



ANDERSON JUNIOR COLLEGE

JC 2 Preliminary Examination 2014

GENERAL PAPER

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PAPER 2

1 September 2014

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Sushant Stepheson writes about Change.

- 1 The saying 'Change is the only constant' may have become a tired platitude but there is no doubt that we see change as something that will and must happen. Countless motivational books and speakers tell us to embrace change and even encourage us to actively make changes in our lives, extolling the one dimensional proposition that all change, no matter for what purpose it is made, has its virtue. Contrary to the simplistic assertion of motivational books and speakers, change is multi-dimensional: it can sometimes be wonderful, yet sometimes troubling. 5
- 2 One change in individuals that is troubling to many is the decline in character of young people. It is true – and must be conceded – that in many ways our lives and our world, and even ourselves, are very different from our forefathers. Still, from one generation to the next, many perennially lament that the young – especially teenagers – are ignorant, ungrateful and self-obsessed. They lament that young people today do not understand the struggles of people in the past, that they take for granted the privileged life many of them have, and that they are preoccupied with their own lives. More controversially, these young people are perceived to claim entitlement to all the desirable things in life without having to do anything to earn them. 10
- 3 This change in young people is projected in so many observable ways. There is a growing lack of deference to legitimate authority: disobeying parents, defying teachers, and being unwilling to follow organisational rules. There is also a worrying loss of respect for the elderly: the experience and wise counsel of grandparents are ignored, and the ideas of any older person are regarded as belonging to the Stone Age or even further back. This unwillingness to respect those in authority stems from today's youth granting themselves superiority in intelligence and experience, and the right to be arrogant and ill-mannered. Their sense of 'superiority' may enable them to achieve many things the previous generations could not but will not prepare them for the monumental challenges of the future. 20
- 4 This stereotyping of all young people today as arrogant, however, is wildly off the mark. Not all the changes observed in today's young people are worrisome; they can be encouraging too. More young people – perhaps the overwhelming majority – have the privilege to receive education and have parents who care for their well-being. Through their education and upbringing, these young people understand that there are many unfortunate people who, through no fault of their own, do not enjoy the material, emotional and psychological benefits that the former have by virtue of their birth and families. A good number of these young people are inspired with a passion to do what they can, locally or internationally, to achieve a world where there is a fairer distribution of the good things the world has to offer. They are volunteering their time and money, whether on their own or through joining humanitarian groups: raising funds for those who are in dire need, working in old age homes, and donating what little money many of them have to sponsor children to get an education. These are not selfish, self-obsessed brats. In fact, far from being self-absorbed, young people today are fighting for change for the better, just like their forefathers did. The circumstances of the time compelled their forefathers to fight to make the world a better place for their children and families. The circumstances today allow young people the opportunity to try to make the world a better place for everyone. 35
- 5 The young are hardly the only ones who have changed or are affected by change. In recent memory, myriad changes, unforeseen at least by us ordinary folk, have already changed the world as we knew it, in the process revealing much about 40

- ourselves and our societies. Many countries are grappling with the problems of ageing populations, at the heart of which are people's changing attitudes towards having children. No longer are there the large families of the past. People have become so engrossed in the enjoyment of their own lives that having children has become a burden. Or, for many, it is simply this: work is stressful and consumes so much time; raising children is expensive, let's have one or two, or none at all. In commerce and the professions, drastic change has taken place as well. For example, not so long ago, film development was a one-week affair involving a trip to a shop, wait time, and a return trip for collection. Now, we have the ubiquitous digital camera that does it all for us. This is but one example of many where traditionally accepted commercial enterprises have been driven to the verge of obsolescence by technology. Professions also have been diminished by the changing technology. The digital camera placed in the hands of an amateur turns him into another Annie Leibovitz or Steve McCurry overnight. Photography is not the only profession under threat; online banking is slowly replacing the bank officer and surveillance technology is resulting in a declining demand for security officers. In the field of popular entertainment, television was flooded with films and a gamut of variety shows. This entertainment has now morphed into a deluge of reality shows, heralding a drastic change in social attitudes. In the bygone days of television, we valued the entertainers' talent and performance. The lives they lived were relatively private. Today, reality show participants are prepared to reveal intimate details of their lives and show the pettiness and nastiness of their character by behaving diabolically. Any real talent becomes secondary, and of course the more disturbing aspect of this trend is that audiences love it. Whether we care to admit it or not, because of reality TV shows, the voyeur in us has been released and perhaps even become respectable. Such unforeseen changes will most likely be the prevailing trend of the future.
- 6 As to the future, whatever the changes may be, they will continue to be both challenging and promising. To manage these changes, coming generations will have to be flexible, innovative and committed. Already, ironically, preparations are being made for the unknowns of the future. Reforms in education give students the confidence to be independent thinkers and masters of research. Political changes enhance democracy and bring about inclusiveness so that many voices can contribute to the policies that will effectively integrate these changes into the existing social fabric. To add to that note of optimism, we can look at the progress we have already made. For example, AIDS – once falsely perceived as highly contagious and all those infected were judged as immoral, hence its sufferers stigmatised and ostracised – is now much better understood. The change has been in public education about the nature of AIDS and the awareness that these people are suffering essentially from a disease, and not necessarily some moral transgression. The human race instinctively rises to the challenge of change and finds ways to deal with it.
- 7 Moving forward, the human race must maintain this wisdom in responding to change. To do so successfully, we will have to reaffirm the values and principles that have served as the bedrock of humane societies that work for the good of all their members. Without commitment, integrity and concern for others, we cannot create the better society that we want for all. History is on our side. History has shown consistently that change has only led to advancement for humanity. This advancement, which stems from Man's inimitable adaptation to such constant change, has only been made possible through the consistent application of the values and principles that remain so important to us.