

## Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam—The President of India

---

In the Presidential election held on July 15, 2002, Dr. A.P.J. Kalam, a renowned scientist of the country, was elected with an overwhelming majority. The election of Dr. Kalam, the son of a poor boatman from Tamil Nadu, is a tribute not only to the sterling qualities of the man but also to the democratic process of the country. This 'missile man' of India, is a real visionary who rose to be Scientific Advisor to Prime Minister by sheer hard work and intelligence. He is a man with a vision.

On his election to the highest office in the country, Dr. Kalam said, "I am indeed delighted to have become President. I thank God, my parents and the great minds of India for having got me the status of First Citizen." His message to the nation was: "We need a vision, a second Vision 2020, for the nation to get India transformed into a developed country in 20 years."

Dr. Kalam was born at Dhanushkodi (Rameshwaram) in Tamil Nadu on October 15, 1931. After having received his education at Schwartz High School, he graduated from St. Joseph College, Tiruchirappalli. He obtained his degree in Aeronautical Engineering from Madras Institute of Technology, Madras in 1957. After receiving his training at the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Bangalore, he joined the Ministry of Defense as a Senior Scientific Assistant. He successfully designed and developed a vertical take-off and landing platform. He later joined the Space Research Organisation. He is known for introducing Fiber Reinforced Plastics (FRP). He soon became the project director for Satellite Launch Vehicle—3. His team succeeded in putting Rohini into orbit in July 1980. That brought him into lime light.

Kalam was honoured with Padma Bhushan in 1981. He was now assigned the charge of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme, a big need of the Defence Services of the country. Under his guidance his team succeeded in developing and successfully testing Trishul(1985), Prithvi(1988), Agni(1989) and their more developed versions in the next few years. He was awarded the country's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, in October 1998.

Kalam played a crucial role in the Pokharan atomic bomb blast in 1988 that placed India on the nuclear map of the world. As Scientific Adviser to the Prime Minister of India, he won the Life-time Contribution Award in Engineering on December 8, 2000 from the Chairman of the Planning Commission.

Dr. Kalam is a true patriot and a great citizen. He loves music and poetry. He is a versatile genius, a strict vegetarian and a teetotaler. A man full of energy, spirit and vision, he looks upon the children of India as harbingers of a new revolution that would change India into a modern developed nation during the next 20 years.

Well versed in the Bhagvad Gita as well as the holy Quran, he quotes richly from these great books and believes: 'Religion is a way of making friends. It is the small men only who use it as a fighting tool.' Truly secular to the core, he believes in the religion of Humanity and the brotherhood of nations. He wants his country to be strong, powerful and prosperous. May he live long to guide the destiny of this great country!"