

A call from the prime minister ...

It was like any other day on the Anna University campus in Chennai. I had delivered a lecture, 'Vision to Mission', and the session got extended from one hour to two. I had lunch with a group of research students and went back to class. As I was returning to my rooms in the evening, the vice-chancellor, Prof. A. Kalanidhi, fell step with me. Someone had been frantically trying to get in touch with me through the day, he said.

Indeed, the phone was ringing when I entered the room. When answered, a voice at the other end said, 'The prime minister wants to talk with you...' Some months earlier, I had left my post as Principal Scientific Adviser to the government of India, a Cabinet-level post, to return to teaching.

Now, as I spoke to the PM, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, my life was set for an unexpected change.

Turning Points takes up the incredible Kalam story from where *Wings of Fire* left off. It brings together details from his career and presidency that are not generally known as he speaks out for the first time on certain points of controversy. It offers insight not only into an extraordinary personality but also a vision of how a country with a great heritage can become great in accomplishment, skills and abilities, through effort, perseverance and confidence. It is a continuing saga, above all, of a journey, individual and collective, that will take India to 2020 and beyond as a developed nation.



A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was the eleventh president of India, from 2002 to 2007. He is a recipient of the Bharat Ratna.

'If A.P.J. Abdul Kalam didn't exist, India would have had to invent him.'

—Kaveree Bamzai, *India Today*

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Photograph shows A.P.J. Abdul Kalam taking the salute as president at a fleet review of the IAF in March 2007.

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A Journey through
Challenges

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam



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PREFACE

My book *Wings of Fire* covered my life up to 1992. Ever since it was published in 1999 the response has been astounding and the book has sold more than a million copies. More heartening still is that it appears to have made a positive impact on thousands of people, helping them change their lives for the better.

As I wrote *Turning Points* the thought occurred to me why I was writing the book. One could say that my story echoes the concerns, anxieties and aspirations of many Indians. Like them I started my life from the lowest step in the ladder. My first job was as senior scientific assistant. Gradually I moved up to greater responsibilities, finally assuming the office of the president of India. Certainly much has happened in the past decade and more which needs recounting. One could say that it has been a very intense experience.

However, my reasons for writing *Turning Points* were slightly different. Seeing the response generated by *Wings of Fire* I