

# An Impact on A. P. J. Abdul Kalam Biography: A Perspective View

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**Abstract:** People from all over the world have attacked us, taken our territories, and dominated our minds over the course of 3000 years. From Alexander forward, the Greeks, Turks, Moguls, Portuguese, British, French, and Dutch all came and robbed us, taking away what was ours. That is why my initial vision is one of liberty. I feel that India first saw this in 1857, when we began the battle for independence. This is the freedom we must safeguard, cultivate, and expand. No one will appreciate us if we are not free. My second vision for India's future is that we have been a developing country for the past fifty years. It is past time for us to recognize ourselves as a developed nation. In terms of GDP, we are among the top five countries in the world. In most regions, we are growing at a pace of 10%. I've had a third vision. India must stand up to the rest of the globe. Because, in my opinion, unless India stands up to the rest of the world, no one will respect us. Only strength is respected by strength. We must be powerful not only militarily, but also economically.

**Keywords:** perspective, biography, vision, strength.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The eleventh President of India Bharat Ratna Dr APJ Abdul Kalam (1931- 2015) was the finest technocrat, who led many high technology missions in taking the country on the path of self-reliance with home-grown technologies. His approaches were simple that led to the development of frugal indigenous solutions, instead of high technology acquisitions from the developed nations.

Dr. Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam was born on October 15, 1931, in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, to a Tamil Muslim family (then the Madras Presidency). His father, Jainulabudeen, was a boat owner and part-time imam at a local mosque, while his mother, Ashiamma, was a nurturing housewife. His father had a close relationship with local Hindu and Christian clerics, who instilled spiritual ideas and beliefs in Kalam. "My father Jainulabudeen was not technically educated but was a guy of immense insight and love," Kalam says about his father.



Figure 1: President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam addressing the nation on the eve of 58th Republic Day in New Delhi on January 25, 2007.

Kalam graduated from Ramanathapuram Schwartz High School, where he distinguished himself as a dedicated student with a specific interest in mathematics. He subsequently obtained his first degree in physics at Saint Joseph's College in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, which was then associated with the University of Madras. Following his BSc, he enrolled in an aeronautical engineering degree programme at Madras Institute of Technology in Tamil Nadu. In 1958, he completed his engineering studies. His top objective was to join the Indian Air Force (IAF) as a fighter pilot as soon as he finished his engineering studies, but he narrowly missed out. Instead, in 1958, he joined the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) as a junior scientist at the Aeronautical Development Establishment in Bangalore, where he worked on fighter jet research and development for the Indian Air Force.

In 1963, he was chosen to work as a rocket engineer with the Indian Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR). INCOSPAR was the forerunner to the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), which was commanded by Professor Vikram Sarabhai. Kalam was nominated for a six-month training programme in sounding rocket launching procedures at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the United States shortly after joining INCOSPAR. In 1963, he entered NASA's advanced training programme and got practical instruction at different NASA R&D centres, including the Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia, and the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland.

His NASA expertise paid dividends as he worked as one of the primary architects of India's now-thriving

space programme. He played a key part in the construction and deployment of India's first indigenous Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-3), which successfully launched the Rohini RS-1 satellite into Earth orbit in July 1980. SLV-3 was a historic milestone for India, since it allowed the country to join the elite space club. During his scientific career, Kalam was fortunate to be mentored by notable Indian scientists such as Professor Vikram Sarabhai, Professor MGK Menon, Professor Satish Dhawan, and Professor Raja Ramanna.

After nearly two decades at the ISRO, he returned to DRDO in 1983 as its Chief Executive to supervise the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP). During the 1980s, under his direction, the IGMDP developed and operationalized the Agni and Prithvi missiles to establish indigenous capabilities in crucial technologies. Following the success of the IGMDP programme, Kalam was promoted to the position of Chief Scientific Adviser to the Prime Minister and Secretary of the DRDO, where he served the country from July 1992 to December 1999. Subsequently, he worked as one of the Chief Project Coordinators in the 1998 Operation Shakti (Pokhran-II) nuclear tests, which drew global attention as India transitioned to a full-fledged nuclear state in order to strike a balance for regional security and peace.

Professor Y. S. Rajan, a co-author of several publications, was the Executive Director of the Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC), an autonomous organization within the Ministry of Science and Technology. TIFAC was involved in the Technology Vision 2020 exercise for India in the 1990s, with the goal of "Transforming the nation into a developed country, with five areas in combination having been identified based on India's core competence, natural resources, and talented manpower for integrated action to double the GDP growth rate and realize the Vision of Developed India." The following regions were identified:

- "Agriculture and food processing," with a goal of tripling current food and agricultural product production by 2020.
- Infrastructure with reliable and quality electric power, including solar farming for all parts of the country, providing urban amenities in rural areas, and interlinking of rivers;
- Education and healthcare, to provide social security and eradication of illiteracy and health for all; and
- Information and communication technology (ICT): This is one of our fundamental skills and a source of income. ICT may be utilized for tele-education, tele-medicine, and e-governance to boost education in remote places, healthcare, and administrative transparency;
- Critical technologies and strategic industries have seen expansion in nuclear technology, space technology, and defense technology." The book *India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium* was a refinement of TIFAC's series of "Technology Vision 2020" publications.

