

INSPIRING MINDS FROM INDIVIDUAL TO SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS A STUDY OF DR. A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM'S SELECTED WORKS

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ABSTRACT

Non-fiction books are like the real life dramas from where we can feel the various emotional states of life, like happiness, excitement, anger, apathy, joy and calmness. This element makes the readers to maintain their curiosity and interest throughout the book. Life is always filled with so many good and bad experiences, incidents and feelings. But what makes a man successful is the inspiration within the mind. Inspiration is the process of instilling faith in someone to motivate him or her to do something. Many people do things easily because of this faith and will- power, but do not realize they are inspiring others around them. The former president of India Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam is such a person who inspires the people of all the realms through his works. He urges the readers to dream high and to convert their individual aspirations to social consciousness. The present paper focus on how Dr. Abdul Kalam inspires the individuals to elevate their individual aspirations to make it a part of the social and national consciousness. The attempt is also to prove that the individual aspiration can add value to the social consciousness of a nation.

The future and well-being of a nation rests on its citizen's aspirations and how these aspirations help in the social involvement and participation of its youngest citizens. The concept of igniting minds and inspiring the people to participate in the social consciousness has been done by many writers and Dr. Kalam popularly known as people's president tells us that a great

Personality is just not one person but a collective effort of many. He proves the same through his life and inspires the future generations through his autobiography, *Wings of Fire* and other works like *Ignited Minds* and *Indomitable Spirit*.

KEYWORDS: Individual Consciousness, National Consciousness, Ignite, Inspiration, Goals, Vision, Mission

INTRODUCTION

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Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam was one of the contemporary Indian writers who focused on the inspirational effect on

life and who inspired the Indians to move from the individual consciousness to the collective social and national consciousness. He was famous as one of the greatest visionary, a good teacher, a motivator, a promising scientist and a great legend. His inspiring and igniting effect can be found in his words, deeds and works. Rajesh Pant comments “Nothing could be more inspiring in my life than reading Dr. Kalam’s autobiography”.

Dr. Kalam felt so comfortable by writing for the ordinary people. His words have a warm, intensely personal and passionate touch which is capable of moving all the readers.

“Of all the resources, the ignited mind of the youth is the most powerful resource on the earth, above the earth and under the earth” says Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam on addressing the students of Sri Lanka. A strong believer in self reliance, freedom and development, Dr. Abdul Kalam is a dreamer to the core.

What make A. P. J. Abdul Kalam different from other writers are his spirituality and the importance he has given to his parents, teachers and his companions in life. Dr. Kalam also followed the philosophy of Kalpana Chawla on inspirational matter. He made this reference in the work, *Indomitable Spirit* that “ Inspiration came to her every day from people in the walks of life and that she was inspired and motivated by seeing somebody who just goes all out to do something” (*Indomitable Spirit*, 8). The inspirational fire and the ignited mind within himself gave birth to his famous works in Indian Literature including *Wings of Fire, Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power within India, Indomitable Spirit, The Luminous Sparks, Inspiring Thoughts, You Are Born To Blossom: Take My Journey Beyond, Turning Points: A Journey Through Challenges, You Are Unique* and *Guiding Souls*.

The inspirational element in *Wings of Fire* ignites a mind to individual progress and influences an individual to improve his or her individual consciousness, *Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power within India* proclaims the belief that the people of a nation have the power as a nation and by dint of hard work can realize their dream of a truly good life

Indomitable Spirit ignites and inspires the social and national consciousness of a nation to go to its heights and climb the pedestals of glory. *Wings of Fire* is an autobiography by Dr. Kalam with Arun Tiwari, who worked with him in the Defense Research Development Laboratory, Hyderabad. Arun Tiwari comments that “This book is written for the ordinary people of India for whom Dr. Kalam has an immense affection, and of whom Dr. Kalam is certainly one” (*Wings of Fire*, Introduction X). It not only tells us Dr. Kalam’s personal triumphs but also the story of national aspiration of co-operative Endeavour. The book has inspired us a lot. Dr. Kalam’s life is very well portrayed in the book. His childhood and hard work can be great model for the youth. All the hard work he had done for his love to study is a great thing to look at and follow.

In his autobiography, *Wings of Fire*, he describes his life in different stages. His life is divided into four stages- Orientation, Creation, Propitiation and Contemplation. Dr. Kalam says, “This story is an account, I hope, not just of my personal triumphs and tribulations but of the success and setbacks of the science establishment in modern India, struggling to establish itself in the technological forefront. It is the story of national aspiration and of co-operative endeavour. And, as I see it, the saga of India’s search for scientific self- sufficiency, and technological competence is a parable for our times” (*Wings of Fire*, Introduction xv). Dr. Kalam parts the message that anyone can achieve anything through hard work. This was the inspiration that he gave throughout his life.

