
IGNITING MINDS: THE AURA OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN DR. A. P. J. ABDUL KALAM'S *IGNITED MINDS AND TURNING POINTS*

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Abstract

Apart from being one of India's finest technocrats ever, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam has been an iconic figure whose influence on younger generations is paramount. The great visionary he was, all the knowledge and wisdom that he had acquired, he wanted to impart to the youth in whose hands lies the future of the Nation. Though fondly called as 'The Missile Man of India', his versatile genius transcended science and flourished in literature too, as is evident from his voluminous writings, impressive orations, and inspiring lectures. The hallmark of his entire corpus, beginning right from his autobiography *Wings Of Fire*, is his ardent patriotic fervor and the earnest quest for the welfare of our Nation. Shaking off the remnants of the Colonial domination our country had been through, Dr. Kalam reminded us of the inevitability of marking a distinctive spot of our own and the necessity of working together towards progress. This paper is an attempt to delineate the spirit of Integrity and National Consciousness in his works *Ignited Minds* and *Turning Points*.

Keywords: *nation, integrity, patriotism, national consciousness.*

The concept of 'Nation' has been much discussed and debated over the topic in recent years. Seemingly simple and straight in its meaning as well as application, it is profound and ambivalent in the sense it can either be a making force or a braking force. The simplest or most common definition of Nation one can come across would be a body of people organized politically under the governance of a single government or a large mass of people sharing general history, common language, and descent, creating a state or inhabiting land-unit. As a matter of fact, the twentieth century witnessed relatively rapid shifts in the connotations of the term 'nation', which is quite remarkable and enigmatic.

The colonial era and the anti-colonial resistance all over the world could justifiably be regarded as the impetus behind the emergence of the concept of 'nation' as central, exalted and

sacred. That is, the idea of 'nation' has been one among the most effective means of bringing together common people from different cultural, regional, social, religious and political backgrounds for resistance to imperial domination and to attain Independence. In this regard, the concept proved to be a making force that rendered fruition to the dream of freedom. Nonetheless, in a considerably short span of two decades since the ex-colonies had become autonomous, the very idea of 'nation' came to be reviewed by those, who had once glorified and valorized it. To illuminate, the suppressed and oppressed masses of the colonies in the 1930s and the 1940s were retaliating to get themselves free from colonial subjugation and constitute their own sovereign nations; by the 1970s disillusionment with nation and nationalism had been expressed. This disenchantment was largely due to the apparently parochial, xenophobic nature those ideologies had in the offer and that those thrive on juxtaposing differences, which could eventually turn out to be a breaking force that differentiates and divides the human race across the globe. Be that as it may, it is undeniable that Nation was a rather slackly structured grid which bound various layers of the colonized society together in their protests against the other - the colonial ruler - and liberated them from the atrocities inherent in colonization.

The nation is the concept of a shared community, as per Benedict Anderson, which he calls an 'imagined community', that has helped post-colonial societies to create a self-image through which they could work to emancipate themselves from the oppression of the imperialist powers.

One might not necessarily agree with Anderson in his interpretation of the concept. Nation is not just a fabrication of imagination as Anderson belittles it or rather it is not merely the image that conjures up the nation, but it is something that ties together the emotions of many a man who yearns for independence and existence of their own will, free from any external forces imposing tyrannical reign over them. It is constituted by scattered voices that had been muffled for years. Having said this, it can't be dismissed that there are still perplexing contradictions in the abstractions of Nation and Nationalism, where those are entangled in confusing aporias. Simultaneously cohesive and divisive, cohesive in that they unify inhabitants of one land-unit to exist in a bond of comradeship; divisive as they flourish by highlighting anomalies and antipathy against the 'other', these concepts regularly elude justification or condemnation.

