

Turning Points: A Journey through Challenges

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A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (2012). Turning Points: A Journey through Challenges, HarperCollins Publishers India, Noida. Price: Rs. 199; Pages x+182, ISBN: 9789350293478.

An Overview of the Book

Turning Points is the twenty-first book of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in which he shares his dithyrambic eye-opening experiences in fourteen mesmerizing chapters, an epilogue, an afterword, and two appendices. The book is in fact a sequel to Wings of Fire which has covered the Missile Man's odyssey till the year 1992. The book has some of the iconic photographs which include the photograph of A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in the cave of one of the greatest philosopher's of all times - Socrates. It touches on several other topics, such as Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA), National Prosperity Index (NPI) which is of paramount importance keeping in view the present scenario when several nations across the world are experiencing economic turbulence.

Review

The preface contains the reasons for which Dr. Abdul Kalam has penned the book under review. In the Acknowledgement section the author of the book explains that there have been eight turning points or challenges in his life which helped him emerge as successful in life's voyage hitherto. The first chapter dwells upon Dr. Kalam's interactions with politicians, scientists, artists, writers, religious heads, legal and judicial communities, non-resident Indians, medical practitioners, farmers, policemen, panchayat presidents, teachers, various associations and institutions. The chapter brings out the fact that Dr. Kalam used to read the letters and emails sent by people from all walks of life and even used to forward the letters to the official concerned for supplementary action which at times yielded fabulous results (one of the resultant actions finds a mention in the afterword section towards the end of the book). The second chapter briefly touches

on the events from 10th of June to 18th of July 2002 which changed the course of action of the scientist and academician, Dr. Kalam, when he was elected as the President of one of the largest democracies in the world. The third chapter is devoted to the seven turning points in the life of Dr. Kalam. The fourth chapter explains how G2G e-governance operations were expedited when Dr Kalam initiated e-governance at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. It also elaborates on the steps initiated by Dr Kalam to obtain first-hand knowledge of the development in the states and union territories of India. The fifth chapter performs an intricate examination of the national addresses on the eve of Independence Day and Republic Day as well as the speeches delivered to parliamentarians. It exposes the sordid underbelly of the people in fiefdoms of power. It also identifies the five key areas wherein India is having core competencies. Through a real-life incidence the sixth chapter brings forth the meaning of a Hadith (a saying or an action by Prophet Mohammad) which says 'When the Almighty appoints a person to a position, He takes care of his provision. If a person takes anything beyond that, it is an illegal gain'. The chapter talks of the sanctity of Manu Smriti, offers much from a Haj pilgrimage and discusses Dr Kalam's personal meetings with Field Marshal S.H.F.J. 'Sam' Manekshaw, prominent Indian novelist and journalist Shri Khuswant Singh, several interactions with Shri Satish Dhawan (erstwhile chairman of ISRO) and several Prime Ministers. The seventh chapter examines the significance of nanotechnology, e-governance, bio-diesel, water, energy, the successful testing of a missile and a few other space activities. The eighth chapter contains Dr Kalam's conversations pertaining to the crash of the Airborne Surveillance Platform on the 11th of January 1999 with Prof. Arun Tiwari. The ninth chapter is devoted to Dr Kalam's visit to a state which did witness

horrendous and tragic events in 2002. The tenth chapter presents a few highlights from Dr Kalam's visit to Sudan, South Africa, European Union, Greece, and Switzerland. The eleventh chapter exemplifies the style of Management By Walking Around (MBWA) and Management By Participation. It illustrates how developmental work was done at rapid speed in one of the villages only because of the fact that the President was desirous to visit the said village. The twelfth chapter presents the panoramic view of few of the well-preserved exquisitely designed gardens. The thirteenth chapter examines the nitty-gritty of a famous case related to the dissolution of the Bihar assembly based on the concerns of the then governor due to which Dr Kalam had prepared a letter of resignation. The fourteenth chapter provides a glimpse of Dr Kalam's ventures after having completed his presidential term.

The epilogue is a treatise on improving the working of the heart of the democracy. The afterword explains how Acharya Mahapragya resolved the turmoil pertaining to the nuclear empowerment of India, which had been haunting Dr Kalam's mind for a considerable period of time.

Overall Impact of the Book

Each chapter begins with a quote which sets the tone of the chapter. Each chapter also ends with a quote which explains the effect of certain incidences on the life of the author of the book under review. The book has several takeaways. The first chapter will definitely take the reader from the real world to an imaginary world where there are no problems at all because all

are conscious of their work and sounds too good to be true. But it does prove that God has blessed the citizens of India with the power to catapult India into an orbit of continuous growth. At some places the clef of the book is so exhilarating that the reader would be able to feel a sudden rush of adrenaline through his/her body. The book focuses on the splendid use of information technology for faster decision-making and systematic work-planning and implementation. It will be very helpful to the champions of Management By Objectives (MBO), creativity and innovation. The tome will be especially of great help to parliamentarians. The book examines the causes due to which there has been delay in delivering justice in the trial courts, high courts, and the Supreme Court and also lays down the nine suggestions which will certainly help in timely administering justice. It will also help the reader in understanding how physical, electronic, and knowledge connectivity can lead a country towards economic growth.

Today, history books speak a lot about the justice system set up by the famous emperor Salim Nuruddin Jahangir. In a few years Dr Kalam's innovative measures towards improving political administration might find their way into several text books across the world.

Wallace Jacob has done his M. Phil. in Management. He is presently working as a Senior Assistant Professor at Tolani Maritime Institute, Pune, where he teaches Principles of Management and Project Management. His book reviews have been published in journals published by IIM Lucknow, IIM Indore, IMI New Delhi, Bharathidasan Institute of Management Tiruchirappalli. He has also presented a few papers in various conferences.