

The Swaminarayan

EDUCATION IS THAT WHICH LIBERATES

Dear Parents, Guardians, Pupils and Friends,

Theme of the Week

The theme of next week is Democracy.

Fees and Deposits

Parents are advised that the fees should have been paid for their child for this term. Parents in Years 9 are reminded to meet their commitment for the third year as agreed with the Trustees.

Tennis Court Pedestrian Gate

Parents are advised that the Tennis Court Pedestrian Gate on the Canal will be locked at 8.30 am from Monday, 24th September 2018. Students arriving late should report directly to the Reception for registration.

Lower & Upper 6, Senior 5 Parents' Consultation Evening Thursday, 27th September 2018

The meeting with the parents and students will take place on Thursday, 27th September 2018 between 4.30-7.00pm in the Yogi Hall. It is also an opportunity at an early stage in A1/A2 and for Senior 5 a chance to discuss the results of the summer examinations and plan a way forward for the remaining GCSEs. This is a crucial beginning for the Lower and Upper 6 students so we have organised a very early meeting with the parents to ensure we are all ready to help the students to achieve their best start and grades. The UCAS application process for the Upper Six will be completed by Christmas for the Upper Six.

Photograph Day on Wednesday, 26th September 2018

This is a reminder for all pupils to come in their smartest winter uniforms for the day.

Key Elements of Democracy

It is often easy to forget the values and freedoms we enjoy by living in a country whose values are steeped in freedom and justice for all. It is easy to take it for granted as well and constantly needs renewed energy from the adults of tomorrow by engaging in the political system.

We can think of democracy as a system of government with four key elements:

1. A political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections.
2. The active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life.
3. Protection of the human rights of all citizens.
4. A rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

I want to talk about each of these four elements of what democracy is. Then I will talk about the obligations and requirements of citizens in a democracy.

Then I will conclude by talking about the obligations that we, the international community, have to the people of Iraq as you seek to build the first true democracy in the Arab world.

I. Democracy as a Political System of Competition for Power

Democracy is a means for the people to choose their leaders and to hold their leaders accountable for their policies and their conduct in office.

The people decide who will represent them in parliament, and who will head the government at the national and local levels. They do so by choosing between competing parties in regular, free and fair elections.

Government is based on the consent of the governed.

In a democracy, the people are sovereign—they are the highest form of political authority.

Power flows from the people to the leaders of government, who hold power only temporarily.

Laws and policies require majority support in parliament, but the rights of minorities are protected in various ways.

The people are free to criticize their elected leaders and representatives, and to observe how they conduct the business of government.

Elected representatives at the national and local levels should listen to the people and respond to their needs and suggestions.

Elections have to occur at regular intervals, as prescribed by law. Those in power cannot extend their terms in office without asking for the consent of the people again in an election.

For elections to be free and fair, they have to be administered by a neutral, fair, and professional body that treats all political parties and candidates equally.

All parties and candidates must have the right to campaign freely, to present their proposals to the voters both directly and through the mass media.

Voters must be able to vote in secret, free of intimidation and violence.

Independent observers must be able to observe the voting and the vote counting to ensure that the process is free of corruption, intimidation, and fraud.

There needs to be some impartial and independent tribunal to resolve any disputes about the election results.

This is why it takes a lot of time to organize a good, democratic election.

Any country can hold an election, but for an election to be free and fair requires a lot of organization, preparation, and training of political parties, electoral officials, and civil society organizations who monitor the process.

II. Participation: The Role of the Citizen in A Democracy

The key role of citizens in a democracy is to participate in public life.

Citizens have an obligation to become informed about public issues, to watch carefully how their political leaders and representatives use their powers, and to express their own opinions and interests.

Voting in elections is another important civic duty of all citizens.

But to vote wisely, each citizen should listen to the views of the different parties and candidates, and then make his or her own decision on whom to support.

Participation can also involve campaigning for a political party or candidate, standing as a candidate for political office, debating public issues, attending community meetings, petitioning the government, and even protesting.

A vital form of participation comes through active membership in independent, non-governmental organizations, what we call “civil society.”

These organizations represent a variety of interests and beliefs: farmers, workers, doctors, teachers, business owners, religious believers, women, students, human rights activists.

It is important that women participate fully both in politics and in civil society.

This requires efforts by civil society organizations to educate women about their democratic rights and responsibilities, improve their political skills, represent their common interests, and involve them in political life.

In a democracy, participation in civic groups should be voluntary. No one should be forced to join an organization against their will.

Political parties are vital organizations in a democracy, and democracy is stronger when citizens become active members of political parties.

However, no one should support a political party because he is pressured or threatened by others. In a democracy, citizens are free to choose which party to support.

Democracy depends on citizen participation in all these ways. But participation must be peaceful, respectful of the law, and tolerant of the different views of other groups and individuals.

I do hope after the discussions we will have during the democracy week, pupils at TSS will engage with the political arena within their areas, and also perhaps consider standing for election for the Youth Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Nilesh Manani