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**Conceptual Understanding of Religion And Spirituality of  
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**Abstract:**

*Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's contribution towards Science, Education & Society is immeasurable and occupied with incredible efforts during his life journey. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was a practical enlightening mastermind and creative thinker who remain for coordinating obsolete and present educational goals for the progression of an accustomed Indian culture. He was the first educational thinker who had provided the idea of teaching students to be autonomous learners, so that they will continue as enduring learners. According to the opinion of A P J Abdul Kalam, the institution that provide religious education should give admission to the children of all the religion in their institute and these institutions also need to provide education of values like religious tolerance and good conduct. In these institutions, the children should be provided religious education properly. The understanding of realistic goals of religion and internal equality of religions should be developed in the minds of the children. The children with this kind of religious education will establish mutual peace and the feeling of friendship among the people in the society.*

**Key words:** Religion, Spirituality, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam**1. Introduction:**

In spite of being scientist by profession Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has made a pathway to social, national, spiritual and technological development by establishing educational and social thinking. During his journey of the thinking on education in the country – India, he met thousands of children, teachers, scientists, saints and visionaries and focused on their questions and problems that aroused new enthusiasm in education and patriotism. In his thinking, he has covered subjects like vision of the developed nation, science and technology, agriculture and health services, value education, moral education, spiritual education, religious education, leadership, women empowerment, children, youth education etc. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has broad view points of thought, creativity and thinking. So, here the researcher tried to study the thinking of A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on these subjects in the present study.

According to the opinion of Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, the institution that provide religious education should give admission to the children of all the religion in their institute and these institutions also need to provide education of values like religious tolerance and good conduct. In these institutions, the children should be provided religious education properly. The understanding of realistic goals of religion and internal equality of religions should be developed in the minds of the children. The children with this kind of religious education will establish mutual peace and the feeling of friendship among the people in the society.

**2. Life, work and contribution of A. P. J. Abdul Kalam:**

- **A.P.J. Abdul Kalam :** A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, in full **Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam**, (born October 15, 1931, [Rameswaram](#), India—died July 27, 2015, Shillong), Indian scientist and politician who played a leading role in the development of [India's](#) missile and [nuclear weapons](#) programs. He was [president](#) of India from 2002 to 2007.

- **Abdul Kalam as a missile man:** Kalam earned a degree in [aeronautical engineering](#) from the Madras Institute of Technology and in 1958 joined the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO). He soon moved to the [Indian Space Research Organization](#), where he was project director of the [SLV-III](#), India's first indigenously designed and produced satellite [launch vehicle](#). Rejoining DRDO in 1982, Kalam planned the program that produced a number of successful missiles, which helped earned him the nickname 'Missile Man.' The plan called for, among other measures, increasing agricultural productivity, emphasizing [technology](#) as a vehicle for [economic growth](#), and widening access to health care and education.
- **Presidency:** Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam served as the 11<sup>th</sup> president of India lasted from 25<sup>th</sup> July 2002 to 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2007. In 2002 India's ruling [National Democratic Alliance](#) (NDA) put forward Kalam to succeed outgoing President [Kocheril Raman Narayanan](#). Kalam was nominated by the Hindu nationalist NDA even though he was Muslim, and his stature and popular appeal were such that even the main opposition party, the [Indian National Congress](#), also proposed his candidacy. Kalam easily won the election and was sworn in as India's 11<sup>th</sup> president, a largely ceremonial post, in July 2002. He remained committed to using [science](#) and technology to transform India into a developed country.
- **Early Life and Education of Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam :** Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam was born on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1931 in a Muslim family in Rameshwaram in the state of Tamil Nadu. His father's name was Jainulabdeen and he was a boat owner and the Imam of the local mosque. His mother's name was Ashiamma and she was a housewife. A P J Abdul Kalam was the youngest of four brothers and one sister in his family. Because of the poor condition of the family, A P J Abdul Kalam sold newspapers to help his family's income in the early age Kalam was an average student in getting the grades in his school education, but it is said that he was a bright and hardworking student and had a strong desire to learn. A P J Abdul Kalam completed school education from the Schwartz Higher Secondary School, Ramanathapuram, and then he completed his graduation in the subject of physics in the year 1954 from Saint Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli. Then he moved to Madras in the year 1955 and studied aerospace engineering from Madras Institute of Technology.
- **Awards and books writing:** Kalam wrote several books, including an autobiography, *Wings of Fire* (1999). Among his numerous awards were two of the country's highest honours, the Padma Vibhushan (1990) and the Bharat Ratna (1997).
- **Death:** Kalam travelled to Shillong to deliver a lecture on "Creating a Liable planet Earth" at the Indian Institute of Management – Shillong. At around 6:35 p.m., only five minutes into his lecture, he collapsed. He had been rushed to the nearby Bethany Hospital in a critical condition; upon arrival, he lacked a pulse or any other signs of life. Despite being placed in the intensive care unit, Kalam was confirmed dead of a sudden cardiac arrest at 7:45 p.m.

