

My personal tribute to Bharat Ratna Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam
By Praful Patel of London

I consider myself very lucky and privileged to have met Dr. Abdul Kalam at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. I had gone to New Delhi when the Akshardham was being consecrated on 6th November 2005. Before I went to Delhi, I sent a bundle of documents and my articles about Ayurveda to the President and had requested for a meeting with him. We run an NGO titled International Ayurveda Foundation, UK, India & Switzerland (www.iaf-ngo.org).

I was delighted when the meeting was granted during November 2005. I had the honour to meet the President in his office. He offered me tea, samosa and jalebi..! Surprisingly he had read all the documents on Ayurveda because of his commitment to Traditional Systems of Medicine. He was pleased to hear about my Guruji His Holiness Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj and he mentioned his participation as a special guest at the opening of Akshardham. I briefed him for about half an hour about the work of International Ayurveda Foundation (IAF) and the problems faced in the European Union, who were then discussing a Directive titled THMPD. However, we discussed many challenges facing Ayurveda in India and abroad. I asked him what advice he had to give me. He mentioned that the Ayurvedic community and the Indian Government should set up Ayurveda Research and Development Centre, herbal and non-herbal. The Centre should provide fool proof testing and certification of Ayurvedic and other traditional medicinal products about their quality, safety, stability and efficacy. Such a multi-disciplinary laboratory will have highly qualified and experienced technical staff to operate sophisticated instrumentation/techniques for pharmacognostic, pharmacological, chemical and pharmaceutical standardisation, the results of which would be internationally acceptable. The Centre should be run on the lines of Western medicine R&D. He mentioned that it requires huge investment and it should be possible to get the funding from the government, but more so from private sector. At IAF we have developed a project for *Ayurveda R&D Centre*.

Secondly, Dr. Kalam asked me if I had enough knowledge about medicinal plants. I frankly admitted that I didn't, though I was aware that the raw material is used by all systems of medicine while manufacturing of medicines. He then asked if I knew the total value of the production of medicinal plants in the world. He seemed excited to give me briefing on this matter and mentioned that the global production of medicinal plant was US\$ 68 billion and India had only half a billion US\$ to its share. He emphasised that China was far ahead of India. He stressed that India has vast land in South India and States like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Eastern States and Himalayas where we should encourage the growth of medicinal plants on large scale. He stressed that if a large agricultural based company wants to invest money in different parts of India, such companies could encourage the surrounding farmer community to grow medicinal plant and an agency set up can purchase it from farmers on the model of Amul Dairy. He organised for me to be invited to an International Conference on Medicinal Plant at Hyderabad and the main guiding spirit behind this conference was Late Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao. I went to

this conference and was seated in the front row and when he opened his speech he recognised my presence. I felt deeply inspired and encouraged. IAF also has prepared a project report titled *“Development of a Resource Institute for Medicinal plants and Herbal Certification”*.

As a tribute to world’s great scientist, a true human being, deeply spiritual man and people’s President, Dr. Kalam, I hope I can find a syndicate to launch these two projects in his memory.

He has great faith in my Guruji His Holiness Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj of worldwide Swaminarayan Fellowship. They are both close friends. I am happy to pay a further tribute to Dr. Kalam that he must be the only Head of State who has written a book about a spiritual leader. This book titled *“Transcendence”* was inaugurated in the presence of Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj on 20th June 2015 at Sarangpur, Gujarat. I recommend all my friends to study this book. Maybe this was the last book he wrote amongst many that Dr. Kalam has written. My favourite book was *“Vision 2020”*. I am happy to share this photograph when the book was presented to Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who blessed Dr. Kalam very recently and I am praying that Late President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam’s soul may rest in peace. Om Shanti ! Shanti! Shantihi !

Below: Late President Abdul Kalam at the opening of Akshardham in New Delhi on 6.11.2005 and recently at the launch of the book “Transcendence” at Sarangpur on 20.6.2015.

