

## APJ Abdul Kalam: A Poet of Human Concern

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### Abstract

Abdul Kalam Azad, the former President of India, is known as the Missile man of India. He has a great name in scientific development, and despite this, he is thoroughly an Indian poet. His poetry is replete with humanism and intellectuality and presents his human concerns for the nation. He is the paragon for the learners. The aesthetic and harmonious feelings are the remarkable traits of his poetry. His scientific mood can be seen in his poetic diction. He was a versatile genius, and his excellent craftsmanship identified his versatility. His religious faith and love for the nation compelled him to paint the social reality on his poetic canvas. Kalam's poems express human concern, love, peace, and harmony. He succeeds in this attempt by selecting images and symbols from his personal life. Indeed, his poetry abounds in the spirit of patriotism, heroism, and self-sacrifice. His inspiring poems have a marvelous sense of vision, passion, imagination, and innovation. Therefore, it can be said that Kalam was a highly innovative poet of India.

**Keywords:** Missile man, Humanism, Intellectuality, Paragon, Aesthetic, Versatile, patriotism.

APJ Abdul Kalam is one of the eminent poets of contemporary life. He was the former President and a reverent scientist of India. Kalam gained immense popularity as a president and poet. He was a great humanist per excellence. He wrote many poems. His concern for human beings and His love for Nature is apparent in his poetry. His first collection of poems, entitled *The Life Tree* is remarkable for his attraction toward Nature. As a humanist, he was concerned with several causes, such as human suffering and the deteriorating conditions of men in contemporary life. He thought broken relations with Nature were the main cause of human suffering. The poem 'The Life Tree' abounds with the beauty of Nature and has a particular fascination for him. Through this poem, the poet gives a message of passion, tolerance, sympathy, unselfish services, contemplation and devotion, and his undaunted faith in Nature. He was a thinker, so he tried his best to penetrate the garb of Nature. He was a science student, but his faith in Nature was not segmented. His profound feelings and emotions emerge when he comes in contact with Nature. He felt the humanistic and spiritual splendor of Nature and believed that God pervades entire Nature. Kalam realized aesthetic beauty,

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happiness, and the spirit of fraternity in the domain of Nature. No doubt the following lines express his current passion:

Perfume radiating beauty all around  
Honey bees filling the flowerbed, mutual love flowing  
Intoxicated with the scene, we looked at the top layer,  
Ring of the birds about to blossom.  
And new layers at their birth. (Poems 15)

A critic says, "To understand Kalam's place among the Indian poets, it is necessary to know the time and situation he lived in and the generals followed by him and the other Indian poets." This statement is rightly applied to Kalam because having been known as Missile Man, so much intellectuality is found in his poetry. Kalam was very fond of literature and had a particular fascination for poetry. He was interested in reading books and believed that 'Books have always been a close companion.' (Kalam 83) He stated that only poetry has healing power in times of hardship. His stupendous learning is found in his poetic works. Kalam can be counted among the renowned poets of Post Independent India. He wrote poems on several topics, but his main concern was only for the development of his nation. That is why a gradual vision of progressive India is found in his poetry. 'The Life Tree' and 'The Song of Souls' are the true record of his faith in India and the Indian people. His poems are based on the themes of education, Indian youth, Indian society, and his love for the motherland. As we know that Kalam is known as a Missile Man, and this fact is reflected in poetic compositions. Kalam was a considerable poet and a poet of aesthetic and intellectual ideas. Some of his poems like 'His Best Creation', 'God,' 'The Life Tree,' 'Our Mission is Water,' 'Are We Alone,' and 'Pride,' 'Humanity' mirror the unique world created by God. At the beginning of the poem, 'Are We Alone,' the poet is regretting on seeing the pathetic gloom of the world. He feels unhappy and thinks about how strange the world is and where he was born. Though many human beings live there, he still feels alone among the crowd because they have become selfish. He screams, Oh, my human race,/ How we were born,/ In the universe of near infinity,/ Are we alone? (Poems 18). The poet is unable to understand why the condition of man is gradually going to decline. Therefore he wants to see its answer. He considers that the time to think has come. He is now seventieth years old and believes that Nature is the abode of God. He has seen the divine glory of Nature, and now he is waiting for his inevitable hour when he will have to go beyond this universe. In this metaplastic world, he could not realize the ultimate truth of life. He understands that Nature is not a thing of color and form. He was brought up in the lap of Nature

