

LITERATURE, RELIGION AND SCIENCE IN THE PEN- PORTRAYALS OF DR. A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM

S. Lalitha*

Abstract: Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, is an Indian scientist and administrator who served as the 11th President of India from 2002 to 2007. Kalam was born and raised in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, studied physics at the St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli, and aerospace engineering at the Madras Institute of Technology (MIT), Chennai. Before his term as President, he worked as an Aerospace engineer with Defense (DRDO) and Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). Kalam is popularly known as the Missile Man of India for his work on the development of ballistic missile and launch vehicle technology. He has received several prestigious awards, including the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honor. Kalam is known for his motivational speeches and interaction with the student community in India. After all, what can you expect more from someone who dedicated his entire life for our country? A man beyond religion, caste and community, has had great knowledge in literature, epics, puranas and Vedas. The present paper elucidates the power of pen of the great philanthropist, innovator, scientist and a great leader.

Keywords: Missile man, scientist, elevated thoughts, great philanthropist, knowledge, love for mankind.

Dr. Abdul Kalam is a simple man of passion who provokes the student's emotion to make them dive into a big ocean containing lots of fusions. He is the idol of India and patent of Tamilnadu. Though he was the previous president he always mentions that "I am still a student". He launched his mission for the youth of the nation in 2011 called the 'What Can I Give Movement, with a central theme to defeat corruption in India'. He worked tirelessly on his project and met the deadline, impressing the Dean who later said, "I [Dean] was putting you [Kalam] under stress and asking you to meet a difficult deadline". For him becoming a fighter pilot was a "dearest dream" but he failed to realize it as he bagged the ninth position when only eight slots were available in the IAF. "I inherited honesty and self-discipline from my father; from my mother, I inherited faith in goodness and deep kindness as did my three brothers and sisters."-A quote from Kalam's autobiography.

Kalam played a pivotal organizational, technical and political role in India's Pokhran-II nuclear tests in 1998, the first since the original nuclear test by India in 1974. Some scientific experts have however called Kalam a man with no authority over nuclear physics but who just carried on the works of Homi J. Bhabha and Vikram Sarabhai. Kalam was elected the President of India in 2002, defeating Lakshmi Sahgal and was supported by both the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party, the major political parties of India. He was a visiting professor at various universities and an adjunct/visiting faculty at many other academic and research institutions across India.

* Asst Prof. of English, Agni College of Technology, Chennai. Email: prof.lalithas@gmail.com

In May 2012, Kalam launched his mission for the youth of the nation called the What Can I Give Movement with a central theme to defeat corruption. He also had interests in writing Tamil poetry and in playing Veenai, a South Indian string instrument. Kalam was nominated for the MTV Youth Icon of the Year award in 2003 and in 2006. In the 2011 Hindi film 'I am Kalam', Kalam is portrayed as an extremely positive influence to a poor but bright Rajasthani boy named Chhotu, who renames himself Kalam in honour of his idol.

In 1982, A.P.J Abdul Kalam was appointed as Director of Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme. He was awarded Padma Vibushan in 1990 for his great contribution in Indian missile Technology. He was appointed as the nation's Chief Scientific Advisor in 1992. He played an important technical and political Role in the nuclear test Pokhran -II in 1998 after smiling Buddha. He was popularly known as 'Missile Man of India' for his work on development of ballistic missiles and space technology. In 2002, Abdul Kalam was elected as the President of India, the first citizen of the nation. Thereafter his work towards the progress of nation was very high.

The pen-portrayals written by A.P.J Abdul Kalam constitute 'The Wings of Fire', his autobiography – 2002, 'Scientist to President' – 2003, 'Ignited Minds' – 2003, 'India 2020 – 2003', 'India My Dream – 2004', 'Envisioning and Empowered Nation – 2004', 'Guiding souls – 2005', 'Children ask Kalam – 2006', 'Indomitable Spirit – 2006', 'The Scientific Indian : A Twenty first Century Guide to the World around us – 2007'. His poems give a versatile mind and thought provoking ideas to the readers. One of his poems evokes mental strength and the power to fight the realities of life.

