



# The Elephant

No. 299

WELHAM BOYS' SCHOOL

25th March, 2004

## FOUNDER'S DAY SUPPLEMENT

(We sincerely apologize for the delay in bringing out the Supplement issue due to technical reasons)

- Ed

### Excerpts from an Interview with the Chief Guest, Mr. Salman Khurshid: Founders Day 2003

Q. In school today, was your experience good?

A. There was so much to see this morning, I was quite fascinated. I wish I had more time. I had just two hours.

Q. What did you enjoy the most?

A. I think your science models were very interesting. The science park was good, very interesting and educative, shows a lot of thought about science models. Everything else was good as well, like the history and geography projects. I saw the junior school projects on the states of India, very enriching and delightful. I think the science is very strong here.

Q. Sir, why don't you tell us something about yourself.

A. I wasn't a student of Welham to begin with which is a pity. I went to a City Public School, a large one, D.P.S. It's a different ambience; it is not as intimate as you all are. In day schools you have half a day at home, half a day at school. I went on to study at St. Stephen's College with English Honors and played a little bit of cricket. I was an enthusiastic cricket player, did a little bit of theatre, a little bit of debating, some studying of Eng. Literature. Then I went on to Oxford in 1974 to do Law, dropped my cricket after a couple of years, dropped theatre, and took to a little bit of writing and some serious study of law. Then I went

on to teach law at Oxford for 3 years at Trinity College. After 3 years I came back to India and worked for the government in the Prime minister's office and then went into legal practice, which I did for over a decade before I joined politics to try to battle for justice.

Q. What is your slot in the D.P.S society?

A. I was a D.P.S student as I told you; I've been President of the Old Boys' D.P.S society. Then I became a member of the D.P.S society that controls all the schools. I am now the President. As a President my job is not an executive job, because there is a full-time executive chair-person but my job is kind of honorary, guiding, looking behind the horizon to things that we can do, giving people ideas, so on and of course presiding over D.P.S meetings. I do spend a lot of time with students and teachers of D.P.S and go to a lot of their functions. Of course cultural, sports, academic any occasion they want me to come. But since it's such a large family now, 120 schools that's a lot of work to do even if you visit for a short time.

Q. Today, education and studies are completely two different words, how would you differentiate between the two?

A. Ah! That is a very difficult question because we tried to tackle this question in D.P.S., we find in D.P.S. there is a major thrust towards studies,

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towards excelling, getting good marks, because it's a very competitive world and marks decide everything. That's what parents demand, and a good school today is that which gives you high percentage. I think this cycle will turn, I think this immediate middle class rush towards marks will finally end and people will look for more than just marks and I think that's why some of the best schools (public) like yours which I call hill public schools will continue to be very connective institutions because they certainly have re-

tained their standards of producing rounded personalities rather than just producing people who do well in exams.

Q. They say that the future of the country lies in its classrooms. So what as a politician you do to improve the situation of education in India?

A. Classrooms without walls is my answer. Those who have been confined to classrooms must break the walls and break out, and those who have been denied the classrooms must be able to break the walls and get in.

## Chairman's Speech: Founders Day 2003

Good Evening,

Distinguished Chief Guest, Mr. Salman Khurshid, Chairman Emeritus, Mr. Gulab Ramchandani, Fellow Members of the Board, Honoured Guests, Parents, Faculty and Old Students of Welham Boys' School.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Mr. Salman Khurshid in our midst today. The Principal has already spoken at length about him, and we consider it an honour and privilege to have him with us on this Founder's Day. In a good School, such as ours, it is our declared endeavor to bring up future citizens who will excel in what ever profession they choose. Mr. Salman Khurshid, Sir, you are such one gentleman, for you have excelled as a person with strong values not only in your chosen profession as a lawyer, as a politician, but in fact even as an educationist as president of Delhi Public School Society. Therefore sir, you are an example for us and for what we stand. We are indeed very grateful that you have spared the time to grace this important function in the life of our school.

Sir, these are times of competition. Competition between countries, companies, economies and even Schools. There are many new schools. To merely survive is a poor target. We must excel and we must do that in Welham Boys'. This has always been an exemplary School, but it must do better. The threads of success must start from the top and run through the veins of the entire School community. Firstly, we must ensure a Board that is not only committed but also capable.