and spent much time in Nature. The poet thinks that man is the image of God, but the terrible situations in man's life distract man from being called a human being. The poet feels that Nature is the prime source of happiness for people and she is the true picture of humanity. But in the rapid progress of material things, Nature has no value for them. People have forgotten the grandeur and splendour of beauty. As a true humanist, Kalam has firm faith in man. The miserable plight and apathy of life compel him to think about several other questions of humanity. In the poem, 'The Life Tree,' Kalam uses metaphorical language to make human beings feel the importance and value of the creation on this earth. Kalam exhibits human passion and the spirit of brotherhood in the form of the art of living in this poem. In the poem, 'Our Mission is Water,' Kalam beautifully uses metaphor and points out that his mother calls him 'Blue Nile' and 'White Nile.' (Poems 83). The metaphoric word 'Nile' is used to express his journey of life beyond the margin because he has been part of the duty of a 'Confluence with a Mission' (Poems 83) for serving humanity in the entire world. His purpose is only to show unity; he explains that a river comes across hundreds and thousands of miles after facing many hardships and hurdles and continually passes through mountains, valleys, forests, and plains, and at last, it reaches its goal. He says that both the Niles-The Blue Nile and The white Nile, meet in the past and make a confluence( a symbol of unity). Kalam teaches a lesson to all human beings that in any circumstance, we should have to maintain peace and calm, and in this way, we can achieve happiness in life. Kalam's human concern becomes more bitter when he sees the deteriorating conditions of the nation. In one of his poems, 'The Gratitude,' he presents his philosophical views when he sees communal riots in Hyderabad. He had deep anguish to see such terrible things. His heart filled with human passion, and poignant feelings burst out from his heart. He says:

Then like sudden clouds full of rumbling and thunder,  
Disease and death descended upon the scene,  
Panther and boar all fell dead in heaps,  
Death striking at will, like lightning gone haywire,  
Wrecking havoc wherever it strikes,  
Big or small that is never spared. (Poems 25)

So many questions are emerging in the heart of the poet. He immediately asks, "where is that heart?" symbolically means human love and care for one another. He is unable to think about what he will answer to God when he departs from this mundane world. Will it be the reward for returning His kindness and grace. All these things make Kalam pathetic and gloomy. In

another poem, 'The Great Tree In My Home', the poet loses his past, and he dreams that a tree is rooted in his home. He gives it the name 'Arjun Tree.' He thinks that this tree is not a mere tree but his faithful friend because it was grown when his ancestors were living there. No doubt, the poem is remarkable for its imagery that reminds us of Toru Dutt's poem, 'Our Casuarina Tree.' He is very happy because he has spent his life and also his ancestors spent time under the shade of this tree. It is a valuable part of the joys and sorrows of his life. Kalam realizes that this tree gave its offering to him and his family like a friend. He becomes compelled to think, 'What Can I Give.' Kalam means to say that this tree fulfills its duties honestly and faces many hardships. In the same way, men cannot get peace without facing any burden of life and hardship; he feels that real pleasure is labour that makes "beautiful face of my life." On the other hand, a tree best houses its pleasures to everyone and makes harmonious relationships with human beings. Kalam means to say that we should fulfill our duty to everyone. It does not matter whether they are human beings or the other creatures of the world. Kalam focuses on the sources of absolute pleasure in the life of human beings. Nature is the prime source of all poets, and in fact, the poem begins with Nature and ends with Nature. Kalam himself could not escape from the perennial charm of the blessed Nature. His out topping knowledge is seen in the poem, 'Whisper To Jasmine', he beautifies Nature with aesthetic and artistic glory with his selected words in the poem. Kalam shows his attraction to the fascinating aspect of Nature. In the opening lines of the poem, he believes that only Nature can soothe man's heart. He becomes enamored when he sees the beautiful flowers of jasmine blossoming in his garden. It is expressed by 'breezy dawn,' 'cracking birds', and 'the melodious voice of cuckoo' compels the 'Creepers' to dance to the tune of 'Cuckoo.' The poet finds Nature in complete rejoicing. He sees that all the creatures, whether they are small or big, are merry\_making. These sights remind us William Wordsworth's poem, 'Intimation to Immortality' when he says:

There was a time when meadows, grove and stream,  
The earth and every common sight,  
To me did seem,  
Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream. (Poems 45)

The entire Nature is loving and adorable, but man has turned his face from Nature and indulged in material gains; that is the main cause of human suffering and pathetic condition. He thinks only of his selfish motive. Kalam realizes the cause of human beings' deplorable condition. He is so selfish that he doesn't feel what he is doing and becomes 'Harder in soul, harder in tongue'.