I was swimming in the sea,
 Waves came one after the other
 I was swimming and swimming to reach my destination.
 But one wave, a powerful wave, overpowered me;
 It took me along in its own direction,
 I was pulled long and along.
 When I was about to lose amidst the sea wave power,
 One thought flashed to me, yes, that is courage
 Courage to reach my goal, courage to defeat the powerful force and
 succeed;
 With courage in my mind, indomitable spirit engulfed me,
 With...

Kalam's education system and focus on varied thoughts are a source of inspiration to many leaders and youngsters. His education system focused with

value system like Education Category, Objective, Righteousness, Self-Confidence and Spirit. He believed the religion being transformed into spirituality with Religion Evolution, Love, Affection, FUREC and Spirituality. His vision on Equitable Economic Prosperity in India was based on Vision 2020, PURA, Employment Generation, Entrepreneurship, Innovation Eco-System, Green Environment, Smart e-Governance and Creative Leadership. His love and care for the people evoked his love and passion towards the humanity which focused on Health Care in India, Natural Life Style, Hygienic Environment, Sanitary Improvement, Clean Water, Brisk Walking and Aero, Meditation and Yoga, Naturopathy, Fibrous Food Habit and Cleanliness. These constituted the evolution of a healthy and a philanthropic nation.

Turning Points take up the incredible Kalam's story from where Wings of Fire left off. It brings together details from his career and presidency that are not generally known as he speaks out for the first time on certain points of controversy. It offers insight not only into an extraordinary personality but also a vision of how a country with a great heritage can become great in accomplishment, skills and abilities through effort, perseverance and confidence. It is a continuing saga, above all, of a journey, individual and collective, that will take India to 2020 and beyond as a developed nation.

As the title says this book is the sequel to "Wings of fire" where he continues to narrate his experiences from how he went on to become The President and how his life went from then on. This book is pretty much of an open talk where Kalam shares all his success, pain and controversies he faced as president. Even though this book is all about his own experiences it still doesn't fail to inspire, teach and motivate you. After all, what can you expect from someone who dedicated his entire life for our country?

Total eye-opener to some of the facts those are oblivious to the general public. Reading this book gives us hope and comfort that India is definitely growing into a developed nation at a rapid pace and we, the youth are at the forefront acting as catalysts for this transformation. Dr.Kalam shares with us some of the guidelines that he's provided to the various states, the parliament and the government itself in general, to provide a clear picture of how it is that the transformation can take place. There is something about the man. He radiates a refreshing sense of optimism and yet it seems wrong to suspect naivety. At times, it might come across as though the book is all about the proud and glorious moments of his life. But without much further contemplation it becomes apparent that it is his unique spirit that projects even the most disastrous of situations into a learning and memorable occasion. There were much less technical details compared to Wings of Fire.

This is an interesting sequel to the "Wings of Fire" by Abdul Kalam, former President of India, Scientist and a good human being. This book make one feel good

about the potential of resources of India, how best one can make use of it with the plan of action Vision 2020. Kalam takes us to his journey through his candidature to Presidential position and also his efforts to make use of the Presidency for the development of the country.

“If a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel there are three key societal members who can make a difference. They are the father, the mother and the teacher”, says Kalam. ‘The Luminous Sparks’ is an exquisite book of poems and biographical thoughts of the greatest scientist, philosopher of India Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam. He not only wrote his poems but took the reader to the window of his mind and reveals the reasons for writing the poem, which is very rare. His mind comes out like a transparent sheen of waterfall through which you can see his poems and his thoughts dazzling in rainbow colours without embellishments, going straight to your heart. The very first poem Harmony takes us to the classroom of two small kids who are separated because one reads Kuran and other reads Bagavad Gita. They have no difference in their mind, beyond any conditioning, these two children react to each other just as two human beings but those with minds heavy with conditioning of separatism cannot tolerate that and try to separate them.

Dr. Kalam wants us to break the goggles of perception that separate us. If we all start feeling as one, and free our minds of prejudices we will be able to ‘kill the snake’ that leads to shedding the blood of innocent in the name of religion, class, caste or creed. More than once in his poems such as ‘Pursuit of Happiness’ and ‘Whispers of Jasmine’ presented as poetic dramas Dr. Kalam urges on people to do their duty without looking for rewards. To think that it is my duty to work, my religion, and my worship is my work irrespective of rewards. A flower blooms whether you look at it or not. It gives fragrance and happiness and softens the harsh human emotions irrespective of your trampling on its buds.

