

Professor Sir Joseph Rotblat

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Promoting Gandhian Values outside India-1999

Date of Birth: 4th November 1908

Nationality: British

Educational Qualification: M.A. DSC (Warsaw), PHD (Liverpool); DSC (London)

Professor Sir Joseph Rotblat who is Emeritus Professor of Physics in the University of London, at St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, is not only a distinguished scientist but has made significant contribution in the fields of Nuclear Physics, Medical Physics and Radiation Biology. He is also known for his total commitment and life long dedication to the cause of Peace, for his sustained efforts to prevent armed conflicts for promoting peaceful solutions to world problems, and for his persistent endeavours to arouse the conscience of scientists to devote their skill and ingenuity to the true purpose of science, to be of service to mankind while at the same time adhering to ethical values.

During World War II, Professor Rotblat worked on the first atom bomb in the U.K. and in Los Alamos. His sole motivation was the fear that the Nazis might acquire this weapon and thus world domination. His purpose in doing this work was to ensure that the atom bomb would not be used. True to this conviction, as soon as it became clear that Germany was not working on the bomb, he resigned from the Project. He was the only Scientist to have left the Manhattan project before the bomb was tested.

Following the trauma of working on a weapon of mass destruction, he changed his direction of research of work to one in which the results could be directly applied to the benefit of mankind, namely medicine. For nearly 30 years, he was the Chief Physicist of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London, where he built-up and directed a large team of scientists and technologists working on various applications of physics to medicine.

The more important outcome of his atom bomb involvement was his decision to arouse the scientific community and the public in general to the perils of nuclear war, and to devote his energy to the prevention of not only such a war but also wars in general.

In pursuance of this, he set up, sponsored and directly involved himself in a number of institutions, movements and adhoc bodies, aiming at avoiding military confrontations and creating conditions for peaceful world. He played a decisive role in inspiring scientists who are developing weapons of mass destruction to realize their duty to society and be useful for the benefit of mankind. His conviction that lasting world security can be achieved only by an elimination of nuclear weapons and eventually by general and complete disarmament, led him to challenge the various doctrines of nuclear deterrence and the futility of arms control measure in isolation. He called for actual disarmament and the destruction of nuclear warheads.

He was the pioneer in locating radiation hazards and with his expert knowledge of Radiation Physics and Radiation Biology; he could make authoritative statements about radiation hazards. He was largely responsible for the comprehensive reports of (1984 and 1987) of the World Health Organisation on the Effects of Nuclear War on health and Health Services.

Professor Rotblat was one of the signatories of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto and a Co-Founder, of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. In 1995 the Nobel Prize for Peace was awarded to Pugwash and its President, Professor Joseph Rotblat. The Pugwash Movement and its various Conferences are based on the recognition of the responsibility of scientists for their inventions. They have underlined the catastrophic consequences of the use of the new weapons.

They have brought together scientists and decision-makers to collaborate across political divides on constructive proposals for reducing the nuclear threat.