The result is that he is unable to get peace in his life, and he finds all around 'Violence pervading walks of life'/A brasive thinking vicious indeed.' All these things make man frustrated and gloomy as 'Disturbed homes turbulence ' he wants to tell us that only man is responsible for his pathetic and miserable life. God has created this world of beauty in which He by(God) plays His orchestra as Chiming beats of musical vibration that make enamored. Kalam believes that only Nature can provide peace in the form of music. When man comes in touch with this Divine musician for a short while, he forgets his Sorrows and begins to dance just like 'dancing peacock, singing parrots.'. In the concluding lines of the poem, Kalam exhorts human beings to feel Nature and to feel the presence of God in Nature as he states: 'T'is God's will gladden thy soul,/ Blossom we will, blossom we will,/Cheer up,dear bud, blossom we will'. (Poems 56) The same concern is expressed in the poem,' My Garden Smiles'. Kalam finances divine beauty in Nature. He believes that Nature is the incarnation of God. In the opening lines of the poem, the poet welcomes spring with 'Roses beautiful roses with fragrance and beauty.' Kalam also teaches us that Nature is the only source that leads to the Divine as he felt 'blossomed happiness in my body and soul'. In his opinion, Nature is a miracle, and it is the only source of the Divine glory of God as he states,' All the roses fully blossomed towards the sky. It was a miracle to see'. Kalam presents his ideology in favour of Nature. He observes Nature minutely and feels the blessed services in this beautiful aspect of Nature. The melodious voice of the birds, the shining moon, the Sun, the stars, the flowers, and the sky are possessed divine beauty. He is enchanted,'then the sweet music all around engulfs the scene emanating from the garden.' This line is similar to William Wordsworth's poem 'Tintern Abbey':

The sounding cataract,  
Haunted me like a passion, the tall rock,  
The mountain and The Deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colors and their forms were them to me,  
An appetite. (Poems 57)

It was the occasion, when he wrote this poem. The poet shares his feelings with the readers about how he felt elated when he was awarded the supreme honor ' Crown Medallion From the famous poet Yu His. Then, he realized that all the flowering poets came there to bestow their blessings to him. He uses symbols,' Roses' for the laurels and 'Garden' for his soul. Kalam was thoroughly an Indian patriot. He saw the bright features of Indian youth. He could not ignore the pathetic situation of the youth of his nation. In his poem,' Pride' Kalam presents the miserable plight of the youth. Kalam depicts the monotonous and sterile life in the beginning

of the poem. He observes that they have lost their mutual faith and become selfish in Nature, 'Manipulating man meaner in treatment.' He feels dejected to see the pathetic gloom all around. This is very regrettable that they have become too selfish to identify themselves. Kalam thinks that the time has come to seek the truth, but in the unrest situation, the youth of the nation have lost their aims of life and indulge, 'give and take, give come first.' It is very strange that man cannot realize the ultimate end of life. Seeing the deplorable condition of the youth of the nation, Kalam compels to recall the past, 'When prosperity and pride were sealed at back.' He imagined how the youth of the nation had a brave cause. Though the whole nation was ensnared in the chains of slavery, they were united at every step as Kalam states, 'We aren't afraid, nor do we bow down.' Kalam also says that the magnificent speech of Gandhiji had a great influence on the youth of the nation and he tells us, 'These words would make sense to those who are strong.' He believes that Gandhiji words were enthusiastic and dared to make them strong. His speech on non-violence and truth never learnt them to bow. Kalam says, "Mahatma Gandhi was a greatest advocate of non-violence. His belief in the principal of non-violence emanated from a deep understanding of grass- roots level issues. About eight decades ago, he linked the evolution of peaceful societies with the need to develop the rural world." (Target Three Billion: PURA: Innovative solutions Towards Sustainable Development 8) That is why Kalam wants to realize people to seek the truth and identify themselves. He does not believe in this materialistic world. He knows well that this mundane world is a mere illusion and hallucination of Maya and a person who does not stray in life can survive only. Therefore in this poem, Kalam exhorts to the youth of the nation to 'free yourself from pessimistic distrust;' then nation, 'Blessed by God arise to reach new heights.' Kalam was also an Indian idealist. He had a deep concern for the nation-building. He often wrote about nation-building in his poems. He believed that Sooner or later, India will present itself as a leading nation of the world. In one of his poems, Kalam appeals to God to raise the spirit of brotherhood among the people of India, and they will work together for the welfare of the nation. He praises God to 'instill the thought into the citizens' mind', so that it is known that the nation is more significant than any individual. He wants to request God to give unity of mind to the people of the nation despite the challenging outlook of the population. He says, "O Almighty, bless all my people to work and transform, / Our country is developing into a developed nation. / Let this second reason be born out of the sweetness of the past. / And bless our youth to live in a developed India." (Poems 106). Kalam's dream was to spread happiness through the act of giving. He knows that Nature is bountiful in giving everything to human beings, but the only way for man is to become happy

by giving back to Nature. In the beautiful aspects of Nature and the things of Nature such as healing breeze, roses, clouds, sea, moon, trees, birds etc, the poet wants to feel a glimpse of gladness in the hearts of the people. So that they may spread peace and love for humanity, this concern can be seen in the following lines of the poem:

