

*A.M.D.G.*

## **THE PERSONAL VIEW OF KEN KHAN ON THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AT SAINT STANISLAUS COLLEGE**

This is a personal view and readers are asked to treat it as such.

I found the 3 C's – COMMUNICATION, COOPERATION and CONSULTATION which are now shown on my SKYPE contact, as a summary of my entire life and delineate concepts that influenced me a great deal as I was growing up and in particular from the time I commenced my secondary education in 1948..

COMMUNICATION – this has to be mutual and involves the sharing of ideas, however disparate and contradictory they may be.

COOPERATION – it is the lack of working and cooperating together, that has led to so much misunderstanding and confusion at so many levels, personal, social, economic, national, political, emotional etc.

CONSULTATION – if only more consultation was done before critical decisions were made, the world would be a much better place for all of us.

This was the time that Jesuit priests were sent out from UK at the end of World War II and many served in the various parishes scattered up and down the colony of British Guiana, while those with educational qualifications were assigned to teach at Saints. They were all relatively young priests, full of enthusiasm at their 1st assignment away from home, and eager to serve their charges. A great team of both educators and parish priests

### **1. EVENTS THAT SHAPED MY PHILOSOPHY**

I have been involved in education from the day I entered Saints in September 1948 until the present time. I won one of the 6 Demerara County scholarships for Queen's College, located at the time at the bottom of Brickdam, at the site of the recently destroyed Ministry of Health (3 were allocated to Essequibo and 3 to Berbice). I well remember collecting my tie, uniform and books and preparing for an academic future at the reputedly best school in Guyana. However, my father decided that he wanted me to go to Saints. At the time, I objected, saying that I did not want to go to a Jesuit school, but in vain. When my father said jump, you can only reply – How high! My life would have been different if I had gone to QC, as I intended. However, I made lifelong friends at Saints, and 4 of us formed what we called the House, frequenting each other's home for meals, study, and recreation. I owe them a lot: Carlyle Moore, and Oswald de Haan

now in USA, and Godfrey Persaud who unfortunately passed away in September 2001 and to whose family I extend sincere sympathy and condolences. RIP.

We were very close friends and remain so to this day. Academically, Carlyle and myself fought for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the end-of-year examinations, and were considered above average students. In 1955, I obtained the Rediffusion Open Scholarship in Natural Science, to study at UWI, Mona, but was already en route to UK to join the Jesuits. In 1955, Carlyle was offered the Rediffusion Scholarship and studied Physics and Mathematics at UWI, Mona before proceeding to Cambridge University for his PhD in 1958. He has moved around quite a lot, working in Ghana and UG, and in 1977 was appointed a Professor at Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia, where he is working until the present time. We are in frequent contact and collaboration.

Here is a brief summary of my life:

**1936-1948:** moved around various primary schools as my father, an educator and Headmaster, was transferred from school to school.

**1948-55:**  
**The Jesuit influence.**

As a student at Saints, I was influenced by the Jesuits on the College Staff. Jesuits are member of the Society of Jesus, a Christian religious order of the Roman Catholic Church.

From its inception in 1540, Jesuits were sent as missionaries around Europe, and later around the world, to create schools, colleges and seminaries. These were highly educated men who were totally committed to education and intellectual pursuits without regard to working conditions, material comforts and the good life, for which they were highly qualified.

I was so intellectually and spiritually inspired by the Jesuits that I eventually entered the Jesuit Novitiate in the UK.

**1955-1972:** Jesuit in formation for some 16 years, until taking Final Vows.

**1955-57:** After 2 years Novitiate at Harlaxton Manor, Granthamshire, I took simple vows

**1957-58:** I then moved on to Manresa College, near Roehampton, for 1 year, completing some studies, including Ordinary Level Greek. Here 7 of us, including Fred Rigby, formed a very closely knit community. This was a happy year that formed us into what we were to become later in life.