Frantz Fanon is one seminal figure who has summed up Nationalism or National Consciousness in his works pretty convincingly. Nevertheless, Fanon also warned of the pitfalls of it becoming an "empty shell" (117), a grotesque misrepresentation of what it might have been. As C. Vijayasree rightly observes, "Nationalism is progressive as well as retrogressive, It is primordial and yet modern: primordial in that it is expressive of the innate human need for collective existence and modern as it is indeed linked with the passing away of the old order- be it religious or dynastic. It has both a civic and an ethnic aspect to it" (*Nation in Imagination*:

*Essays on Nationalism, Sub- Nationalisms and Narration*10). For the role it has played in world history, Nationalism is arguably one among the most powerful driving forces in politics and also the most malleable one. It is a double-edged sword that can be a binding force, or a fatally divisive tool used to cause strife around political, cultural, linguistic or, more importantly, religious identities.

This paper entitled *Igniting Minds: The Aura Of National Consciousness* in Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam's *Ignited Minds* and *Turning Points* discusses the sanctity and nobility with which one man embraced his Nation, with a Nationalism that was utmost progressive and philanthropic. With the sole vision of improving the standard of living of his fellow beings as well as the overall development of the country, Dr. Kalam envisaged an India that is self-sufficient. Neither did his National Consciousness nor did his patriotism separate, categorize nor classify people according to differences or diversities. He advocated the love for mankind which has to begin from an individual, nurtured at home, nourished by society, boosted by country and ultimately, widespread in the world so that people live in absolute harmony. He always knew that in order to establish global peace, every nation has to be economically independent and self-reliant. As a citizen of India, he wanted his mother nation to achieve the status of the developed ones in the first place so that it takes us one step closer to attaining the goal of universal tranquillity.

Born in 1931 as the youngest son of a very ordinary, little educated boatowner in Rameswaram - a coastal village at the tip of the Indian peninsula, he conquered heights with relentless hard work and sheer determination, winning the highest civilian award of India, The Bharat Ratna and reaching the topmost position of the First citizen of world's largest democracy. Apart from being one of India's finest technocrats ever, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam has been an iconic figure whose influence on younger generations is paramount. The great visionary he was, all the knowledge and wisdom that he had acquired, he wanted to impart to the youth in whose hands lies the future of the Nation. Though fondly called as 'The Missile Man of India', his versatile genius transcended science and flourished in literature too, as is evident from his voluminous writings, impressive orations, and inspiring lectures. The hallmark of his entire corpus, beginning right from his autobiography *Wings Of Fire*, is his ardent patriotic fervor and the earnest quest for the welfare of our Nation. Shaking off the remnants of the Colonial domination our country had been through, Dr.Kalam reminded us of the inevitability of marking a distinctive spot of our own and the necessity of working together towards progress.

In *Ignited Minds*, Dr.Kalam insists the younger generation to strive for the best rather than settle so often for the ordinary. He encourages them to work hard for the finest of results by reiterating the fact that we have numerous skills, ample resources and matchless talents that make for the potential to gain excellence in every field.

With his words of great wisdom, Dr.Kalam has always been a phare of motivation to the youth and his image in the minds of young people has been that of a cult figure whom they adore as their role model.

Another work of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam taken up for the present study is *Turning Points*. The inspiring sequel to *Wings of Fire*, *Turning Points* offers a vision of how a country with a great heritage can become great in accomplishment, skills, and abilities, through effort, perseverance, and confidence. Dr. Kalam makes it clear through *Turning points* that Vision elevates Nation. He says,

What can I give to the Nation? Honor and respect among other countries. Putting a smile on the faces of my one billion countrymen and women. This can only be achieved through economic development and education. Education is paramount for achieving dignity. Inculcating the habit of giving will help us draw our countrymen into the mainstream of development. (44)

It is very much evident from throughout his words and works that all he wanted was the prosperity of his fellow men, the progress of his nation and ultimately, the well-being of the human fraternity in the entire world. There are numerous other instances in both the works where Dr.Kalam speaks of so enthusiastically and hopefully of the matters, we, as the citizens of India, could do and accomplish towards the progress of the Nation. As is obvious from his own words, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam wanted to uphold the reputation of our Motherland by attaining the stature of a developed nation. To top it off, the National Consciousness he had preached and practiced was always out-and-out positive as well as progressive, with a vision to elevate the nation and promote global unanimity.

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