We are lucky enough to have on the Board Gen. Ranbir Bakshi, who excelled in the Army and won the Military Cross. He later represented India in swimming at three pre-Olympics meets, the West Asia, all India and the Asian, and won Gold Medals, years before partition. Gen. Bakshi is now 93 years old and was once asked as to why he did not use the services of a driver. His reply was, "My driver is too old." It is this spirit that all of us at Welham must imbibe. During this year we have added one other Board Member, Mr. Kamal Bhagat, an old Welhamite, who again excelled in his chosen career, also in education as well as in the Fine Arts. Another Old Student is Mr. Pushpender Maliah, who has many valuable years of experience on the Board. Earlier Dr. Anil Wilson, Principal, St. Stephen's College, had joined us. I ask you, "What do Students do after school?" Surely, most go to University. It is therefore a privilege to have Dr. Wilson to guide us on important issues that we cannot be complacent about. If I may say so the future of this of this school lies in the Strategic Planning that we do today. A strong and varied Board is a step in that direction, and we will do our utmost to take our School forward.

I see five important parts that form the School Community. Apart from the Board, the second is the Faculty. Recently we undertook an elaborate exercise that resulted in inviting Mr. Dev Lahiri to head this Institution. I am pleased to say that he is another person who leaves no stone unturned in his efforts to excel. He is a Rhodes Scholar and comes with the experience of having headed other

schools in the past. We also have a new Vice Principal, Mr. Prabir Basu another Old Welhamite, who brings valuable experience from the corporate world which is so necessary towards the support that a Principal needs. We are, of course, making additional efforts to strengthen the Faculty at other levels.

The third component is the body of Parents without whose appreciation and support we cannot succeed. We have one parent on the Board and will in future continue this interaction.

The fourth is the most important component, the corpus of Students, which is the very purpose of all our efforts. They must accrue great potential and it will thus be the School's endeavor to develop them in mind, body and spirit so as to fill the great vacuum that this country has in its near future requirement for leadership. The fifth component is gradually growing in strength. The Old Boys are looked upon by every institution, not only for support but also for helping to develop a bond that gives any wonderful institution the positive reputation that it deserves.

Sir, these are exciting times indeed for Welham Boys'. It is my proud privilege to be a part of a Board that is prepared to take head-on, the challenges there are, whether it be the infrastructure, academic achievements, staff development or redefining the vision of a school that is to be, two decades from now. A beginning has indeed been made. Additions and improvements have been made to the infrastructure, School discipline has been greatly streamlined, and teaching standards are being made to make Welham a genuinely "Student-involved School." The most important thing, however is that all around there is a tremendous urge to "Fast-Forward" the development process. This Board has reduced red-tape so as to empower the School administration to take vital and crucial decisions without having to negotiate a sea of bureaucracy. The Board has taken a proactive approach towards its responsibilities – whether it be in the area of financial planning, planning for infrastructure, or setting long term goals and objectives. And yet it has carefully respected the 'Lakshman-rekha' that divides being "proactive" from being "interfering."

Let me now give you a few insights into the direction in which this School is going. Let us

call it the "Great Welham Initiative". It should be understood that strong characteristics are developed through strict personal discipline. We should all understand that "discipline" by itself is not "punishment." Today there are many powerful distractions that attempt to lure young people away from their intended objectives. We are working with the Principal, and his team, to ensure that the original values and traditions of a Public school remain intact even though education is liberalized to stay in tune with the twenty first century.

There are no secrets to our strategy, which is, to seek all possible alternatives that can exploit the available resources and infrastructure. The Board has opened avenues of direct communication with the Staff so as to be transparent in our approach. We seek a cheerful environment that nurtures team spirit; and an environment that blends Indian culture and heritage with modern concepts of education. We must do all this so that finally we inculcate in our students high self-reliance and self-esteem.