The first chapter of the book, Orientation, deals with Dr. Kalam’s childhood, how he was inspired by his parents, friends and teachers. It also deals with his college days, how he worked hard to achieve success. It is a great lesson for

today's students, a great motivation and inspiration for all students who struggle to achieve fame and glory. The second chapter, Creation, talks about the seventeen years of his career. He describes the individuals who had a profound influence on his life. Throughout these seventeen years of experience he learned so many things- problems, failures, struggle, achievements etc. The Next chapter, Propitiation, deals with the missiles projects that he was involved, the failures and successes of Agni and the other missiles. The last chapter, Contemplation, sums up the book and how he got the nick name 'Missile Man'. Dr. Kalam says,

This is the story of the period ending with the Agni launch – life will go on. This great country will make great strides in all the fields we think like a united nation of 900 million people. My story –the story of the son of Jainulabdeen, who lived for over a hundred years on Mosque street in Rameswaram island and died there; the story of a lad who sold newspapers to help his brother; the story of a pupil reared by Sivasubramania Iyer and Iyadurai Solomon; the story of a student taught by teachers like Pandalai; the story of an engineer spotted by M. G. K. Menon and groomed by the legendary Prof. Sarabhai; the story of a scientist tested by failures and setbacks; the story of a leader supported by a large team of brilliant and dedicated professionals. I do not wish to set myself as an example to others, but I believe that a few souls may draw inspiration and come to balance that ultimate satisfaction which can only be found in the life of the spirit. (*Wings of Fire*, 177).

Dr. Kalam belongs to a large middle class family. He gives more respect to his parents. They were an ideal couple. His father did not have any formal education or wealth but he possessed great wisdom and a true generous spirit. The words of his father quoted in the book *Wings of Fire* "When trouble comes, try to understand the relevance of your sufferings. Adversity always presents opportunities for introspection" (*Wings of Fire*, 5). Dr. Kalam's spiritual life begins from his childhood, it was found in his achievements. He had a good loving mother. His parents were the first teachers and inspirations in his life. Being a middle class family they dreamed about their children's good life. He states, "I inherited honesty and self-discipline from my father; from my mother, I inherited faith in goodness and deep kindness and so did my three brothers and sister. But it was the time that I spent with Jallaluddin and Samsuddin that perhaps contributed most of the uniqueness of my childhood and made all the difference in my later life. The unschooled wisdom of Jallaluddin and Samsuddin was so intuitive and responsive to non- verbal messages, that I can unhesitatingly attribute my subsequently manifested creativity to their company in my childhood" (*Wings of Fire*, 8).

Wings of Fire mentions about the teacher of Kalam's boyhood, Iyadurai Solomon, who used to say: "To succeed in life and achieve results, you must understand and master three mighty forces- desire, belief and expectation" (*Wings of Fire*, 12). He also would say, "With faith you can change your destiny" (*Wings of Fire*, 13). Kalam also quotes in the second chapter that "the vivid memory of our mathematics teachers, Prof. Thothathri Iyengar and Prof. Suryanarayana Sastry, walking together on the campus inspires me to this day" (*Wings of Fire*, 14). His father's inspiring words also echoed in him in those periods of nebulous drift. "He who knows others is learned, but the wise one is the one who knows himself. Learning without wisdom is of no use" (*Wings of Fire*, 17).

According to Dr. Kalam each individual creature on this beautiful planet is created by God to fulfill a particular role. Throughout his life he gave gratitude to God. He comments, "Whatever I have achieved in life is through His help, and an expression of His will. He showered His grace on me through some outstanding teachers and colleagues, and when I pay tributes to these fine persons, I am merely praising His glory...We are all born with a divine fire in us. Our efforts should be to give wings to this fire and fill the world with the glow of its goodness" (*Wings of Fire*, Introduction xv).

Wings of Fire describes Kalam's rise from confusions and his personal and professional struggles. It is also the story of Agni, Prithvi, Akash, Trishul and Nag missiles that have become common names in India. All these missiles have made the nation to the level of a missile power of international ranking. This is also the story of independent India's struggle for technological self sufficiency.

Dr. Kalam gets motivation and inspiration from his life experiences, his parents, teachers, mentors and colleagues. These motivations were of great help to him to grow and achieve in life. But his life, experiences and writings are a source of great motivation and inspiration to each and every person in the world especially to an Indian. *Wings of Fire* is the story of national aspiration and of co-operative endeavour. Thus he inspires and ignites the readers to raise their individual consciousness to the collective social and national consciousness of the nation.

