

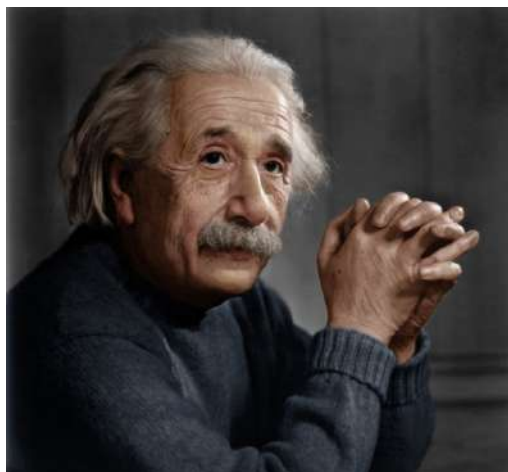


## Albert Einstein :The Crusader of Peace and Justice

(On the occasion of death Anniversary of Einstein)

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Albert Einstein(14 March 1879-18 April 1955; Nobel Prize in 1921 for his explanation of the Photoelectric Effect.)

As the month of April approaches, many scientists across the world remember the passing of Albert Einstein, whose innocent philosophical face remains etched in the mind. Both as a scientist and great humanist, Einstein did his utmost what he could do to make the world a better place to live in.

Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientists of his times once stated, "Politics is for the present, but an equation is something for eternity." Considering Einstein was not only a crusader of world peace, freedom and of justice to persecuted races, but also a great original theorist whose theories revolutionized the understanding of the structure of the universe, he was invited to become the second President of Israel [1]. He declined the invitation, without thinking second time about the refusal. So, to the great physicist, politics was not a means to enjoying political power. As a scientist philosopher devoted to the humanist causes of his times, he had a deep sense of personal outrage at the shocking happenings and involved himself in people's movement to create a free and just world. Einstein thus showed by both practice and precept that a scientist should not live in an ivory tower or an enclosed world.

In India, we have the similar example of C.V. Raman who had politely rebuffed the offer of Vice-Presidency of India made to him [1]. It is in the fitness of things to expect that a person of the calibre and sensitivity of a scientist intellectual should rise above the selfish motives and so something for focusing on the problems the community faces.

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In this regard, we are hopeful and can learn from the example of Einstein who chose the thorny way of resisting the power of German State, though he could afford to live an unruffled life if he had remained indifferent to the sufferings of the masses. To the surprise of all scientists of Einstein's times, he was put to a lot of hassles for speaking on behalf of Jews who were subjected to unspeakable sufferings under the regime of Hitler. In the early 1930s, Adolf Hitler, on the strength of populist slogans, was holding the German intellectual fraternity to ransom, having declared upon communists, intellectuals, artists and philosophers. He had already begun killing Jews whose number was considerable in Germany. Germany's humiliating defeat in World War II was attributed to the low fighting ability of Jews. On this flimsy ground and many other, Hitler had vowed to exterminate all the Jewish people from Europe. A vehement enemy of reason and common sense as Hitler was, he executed his criminal motives, which constitutes the ugliest chapter in history of racial injustice. Six million Jews were slaughtered in concentration camps, which dotted Germany, where they were herded together like animals, tortured and murdered.

Einstein was born of Jewish parents in Southern Germany's town called Ulm. Being rational in their minds, his parents were not strict adherent to Jewish faith. In childhood, Albert was awed by religious feelings-so much so that he composed songs to be recited on his way to and from school. But to the surprise of all, he lost all interest in religion and believed that there existed no God described by teachers. Albert took another startling step when he was sixteen. He surprised his parents by deciding to leave Germany where everyone was drafted into military service on becoming seventeen. Compulsory enrolment in military, to young Albert, amounted to denying an individual the basic human right to choose his destiny the way he likes or in agreement with his beliefs. In the imagination of young Albert war was a hateful thing, an organised violence committed by the State to the innocent people.

Albert decided to leave Germany to become a citizen of Switzerland, a country where there was no preparation for war. The independence Albert showed by taking such a drastic decision dismayed his parents about his future, but he assured them that he would take the entrance exam for the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich in Switzerland. Though he could not make it to Institute of Technology for want of adequate guidance, he never dithered from his firm determination to study science and mathematics. Gifted with philosophic mind given to enjoying abstract ideas, mathematics held out a fascination for him. The immense value he placed on independence in a profession may be seen in the observation he made when he was student, "It is above all my disposition for abstract and mathematical thought. One always likes to do the things one is good at. Then there is also a certain independence in the scientific profession which pleases me very much."