On this day, when we remember our Founder, may I assure you that at this School we have set out anew to realize her objectives with determination and resolve. I reiterate that with necessary change, certainty of discipline, kindling of curiosity, awareness of the outdoors, and teaching- not merely of subjects – but of people, we will go from "Strength to Strength". While concluding on behalf of the Board, I commend the positive inputs of the new Principal and his team. On my own behalf, I am grateful to Mr. Nasser Munjee and Mr. Mahendra Shrestha for having come so far from as far as Mumbai and Kathmandu. I thank the School Captain for having invited me, as an Old Boy, to come to this Founder's Day. His invitation to me is particularly special as this is the first time that a former student of Welham, from the time of Miss Oliphant, has the privilege of addressing this august gathering. I also thank all members of the Board, The Principal, Faculty and all others who have enabled me in my responsibilities to this school.

Now I no longer stand between you and our eminent Chief Guest, Mr. Salman Khurshid.

Thank you.

- Mr. Darshan Singh  
(Chairman, Board of Governors)

# Interview with Mr. Darshan Singh, Chairman of Board of Governors: Founders Day 2003

Q. - Sir, being a Welhamite, could you give us an insight into your life as a Welhamite and also tell us how does the Welham of the past differ from the present?

A. - Well, as an insight into Welham, if you are asking about the time when I was in Welham, I can tell you I was most disappointed when my parents left me here and went away. I was 7 years old and I saw this car disappearing and I couldn't believe that my parents would just leave me and go away. But after that I adjusted and I enjoyed myself. I remember my days at Welham with great fondness. After that it helped me in life. I think Welham has taught each child to stand on his own feet.

Q. - And Sir, how does the past differ from the present?

A. - In the past, of course, the most important difference was that the school was a preparatory school. It didn't take children up to the 12<sup>th</sup>, only up to the age of 11 and now it goes up to class 12<sup>th</sup>. I think that would be the single, most important difference.

K.M. - Sir, after your school, what did you do?

D.S. - I did my Engineering in Pillani and then I got into a business. We are now doing R and D activities. We do geographical work for organizations like the ONGC and things like that.

Q. - Sir, very few of us get this opportunity to do something for the school. And you being the Chairman of the Board, you can directly influence the way school is run. How does it feel?

A. - Well, I think it gives me great me a chance to do something for the school in which I studied. I always feel that since we get so much from society, there is a time when you have to give something back to the society and this is my chance.

Q. - Sir, could you please tell us what kind of a reputation we carry outside?

A. - I think all schools in India, especially boarding schools have a problem of discipline and all schools have run into difficulties, not just Welham. But I feel that with the new team that we have in Welham, - if

I can, I would like to call it a new Dream Team, - I think we will be able to get Welham far ahead of the others. There is lots of competition now between schools but we are going to face it and we are going to do well.

Q. - Sir, frankly speaking, nobody actually wants his school to carry a bad name. We as Welhamites, are trying our best to improve our image, but maybe somewhere down the line we are going wrong. What can we actually do to prove that we are not so bad? When we walk around in town, people look at us and say, "Oh! Here are the Welhamites!" What can we do to get back our reputation?

A. - I wouldn't agree with that. I repeat that this is a good school, it always has been a good school and I said earlier we are going to make it a better school. But to answer your question more appropriately, I think what all of us have to do, is to do what we think is right. In other words we all have a sense of basic values and we have to use our own judgment to do the right thing. Not only what we are told but even without necessarily being told what to do.

Q. - Sir, what is your vision of Welham in the near future?

A. - Well, certainly to keep it among the top 5 schools in this country.

Q. - And what are your plans for the school to achieve this vision?

A. - To exploit all available infrastructure, to plan for the future in all key areas like educational standards and morale. I think it's also important to have a strong Old Boys' Society, so we must win goodwill which we will have to exploit. There is more to education such as extra curricular sports, team spirit, outdoor activities and so on.

Q. - Sir, small things like beds and study tables of houses are in bad shape. Our beds don't allow us to sleep comfortably and study tables at times do not exist. If we have to actually study in this school, basic infrastructure is required. Looking at all these small issues what should be the immediate steps that should be taken?

A. – We are going to spend a certain amount of funds on the improvement of existing hostel facilities. This is going to start immediately. There will be better beds and other things that you referred to. Toilets will be improved but more important than that we are going to put up a new house, a new building which will house students, easing the present confusion.

Q. – Every man has a way of running the show, with a new Principal and a vice-principal to lead the institution from strength to strength; do you already see any changes in school?

