

The Big Hope Global Youth Congress 2008 Lecture Series

13. IGNITED MINDS: THE POWER OF THE YOUTH

by Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam



**THE
BIG
HOPE**



Global Youth Congress





A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Dr Kalam was President of India between July 2002 and July 2007. He was born on 15th October 1931 at Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu.

Dr. Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen (APJ) Abdul Kalam, specialised in Aeronautical Engineering from Madras Institute of Technology. Dr. Kalam made significant contribution as Project Director to develop India's first indigenous Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-III) which successfully injected the Rohini satellite in the near earth orbit in July 1980 and made India an exclusive member of Space Club. He was responsible for the evolution of ISRO's launch vehicle programme, particularly the PSLV configuration. After working for two decades in ISRO and mastering launch vehicle technologies, Dr. Kalam took up the responsibility of developing Indigenous Guided Missiles at Defence Research and Development Organisation as the Chief Executive of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP). He was responsible for the development and operationalisation of AGNI and PRITHVI Missiles and for building indigenous capability in critical technologies through networking of multiple institutions. He was the Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister and Secretary, Department of Defence Research & Development from July 1992 to December 1999. During this period he led to the weaponisation of strategic missile systems and the Pokhran-II nuclear tests in collaboration with Department of Atomic Energy, which made India a nuclear weapon State. He also gave thrust to self-reliance in defence systems by progressing multiple development tasks and mission projects such as Light Combat Aircraft. As Chairman of Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) and as an eminent scientist, he led the country with the help of 500

experts to arrive at Technology Vision 2020 giving a road map for transforming India from the present developing status to a developed nation. Dr. Kalam has served as the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, in the rank of Cabinet Minister, from November 1999 to November 2001 and was responsible for evolving policies, strategies and missions for many development applications. Dr. Kalam was also the Chairman, Ex-officio, of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Cabinet (SAC-C) and piloted India Millennium Mission 2020.

Dr. Kalam took up academic pursuit as Professor, Technology & Societal Transformation at Anna University, Chennai from November 2001 and was involved in teaching and research tasks. Above all he took up a mission to ignite the young minds for national development by meeting high school students across the country.

In his literary pursuit four of Dr. Kalam's books - "Wings of Fire", "India 2020 - A Vision for the New Millennium", "My journey" and "Ignited Minds - Unleashing the power within India" have become household names in India and among the Indian nationals abroad. These books have been translated into many Indian languages.

Dr. Kalam is one of the most distinguished scientists of India with the unique honour of receiving honorary doctorates from more than 30 universities and institutions in India and abroad. He has been awarded the coveted civilian awards - Padma Bhushan (1981) and Padma Vibhushan (1990) and the highest civilian award Bharat Ratna (1997). He is a recipient of several other awards and Fellow of many professional institutions.

Dr. Kalam became the 11th President of India on 25th July 2002. His focus was on transforming India into a developed nation by 2020.

The Big Hope Lecture Series

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13. **Dr APJ Abdul KalamPresident of India 2002-2007:** *Ignited Minds: The Power of Youth*
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Ignited Minds: The Power of Youth

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam

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.

Dear friends, when I am in front of over eight hundred youth from different parts of the world, I am thinking what thoughts I can share with you. First of all let me greet the members of Liverpool Hope University for organizing the Big Hope programme focusing on global youth leaders. As I was browsing through the research strengths of the University, I visualized how a wholesome development of human beings is enabled, when there is connectivity among education, science, health care, sports, psychology, management, societal evolution, politics, and theology. My greetings to the organizers, youth-leaders and distinguished guests participating in this forum which I hope will provide a bridge for the innovative ideas of the youth with the mature experience of the elders for the prosperity of the world in the 21st century. As I say this, I realize how the contributions of the youth in the past have continuously contributed to the world of today in many fields. Friends, let me thank you for inviting me to participate in the The Big Hope programme from the distant land across the oceans over 6716 km away.

Dear friends, before reaching this Global Youth Congress at Liverpool, I was travelling from London to Liverpool with

a short halt at BELFRY. It was a beautiful sunny day. It looked although the people came out of homes to celebrate the beautiful sunny day, also it is a Sunday. You might feel that you might have missed the beautiful outing on this Sunday. Dear friends, today you have given one Sunday, to create a better future tomorrow. Yes friends, our meeting on Sunday today, will bring beautiful springs tomorrow not only in your life thereby the nation, and also in the history of human kind. On the occasion of Global Youth Congress today, how the ignited minds of the youth can have a great life, purposeful life so that the societies will have a prosperous life and there by the nation and the world. Hence, I would like to talk on the topic "IGNITED MINDS: THE POWER OF THE YOUTH".