Learn from flowers, learn from nature the poet urges. Another thought that emerges in these poems is, what kind of leaders this world needs. The poet answers this question in his thoughts ‘The Real Leader’. Real leader according to him is not the one who worries about his interests, visibility and chair. Rather the real leader walks along with suffering millions trying to mitigate their sorrows like Mahatma Gandhi. Such a leader has a yearning to spread happiness for all. The poems are most aesthetically presented with paintings created as the publisher says especially for these poems. This is a new genre of book production with colorful and highly visual presentation of paintings representing the thoughts in the poems. Thus the book creates a category of its own - a visual poetry book.

The ‘Wings of Fire’ makes us observe the way Mr.A.P.J.Abdul Kalam had succeeded in his life after crossing many mile stones with his enormous perseverance ,tenacity of purpose, stubbornness towards desire, enchanting support from his

fellow men. His steadily determination, supreme self- confidence, empowered patience, endurance are clearly energized in the lines of the pages in the book. There is something every human being can grasp from this book. This is worthy reading. In this book, Dr.Kalam quotes “when you are the anvil bear and when you are the hammer beat”, he says he had read it from apiece of medieval poet. This particular context makes us know the ends of human life and try to emancipate ourselves from the tyranny of egoism. With regard he refers to fine quotes in this way. His course of education which contained many fires is really inspiring and tugged my heart strings. The living pain that penetrated into the deep layers of heart when Mr.Vikram Sarabhai died was ennobled heart rending incident. This book is realm that converts cosmic elegy of missiles race into the creative psalm of astronomical science.

It is greater than a quintal of gold and a cluster of diamonds. The autobiographical content awakens the giant within you and sprouts desire in you to become something. Kalam’s personal story is a necessity for every Indian and his professional story is compulsory for every man who had a birth in this world to make life worth its salt. Kalam is not a philosopher but a man of technology thus; he can be taken as the missile man of India. Without Kalam there is no India and without reading his book there is no life. He did not wish himself to be an example for others but every soul draws spirit from him, which needs culmination in its dreams. The wings made me travel into a new world and clearly to enhance the value of life. In the midst of death, life persists in the midst of untruth, truth persists in the midst of darkness, light persists in the midst of India, Kalam persists Indian Ikshavak. Sight is about what lies right in front of us.

Vision is what lies ahead” goes the old adage. India is an old civilization and an extremely complex society. Her glorious past, natural beauty, resources, vast size and above all her unique geographical location have always given her the pride of place in the world. With the ups and downs of history it has retained its vibrancy. Yet, due to callousness and lethargy on our part and due to the negative slant of the media here, we as a nation have not been able to attain the status of a developed nation thus far. For all these negatives on our part, we blame it on the system. The whole system has to change, we seem to justify. For us, the system consists of everyone else except me and you. When it comes to making a positive contribution to the system we lock ourselves along with our families into a safe cocoon and wait for a Mr. Clean to come along and work miracles for us, or we leave the country and run away. Like lazy cowards hounded by our fears we run to America to bask in their glory and praise their system.

As the former Prime Minister Atal Biha Vajpayee, whose excellence as a poet is already established, notes in the ‘Foreword’, President Abdul Kalam ‘has contributed invaluablely to our country’s progress in space research and defense technologies....

He is also a sensitive and thoughtful poet. This confluence of scientific brilliance and poetic talent is truly unique.' In 'The Life Tree', the scientist's vision intersects the poet's, as Abdul Kalam deciphers his own humble past and relates it to the nation's great future. While the cause of the nation dominates his consciousness, he presents a humanist view of his personal, technological and social domains as 'mirror of the soul' to underscore resurgence of a potent Indian identity in the world.

The poet's aesthetic focus relates to nation building, through a celebration of Indian science and technology, secular culture, human values, and love for nature. He asserts his conviction that the act of creating, be it poetry, science or engineering, is a basic human capacity which needs to be nurtured. Integrative and interdisciplinary as his genius is, he maintains the dynamics of changes at various levels and links his consciousness to higher emotions, making his poetry an instance of the basic urge in human beings to create aesthetic significance, merging arts, nature, and sciences.

