

# The Swaminarayan

**EDUCATION IS THAT WHICH LIBERATES**

**Dear Parents, Guardians, Pupils and Friends,**

**Theme of the Week: Diwali**

**Car Park on Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> and Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

The main school car park will be used for setting up marquees on Thursday and Friday next week. Parents are reminded of the following arrangements for dropping pupils off:

1. On Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> morning: Please drop pupils off in the main school car park but pick them up from the Tennis court car park. Only the gate next to the Science Block will be open. Parents are requested to use the footpath.
2. Please use the Tennis Court car park for dropping and picking pupils up. Once again use the gate next to the Science Block.
3. Please use the main school car park from Monday to Wednesday as present.

**Half Term**

The school will be closed for two weeks during the Diwali half term break from Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Annakut day is on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017. We hope to see many of you in the marquee which will be set up in the school car park this year. Pupils and staff return to school on Monday, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

**School Event at Mandir**

It was really nice to see so many parents at the Friday TSS day at the Mandir. These are rare days which leave lasting memories in the hearts and minds of everyone who was there. Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj was clearly very pleased with everything he saw during the evening. TSS is deeply engraved in his heart because it is the vision of Param Pujya Yogiji Maharaj, who initiated him as a Sadhu and was founded by Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The love for the children was obvious to see. We will certainly try and get a video of the evening for everyone after the Diwali Festival.

**Assembly with Param Pujya Mahant Swami: Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2017**

We locked the school on Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September at 10.30am and went to the Mandir to receive the blessings of Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj in an exclusive assembly with him. After the Sanskrit prayers and He Paramaveshwar, various male staff members from different departments garlanded Swami after which he spoke about the value of hard work, diligence, as he said, its importance in achieving exceptional academic standards in all the subjects. While he appreciated intelligence, he said academic excellence predominantly – 99%, depended on diligence. His message fits in well with the school's belief that all students can achieve high standards if they strive hard. After his blessings Swami met all the staff and students individually. Everyone was issued with Prasad and a rosary. I want to thank Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj for spending more than an hour with everyone in the school. It is clear to me that TSS is in his heart like Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

## What Does Diwali mean to me?

What does Diwali mean to me? The answer you'll probably expect from a teenage girl in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is 'nothing'. And, yes, you'd be right. Diwali means nothing to me. But the question is should it have to?

Let me explain. My name is Ria Popat and I am currently in Upper 6 of the Swaminarayan School. I am writing this article to remind the young people of our generation that Diwali is our culture, a significant stepping stone in our religious upbringing to enlightenment. I say Diwali means nothing to me because it *shouldn't have to*. Diwali is just a part of my life. Celebrating Diwali is my duty as a Hindu and I think this is often forgotten.

As a child brought up in a Hindu family, Diwali has always meant decorating the house with rangolis and divas or making mithai and nasto in the kitchen! The significance of this day is religious for many, but in my eyes it is much more. Diwali not only combines the ideologies of Hinduism, such as the victory of good over evil, it is opportunity for us to represent our religion and culture. Today, Indians comprise about 1.4 million people in the UK, making us the single largest visible ethnic minority population in the country. We count. We're important. Diwali allows us to unite as one and celebrate the festival triumphantly. Personally, this brings me a sense of belonging to our community. Moreover, it allows other cultures to witness, take notice of and participate in our traditions. Diwali offers something for all, regardless of colour, age, gender, race or religion.

Another aspect of Diwali I would like to touch on is fun. Diwali can be a stressful few days, however, it is a time of celebration. In the hustle of finding the best spot in Ikea car park to see the fireworks, and waking up at unreasonable hours to put in a saree, we often forget what really matters. Let's embrace the fun factor of our festivals. Maybe this year eat one more samosa? Maybe this year light one more sparkle? Maybe this year do something different. Live life on the edge. Go large. The festival of light consists of more than the temple and a few candles.

As I come to an end to this piece on Diwali, I would like to say one thing. Be proud of who you are. Be proud to show others who you are. Appreciate those around you and look forward to new beginnings. Wishing every one of you – especially those of you who've had the patience to bear with me to the end of this article - a Very Happy Diwali.



## **What does Diwali means to me? Ria Mehta**

When I think about Diwali I go back to senior one and two at the Swaminarayan School when we would have to put on the Ramayana play for the rest of the school. I still remember having to put baby powder in my hair to be Manthra, not my best hair day. Diwali is something that I always look forward to because it's the time of the year when I can see all of my family and catch up with them, it's when we can talk about what's happened in the past year and eat as much food as we can. We would make rangolis and I'd attempt to help my mum to cook. It's something we would spend weeks preparing and all be worth it because for once we'd spend some time together as a family instead of going to our rooms. To me, Diwali would be queuing in line at the Mandir in a questionable Indian dress, then waiting in the Gibbons to look at the fireworks. Even when it was cold and I wasn't exactly tall enough to see properly it was always worth it. Diwali is a time when we could all come together, regardless of who you are, to celebrate.

I've been brought up with Diwali being a main holiday for me and every year someone would always recite the Ramayana to us. We'd light divas and leave them outside our house hoping nothing catches on fire. The festival celebrates the triumph of good over evil and that no matter what the power of God will come through. We celebrate the return of Rama and Sita from exile, the welcoming of Lakshmi into our homes, and Lord Krishna's triumph. It's nice to celebrate Diwali knowing that there's such a rich history behind it and that there are so many stories to be told. It's also nice knowing that you don't have to worry about school - but that's irrelevant.

Diwali, to me, also represents the beginning of a new year. This New Year is started by welcoming Lakshmi to offer wealth and luck. Many people begin a new business year at Diwali which shows how significant it really is to people all around the world. It signifies the beginning of a new year and a new start. Even if you've had a not so good year you can always start again and try to make the next year better.

Although I would always wonder why my parents would make such a big effort to make Diwali a big thing, I look back on it now and I'm so grateful that they did. It means that when I have my own children, I'll want them to experience Diwali like I did and make sure that they understand how significant it is to so many people. Diwali means family and happiness to me which makes Diwali incredibly important. Not just for the presents, they're just an added plus.

Yours sincerely,

**Nilesh Manani**