Friends, let me share with you a beautiful experience when I visited Greece in April 2007. I was negotiating and climbing towards Acropolis mountain top in Athens and came across a group of 150 Greek students. They threw a spontaneous smile on me, the teachers came forward and introduced the students. They said they were very happy to see the Indian president and that the children would like to hear from him few words. My mind at that time was thinking about the great personalities, the land of Greece had given to the world: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The words of Plato were ringing in my mind when I saw the young students. Plato brings out that "Our aim in founding the State was not the disproportionate happiness of any

one class, but the greatest happiness of the whole", 2400 years ago.

Similarly, around the same period Tamil poet Saint Thiruvalluvar said,

"the important elements that constitute a nation are: being disease free; high earning capacity; high productivity; harmonious living and strong defence". We have to find how we can provide all these elements to the citizens of every nation on an equitable basis for happiness for all.

With these thoughts, I made up my mind, of what to say to the students and the youth of Greece. I slowly repeated line by line, a hymn which I normally hear in Indian spiritual centers.

Righteousness

Where there is righteousness in the heart

There is beauty in the character.

When there is beauty in the character,

there is harmony in the home.

When there is harmony in the home.

There is an order in the nation.

When there is order in the nation,

There is peace in the world.

When the students and the youth repeated with me, the tourists around at the Acropolis also repeated and there was all round ovations. Then I realized how people from multiple nations, young and experienced were influenced by the thought of righteousness in the heart irrespective

of their nationality. You can see how the righteousness in the heart generates beauty in the character in the human beings and beauty in the character leads to harmony in the home. Harmony in the home in an integrated way generates order in the nation. Of course the order in the nation finally blossoms peace in the world. The righteousness in the heart is the starting point for great individual, great family and great nation and ultimately great planet earth.

Now the question is: How do we inculcate the righteousness in the heart. In my opinion, there are three sources which can build a youth with righteousness in the heart. One is mother, second is father and the third and the most important is the teacher, particularly primary school teacher. Also to provide righteousness in the heart to the young minds, we should have an environment of great education and a spiritual way of life and spiritual environment.

Youth Power:

I would like to put forth to this Global Youth Congress that the ignited minds of the youth is the most powerful resource on the earth, above the earth and under the earth. I am convinced that the youth power, if properly directed and controlled, could bring about transformational changes in humanity for its progress, meeting its challenges and bring peace and prosperity. Let us now consider two major problems

the world faces: one is, out of 6.6 billion people, two thirds of the population lives below poverty line, 50% of the population do not have access to safe drinking water, above all many do not have access to quality education. What can the youth of the world contribute to face the situation? Can every one of the educated spread literacy at least to five in their life? Can the youth spread the message of water conservation? Can the youth come with “out of box solutions” for solving water scarcity? I have started in my country, what is called Lead India 2020 movement. It is indeed a youth movement, with the mission for young students based on the 10 point oath which I have specially designed.

The ten point oath given to the youth of my country conveys that the youth can make difference to the society where they are living in the areas of literacy, environment, social justice, minimizing rural urban divide, and work for the national development, while working hard for an individual goal. I insist that small aim is a crime. I see the youth development has multiple dimensions: The youth working hard improving his knowledge with a career goal, can serve the family, can serve the society, can serve the nation to which he or she belongs and can serve the humanity as a whole. All are complimentary. The very theme of Global Youth Congress signifies this hierarchy of evolving youth. Keeping this in view, I have designed a nine point oath for the global youth. We will jointly take the oath shortly.

Dear friends, I would like to share with you five unique events that have inspired millions of lives.

Save or better someone life

While talking about good deeds, I am reminded of the advice given to Mahatma Gandhiji by his mother. She says,

“Son, in your entire life time, if you can save or better someone’s life, your birth as a human being and your life is a success. You have the blessing of the Almighty God”.

This advice has made a deep impact in the mind of Gandhiji, which made him to work for the humanity throughout his life.

Remove “I” and “Me”

During the year 2003, when I was visiting one of the Indian states, Arunachal Pradesh, I visited a Buddhist monastery at Tawang 3500m. altitude. I was in the Monastery nearly for a day. I observed a unique situation in all the nearby villages, where young and experienced radiating happiness in spite of severe winter environment. Then, I visited the 400 year old Tawang monastery and there I saw monks of all age groups in a state of serenity. I was asking myself what is the unique feature of Tawang and surrounding villages which makes people and monks to be at peace with themselves. When the time came, I asked the Chief Monk, how in Tawang villages and monastery, I am experiencing peace and happiness being radiated by everyone. There was a pause,

the chief monk smiled. He said, "You are the President of India. You will know all about us and the whole nation." Again, I said, "it is very important for me, please give me your thoughtful analysis".