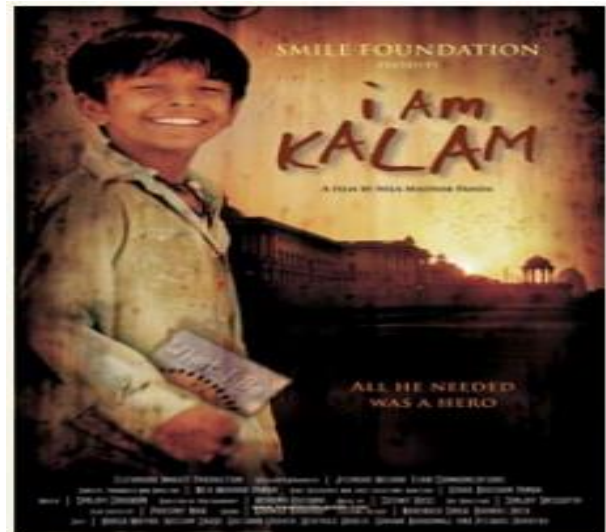


Figure 2: A Poster of the Film "I Am Kalam" inspired by life of AJP Abdul Kalam

Kalam and Rajan wrote a touching dedication to the book:

*After one of the talks delivered by Dr. Kalam, a ten-year-old girl came up to him for his autograph. 'What is your ambition,' he asked her. 'I want to live in a developed India,' she replied without hesitation. This book is dedicated to her and the millions of Indians who share her aspiration.*

For different reasons, Kalam was dubbed "the People's President" and "Missile Man of India." In an obituary, noted writer Mark Tully says, "He became known as the "People's President" because he welcomed the people inside the palace in New Delhi (constructed for the last of the viceroys by the British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens) and made himself available wherever he travelled." Tully went on to say that Kalam was a key figure in some of India's most successful technical programmes, including the creation and launch of the SLV-3 and indigenous guided missiles, which earned him the title "Missile Man of India." His leadership style was very unique and exemplary, as it was documented in a research paper titled "Visionary Leadership: A Survey of Literature and Case Study of Dr A P J Abdul Kalam at DRDL" by R S Dwivedi (The Journal of Business Perspective, 10(3), 11-21, 2006).

During his presidency (2002-2007), Kalam evolved many innovative ideas for sustainable development and peoples' empowerment, to be implemented by the national and local governments, including the Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA). PURA became a central scheme titled 'Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas' in 2010 led by Ministry of Rural Development and implemented on pilot basis under a public-private partnership (PPP) framework during the 11th Five Year Plan.

He was bestowed Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian honour, in 1997 by Government of India for his leadership roles in attaining the country's scientific and technological competencies. He was earlier awarded two other coveted civilian honours the Padma Bhushan in 1981 and the Padma Vibhushan in 1990. He became an elected Fellow of the national academies such as the Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE), the Indian Academy of Sciences Bangalore (IAS), the National Academy of Sciences of India (NASI), and an honorary fellow of the Institution of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering (IETE). He also received honorary doctorates from many universities in India and abroad, such as, Aligarh Muslim University, India; Edinburgh University, UK; University of Wolver Hampton, UK; Simon Fraser University, USA; Oakland University, USA; Carnegie Mellon University, USA; University of Waterloo, Canada; and Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He remained a bachelor throughout life.

Kalam had established himself as a skilled writer. He has published more than twenty novels, yet an official homepage of the former President (on [Abdulkalam.nic.in/books.html](http://Abdulkalam.nic.in/books.html)) includes just thirteen of them. His work is divided into three genres: autobiographical, futuristic or visionary, and inspiring. He co-wrote two autobiographical books, *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* with Arun Tiwari (1999) and *Turning Points: A Journey Through Challenges* (2001). (2012). His inspiring book titles are similar to the subjects of his public lectures, which he enjoyed delivering in front of assemblies of school, college, and university students, as well as young residents of India, in order to spark a desire for India to become a developed nation in the near future.

Many of his books have been highly rated or reviewed by book readers. The top five novels based on reader votes at the GoodReads.com website, which allows readers and booklovers to rank and review published books, are as follows:

*Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* (1999); *Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power within India* (2002); *Turning Points: A Journey through Challenges* (2012); *India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium jointly with Y S Rajan* (1999); and *My Journey: Transforming Dreams into Actions* (2013).

The top five books, based on the number of citations each book received as reflected on Google Scholar search engine, are: *India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium*; *Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power within India*; *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography*; *Target 3 Billion: Innovative Solutions Towards Sustainable Development jointly with SP Singh* (2011); and *Envisioning an Empowered Nation: Technology for Societal Transformation jointly with AS Pillai* (2004).

In addition to the above-mentioned books, Kalam wrote a few more visionary and inspirational books for the Indian youth, namely, *Reignited: Scientific Pathways to a Brighter Future jointly with S P Singh* (2015); *Beyond 2020: A Vision for Tomorrow's India jointly with YS Rajan* (2014); *A Manifesto for Change: A Sequel to India 2020 jointly with V Ponraj* (2014); *The Scientific Indian: A Twenty-first Century Guide to the World around Us jointly with Y S Rajan* (2011); and *Mission India: A Vision for Indian Youth jointly with Y S Rajan* (2005).

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