

Sanjivani for Primary Education : APJ Abdul Kalam's Educational Thoughts

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Abstract

The architect of space and missile technology, rocket engineer, aerospace engineer, 'missile man', eminent author, poet, philosopher, educationist, Padma Bhushan (1981), Padma Vibhushan (1991), Bharat Ratna (1997), eleventh president of India, H.E. Dr Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam, is a multi-talented and radiant personality with a scientific and spiritual outlook. For students, he is the 'wing' of inspiration to spread the glow of goodness. He summarizes the knowledge of Quran, the Gita and other scriptures of various religions, modern and scientific knowledge, his personal experiences and disseminates this amalgam of knowledge in an aphoristic and lucid way to inspire the students to resurge the present education system.

This article is an attempt to inquire, scan, organise and visualise his educational doctrines.

Dr Kalam lays great emphasis on primary education. He believes that the teachers, particularly school teachers, have tremendous responsibility in shaping the life of an individual. Childhood is the foundation stone upon which stands the entire life structure. He states that the seeds sown in childhood blossom into the tree of life.

According to his standpoint, education which is imparted in

childhood at the very early stage of development of mind is more important than the education received in college and university. He advises that at the primary stage, education must nurture the child's curiosity about his/her environment and integrate the thinking process with the skills of hands, limbs and body. He considers that primary education needs revamping of the syllabus, the teaching methods and the examination system, so that children's

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creativity is kindled and allowed to grow. He also suggests that emphasis should be on exploration, innovativeness and creativity through activities.

According to Dr Kalam, education is the pursuit of truth and an endless journey through knowledge and enlightenment which opens up new vistas of development of humanism where there is neither scope nor room for pettiness, disharmony, jealousy, hatred or enmity. Emphasising the importance of education, he states that education transforms a human being into a wholesome whole, a noble soul and an asset to the Universe. He believes that universal brotherhood in its true sense becomes the sheet-anchor for such education. He holds that real education enhances the dignity of human beings and enhances their self respect. Dr Kalam often says that education is drawing out and developing creativity inherent in students. Being the former president of a democratic country, he maintains that education is indeed a fundamental right of every Indian child. India is in the process of transforming itself into developed nation by 2020.

Dr Kalam believes that education is the pillar of a developed and powerful country, and also the most important element for growth and prosperity. He trusts that education is the most important area of the service sector as it provides the required knowledge and skill to do any work. Based on the experience of his student life, he has suggested that real teaching is giving

theoretical lesson coupled with practical examples from nature. He has also said that learning needs freedom to think and freedom to imagine, and both have to be facilitated by the teacher and the education system.

Aims of Education : Dr Kalam has suggested that the education system should be able to nourish and encourage creativity among children.

He firmly believes that the education system should be able to retain the smiles of children. He further states that the education system has a tremendous responsibility to transform a child into a leader—the transformation from “What can you do for me?” to “What can I do for you?” He believes that proper education would help nurture a sense of dignity and self-respect among the students. He maintains that the purpose of teaching is to create nation-building capacities in the students and these capabilities are derived from knowledge, education, own experience and value system inherited through civilisation. The main aims of education, according to him are as under.

- To build character and to cultivate human values in students
- To encourage creativity and to develop scientific attitude with spiritual foundation
- To enhance learning capacity through technology
- To build confidence among children to face the future
- To enlighten and empower citizens to contribute towards healthy nation building

- To develop moral leadership
- To reveal a sense of dignity, self respect and self-reliance among students

Curriculum and Syllabus

Dr Kalam maintains that the curriculum and syllabus should be structured in such a manner that it should meet the changing societal and occupational needs, and inculcate high moral values among the students in addition to learning skills. Dr Kalam has struck a balance between science and spiritualism in his educational philosophy, which he believes is imperative, and suggested that curriculum must include the teachings and experiences of our eminent and great leaders.

In the words of Dr Kalam – “Science and spiritualism seek the same divine blessings for doing for the people... science tries to provide solutions for a better material life, while spiritualism looks at answers on how to lead to righteous life.” He favours universal religion and suggests that knowledge of our scriptures should be included in the syllabus. He also suggests that alongwith academics, lessons – such as *satyamvada* (Speak the Truth), *dharmachar* (treat the path of righteousness), service towards others and faith in God – should be taught.

Teaching Methodology

Teaching methodology plays a significant role in the process of

education. Dr Kalam has suggested various methods of teaching at different levels. He advises that at the primary level emphasis should be on exploration, innovativeness and creativity through activities. He does not advocate traditional methods of teaching. He favours learning by doing and self-observation and says that self-observation outside the classroom is equally important for the students.

A child must become an active participant in the process of learning through observation, field studies, experiments and discussions.

He holds that when the teachers interact with children they do so in the manner of a scientist. This technique promotes creativity among children.

