form itself into a community of saint-soldiers, would live like a saint and die as a soldier.

Later in 1675 when Ninth Nanak, Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib refused to concede to the Emperor's demand to change his religion, the Guru was ordered to get beheaded. Unparalleled in the history of humankind, the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib was an act of sacrifice for another religion, which took place in Delhi on 11th November 1675.

From there on, the Sikhs would not hesitate to offer their heads and hearts to protect the meek and weak, whenever and wherever a call came or was the demand of the time. They would do so irrespective of hurdles thrown into their paths by the then bigoted and religiously intolerant rulers. Guru Sahib's sacrifice for a morally correct principle proved beyond doubt that, what matters at the end of a day is not the pseudo-power that, the mortals often seek rather the courage to stand up for 'the moral convictions'.

The Guru's martyrdom served to awaken the collective conscience of the Sikh community, which was about to undergo a final transformation in the years to follow. In the centuries that followed, the world has seen Sikhs achieving martyrdom in large numbers. This tradition is still continuing in our time. In 1984 we saw Shaheedi of Baba Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale, Bhai Amrik Singh, Major General Bhai Subeg Singh, Baba Thara Singh and countless other Sikhs. Who can forget the completely blind Raagi Singh Bhai Amrik Singh martyred at that time while performing Kirtan of Guru's Bani in the Sanctum Sanctorum at Shri Harmandar Sahib. In 1995 Bhai Jaswant Singh Khalra, 13 martyrs of 1978, Babbar Akalis of 1925, Bhai Pratap Singh of Saka Panja Sahib in 1922, Shaheeds of Nankana Sahib are some other examples from the last century. We have Baba Ram Singh in 1885, Bhai Maharaj Singh in 1856, Bhai Shaam Singh Atari in 1845, Hari Singh Nalwa in 1834 and Akali Phoola Singh in 1823 from the nineteenth century. Before them were even greater names, in fact a long list to mention all those names here. Life and time of each one of them was exemplary.