**1958-61:** Studies at Heythrop College, Lincs, towards the Licentiate in Philosophy, guided by Professors who imbued in us the need for intellectual honesty, and we studied authors who were frowned upon by the Roman authorities – Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeckx, and Teilhard de Chardin, as well as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Alfred Adler.

**1961-64:** We then moved on to study for 3 years at Campion Hall, the Jesuit house of studies in Oxford. Fred Rigby and I had been together since 1955, and these were intellectually stimulating years, as we grappled with the complexities of Mathematics, French and other subjects. Also at Campion College was Fr Compton Meerabaux. The photo of us standing at the entrance of Campion College was taken in 1964.



**1964-66:** As part of our formation, some of us proceeded to spend one or two years in the Regency experiment. I was young, just 28 years of age, somewhat impetuous, a bit of a revolutionary, and enjoyed both teaching and assisting Fr. T. Lynch S.J. with games at the Sea Wall Grounds. I was issued with a motor cycle, and enjoyed this part of the Jesuit formation. I worked with Fr. Bernard Darke S.J. as his Assistant Scout Master, including the memorable trip to Lethem in August 1965. In my case, I was supervised by the then Principal Fr. John Hopkinson, referred to outside his hearing, as Hoppy. Unfortunately, my relationship with Hoppy was one of confrontation. The 4 young teachers in my group – Clement Derrell, John Choy, Gerald Jekir and myself were considered as rebels. However, if I was to proceed to Theology in UK, this was the litmus test and I had to be circumspect although I disagreed with many of his views about education. He wanted a classical and liberal education, stressing the arts and languages as well as Science and Mathematics, but no mention of topics that I felt were more relevant to Guyana. However, eventually, he gave me the all clear, and recommended that I proceed to UK for Theology studies at Heythrop College.

**1966-70:** Again, we studied towards the Licentiate in Theology, guided by the Professors who urged us to work hard and study our sources. And eventually, in March 1969, I was ordained a Jesuit Priest, and went on to complete the 4 year course.

**1970-71:** This was a brief interlude at Saints, teaching Mathematics.

**1971-72:** Return to UK to complete the final year of formation at the Jesuit house of studies at St. Beuno's College, Flintshire, recharge our energies, make once more the 30 days retreat, and take my final vows as a Jesuit priest.

## 1972-1980: Jesuit HM of SSC.

On my return to Saints, at aged 36, I had no teaching qualification, so commenced an 18 months part time course at the University of Guyana towards obtaining a Diploma in Education.

I was urged by Fr. Hopkinson to understudy him for 1 term before replacing him as HM. But I strongly objected to this, and successfully urged my Jesuit Superiors to let me run the College on completely different lines:

- converting the Bicycle Shed into a Canteen and Home Economics Building.
- constructing an Industrial Workshop at Brickdam.
- and eventually setting up the College Farm at Sophia.

It was felt by many that any sort of manual work was degrading and smacked of slave labour days., but I disagreed and in this I obtained the support of some members of the Burnham government, The Official Opening of the College Farm took place on September 25<sup>th</sup> 1975 by then Minister of Agriculture Gavin Kennard.

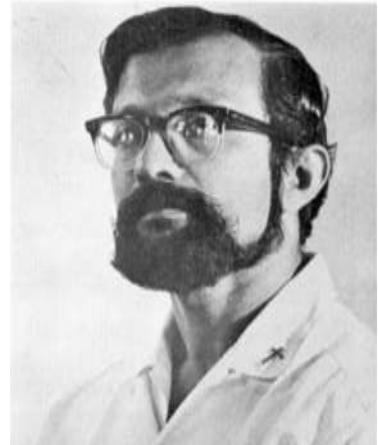
I felt then that the needs of a developing nation were better served not just by focusing on the traditionally “white-collar” studies of Science, Mathematics and the Classics- English, French, Languages, but by a broader mix that included more “blue-collar” topics such as Agricultural Sciences, Industrial Arts and Technology. In fact, the College Farm was unique in the Caribbean and remains part of what I feel is my lasting heritage to my alma mater, despite the misgivings of many Jesuits and others at that time and in my day.