Later, as a student at Institute of Technology in Zurich, Einstein acquired more confidence in regard to temperamental freedom. Possessed of the intense love to learning, he would often enter into discussion with professors. It took him no time to probe that the teachers of science relied only on old knowledge. The drab routine teaching was inadequate to satisfy his keen mind searching for new and novel ideas. His expressing idea forthrightly annoyed Heinrich Weber, one of the professors at the Institute, though he came out Institute with excellent grades. Nevertheless, the exceptional merit at his command could not place him on the teaching staff of a university. Having over come this disappointment, he began to enjoy teaching in a school. That time, he swallowed another bitter pill when his original research paper was not considered for awarding him a Ph.D. He was aware of the fact the whole scientific Establishment got united against him.

Thanks to Einstein's faith in his ability to do something new, he kept to the arduous path of an academic, unmindful of the disparaging comments of the established scientists. A decade had already passed since Einstein had begun working on his research project. The time had arrived then when Einstein's due could not be held back. Around 1910, Einstein was recognized as a great scientist. His appointment as a professor at the University of Zurich was followed by offers from other universities. For Einstein, a special position of head of a prestigious new research institute was created in Berlin in Germany where he moved in

1914 from Prague. However, his happiness at new assignment soon ended. The World War I cast its shadow across Europe. The country where he was working i.e. Germany, was locked in war with Britain, Russia and France. Though shifted to Germany, Einstein was still a citizen of Switzerland, that was neutral country, that way Einstein, too, was not a party to war.

A very sensitive personality as Einstein was, he visualised the sufferings war involves; it leaves behind mothers distraught, wives widowed and children orphaned. City and civilization are ruined. Concerned about unspeakable sufferings war causes to the common man, Einstein found himself on the side of peace. In 1915, Einstein was active against war and along with other famous personalities of the world, signed a document called “Manifesto to Europeans” appealing to the like minded people to help in founding a league of nations dedicated to the cause of peace. From then onwards, Einstein campaigned for peace, tolerance, and for justice all his life. Between 1914 and 1918, Einstein produced the best research papers around fifty in number. This work brought more honour to him, though he was at the very top of his profession when he was thirty four, in the year 1913. In 1921, he was given Nobel Prize, the highest honour a scientist could dream of. The award of Nobel Prize was preceded and followed by other international medals conferred on Einstein. He reached the summit of fame and glory. He could afford a cozy and comfortable life, using his capital of power earned by fame. But his greatness lay in the fact that fame never went into his head. He remained humble, modest helpful to others. Nor could it isolate him from the causes of the masses. He became a political activist in movement called Zionism. At the fore front this movement were the Jews who wanted to found Jewish State in their former homeland in Israel from where they were expelled under Muslim domination of Israel. Einstein was himself a Jew. He remained nevertheless secular in his outlook as he did not believe in the teachings of Jewish religious laws in his everyday life. However, he backed up the cause of his fellow brethren as he believed that each individual is arbitrator of his existence. Also, he toiled to disseminate science in Israel and helped to raise fund for this purpose. From 1925 to 1928, he served on the governing body of Hebrew University in Jerusalem. To this university, he donated his precious collection of manuscripts and papers.

It cost him a lot of hassles to be on the side of Jews. The celebrity status he enjoyed among the scientists of world could not protect him from the anti-Jewish attacks under Nazism. The supporters of Hitler founded a society called “Anti-Einstein Society” and published a book entitled “One Hundred Authors against Einstein” in 1931. Einstein faced all this storm with an exemplary courage and spoke in his characteristic joking vein. “If I were wrong, then one author would have been enough.”

He remained firm in his politics against the persecution of Jews, though a man was hired to have him murdered. He felt proud of being born a Jew and joined the Berlin Jewish Community in 1924. The German State, backed up by its whole might, created terror in the minds of the marked community. Jews were discredited. Many of the friends of Einstein were tried and convicted for treason. Einstein did not fail in courage and opposed this glaring injustice. Doing so was not a child’s play, as it invited the enmity of German regime. His family had to pay off heavy cost as Einstein was away in the USA at that time. A raid was conducted at family’s summer cottage for possessing illegal arms. Einstein was singled out as an offender. Under these conditions, Einstein left Europe for the USA for good and carried his campaign there. He still believed in his ideals of world peace and justice to all. So, he made an important observation, “Organised power can be opposed only by organised power.’ Much as I regret this, there is no other way.”

## References

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