

## Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

### Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Promoting Gandhian Values outside India-2000

Date of Birth : 7th October, 1931

Educational Qualification : B.A., University of Johannesburg Master of Theology, England

Desmond Tutu's origins were humble. His father was a school teacher and his mother a domestic servant - Even as a teenager, he earned his pocket money by selling peanuts at suburban railroad stations and caddying at the Killarney golf course in Johannesburg. He wanted to study medicine but the family's indigent circumstances forced him to take-up teaching instead. In High Schools at Johannesburg and Krugersdorp when the Government introduced a calculatedly second-class state-run system of "Bantu education" in 1957, Tutu along with many other teachers resigned in protest. He saw the Church as a likely means of service, was ordained as an Anglican Priest and during this period he pursued theological studies in England leading to a Master of Theology. Between 1967-1972 he lectured in Theology in South Africa, before returning to England again as Associate Director of the Theological Education Fund for three years. During this period, he traveled widely, especially in Asia and black Africa.

In 1975, Tutu returned to Johannesburg as the Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral. He was the first black to hold that position. In 1987, he became the first black General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches which represents 13 million Christians, of whom more than 80 per cent were black. Consequent on the banning of the main African Nationalist parties, the South African Council of Churches under Tutu became an important vehicle of black protest. He fought against the Group Areas Act, a statute authorising the Government to remove blacks from urban areas to barren tribal lands. He also advocated the withdrawal of foreign investments from South Africa and appealed to foreign Governments to sever economic relations with South Africa. He was harassed by the South African Government for propagating such views.

Tutu has formulated his objective as "a democratic and just society without racial divisions" and has set forward the following points as main demands:

1. Equal civil rights for all,
  2. Abolition of South Africa's passport laws
  3. A common system of education and
  4. Cessation of forced deportation of blacks from SA to the so-called 'homelands'
- The Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1984 to Bishop Tutu. It attached importance to his role as a unifying leader figure in the campaign to resolve the problem of Apartheid in South Africa. The Committee observed: "The means by which this campaign is conducted is of vital importance for the whole of the continent of Africa and for the cause of peace in the world. Through the award of this year's Peace Prize the Committee wishes to direct attention to the non-violent struggle for liberation to which Desmond Tutu belongs, a struggle in which black and white South Africas unite to bring their country out of conflict and crisis".

In November 1984, Tutu was elected the first Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg.

Throughout his Episcopal career, Bishop Tutu has been an outspoken and tireless Christian witness to the plight of the powerless black majority in a country ruled by a white minority with an official system of racial separatism that is, as he describes it, "as evil as Nazism". The Africaner Government views Tutu as a troublemaker, if not a subversive. But concerned observers in the international community generally see him as he sees himself, a peacemaker in a dangerously

polarising society, preaching racial reconciliation, warning against a "blood bath", and hoping that he is heard before time runs out.

A crowning point of glory in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's career is the chairmanship of the Truth Reconciliation Commission which was offered to him. In all his activities Bishop Tutu has been inspired by the teachings and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. He carries forward the eternally bright flame of truth, nonviolence, peace between peoples and harmony among nations and above all the rescue and the empowerment of the distressed, harassed and oppressed sections of all communities.