Today, more than a decade into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I remain convinced that this is the way to proceed if Saints were to take the lead in education and become once more the leading College in Guyana.

The Burnham Government introduced co-education in 1975 and proceeded to take over full control on of the school in 1976, making it increasingly difficult to run a school with no political affiliation to the ruling party.

Eventually, in July 1980, I received a 2 line letter transferring me to Central High School. No reason was ever given, but this was for me the end of the road.

The Jesuit involvement ended with my departure in August 1980, since I quietly departed Guyana unknown to the political directorate.



I migrated to Barbados where I taught Mathematics at Harrison College until 2001, the statutory retirement age at the time. Eventually, I was offered Citizenship by the Barbados Government and proceeded to Cave Hill Campus to study for a PhD in Education which I completed in 1993.

## 2. PHILOSOPHY OF THE COLLEGE

The philosophy of the College can be gleaned from the changes noted over the years in the wording of the Prospectus which spells out its aims and objectives. There have been significant changes and my thesis is that the process of change is not over.

**Prospectus (1972)** spells out the aims of SSC

*“Saint Stanislaus College has been conducted for one hundred years by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus with the object, not only of giving to boys a sound liberal education, but also of imparting to them a love and knowledge of their religion”.*

This Prospectus has been in use since SSC was set up in 1866. Liberal Education was understood by some as a humanistic education, viz. an appreciation of the arts, grammar, rhetoric, maths and science, as well as a philosophy that gives meaning to our lives.

**Prospectus (1973)** sees a dramatic shift, and owes a lot to the collective thinking of the Staff and the Board of Management and of the SSCA that was set up in 1943 by a great man, John Fernandes Snr, to whom and to whose family, I would like to pay tribute.

The Prospectus was reworded as follows:

*“SSC is a Christian institution.....It aims at imparting both intellectual and technical skills and at forming citizens of Guyana who are imbued with a reverence of God, a love of their religion and a spirit of service to their country. It offers an education that stresses academic excellence and respect for manual labour, and is at the same time based on a philosophy of co-operation, a spirit of sharing and working together for the good of all”.*

This was to lead to the setting up of the School Farm at Sophia and the construction of the Workshop, Home Economics Building and Canteen at Brickdam.

**Prospectus (1980)** subsequent to the Government takeover of education in 1976, witnesses the change from “Christian institution” to “Government school” but the aims and objectives are unchanged.

**Prospectus (1993)** makes a further change to: “Grade A, Senior Secondary school administered by the Government of Guyana” and spells out its philosophy, centred on its motto “Aeterna Non Caduca, - not for this life only but for Eternity.”

**Prospectus (1995)** claims that SSC is “owned and managed by the Government of Guyana through the Ministry of Education”.

The ownership of the College at Brickdam, is actually that of the Jesuits. The school farm at Sophia is owned by the SSCA.

**Prospectus (2006)** includes the changes spelt out in the Prospectus of 1973 and subsequent years, but now describes the responsibility of a Board of Governors that was set up in 2005 *“to manage the College in its entirety, viz. maintenance and repairs, day to day operations, including hiring and firing of staff (except for HM and DHM). It receives an annual subvention to cover budgeted expenses and the wages and salaries of staff but must raise any additional funds”*.

There are quite a number of government-sponsored repairs which take place at SSC as well as in other government schools. The College Farm was expanded considerably to become a Caribbean institution second to none, and the Computer laboratories at the Brickdam site are among the best in Guyana. We need to keep promoting Agricultural and Technical education, as well as Information Technology (IT) with Examination results that show our claim for excellence, so that Parents will choose Saints, albeit sometimes as their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> choice.

The history of the [College at Brickdam](#) and the [Farm at Sophia](#) have been spelt out in great detail at the [School website](#).