### 3. Religious and Spiritual Views of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam:

Religion and spirituality were very important to Kalam throughout his life. In fact, he made his own spiritual journey the subject of his final book, *Transcendence: My Spiritual Experiences with Pramukh Swamiji*.

- **Islam**

A proud and practicing Muslim, daily namaz and fasting during Ramazan were integral to Kalam's life. His father, the imam of a mosque in his hometown of Rameswaram, had strictly instilled these Islamic customs in his children. His father had also impressed upon the young Kalam the value of interfaith respect and dialogue. As Kalam recalled: "Every evening, my father A.P. Jainulabdeen,

an imam, Pakshi Lakshmana Sastry, the head priest of the Ramanathaswamy Hindu temple, and a church priest used to sit with hot tea and discuss the issues concerning the island." Such early exposure convinced Kalam that the answers to India's multitudinous issues lay in "dialogue and cooperation" among the country's religious, social, and political leaders. Moreover, since Kalam believed that "respect for other faiths" was one of the key cornerstones of Islam, he was fond of saying: "For great men, religion is a way of making friends; Small people make religion a fighting tool."

- **Syncretism**

One component of Kalam's widespread popularity among diverse groups in India, and an enduring aspect of his legacy, is the syncretism he embodied in appreciating various elements of the many spiritual and cultural traditions of India. In addition to his faith in the Quran and Islamic practice, Kalam was well versed in Hindu traditions; He learnt Sanskrit, read the Bhagavad Gita and he was a vegetarian. Kalam also enjoyed writing Tamil poetry, playing the veena (a South Indian string instrument), and listening to Carnatic devotional music every day. In 2002, in one of his early speeches to Parliament after becoming President, he reiterated his desire for a more united India, stating that "during the last one year I met a number of spiritual leaders of all religions and I would like to endeavor to work for bringing about unity of minds among the divergent traditions of our country". Describing Kalam as a unifier of diverse traditions, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor stated, "Kalam was a complete Indian, an embodiment of the eclecticism of India's heritage of diversity". BJP leader L. K. Advani concurred that Kalam was "the best exemplar of the Idea of India, one who embodied the best of all the cultural and spiritual traditions that signify India's unity in immense diversity. This was most strikingly evident in the last book he wrote, presciently titled *Transcendence: My Spiritual Experiences with Pramukh Swami*."

Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam presents a matter of religion along with the matter of spirituality too. He is in favor of religious education, but along with this, he also considers spirituality necessary at the higher level of religion. The goal of any religion of the world should be to make the man spiritually healthy. He considers the religion supreme as the strong base of secularism. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam expressed his worry about the way efforts are happening to impose religious nature on religious feeling. He emphasizes on cultural context instead of religion for heredity. He had integral faith and trust in the God. Accepting the God as the supreme, he wants to focus on to work for humanity through good needs and efforts. Religious books are very important in our life. The religious books are motivated by the God and the purpose of these books is to provide the education of truth and to make aware about wrong things of the life; gives special importance to prayer in the life. We can get the help in the use and development of great possibilities, strength and ability provided by the God in our heart and personality with the help of prayer. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam believes that man is the best creation of the God. The mission of the humanity is to keep the love of the God in the heart in every situation. He believes that each man born on this earth learns something every day. Each religion is a collection of beautiful islands. When religions bring the form of spirituality, one can see one soul in the all. Only self-discipline is a real way of religion, real and dutiful way of living life. Human religious faiths are changeable. But we should examine these faiths at proper interval of time and it is also needed to recreate them. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam considers all the religions of the world true. It is also necessary to keep own supremacy of each nation in the positive boundary and to develop the understanding of sovereign apprehension of religion in the children through the medium of education to bring public outrage at lower level and to go out the fire of non-violence, conflict and campaign. National unity can be established in the nation through the education of virtues like co-operation, friendship, justice and welfare to the children in the school. Religion provides us the education to become benevolent.

Man is a gift by the God. The god has given various strengths in the human beings and man has to use these strengths by thinking and understanding them very reasonably. And man realizes the God through this reasonable society. It is said that a person who has a high spiritual strength is mentally brawny person. Many attacks have happened on our nation and we adjust ourselves in those situations too. In this kind of process of adjustment, man has decreased his goals and expectations and narrowed his mind too. But the development of spirituality is very necessary to make our thinking and approach broad. Our inner strengths need to be developed. We have to prepare our own model. Self-realization has a very special importance in the education of spirituality. One should know thyself. One should also connect our past experiences with our future thoughts. It is our own duty to awake our hidden strengths.