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam indicts unthinking, mindless adherence to fundamentalist, religious, casteist, and narrow social systems that disrupt harmonious relationship. His poems of love, faith and optimism in *The Life Tree* bespeak his innate humanity, selflessness and dedication for transforming Indian society. He seeks to ignite every soul with dream and passion that "will keep the lamp of knowledge burning/to achieve the vision – Developed India." Abdul Kalam, the visionary scientist poet, is convinced:

"If we work and sweat for the great vision with ignited mind,
The transformation leading to the birth
Of a vibrant, developed India will happen."
And, this is his prayer too.

Dr. Kalam exploits the medium of poetry, articulating subjective experience and meaning, to ensure promotion of excellence with focus on three main areas—education, research and performance—for emergence of a new Developed India. "We want to work for our nation/with our sweat enrich the great land of ours," asserts the poet. He assimilates new ideas from the contemporary sciences whilst embracing traditional, spiritual and artistic aspects of human experience. He celebrates innovations and indigenous knowledge just as he empathizes with the deprived and poor. The poet, sad to see waves of communalism and violence; sing the "song of creation" in one of his visionary moods, and feels the "divine splendor reflecting ...the heavenly answer":

"You, the human race is the best of my creation,
You will live and live.
You give and give till you are united,

In human happiness and pain;
 My bliss will be born in you.
 Love is continuum,
 That is the mission of humanity,
 You will see every day in Life Tree.
 You learn and learn
 My best of creations.”
 And bond with ties of affection.
 Your mission is the Life Tree.”

The poet President of India passionately voices the divine knowledge for humankind, the best of Nature’s creations, when he envisions the country as a leader in the emerging Knowledge Society. He sees the Life Tree growing with the mantra: “learn and learn.” Elsewhere he prays to Almighty “to light the lamp of knowledge” and “grant us a new life.” He feels “mutual love flowing” all around with intimate belongingness of “billions of billions of lives” in various forms displayed in nature. “You give and give till you are united/In human happiness and pain,” realizes Abdul Kalam in his compassionate thinking and reflection on “nature’s wonder.”

‘The metaphor of Life Tree’, which provides the book its name, is rich in meaning and message. The poet turns a sage philosopher and devotee, reasoning out the future of India and “the mission of human life” at the same time. As a poet he seems to be engaged in changing tastes and beliefs from within: His style of poetry seems to stress the need for implicit persuasion to reorient individual, personal, institutional, or public norms, social actions, and roles, making best use of knowledge today. He effectively proves poetry is not only language but it is also articulation of a people’s greatness, achievements, hopes and aspirations, and of common sense. He sets out a new poetics and himself stands out as a leader poet. His aesthetics conforms to his personal experiences, intuitions, and interior self. With implicit presence of the scientist in him throughout, he turns remarkably creative and diverse.

As a lyrical poet with patriotic fervor at the core of his personal reflections, he evinces a firm faith in God and believes in the efficacy of prayers. He seeks God’s blessings for everyone “to be with great teachers/Of high thinking” so that none have to suffer the pangs of communalism and social inequity. In the poem ‘Harmony’, for example, he recalls how a teacher had separated him from his close friend Ramanathan when they were students in standard fifth. As the teacher had failed to “comprehend a Brahmin boy and a Muslim boy sitting together” in the class, he asked the latter to move to the back bench: “My tears that the Almighty has created all equal, and free. dripped; Ramanathan wept/...The so called educated separate our souls,/Sowing seeds of discord and poison.” The sensitive soul of the poet knew

from the beginning Kalam wants us to remember: “All men are equal and created alike/And the creator endowed them with inalienable rights/To life, to freedom, and to continued happiness.” It is important that people used their inner faculties and brain to defeat the “Satanic temptations” within and kept from communal violence that “break the cage of peace and faith.” As he stresses: “Know you all: Khuda and Ram/Both are one, blossoming in love.” The poet’s compassionate heart feels the anguish of everyone, especially the poor and needy. As he recounts, he was greatly moved when Mother Teresa was hospitalized in 1991. He prayed for her recovery because “Her heart is home for those who have none.”

