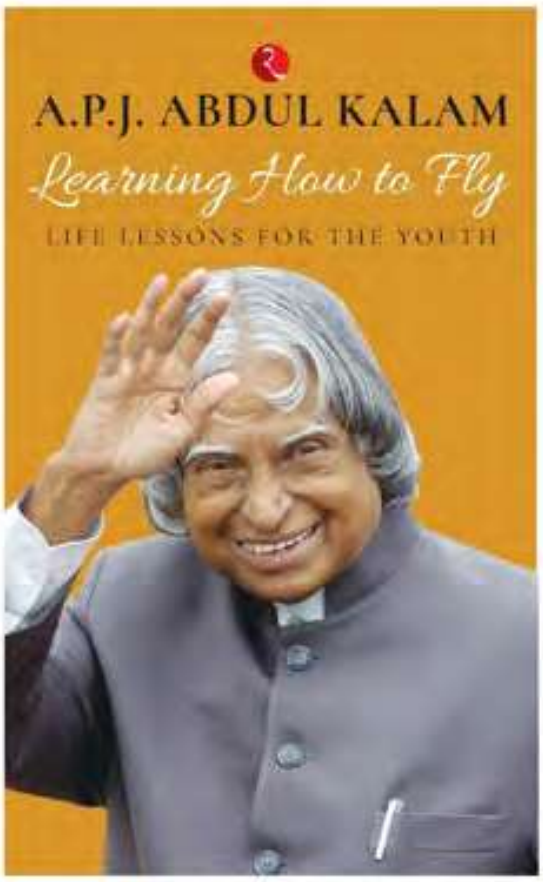
Book Review

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Dr. Abdul Kalam – Learning how to fly (Life Lessons for the youth)

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Author of the book:
Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

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Dr. Kalam, to most of the world, was one of the greatest leaders, teachers, mentors, guides, gurus, scientists and a much-loved President of our time. But one thing we mostly miss in describing him is that he always remained an ardent student throughout his life. Right from his childhood days till the very last – he always kept his curiosity quotient high. Though he had vast knowledge and wisdom, he always had the excitement to learn something new every time.

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No matter how busy Dr. Kalam was, he had a special place in his heart for the youth. He always believed that for a better tomorrow, we have to invest, guide, and train the young minds of today. Whenever he got an opportunity to interact with young minds or give them pearls of wisdom from the vast ocean of knowledge – he always did that and that too with a smile. He travelled to almost every part of the country meeting the students in schools, universities, and institutions, and interacted with them like a committed teacher.

Learning How to Fly is an awesome collection of Dr. Kalam's lectures delivered over a period of time to teachers and students across the world. In each of the lectures, Dr. Kalam touched upon some of the most pertinent topics of today and tomorrow, giving real-life examples of famous personalities across the period, the challenges they faced, and how they overcame them. The book stands very loyal to the lectures and presentations made by him. The lectures, with the help of anecdotes and points, make it easy to understand and they also inspire the readers to achieve more. His lectures and speeches capture the real essence and passion with which he would have delivered them in person and, like the youngsters sitting in the crowds hearing his lectures, one can hear his voice reverberate. The book with his most humble and brilliant speeches gives enough reasons to get inspired.

In his speeches, he discussed various things that would help in shaping our future. His main emphasis was to motivate and ignite young minds, make them realize their true potential and believe that they can change the future if they work towards it. He considered the young ignited minds as the most important asset any country can have. By narrating stories of his own life, his teachers and mentors as well as stories of some of the greatest men and women of the world, he demonstrates the importance of dreams and the hard work needed to turn those dreams into reality

The hallmark of his speeches lies in the ease with which he was able to connect with the audience and convey his thoughts and message by citing real-life examples of great personalities and projects. In each of his lectures, he spoke about preparing oneself best for life, identifying and overcoming challenges, and how to bring out the best. The clarity of thought and speech were his greatest virtues. For him, holistic development was the most important thing, be it for it is for an individual, organization, society, nation, or the world at large. For example, in one of the lectures talking about creating a culture of excellence, he says that excellence does not come by accident; rather it is a process where an individual, organization or nation has to continuously thrive to get better. Likewise, he believed that when knowledge becomes an important part of the economy, then society focuses more on empowerment and all-around development rather than fulfilling just the basic needs. Every

speech has a message behind it and therefore it leaves you with a lot more knowledge than you had before reading it.

Being a scientist himself, science was closest to his heart and numerous times he gave examples of how science has and can benefit the world. His insights into how he worked in the field of aeronautics are an excellent read and leave us with the thought to know more and more about how he worked on several proud achievements of this country. His experiences in ISRO are apt examples to motivate the youth to attain excellence in their respective field of work- be it studies, sports, or anything else. He gave insights and examples of real-life situations and critical projects like the Mars Orbiter Mission or famous personalities like Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, Professor Vikram Sarabhai, Chandrasekhar Subrahmanyan, Professor Satish Dhawan, and E Shreedharan to stresses how one should never give up in life and work towards what one believes in.

The way he spoke about his seniors shows how modest he was. In speeches, he always thanked his teachers, guides, and mentors who shaped him to become what he was. To the young people, he also highlighted the importance of books and how inculcating reading habits at an early age can shape the thought process and channel the energy in the right direction. The way he highlights and inspires young people to think, act and become leaders.

This is one of the best books which need to be read in the genre of compilations. It is an amazing and sincere attempt, filled with passion, real-life examples, and a positive attitude - it is a must read for every Indian, old and young. If the book doesn't inspire and influence a person, then nothing can.