Linking the religious education with the spiritual education, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam says that students should be made self realize to acquire inner energy and through this, the nation will become peaceful, prosperous and happy. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam says that man inhere the problems of life instead of living the life, but only eventually tries to solve them. In this kind of situation, religious education says that one should go on spiritually keeping with the theological principle. And when one experiences the failure in solving the problems, one should observe the golden opportunity instead of being hopeless.

Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam says about religion and spirituality that when your good deeds come nearer to your wish and values, you accept the way of spirituality and you also feel it. The goal of spirituality in each religion is dependent on mind and body of the person. One should be non-violent and through this, a peaceful atmosphere can be created in the society. So the religious and spiritual education is necessary in the education system. We should search the way of spirituality with religion which contains the theological virtue and accept the way to reach and approach the God. And knowing that way, one should try to spread this understanding in the society through the medium of education. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam says about the spirituality that spirituality is a special principle given by the God and it is our duty to spread the spirituality in the society only through religion and education. There is a central and purposeful meaning in each religion. Spirituality is produced only through compassion, pity, love, feeling, non-violence etc. Intellectuality, logic and science are the values of the spirituality. If one can connect the spirituality with the science, one can definitely reach at the level of higher thinking and for this, interaction of science and spirituality is very important. One should pray for peace through education. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam says that spiritual education is very important for future change.

According to Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, spirituality is a special virtue given by the God to each man. He believes that we should know it and use it for the whole humanity. Spirituality is a thought which is related to the ultimate goal and meaning of the life. We become spiritual, when the deeds of person are continuously similar to spiritual values and faiths. He considers the teaching of spirituality is necessary to bring change in our feeling. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam gives special importance to spirituality along with the basic matters like education, politics, management that strengthens the nation. Human positive competences develop through these aspects. Prayer is the general activities of the people. At the time of prayer, man establishes harmony with the God. The real prayer is not only to sing hymn or to kneel, but how our heart is and how much we help the needy people. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam considers it the real spirituality. The beginning of harmonious world happens due to the necessary spirituality with the harmonious internal world. We should remove arrogance from ourselves by introspection to enlighten our internal spirituality. We should need to know our eternal soul to develop harmony with it and to try sameness with it. The fundamental spiritual nature, to which we call social freedom or independence, in reality, is for its creation and enrichment whatever we are for, so this kind of freedom should not be suppressed at any cost. We will get the help to

change and improve our present system through spiritual awareness. Spiritual education pushes the negative effects around us far away from us. We find new ways to understand real invincible spirituality in any situation and these ways provide us very deep peace and trust.

When the seed of spirituality germinates in the minds, it focuses on the spiritual energy in the life of the person. At this time, the person can see new spiritual ideas at the level of concept. This concept can bring improvement in our faith; moreover it also enables the man to achieve wonderful results and to acquire desired results. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam insists to follow four kinds of spiritual actions. These four actions include obedience, belief, understanding and knowledge. Each person adopts any one level of this action according to his level of spiritual activity. Our individual beliefs construct a context in which we do our spiritual deeds. When this numerous level becomes workable, it turns into a series. When the human religious faiths learn about these four levels, it gets the base to understand its pattern. We can also understand the stages how differently we senses the global and individual spiritual matters. We should adopt such trials and activities by which we can develop the concept of spiritual principles in the students. One, who thinks according to the spiritual principles and adopts this principle in the practical life, will feed their spiritual practice as scientific. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam believes that science is the only trustable solution to understand this natural world, and when the tools of science are used properly, and then it provides the mystified information in the matter of physical existence. But science cannot answer the questions like why does this universe come into existence? What is the meaning of the existence of the human? And desire to acquire the answers of these questions is a big motivation for the humans. A person needs all the strengths of both the approaches - scientific and spiritual too.

Thus, if religious and spiritual education is given in proper way, it is possible to nurture the good citizens. We should integrate religious education with the spiritual education. Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam emphasizes on the necessity to provide spiritual education at the higher level of religion to bring change in the thinking and feeling.

#### **4. Major findings of Religion, Spirituality and Education:**

- A.P.J. Abdul Kalam is in favor of religious education but he also refers the necessity of spirituality at higher level of religion. He believes that the goal of any religion of the world should be to make the human spiritually healthy. He considers spirituality as supreme like the strong base of egalitarianism.
- If intolerance, agitation and conflicts occur in the society due to the religious beliefs, religious, racial or lingual differences and harsh of the attitude of any cult, A P J Abdul Kalam advocates the understanding of religion through education as the only way to prevent these.
- A P J Abdul Kalam considers the self-discipline as the true way of religion. According to him, this is the only true and responsive way to live a life.
- A P J Abdul Kalam believes that religion is based on the faith and he also says ever that each faith cannot be religious. He suggests that religion gives the education to be benevolent. Religious conflicts hurt the tolerance of person.
- A.P.J. Abdul Kalam gives special importance to the spiritual education. He hopes that spirituality should be integrated with the education. He believes that spiritual understanding is a special strength of the man.

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