A. – Yes, I certainly see changes in school. The school is looking different. I think if you ask anyone

in DehraDun, they will say that there is a change. People are already appreciating the fact that this school is where it should be.

Q. – Where do you see Welham 2 years, 5 years and 10 years from now?

A. – In 2 years I think we will have consolidated all the changes that we are attempting. In 5 years we should certainly be ahead of where we are. In other words, in that top 5 schools which I am referring to. Maybe we are in the top 10, and I would like to bring it to the top 5. And in the long term I see Welham a name to reckon with and we are going to give all the other schools a run for their money.

Q. – Thank you so much, Sir.

A. – Thank you.

## Principal's Speech: Founders Day 2003

Our Chief Guest on the occasion of the School's 67th Founders Day celebrations, Members of the Board, distinguished guests, and assembled members of the Welham community, past and present.

We are privileged to have with us today Mr. Salman Khurshid, a distinguished educationist and a Member of Parliament. Mr. Khurshid, as we all know, has several "avatars" but when I asked him in which avatar he wished to visit the school, his prompt reply was 'as someone associated with education'!

However, that will not stop me this evening from speaking briefly about his other achievements, for two reasons. First of all, he exemplifies best what I have been drumming into the students almost every single day – that the world belongs to multi-dimensional people – to those who have a variety of interests and achievements in their travel bags – and not to boring one-dimensional people who, having gone through the syndrome of school, college and tuitions – then go through life envying those who dare to be different. This is a theme that I shall return to later.

And the second reason for my wanting to dwell on Mr. Khurshid's achievements is the vicarious pleasure one gets from being associated with somebody famous. Mr. Khurshid and I were in college together both at Delhi and the UK, and I guess it is only human for me to want to bask in a dose of

reflected glory.

Apart from being an eminent MP and President of a movement called the DPS, Mr. Khurshid has one of the finest legal brains in the country. He studied law at Oxford (at a time when I was busy studying nothing at all) and was a lecturer in Law at Trinity College, Oxford. He has made regular appearances in the Supreme Court of India. But then he dared to do what most of us scoff at but actually don't do because we don't have the guts to – he became a politician! I remember being with several friends all of us who were at college together, and somebody remarked that 'if people like Salman become involved in politics, there is some hope for this nation yet'. Those of us who follow current events will know that this is one politician who has set the highest standards of dignity, integrity and decorum in the execution of public duties. He also writes extensively and has at least 3 books and contributions to various journals to his credit. Of interest to the younger section of this gathering will be the fact that Mr. Khurshid is a keen lover of sport, particularly cricket and squash, as also an avid wildlife and adventure enthusiast! He also dabbles in theatre, which actually all of us did in college because it gave us a chance to meet the fairer sex from Miranda House, though I dare say he had considerably greater success than me on both fronts i.e. the theatre and the ladies! I just discovered he too, like me, is passionately fond of dogs though I don't think either of us has gone to the dogs. In short, he is a man with a

huge range of interests and successes and we are particularly fortunate to have him with us. Thank you Salman, for finding the time to be here today.

It is customary for a Principal to present the annual report on this occasion. But I will not do so for the simple reason that I was not here last year. A comprehensive report is being circulated for your benefit. What I would like to do here is to first of all place on record my gratitude to the Board for having reposed its faith in me, to my predecessor Mr. Bakshi for having so patiently introduced me to the school, to Mrs. Jyotsna Brar for being such a warm and welcoming neighbour, to my colleagues for having been such a wonderful support system, to the parents who have entrusted their children to our care, and last but not the least to the students who have given me so many sleepless nights!

Equally importantly, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you my perspective of some of the challenges that face the old school and what could be some of our responses to these challenges.

The biggest challenge that lies before Welham is that it must carve out an identity for itself. Welham was started as a preparatory school to equip boys to go on to bigger institutions. Whilst Welham has grown physically – in as much it now has the buildings, classrooms, hostels up to XII, the mind-set is still trapped in the shadows of its more well known fellow schools. Welham must break free and carve out its own niche, its own brand image as it were, in the marketplace.