There was a beautiful golden image of Lord Buddha radiating smile and peace. The Chief Monk assembled nearly 100 young and experienced monks. The Chief Monk and myself were sitting amidst them. The Chief Monk gave a short discourse, which I would like to share with you. Chief Monk said, "In the present world, we have a problem of distrust, unhappiness transforming into violence. This monastery spreads: when you remove "I" and "Me" from your mind, you will eliminate ego; if you get rid of ego, hatred towards fellow human beings will vanish; if the hatred goes out of our mind, the violence in thinking and action will disappear; if violence in our mind is taken away, peace springs in human minds. Then peace and peace and peace alone will blossom in the society". I realized the meaning of beautiful equation for peaceful life, but difficult mission for the individual is how to remove the ethos of "I" and "ME". For this, we need the education inculcated in the young age as propagated by ancient philosophers.

Forgiveness

In my search for evolving a peaceful and prosperous society, I got a part answer. My search for real truth continues. I visited an ancient Christian monastery in Bulgaria,

where I had a discussion with highly experienced monks on the message of Tawang. The Monk added that forgiveness is also the foundation of good life.

Giving a trait of happiness

Similarly, I had a memorable experience in the birth place of Swami Vivekananda, a youth monk of India who could keep the audience spell bound in eastern and western society with his inspirational messages of spirituality and practical life, I explained the Tawang experience to the disciples and they too felt the Tawang experience indeed is beautiful and they added "Trait of Giving " will add to peace and happiness.

Good deed results in good actions

When I visited Ajmeer Sharif, I participated in the Friday Namaz. Here, the Sufi expert told me that Almighty's creation, the man, has been challenged with another powerful creation of Shaitan. Only good deeds lead to good thinking, good thinking results into actions radiating love as commanded by Almighty.

The message from all these and other spiritual thinkers is that there are many ideas and spiritual thoughts which transcend religions, geographies and time. If only we could bridge the spirituality among religions and nations, many of the problems like the gaps between haves and have nots, deprivation causing unrest leading to extremism, the remnants of past animosities and war and several other

road blocks to peace and prosperity can be tackled. I am sure the global youth will be able to work on this theme for a safe world that they dream.

Together we will win

Friends, I would like to share with you an inspirational experience, which I came across. At a Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100m race. At the starting signal, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All except one little boy, who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back.....every one of them. One girl with Down's syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better." Then all nine linked their arms together and walked together and finally reached the destination. Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course. I would say that, you do not have to slow down. Rather by helping difficult areas, the feed back will make you go faster. If you pass this on, we

may be able to change our hearts as well as someone else's. "A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle".

Indomitable Spirit

I was reading a book called "Everyday Greatness". I would like to share one event which is essential component of our development today. Today, what we need is a leadership with compassion. Let me narrate one experience which happened in Mexico.

A riot was raging in La Mesa Prison in Mexico. Twenty five hundred prisoners were packed into a compound, which had been built for only six hundred. They angrily hurled broken bottles at the police who fired back with machine guns. Then came a startling sight. A tiny five feet two inches, sixty three year old woman, calmly got into the crowd, with outstretched hands, in a simple gesture of peace. Ignoring the shower of bullets, she stood quietly and asked every one to stop. Incredibly every one did. No one else in the world, but Sister Antonia could have done this. Why did the people listen to her? All because of her decades of service to the prisoners by her choice. She sacrificed all her life for the sake of prisoners lived in the midst of murderers, thieves and drug lords all of whom she called her sons. She attended their needs round the clock, procured antibiotics, distributed eyeglasses, washed bodies for the burial

and counselled the suicidal. This selfless act of love and compassion generated the respect among the prisoners to control themselves and urged them to do what she wanted them to do. What a great message for humanity? We have seen a leader with compassion is there for even prisoners, but we need leaders with compassion for the voiceless people of millions in the world.

Dialogue of Cultures

I would like to recall one incident which commonly occurs in many parts of my country. I have witnessed this event when I was a young boy (10 yrs). In our house, periodically I used to see three different unique personalities meet. Pakshi Lakshmana Shastrigal, who was the head priest of the famous Rameshwaram temple and a vedic scholar, Rev Father Bodal, who built the first church in Rameswaram Island and my father who was an Imam in the mosque. All three of them used to sit and discuss the islands problems and find solutions. In addition they built several religious connectivities with compassion. These connectivities quietly spread to others in the island like the fragrance from the flowers. This sight always comes to my mind whenever, I discuss with people on Dialogue of religions. India has had this advantage of integration of minds for thousands of years. Throughout the world, the need to have a frank dialogue among cultures, religions and civilizations has been felt now more than ever.