Schools : In his educational philosophy, Dr Kalam has also laid due emphasis on schools. He advocates that there is an urgent need for every school to have basic amenities, such as good building equipped with ventilated, lighted, airy and spacious classrooms, safe drinking water, clean toilets and playgrounds. Fixing the responsibility for the same, he further states that it is the responsibility of the sponsoring organisation to see that their schools maintain basic minimum norms both in academics as well as in providing physical facilities on their campus. Certain safety features must be built in school buildings without which it should not be possible to get affiliation for these schools.

Students : On the basis of his interactions with lakhs of students, Dr Kalam has observed and

conceptualised his educational doctrines related to them.

He visualises the future of India in children. He has reiterated that he always wanted to be associated with youngsters. He radiates brilliance and positive energy in the presence of children. He believes that children are our greatest wealth. Every child born in the nation should be allowed to blossom. For motivating students he gave this message to them, "We are all born with a divine fire in us. Our efforts should be to give wings to this fire and fill the world with the glow of its goodness."

He suggests that students should fix a goal in their life, concentrate to combat and overcome the hurdles, and achieve excellence. They must imbibe moral values. During holidays they can teach the poor and the underprivileged children and create a mission for them in life. They can plant trees and contribute towards improving ecological balance. These activities will collectively lead towards development and prosperity. In his own words – "I wish you all students and the teaching community success in giving the nation empowered, learned young with integrity."

He not only advises the students to be disciplined but also maintains strict personal discipline, practices vegetarianism, teetotalism and celibacy. Citing himself as an example, he has taught to and proved before the students that to reach great heights in life, tenacity, firm determination and

hard work with patience and calmness are required. He often says that all the success in the world is the result of indomitable spirit. So don't be anxious, just develop a 'can-do' attitude. Nothing is impossible. He suggests that students should visualise their dreams because life is purposeless without dreams and when dreams are intense and pure, they (dreams) possess electro-magnetic energy. He believes that students should try and excel in their education. He holds that honesty and sympathy for others are important qualities for students. He advises the students to set goals, attain knowledge and experiences and acquire moral values.

Teacher : Dr Kalam has provided a glorious place to teachers in his educational philosophy. He has thrown light on the role of teachers, various qualities of teachers and teacher-student relationship. He has great respect for his teachers.

Role and responsibility of teachers : Dr Kalam believes that teachers have tremendous responsibility in shaping the life of an individual and their great mission should be to ignite the minds of the young. Dr Kalam realises that these ignited minds of the young are the most powerful resource on the earth, above the earth and under the earth. He visualises that the role of a teacher is like the proverbial 'ladder' which is used by everyone to climb up in life, provided the ladder stays in its place.

He suggests that the aim of the teacher should be to build character and inculcate values that enhance the learning capacity of children; build confidence to be innovative and creative which, in turn, will make them competitive to face the future. He advises the teachers to teach the students the process of learning and enable them (students) to become life-long autonomous learners. He suggests that teachers facilitate better understanding and learning to those students who are weak in studies.

He advises the teachers to become role-models for generating creativity among their students. He believes that a good teacher can eliminate the weaknesses of our education system. An efficient teacher alone can provide quality education. He trusts that there are only three members of the society who can uproot corruption from the country— mother, father, primary teacher. He advises the teacher to have patience while talking to the parents so that they can get quality feedback about the behaviour of the student at home. It is Dr Kalam's standpoint that the delivery of quality education is possible only through quality teachers. He says that the teacher provides knowledge and facilitates shaping the student's life with great dreams and aims. The teacher instills self-confidence in students and helps them to inculcate the "I can do it" spirit through the process of education and learning.

Quality of a teacher : Dr Kalam suggests various qualities for a good

teacher (i) the teacher must be a perpetual seeker of intellectual integrity and universal compassion (ii) he/she must be equipped with all knowledge for effective teaching should be a committed teacher who (iii) he/she loves teaching and children.

He advocates that teachers must possess high self-esteem and the quality to become role models for the students. Dr Kalam says that the teacher who loves teaching is an important asset. He also suggests that the whole life of teachers should be a message to the students and teacher should make teaching their mission. He holds that education in its real sense is the pursuit of truth with the teacher in the pivotal position who has to continuously replenish and update his knowledge so that his wards will always look up to him as a walking encyclopedia, as a fountain of love, and most of all a caring human being.

He suggests that the teacher should ask challenging questions and allow the students to think and come up with answers. He also adds that the teacher should answer the students' questions or at least guide them towards an approach through which they can find an answer. He has also said that with the help of students' questions, the teacher may know the expectations, aspirations, intellectual alertness and dreams of the students. Dr Kalam holds that a teacher holds the key to the students' future.

Thus, it can be concluded that the essence of his personal experience, his life, his educational philosophy and his

educational thoughts are a treasure, deeply and implemented.
worthy to be possessed, studied

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