I submit that these Prospectus changes represent the evolution of ideas, influenced by the changing political situation. The movement from Liberal education, to agricultural and technical education, with its present emphasis on computer-aided education, has introduced a new dimension unheard of or unimaginable in my time. The world has become a global village that has shrunk to the size of our palm, as we influence and are influenced by events across the globe by the click of a mouse or our Blackberry or hand-held computer. The present debate about the possibility of distance education coupled with Broadband access in all schools that offer IT opens out boundless possibilities for learning.

After considering where we come from, we naturally want to consider whither we are going. But we must always remember the statement that if we forget the lessons of history, we are bound to repeat the mistakes of history. However, the past need not be seen as enslaving our thoughts but as helping us make decisions for our future.

### 3. INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

My Philosophy is based on the Christian tradition that human values centre on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, an event that many dispute and some fail to understand. Jesus is one example of a perfect human (mortal man and spiritual God)

I recognize that there are other religious traditions (Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Confucian etc) that were founded by prophets who also claim to be examples of human perfection.

In my view, when God became man, it was not as a god residing in a human body. I submit that God became the man Jesus so that every man (i.e. mankind) can become god-like or god-fearing.

Jesus was a real man who learnt by doing and grew up within the Jewish culture of his time.

He discovered over a period of time that he was God-made-man for us, the perfect combination of the physical or mortal "Man" and the spiritual "God"  
The voice of conscience within each god-fearing person is the voice of God. The presence or absence of a religious tradition may not lead us to the Christian God but this does not condemn us to a limbo or no-man's land. Each one of us, in some way, relives the life of Christ even if we may not have heard anything about the Christian tradition.

I do not accept an exclusivist view of Salvation, summed up in the adage: "Outside of the Church, there is no salvation". One can ask what is meant by the "Church", whether it is a community of believers who are seeking the truth. Again, the age-old questions surface: What is truth? Your truth or mine?

We have seen the influence of Christian and non-Christian traditions with various oral and written traditions. So down the centuries, mankind has torn itself apart in the name of God. The Inquisition, the religious wars of the past, and the present worldwide conflagrations between the various ideologies, bear witness to this. More recently, the supposed dichotomy between science and religion has itself been a complicating factor, as we see in the debate about evolution as the way mankind progressed over the millions of years since earth spun out and became part of the solar system, and life progressed from non-life to life, to animal, to prehominooids to mankind. This is not a magician God, as some tend to believe. God works through nature, and we are all caught up in the ongoing saga of mankind drawing closer to God though Jesus Christ, God-made-man for us.

## 4. My Philosophy Regarding the Qualities of an Educated Person

Education is a process that covers about 20 of the most formative years of an individual's life. Thus becoming an educated person is not achievable at College, but extends into University and post-graduate studies.

There are many qualities that define an educated person.

The **first quality** is a **passion for excellence**. It is the force that prevents us from accepting the status quo, succumbing to complacency, and motivates us to do our best in every worthwhile

The **second quality** is the **appreciation of the humanities and the sciences, with specific reference to the present thrust into computer aided education**. No matter what specializations may be offered, we want our graduates to be able to think and speak and write; to know something about history, literature and art; to have their minds and hearts expanded by philosophy; and to have a solid understanding of math and the sciences. We want graduates prepared for living as well as for working. With the demand for increased technological training in today's world, we need business leaders who read Shakespeare and computer scientists who understand the history and roots of world civilization.

The **third quality** is the preoccupation with questions of **ethics and values** for both the personal strength and professional witness of our graduates. Family values, personal integrity and business ethics have always been important. In recent years, this characteristic has taken on added dimensions, with attention on the great questions of justice and fairness that confront our age: economic inequality, racism and unemployment, the global imbalance of economic resources and opportunities, and poverty and oppression in the Third World, to cite some examples. These are not easy issues, nor do they have any certain and universally accepted solutions through sloganeering and political manoeuvring, except in a way that is proper for higher education, through learning and research, reflection and creative action. In some way, we have to integrate ethics and values.