And what would be the components of this brand identity. “Excellence” is a word that is thrown around all too easily. Every school prospectus swears by it. But what is excellence? To me excellence is more an attitude, a state of mind, as it were. It is first of all, enjoying the work entrusted to you. If all of us – students and teachers, were to genuinely enjoy what we have been asked to do, the chances are quite good that we would do the job well. Excellence lies in doing the simple things right – being on time, being courteous and considerate, keeping our environs clean. . . . If all of us believe in and practice the maxim that ‘if a job is worth doing, it is worth doing well or not at all’, excellence will follow.

Most schools today are concerned with producing what they call ‘the global citizen’ – which is indeed what Welham should be concerned about

too. But who or what is the global citizen? The most recent fad amongst schools today is to call themselves ‘International’. At one time the fad was to call themselves ‘Saint this’ or ‘Saint that’. Then the fad was to call oneself a ‘Public school’. In Dehra Dun everyone linked their name to the Doon school and a whole crop of schools calling themselves ‘Doon this or Doon that’ cropped up. You proudly said that ‘Mera beta to Doon me parrtha hai’ regardless of the fact that the school was probably in Chakkuwallah! Today the fad is ‘International’ – and on the way from Delhi to Dehra Dun you may have seen about a dozen of these International schools ostensibly killing themselves to produce the citizens of the new world order.

But what is this new citizen all about? In our attempt to produce this so-called new global citizen are we going to throw all traditional techniques and philosophies out of the window? To me that would spell certain disaster. Respect for our elders, for the values that bind families together – all these are indispensable to our growth as good human beings – as indeed are the three traditional skills of reading, writing and Arithmetic.

But where things have changed is that the teacher is no longer the fountainhead of all knowledge. We all know about the knowledge revolution that has taken place and is indeed taking place. The teacher’s role today has changed radically to that of a guide – a guide who points his pupils in the right direction and empowers them to seek the answers for themselves. This calls for a drastic re-evaluation of our classroom mores and is a challenge that Welham and indeed every modern progressive school face.

With what again, in the jargon, is the growth of the ‘global village’, educators today have to look closely at producing citizens who are sensitive to the cultural mores, traditions, values and needs of other communities. This is where subjects such as History, Geography, Sociology that so far have got the short end of the stick, will become increasingly important. In our obsession with the IITs, Combined Entrances Tests and what-have-you, let us not forget that a society without its Tagores, Hussains and Tendulkars would be a poor society indeed. The current obsession with Accounts and Commerce makes me fear that we will produce a generation of bookkeepers – quite unfit to take on leadership roles

in a changing world order which requires sensitivity, insight and appreciation of a world without frontiers.

The new generation leader will have to be a team player. The day of Dhyan Chand's single-handed wizardry is over. Unfortunately, our whole system militates against producing teamplayers. At a very early stage we learn to distinguish between castes and community. "Woh toh Madrasi hai", or "Bangali hai" are fundamental axioms. We then go to school where 99% or bust no matter what the cost, becomes the motto. Is it any wonder then that we have the phenomenon of 'mass-cheating'? We then do several exams, the results of which are faithfully reproduced in various newspapers, with a poor bespectacled specimen being trotted out as the 'topper'. This is something that all of us who are involved with education and indeed children will have to look at closely. The new order will be led by genuine team players – not self-centered, egoistic, spoon-fed authoritarian individuals.

And last but not the least we have to strive to instill in our children the quality of compassion – of empathy for the lesser privileged. It amazes me when people say 'God helps those who help themselves'. In my little understanding of the scriptures, God is supposed to help those who can't help themselves! Yet we go on teaching our children to win at any cost, to make individual success the final altar. Look how we have changed our usage of language. We say "so and so is doing well." What we actually mean is that he/she is making good money. We never said that Mother Teresa was doing well! It's a pity that today we have to teach value education through textbooks. All of us adults should be exemplifying the values that go towards making a wholesome, clean, healthy and caring society.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to end my homily here. I have a feeling in my bones that Welham is set on an exciting course. May I ask you all to join hands in creating what I would like to call "A brave new Welham".

## Principal's Interview: Founders Day 2003

Q. You were a Rhodes Scholar, the principal of a prestigious institution and have numerous achievements to your name. Why did you decide to join WBS?