Science, Sports, music and arts – integrators of youth

We have seen how the launching of the sputnik by Russians or Neil Armstrong's stepping on the moon have electrified the entire youth of the world. When an Indian origin Astronaut along with her colleagues was returning to earth after a major space mission, the entire world was praying for their safe return. Cricket is a common wealth theme, Soccer is a European inspiration, and they represent intense competition and admiration across borders. Recently, in India, we had a unique cricket tournament called Indian Premier League (IPL). In this tournament, fifteen teams which participated, each team consisted of players from different countries. First time in the world, such integration of international players in every team has taken place. It had a large number of viewers. For example, on the day of the finals over 24 million viewers watched this programme. This was an example of how individuals can play the role nationally and globally. Similarly, I have seen many instances of how art and music integrate the minds of the youth. This brings me to the point, "Can the global youth congress create development themes for the entire humanity for the youth to contribute?"

Youth Satellite

When I met Mr. Vladimir Putin, the then President of Russia, we agreed on building a

youth satellite where the youth from different countries can work together. Such working together will increase understanding, make them explore new avenues and the spirit of global youth will prevail. The idea of a youth satellite as a joint venture of countries was born. I am glad, the space agencies of India and Russia have put in efforts and the first youth satellite is getting ready at Bangalore, with experiments from India and Russia. This youth satellite will be launched in early next year 2009. I am requesting Dr. Madhavan Nair, Chairman ISRO to continue the series of youth satellites, so that all of you from different countries could use this as a platform for developing collaborative projects, needed for scientific and technological developments and its applications and above all, it will lead to integration of minds.

Dear friends, if you ask me, how my life has been enriched for the last 76 years, I have to convey to all of you one message. The message is like this. When I reached the age of 17, that is the time, I had one great companion. That companion is nothing but great books. Throughout my life from the early phase till today, books enriched me. Hence I would suggest and recommend to all of you to read following books.

Light from many lamps
Lillian Eichler Watson,
Empire of the mind Denis Waitley
Thirukkural Thiruvalluvar
Every day Greatness
My Experiment with truth Mahatma
Gandhi

Conclusion

Now I would like to administer an oath for the youth since the planet Earth is facing many conflicts both natural and man-made. As a youth, all of you have a responsibility to work for universal harmony by ironing out all the causes of conflicts. Are you ready to repeat with me?

Oath for the Global Youth

I will have a goal and work hard to achieve that goal. I realize that small aim is a crime.

I will always be righteous in the heart which leads to beauty in the character; beauty in the character brings harmony in the home, harmony in the home leads to order in the nation and order in the nation leads to peace in the world.

I will work with integrity and succeed with integrity.

I will be a good citizen, a good member of my family, a good member of the society, a good member of the nation and a good member of the world.

I will always try to save or better someone's life. Wherever I am, a thought will always come to my mind. That is "What can I give?"

I will always protect and enhance the dignity of every human life.

I will always remember that "Let not my winged days, be spent in vain".

I will always work for Clean Green Energy and Clean planet Earth.

As a youth of the Globe, I will work

and work with courage to achieve success in all my tasks and enjoy the success of others.

Dear friends, in all oaths that you have taken just now, the eighth oath for the youth focuses on Clean Green Energy and Clean Planet Earth. That means it centered around on a mission for providing good life to 6.5 billion people of planet earth. If all of you work for this singular mission, then the planet earth will be free from fossil fuel. That means the planet earth will move away from the costly fuel which is detrimental to the environment to the three dimensional approach towards achieving clean energy using solar power, nuclear power and bio-fuel. Certainly this mission will give enough challenge to the innovative ability of the youth. I am confident the youth leaders assembled here will take up this challenge. Dear friends, this is the day; 8th June 2008, is the day of action. The action starts from today onwards. Will you take up the challenge with indomitable spirit that you have gained?

The youth power is the most powerful resource on the earth, above the earth and under the earth. Yes dear friends, the power of the youth, will definitely make a change. Change for the prosperity of the nation and the world. Your meeting in Liverpool city, in this beautiful background of Liverpool Hope University with the youth enriching the background, definitely a positive wave, wave of action from today, 8 June 2008 onwards will radiate and spread to all parts

of the world.

My best wishes to all the members of the Global Youth Congress for success in their mission for working towards the creation of beautiful planet earth.

May God bless you.

© Dr APJ Abdul Kalam June 2008

Dr. Kalam greeted the artists at the India Day Entertainment Programme in Liverpool Hope University 8 June 2008

I am delighted to participate in the India Day Entertainment Programme organized as part of Global Youth Congress particularly at Liverpool which is the culture capital of Europe 2008. Of course, Liverpool is known for its poetry and famous poets, theatre and visual arts. India and UK have a long tradition of their own culture and fusion of many cultures have emanated. Fortunately, India and UK have great tradition of promoting the music, painting and various art forms through international cultural competition. I am happy to see at Liverpool, the young people being trained to become professional musicians using Tarang, the first Indian Classical Orchestra and the outstanding Kathak performers Seema and Payal Patel. My greetings to the artists and all the art lovers participating in this programme.

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