The **fourth quality** is the **importance given to religious experience**. This is vital and needs to be integrated into the educational process so that a student has the opportunity to grow and develop his/her potential to the fullest. There is a need to try to open this all-important horizon for all our students, whatever their religious tradition. God is known by various names, and even those who deny the existence of God, are searching for meaning in their lives. We want a Jew to become a better Jew, a Hindu a better Hindu, a Christian a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim, an agnostic a better agnostic, an atheist a better atheist etc. Whatever the religious or non religious or anti-religious tradition of our students, we are not proselytizing or intent on converting to the Catholic faith.



The **fifth quality** is **person-centered-ness**. No matter how large or complex the institution, each individual is important and should be given as much personal attention as humanly possible, both in and out of the classroom. The reason for this specific care for the individual is that teaching is much more than a job - indeed more than a profession. It is a way of life, it enables men and women to look on their work of teaching or administration as sharing in the service of others.

## 5. My Philosophy Regarding the Education Process

Having defined an educated person, we can discuss how (in principle) we may achieve these goals.

Ideas to be addressed:

- **Roles of Teachers, Parents and students.**  
This is critical since they are the main agents of change, and must be adept with the 3 C's mentioned above: communication, cooperation and consultation.
- **Establishing an education-centred Culture.**  
Without education, with its instant and worldwide changes, our Culture is back in the dark ages.
- **Overcoming Social distractions.**  
A balance between use of the social media e.g. facebook, twitter, youtube etc and face-to-face meetings, is now a matter of survival for the human species. We have to learn how to talk with each other, not just send text messages.
- **Level Playing field vs Grouping based on skills.**  
Important to ensure that we are treated alike and not given special privileges because of accidents of birth or upbringing.
- **Core subjects vs Soft subjects**  
Core subjects are a priority as opposed to subjects that are too easy and not a challenge.
- **Broad and shallow coverage of subjects vs Narrow and deep coverage.**  
Depth is all important vs choosing aspects that may appeal to us at the time.
- **Motivation, motivation, motivation.**  
Motivation is the key to success.
- **Balance between studies, extra-lessons, extra curricular activities.**  
A balanced person does not neglect one aspect at the expense of the others, and needs to maintain a well-rounded personality..
- **Education Resources – at school and at home (textbooks, computers, internet access)**  
The shrinkage of the world because of the Computer makes it important that we are in control of our education resources in their various aspects.

- The Principle of Subsidiarity vs control from the top (strong MoE control)  
This principle is often neglected, since we forget that it is by allowing others to share our insights and working together, that we can move ahead.
- Funding the system.  
Funding is important, but again it is a means to an end and a balance is required..
- Role of Alumni Associations.  
The Alumni Associations in Canada, NYC, Barbados, UK, Guyana, Antigua and wherever they can be set up, remind us *that we are standing on the shoulders of the ones who were before us* and need to work together, despite disparity in our various modes of contribution. Alumni Associations have their own characteristics and need to complement one another.

## 6. WHITHER ST. STANISLAUS COLLEGE?

As with all government schools, the aim of Saints is the inculcating of secular values in keeping with respect for human rights and a high degree of tolerance for those holding different views.

However, public education in general tends to suffer whenever the economy experiences a downturn, and unfortunately Saints has not been spared. This has made it extremely challenging to establish a new Culture, or rallying point, for achieving educational excellence.

The problems experienced by some teachers stem from their perception that teaching is not an attractive profession, and hence their last choice.

In the meantime, a lot of work has to be done to ensure proper management of the College, with staff paid working salaries and where both teachers and students are committed to learning and not just surviving from day to day.

We should ask ourselves the following questions:

- 1.What are we teaching?
- 2.Why are we teaching it?
- 3.How are we teaching it?
- 4.Why are we teaching in that way?
- 5.How do we know the students are *learning* ?
- 6.What did we learn in the process of teaching it?