A. To begin with, I was an ordinary teacher for almost ten years before I became a school head. Prior to that I worked in the corporate sector for a while but soon got tired of that life style. I had always wanted to be a teacher from the time I was in college and used to take the college athletics team up to Sanawar for high altitude training. There I met Mr. S.R. Das the then head of the Lawrence School. As a teacher, he made me a great impact on my life and inspired me to follow in his foot steps. I must confess that I was too scared to 'take the plunge' in my earlier years - hence the decision to work in the corporate sector. However, after a few years I realized that I was fooling myself and that I should do what my heart tells me to do - i.e. teach. So I joined the Doon School as Assistant Master, whilst my wife taught at Cambrian Hall. From the Doon School I went on to head the Lawrence School at Lovedale for nine years. Thereafter I returned to Dehradun to help set up the Selaqui School. Various circumstances

forced me to shift to Kolkata where I was heading a prestigious day school called 'The Heritage'. However, both my wife and I missed the ethos of a boarding school intensely. We missed having children around us, as the day school children would go home in the afternoon. So when Welham advertised, we jumped at the opportunity. The rest is history.

Q. In all the days that you've stayed here at Welham, what has your experience been?

A. My experience on the whole, here has been pleasant. Very few schools have this kind of potential that I experienced here. We have all the facilities here but the school has a couple of problems. I feel that this school should not be a clone of another school. I want that this school should create a niche for itself in the market. The school should have its own, original image in the public's eye. To create this image this school should have a more intellectual environment. Students here should give more emphasis on their studies, right from the junior school. There should be a more serious academic culture. Once this happens everything will fall into place. The school also needs to undergo quick infrastructural improvements and lot of capital in-



vestment .

Q. As a House Master at The Doon School, what was your impression of Welham back then and now that you're here how much difference is there in what you heard and what there is?

A. When I was a master at the Doon School I had never really heard much about Welham. I only met the teams against whom we played, and the impression was always very favourable. I lost touch with Welham after I went to the South, but what little I heard there was not entirely flattering. However, I like to make up my own mind about things and not depend on hearsay. I cannot say that all is fine at Welham, but then which institution can say that it does not have problems? We need not be too bothered about what others say. We need to set our own benchmarks.

Q. The first day that you walked into Welham, what was the vision you generated for it?

A. The first day that I walked into Welham, I thought to myself that this was a school without any equal. The amount of potential that I saw in it just walking around the campus was immense and that with a little bit of work Welham would be second to none. The campus is beautiful and the people are great.

Q. How are you going to turn these visions into reality?

A. Well the first front will be the discipline at every level. From the students to the staff to the support staff, all need to be tightened. The systems are all laid down if you read the rules; they just need to be enforced. Punctuality needs to be improved. The boys are late for class all the time and I think that is inexcusable. I find people entering and exiting the dining hall as when they feel like which needs to be stopped. The dress code, I find in many cases is not observed. There are unofficial amendments to various things in the school which over time have simply been accepted as normal.

On the second front the academic base needs to be strengthened. I feel that we are not offering enough

options to the students. Accounts and commerce are very mechanical subjects and don't really prove an intellectual challenge to the students. Without great intellectual challenges the expectations of the students are very low which should not happen. Humanities should be introduced and maybe with a little more work even the IB. Most students don't really enjoy what they study and if they don't enjoy what they study, then they will never be productive. By enjoying studying they will set higher standards for themselves and strive to meet them. We are planning to introduce something called multiple intelligence testing where we test the intelligence of each child in order to get to know his capabilities better. This testing is likely to start in class 8. This will then help us to know the child better and then help and make appropriate choices of subjects later along with the help of the teachers and the parents. The Indian boards unfortunately have not matured and are more quantity based rather than quality based.

Q. Now that you've been here at Welham, for over a month, what do you think we are all about?

A. The basic ethos does not need to be changed. The pride that a Welhamite takes in being a Welhamite is immense and I am very happy to see that. We however need to be able to demonstrate that pride and translate that pride into actions. I went to a school run by the Ramakrishna Mission where the students do everything. The students get up in the morning and instead of P.T. they clean up the entire campus. They divide their duties and do everything from cleaning the toilets to the classrooms. The best thing is that they are proud of it. There should be no compromises on high standards.

Q. To sum up, in short where would you see Welham in two years, five years or ten years from now?

A. In 2 years I see the school having taken a huge step forward. In 5 years I see the school calling itself the best. However 10 years is too far off for me to say anything.

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