Who will merge human hearts to pieces of the lord?  
Nature and humans were created together,  
Together they can govern this world,  
Then only peace and bliss will be here! (Poems 74)

Kalam's staunch faith in universal relation is also a remarkable phenomenon of his life. He strongly believes in giving and taking. He feels that if somebody gives something, he or she should take something back to him or her also. The same phenomenon is applied to Nature. Nature bestows us enormous pleasure and valuable things but what we give in return to her. Kalam means to say that if people try to shirk from gratitude, this is sure in future they will have to pay a lot. The same feelings are described in the same lines:

One evening a beautiful evening  
I was in a mission of Thanksgiving  
To my family's Nature.  
Reached the heart in the Mughal garden  
One young Banyan Tree talked to me. O! Kalam  
Sees us in all seasons rooted, with trunks rooted on earth,  
We observe all the heat in the mid days  
we give shelter to so many birds,  
Give shadows and cool breeze,  
To animals and humans all around. (Poems 105)

We cannot deny that generally, human beings are considered to be the destroyer of Nature. Kalam shows his grievance for this act. He says that on the one hand, Nature gives unconditional pleasures to man, but on the other hand, man's ungrateful behaviour always tries to destroy Nature. Kalam says that Nature is superior to man. Kalam knows that only Nature can soothe human beings' hearts. He alludes to an incident of his life in his poem, 'Agni.' Kalam was distraught due to the hurdles in launching Agni despite working hard for a long time. While he was traveling in a car in a somber mood, suddenly, he was enamored by the beauty of lilies of different colours that were blossoming in the pools of water along the roadside. Immediately, he stopped the car and stepped down, and went near those lilies, and he was very excited to



touch them with his hands. Kalam realized a strong freshness and energetic feelings, and his heart is filled with peace, and all the tension that was related to launch Agni melted away. The result was that he launched Agni successfully and later wrote down the incident in his poem, 'Agni':

Blooming flowers of bounteous beauty,  
vibrant Colors dancing in abundant,  
Some were bud,s others older,  
Beauty of consciousness trapped in peace,  
Blooms of flowers show the Almighty indeed.  
Showing happiness or solemnity in need,  
To express ourselves everywhere we need.  
Ah: That conscious beauty of marvelous peace,  
in pursuits of happiness we always need. (Poems 21)

Kalam uses many poetic devices to express his concern for human welfare. Personification, alliteration,symbols, allusions etc. are the remarkable figures, found in his poetic works. For example, in his poem, 'Unseen Hands' Kalam fantastically personified the Missile Agni and gave graphic details of the conversation between Sea creatures and Agni:

Agni replied: 'No', not alone my friends,  
Though motivation and desire are components of success  
Woven in heady mix of hardwork and technology;  
Yet wives and mothers of my creators also  
And prayed in silence for success with lighted lamps.  
And they lighted the lamps everyday to keep up the hopes... (Poems 61-62)

Kalam's metaphoric language is frequently expressed in the poem. He presents some colorful descriptions of a message in the poem so that the people may realize what he wants to say. He gives a subtle and powerful description that can be easily understood by the readers. The best example of the metaphorical poem is 'Indomitable Spirit' in which Kalam presents his struggle of life before the readers:

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 detection.



I was pulled long and long  
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. (A.P.J. Abdul Kalam 76)

No doubt, Kalam's poetry abounds with allusions. Allusions from the Upanishad, the Geeta, the Bible, the Quran and other religious books express his spiritual feelings and the importance of human values. Kalam's writing is autobiographical as well as motivational. His intellectual outlook and broad-mindedness make him distinguished from the other poets of the postmodern generation. He had profound love and sympathy for the people of the nation. He wanted to see India on a higher level where there would be no dispute of caste, religion, and creed. The nation would progress and get its zenith. Today Kalam is no more, but in his autobiographies and his poetic composition, his enthusiastic spirit is still alive. Kalam was undoubtedly a great scientist as well as a great poet of India. The work of such Missile Man is really unsurpassed. India will remain indebted to him. Kalam's writing is autobiographical as well as motivational. His concern is only to reform the society and remove the marks of demarcation among the people. His intellectual outlook and broad-mindedness make him distinguished from the other poets of the postmodern generation. He had profound love and sympathy for the people of the nation. He wanted to see Indian on a higher level where there would be no dispute of caste, religion and creed. The nation would have progressed and gotten its zenith. Today Kalam is no more but in his autobiographies and in his poetic composition, his enthusiastic spirit is still seen. Kalam was undoubtedly a great scientist as well as a great poet of India; the work of such a missile man is really unsurpassed. Indeed Kalam was not only a great political leader but also a good teacher and writer. He had many delicate qualities and intellectual outlook to make India prosperous.

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