I know that Guyana society is seen by some as predatory, mendicant and beyond salvation as they join the exodus to greener pastures, but I am an optimist and still believe that better days are ahead, if we only avail ourselves of the opportunities as they arise. We need to project an image of dynamism, but this depends to a large

extent on the staff and administration as well the present and past and future alumni of our alma mater.

A lot has happened since the Reunion of August 2009:

1. Elections in 2011 resulting in changes at the Ministry of Education.
2. One Laptop per Child policy, initiated by the outgoing Minister
3. The BOG contract expiring in 2012 and still pending renewal.
4. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> time since 2005, Saints was recognized as the most improved Secondary School based on the CSEC results.
5. In September 2012, Saints was designated as a Sixth Form Science and Technology school (CAPE)
6. A former Headmaster, Mr. Dinband Khusial, has rejoined the Saints teaching staff to teach Add Maths.
7. Toronto Alumni Executives have paid several visits to the College to improve communications with the teaching staff and administration.
8. For the first time in history, a Jesuit has been elected Pope.

These changes are consistent with the history of Saints which has evolved in the face of opportunities as well as challenges, but has always found ways to overcome the challenges. There will always be champions who will turn things around.

I stress that the healthy sharing of Information and the strengthening of Communication, Cooperation and Consultation, are keys to the pursuance of the legacy of excellence as we try to influence the future of our alma mater.

I have personally strived to work within the following communication model which supports regular and open dialogue between the key “agents of change”.



Alumni can play a role in providing educational software on a major scale, refurbishing of Labs, maintenance of the College site in a way that gives regular informational updates from which parents and students can benefit etc. This means that the close working relationship between the BOG and PTA, should be strengthened. The paper by Thomas Singh posted in Matters Educational, makes mention of the “tipping point” that is influenced by research on the relationship between culture and economic success, with emphasis on the extent to which school culture matters. We do acknowledge that professional development opportunities are now made available by the Ministry of Education, something that is very much welcomed.

I join in thanking the past Head teachers for their signal contributions as well as wishing the newly appointed HM the very best in her endeavours. My personal experience as HM has convinced me that team work is the only way to go, and my success was largely the result of finding others who shared my vision.

The Principle of Subsidiarity – *a principle of social doctrine that all social bodies exist for the sake of the individual so that what individuals are able to do, society should not take over, and what small societies can do, larger societies should not take over* – can be very difficult to implement but nevertheless should be the ultimate goal.

The various overseas Chapters in Antigua, Barbados, NY, Toronto and UK as well as individual Alumni worldwide, have worked and continue to work towards promoting our alma mater in these difficult times. Their continued support is critical to the success of Saints.

## **7. RELOCATION TO BARBADOS 1980 TO PRESENT TIME.**

Relocation to Barbados but still involved in promoting the welfare of my alma mater. In 1995, I assisted in the setting up of the SSC Assn. Barbados Chapter, and held many key roles in the Exec. Co.; until I stepped down from active engagement in November 2012. However, from time to time, I am still invited to meetings as a guest.

Understanding my history and background is the key to understanding my personal views on the subject of education in general and the future of education at Saints in particular.



Ken Khan 2012

Now, at the age of 76, I cannot move around as before and leave it to the younger generation to continue transforming our Alma Mater, while remaining cognizant of our origins as a Jesuit College since 1866 and the turbulent history of Guyana until the present time.

The Jesuit influence has continued despite the removal of the Jesuits in 1980, since the tradition persists and former Alumni worldwide are still active in promoting the welfare of their Alma Mater.

I still hope I can contribute in some small way to the efforts of the SSCA and the BOG, headed by Nigel Hughes and Chris Fernandes respectively, and their excellent team of workers.

*Kenneth Khan, class of 1955, SSC 1964-66, 1970-71, 1972-1980*  
[Barbados Chapter](#)

May , 2013

**L.D.S.**