The book, *Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power within India*, talks about Dr. Kalam's personal experience of meeting different students from all over the nation. This meeting made him realize the power and potential of the people especially the youth. "It is the people of a nation who make it great. By their effort, the people in turn become important citizens of their great country. Ignited minds are the most powerful resource on earth, and the one billion minds of our nation are indeed a great power waiting to be tapped" (*Ignited Minds*, 137). The title of the book is very powerful and entices one to the book. Dr. Kalam in the Preface of the book says, "I believe that when we believe in our goals, that what we dream of can become reality. *Ignited Minds* is about developing that conviction in ourselves, and discarding the things that hold us back" (*Ignited Minds*, Preface xiii-xiv). The book starts with his dream of meeting the five greatest beings on earth. He also discusses about the inspiration they gave him to dream and think big. "Most important, through my interaction with them, I feel I can ignite in their minds a love for science, and through it, a sense of mission for achieving a developed India" (*Ignited Minds*, 18). He inspires everyone to have a dream and also emphasizes on the power of the dream. "But what I really do know is that there is no greater power in heaven or on earth than the commitment to a dream. Dreams hold something of that energy which lies at the heart of all things and are the binding force that brings the spiritual and the material together" (*Ignited Minds*, 19). He emphasizes on the role played by parents and teachers in the growth of the young generation who are considered as the nation's future and wealth. "Behind the parents stands the school, and behind the teacher the home. Education and the teacher-student relationship have to be seen not in business terms but with the nation's growth in mind. A proper education would help nurture a sense of dignity and self-respect among our youth" (*Ignited Minds*, 26).

In the book he also discusses his taste for science and technology. He talks about the visionaries and scientists of the nation who helped in shaping the technological growth of India. By narrating their examples Dr. Kalam reinforces the need for a vision and a mission based on the vision of the nation. According to him the vision and mission is important both for an individual and the nation. A nation will lose its strength if it lacks a vision, says Dr. Kalam. He also talks in detail about the saints and prophets he met and how the mind and the body interacts in them to create a vital force and he makes the readers realize about the power of a higher force, a spiritual force within us. Dr. Abdul opines that India is a country with lot of potentials and we have to exploit the strength, energy and creativity of the youth. He asks: "How can one ignite the young minds? How can one attract the task of nation building? Only a united vision launched with renewed vigour will bring the young force into action" (*Ignited Minds*, 154). He asks every citizen of the nation to enter into a mission by integrating the knowledge system. He inspires the readers to achieve the mission of making the country a developed nation.

Throughout the book he focuses on the power of imagination and dream. He asks the youth to look for opportunities in every challenge in front of them. He also asks the youth to take the responsibilities of their actions without thinking of the results. The book induces an inspiration and a feeling of patriotism in the reader. It also urges us to consider the nation and its vision as more important than the individual. In the Epilogue he prays, "Embed the thought "Nation is bigger than the Individual" in the minds of the leaders and people" (*Ignited Minds*, 195). The most inspiring lines from the book are, "I realized then that if something is at stake, the human mind gets ignited..." (*Ignited Minds*, 177). The book is capable of inspiring the reader to the core and ignites a fire in the mind of the reader. Dr. Kalam has been a role model to many people and the book pictures him as a patriot and a man of great wisdom.

This book gives an insight into the great potential our country has, the diversity which makes it so rich, and the great potential which is hidden in the various corners of the country and how the realization of one's higher self within us and the faith in our dreams can take us to places. With real life experiences described in a very simple language, Dr. Kalam has created ripples and disturbance in the minds of the youth.

Indomitable Spirit deals with the values, thoughts and ideals of Dr. Abdul Kalam. Discussing a wide range of themes from the human values to the national and global concerns, his words inspire and capture the reader's attention. In *Indomitable Spirit* he discusses about the persons who gave him inspiration through their life and how it helped him to think about the development of the nation. Kalam believes that "Teachers are the backbone of any country, the pillar upon which all aspirations are converted to realities" (*Indomitable Spirit*, 24).

A knowledge society can build a good nation. Knowledge can change and transform the society. Knowledge can give a wealthier generation. Dr. Kalam asks a question: "When will India become a developed nation? (*Indomitable Spirit*, 187). He gives the answer too: "There is need to have coherent thinking among all the members of society. Our sweat will transform developing India into a developed India. Any country is as good as its citizens: their ethos, their values and their character will be reflected in the country's make-up" (*Indomitable Spirit*, 187). He also discusses the need of an indomitable spirit. "Indomitable spirit has two components. The first component is that there must be a vision leading to higher goals at achievement. And the second component is the ability to overcome all hurdles coming in the way of mission accomplishment" (*Indomitable Spirit*, 236).

CONCLUSIONS

The three selected books emphasis the role others play be it at home, an organization, or a nation to drive us towards a better future. Dr. Kalam gives the country an inspiration on how to dream and go on to realize them. These books are autobiographical, inspirational and philosophical; yet practical and realistic. *Wings of Fire*, *Ignited Minds* and *Indomitable Spirit* are thus a unique blend of all these and much more, which fire the reader's imagination, ignite and inspire the thought that anything is possible. Reading Dr. Abdul Kalam's books have been an exciting and inspiring journey, a journey from the individual consciousness to the social and collective consciousness of the nation.

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