Dr.APJ Abdul Kalam also feels God-presence in the harmony of humans and nature: “Keep loving nature and care for its beings, then you can see divinity all over”; “Beauty of consciousness trapped in peace/Blooms of flowers show Almighty in deed. ...A touch of them makes all humans go tender”; and “Nature and humans were created together, Together they can govern this world. Then only peace and bliss will be here.” He stands for “a valiant new order”, “freedom from fear”, communal harmony, character building, transparent honesty, self-discipline, optimism, “faith in goodness and sea-deep kindness”, “love and peace of humanity”, unity of minds, harmony of humans, nature and science, and the Life tree la Agni, which is symbolic of India’s power, pride and prosperity. Expressing Indianness at its fullest, the poet President goes well beyond the administrative initiative of the state and declares in ‘Rock Walls’:

“I have no house, only open spaces
Filled with truth, kindness, desire and dreams:
Desire to see my country developed and great,
Dreams to see happiness and peace abound.”

The clue to the mystery of success, as he says in ‘Message’, is:

“Love for your work and faith in your dreams,
There is no force on earth that can shatter your dreams.”

It is possible by cultivating and strengthening faith in oneself, in ones inner resources, or the creative potentials within.

Some of the best poems in the volume that may stir a reader’s soul include ‘My Mother’, ‘The Life Tree’, ‘Memory’, ‘Tumult’, ‘Ancestor’s Desire’, and ‘Rock Walls’. I find in them the genuine soul-feelings of the poet. A few poems, namely, ‘The Life tree’, ‘Harmony’, ‘Pursuit of Happiness’, ‘Gratitude’, ‘Whispers of Jasmine’, ‘I am the Child of Bihar’, and ‘My National Prayer’, earlier appeared in The Luminous Spark, which is significant for contribution of half-a-dozen visual artists who illustrated these poems with their brush and colors.

The verbal and visual symphony enhances the appeal of some of the poems in *The Life Tree* too. The poet's anecdotal notes preceding almost every poem facilitates an understanding of the fine relationship between verbal and visual forms of creative expression. While APJ Abdul Kalam creates verbal imagery, Manav Gupta renders the poet's spirit into visual imagery with fifteen water color paintings. Painting and poetry flow into each other, testifying to the poet's belief that both painting and writing are forms of language. The poet inspires saying, "Educationists should build the capacities of the spirit of inquiry, creativity, entrepreneurial and moral leadership among students and become their role model."

Dr. Abdul Kalam, blessed with the 'dual muse', provides a rich feast of the verbal and visual arts, merging aesthetic sensibility, curiosity, analysis, and interpretation. He innately appreciates the painter's sensitivity to the visual properties of his written form and thus, enhances and reinforces his poetic effect. Abdul Kalam indicts unthinking, mindless adherence to fundamentalist, religious, casteist, and narrow social systems that disrupt harmonious relationship. His poems of love, faith and optimism in *The Life Tree* bespeak his innate humanity, selflessness and dedication for transforming Indian society. He seeks to ignite every soul with dream and passion that "will keep the lamp of knowledge burning/to achieve the vision – Developed India." Abdul Kalam, the visionary scientist poet, is convinced.

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thinks of feeding the system, because our conscience is mortgaged to money. When England experiences unemployment, we take the next flight out to the Gulf. When the Gulf is war struck, we demand to be rescued and brought home by the Indian government. Everybody is out to abuse and rape the country. Nobody thinks of feeding the system, because our conscience is mortgaged to money.

To conclude, 'The Life Tree' is a poetic pioneer of the years ahead with Kalam's personal metaphors that seek to balance linguistic and cultural gaps in conveying aspirations of the new generation. With verbal and visual experimentation, the poems in the volume provide a heightened creative experience. They not only reveal the sage scientist poet's life, mind and spirit, but also prove that he has a strong bond between him and his media and tools which, in effect, bespeak his inner discipline and individual mastery. His new book expands the national literary constellation, enriching the aesthetic dimension of Indian poetry in English today. A man beyond the realm of life, Dr.Kalam winds up with the words of J.F.Kennedy to his fellow Americans, and relates it to Indians: "Ask what we can do for India and do what has to be done to make India what America and other Western countries are today."

Reference

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