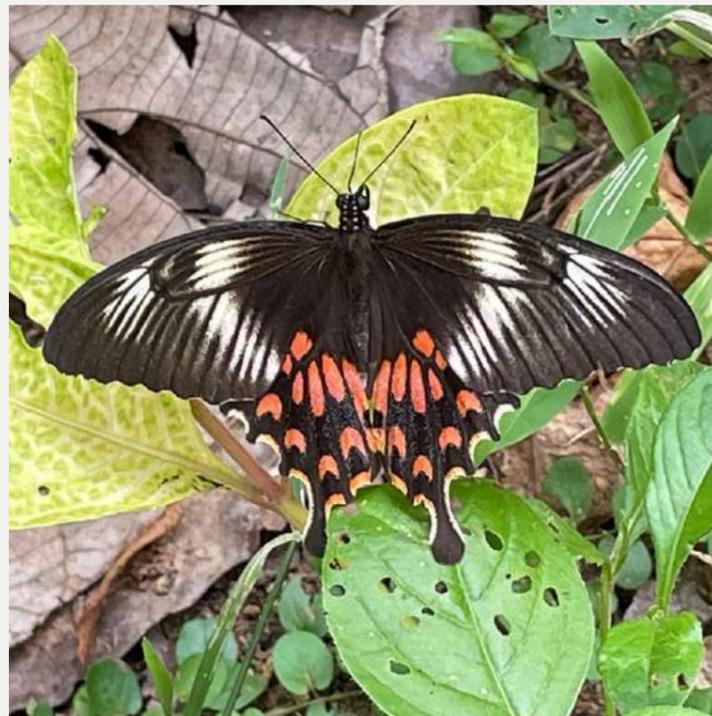




# the school - KFI Newsletter - 2022



# Editorial Note

Reopening- this is a term we are familiar with. Nevertheless, the word reopening touched us with different reminders this year. The school reopened after a break that was interspersed with online classes, lockdown. Coming together after two whole years was an important aspect of the first term.

We saw it in us finding multiple ways of connecting with the flora and fauna in our campus. We connected with friends, Akkas and Annas in our own ways and found the conversations as resplendent as the butterflies that fluttered from one corner to another. Flowers bloomed, Jamuns appeared mid-term and it appeared as though nature welcomed us back. All of us enjoyed its marvel. Some sat quietly and observed nature. Some wrote poetry. Some observed the ways leaves change colour. Some watched Jackie and Bruna frolic around.

We tried to integrate the aspect of coming together in the newsletter. After a brief hiatus, the newsletter hopes to reopen an avenue where all of us get a lens into the happenings of the school. The articles are written by students, Akkas and Annas alike. We, the team of editors, hope that this newsletter keeps you in touch with the happenings at the school. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all of the contributors who shared articles and photos of the various events that happened in the school.

(butterflies on the cover page: top row, left to right - african monarch, spotted grass yellow; tawny coster; common mormon

bottom row, left to right - common pierrot; common mormon; blue pansy; peacock pansy

on this page: top to bottom - common leopard; common jezebel; common crow; tawny coster)



The Coming Together and the Games Week were events that were much anticipated. The Coming Together, a special day, fell on Independence Day. The entire community came together to mark the spirit of togetherness. Everyone from students to staff to parents were enthusiastically present for the event. We dwelled on the notion of gathering as a community interested in and pursuing education. The Coming Together also marked the beginning of the Games Week.





*We had an entire week of games where every member of the school — students from LKG to Class 12, teaching staff, and non-teaching staff, all got to play. A teacher shares his thoughts on 'games in school' and his reflections on 'playing':*

"We moved away from having sports day for a single day. We have it for an entire week and if you notice, there's no purpose in that sense. The basic premise is that whoever is interested should be able to play. And there is no expectation and no outcome. There is no particular thing like you have formed teams or groups or you get some points or something. You're playing and going and again playing back. It's finished, that's it. There's nothing about it. It's just that at certain times you like to do something and the school is giving opportunity for it.

We try to bring in this aspect of what 'good play' is. Notice children, they want to play but they don't want to watch. The game challenges the player. Instead of indulging in challenges and reactions can you also watch? Watch the game. You also learn by watching. The idea is that you see and you respond in a constructive way – emotionally, intellectually, and socially. That is intangibly kept in the idea of how to be a good spectator. We don't say it. Over a period of time, people understand that in their blood and bones.

If there is a fluke shot, they understand. There is a collective sigh when a good move happens.

There should be an intention from our side, a curricular goal that we try to achieve. Not an outcome. Like in any other area, sports also can be ugly in the way it is played or the way you respond to it. But it has a beautiful aspect also. So we are trying to see this possibility in an aesthetic way. Even if you're doing a man-to-man defense, a very difficult defense, you don't tap the ball. You don't trap the ball. You don't grab the ball. But it's all allowed in basketball. Even in the most demanding game, even in the inter-school games, we don't do it. When we play matches outside also, we don't do it. So it's possible that 'good play' can happen in the most righteous way.

While playing, if you feel an emotion, you have to immediately act on it. Your action and emotion are one within.

We can be completely immersed in being very dynamic. That's the beauty of sports"





The All Parents Meeting was held on September 27th after two years with happy energy and affirmation of all that is good. The meeting looked briefly at the intent of our school, the school's approach to fees and finance, essential learning contexts at school outside of academic learning, and games and activities. It also focussed on the new emerging realities in the lives of the young.

