



# XIII

## BOOK REVIEW - THE WINGS OF FIRE

*Slt Namita Dalal*

'Wings of fire' is written by Arun Tiwari and he explains the whole story as he heard it from Dr Abdul Kalam. The book essentially speaks about truthful and most sincere efforts of Indian scientists in making nothing less than a guided missile!! The book has four different phases: Orientation, Creation, Propitiation and Contemplation, devoted respectively to roughly to the first 32 years (1931-1963), the next 17 years (1963-1980), another 10 years (1981-1991), and beyond.

Born to an obscure middle-class family in a remote but spiritually supercharged island town at the southern tip of the Indian peninsula, Dr Kalam

progressed in sure and steady steps through childhood, among loving family members who sacrificed readily for him. With devoted and inspirational teachers, he made his foray into professional life. This first phase of his life covers 32 eventful years, most felicitously in the space of 31 pages.

Dr Kalam's own well meaning advice to all novitiate engineering students is "that when they choose their specialization, the essential point to consider is whether the choice articulates their inner feelings and aspirations." All those young men and women who rush headlong into software careers

should pause and reflect.

Nearly half of the book goes to the "Creation" phase. Here, one sees Dr Kalam managing and inspiring large scale developmental projects on rocket technology. This was an adventure, not without struggle and frequent failure, culminating in the pioneering success of the Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-3), the fifth country to achieve satellite launching capability; thus propelling India into the Space Age. He is seen as engineer and innovator, inspirer and mentor of courageous colleagues, and builder of teams and institutions. This also brought Dr Kalam his first brush with fame, adulation and inevitably, professional rivalries due to jealousy.

The "Propitiation" phase lets us see Dr Kalam going into the 'defence' stage of his career, breathing fresh life into struggling research institutions under the Defence R & D Organization, and later taking charge of all the DRDO establishments, helping India to acquire modern weaponry and delivery systems. If the "creation" phase was marked by the SLV-3 saga, this phase had the Agni and related missile programmes as the defining theme.

As Dr Kalam moved into the contemplative phase of his life, a grateful nation heaped its highest awards on him, and ironically, also made him take wider ranging responsibilities connected with science, technology and the Defence of the realm. He gives credit to the many great visionaries who prepared him for life, especially Professors Sarabhai, Dhawan and Brahm Prakash. He ends the book with the fervent prayer that eventually the country will become strong, prosperous and "developed".

The book is a must read for every student who might otherwise be brainwashed by our "slave minded protagonists". All through the book there are many lessons even for the managers as Dr Kalam narrates how the best out of people can be brought out. No politician reads a book these days; they can't write as they don't have a vision. Dr Kalam isn't a politician, as the media says he is a 'spiritual scientist'. Apparently he didn't have a personal life, it was a life totally well spent for science, for nation. Overall the book is a source of inspiration.

\*\*\*\*\*

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*SLt Namita Dalal was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 08 Aug 05 as an Education Officer. The officer has done BE in Electronics from Mumbai University. Presently the officer is posted at INS Valsura and is carrying out Instructional duties.*