The second part of the meeting revolved around the imperative for parents and the school to come together on issues such as

- leisure in learning and the need to face the pressures of high school with maturity
- ways of understanding the impact of the normalisation of gadget use on children's behaviour and mindscape
- possible increasing anxieties among young people post-Covid
- importance of understanding the relevance of personal safety and its reiteration for our children
- working with a nuanced understanding of the diversity around us in different learning contexts

**The School KFI enters its 50th year in September 2023!**

SEPTEMBER



All  
Parents  
Meeting



Classes 9 and 10 students got to spend a whole day at the school farm. Some of them have shared their experiences with us.



“ How do you choose the place for sowing? How do you actually sow? - were some of the questions that I got answers to on the trip”



“The farm trip was very fun. I became a farmer for a day”

“I look forward to visiting the farm again and I really want to go there very often. It will be fun to look at how the plants I had sowed grew.”



*These words by the school librarian will take us through the "Library Week" that was organized in school.*

"The Middle Schoolers had been told that they were going to have a "Library Week". There must have been some hurrahs and then there must have been some groans when the information must have been shared with them. Or maybe it is an idea, a figment of my imagination where I began conceiving the activities for Library Week.

The intention was to reestablish a connection with the much romanticised world of print on paper, the smell of old books, the yellow crackling pages, the dogeared favourite fantasy tomes, the magnificent illustrations from Quentin Blake to Tara Books and all that one associates with the marvel of spending an eternity among books. Like they say in Alice in Wonderland, "how long is forever, sometimes just a second"!

We knew we wanted our young minds to know this space where all time stops. A wholesome experience had to be curated. We structured the hours for the dedicated week in the scheme of the trinity of aesthetic experience, The Writer, The book, and The Reader. On Monday we introduced the scheme to the students and flagged off with an interaction with an in-house writer, a student from our senior school, who spoke to our young writers about the strategies she finds useful in building her stories and characters, how she manages her time and her approach to the humbling exercise of editing. The library was decked up with displays about writers responding to their social responsibility. There was a display of portraits, quotes, and illustrations from Salman Rushdie, Victor Hugo, Bertolt Brecht, and Lewis Carroll. To internalise the experience the students wrote original stories in the follow-up activity time.

In the second phase of activities on Wednesday, we started with a presentation on the history of book building and shared some interesting facts and anecdotes about how it all happened then and now.. Later in the day they had an interactive session with a guest speaker who made them privy to all that goes into making a book after the story has been written till it comes to the stands in the bookstores. To accompany the theme we set up a display of all the beautiful books we have in our library and the students got to finger the illustrations and read the retellings of some age-old classics! The students who now had their stories ready made book jackets complete with blurbs and biographical snippets to round off the experience.

The final theme was the reader. The library this time had a display about, "Don Quixote", the famous mad reader of all times emphasising the limitless possibilities of a mind that reads. It was going to be all about our young readers. The library had been arranged into discussion corners with stacks of their favourite books piled up to build the mood for "Book Gossip".





PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE ENNORE VISIT

*Two guest speakers visited the school and interacted with the senior school students. One of them is Nityanand Jayaram who is a writer and researcher who investigates and reports on corporate abuses of the environment and human rights. Following are the words of a class 11 student who attended the lecture and also went on the field trip.*

"Class 11 took a trip on the 3rd of September to Ennore, a neighbourhood in Chennai. In preparation for the trip, our host Nithyanand Anna spoke to us about the conditions of the fishing communities of "Kattu kuppam" and "Kattu palli Kuppam". We learnt about the challenging lives led by these people facing the consequences of so called development. The Ennore Nuclear Power Plant releases tons of fly ash into the air every day.. This settles in the nearby river, where hot sewage is also dumped effectively killing the fish and remaining life. The fishermen are out of jobs. Since there are multiple sides to a story, and we were introduced to only one, a couple of students were skeptical once the speech ended. They felt it was an obvious situation, where we were meant to denigrate the corporations behind the plant..

But upon reaching Ennore and seeing the reality with our own eyes, things were different. And some students mentioned that seeing it in real life, outside of textbooks was disturbing. The actual gravity of the situation could be felt only after reaching the site.

After interacting with the local communities the students had a lot of reflections and thoughts. One interaction, in particular, struck a chord with a lot of students. A student asked a fisherman why he didn't try looking for job opportunities elsewhere.. To this he responded, "why should I leave? This is my land, my home".

Many found the trip enlightening - it was something affecting many people outside of the tiny bubble we live in. Others found the trip disheartening. This may have been a trip for class II, but it was daily life for the communities.

Overall, the trip was educational and eye-opening. We came to the realisation that powerful people may not refer to only politicians but also to us. We hold power and it is up to us to use that power for good."

*The second guest speaker was Dr. A Srivathsan, an architectural scholar. He interacted with students and teachers on the theme 'affordable housing in Chennai'. He elaborately spoke about housing in Chennai - its dynamics and determinants. A class 12 student who attended the lecture spoke of how surprised he was at how the real estate prices have changed over the years in Chennai. He was also struck by how rent is determined based on size and of procedure for the sale of land. He felt it was an informative experience and was an important skill to learn which would help him in the future*

## Few questions to Class 12 students involved in terrace gardening and their response

*What was your goal when you started initially?*

We started off with wanting to get maximum yield for the school kitchen. We also planned to try out a drip irrigation system made from plastic water bottles. But for some reason we couldn't do it this time. We plan to do it next time around.



*So what were the challenges you had to face?*

The basic challenge was there are these six planters on the terrace of a two-storey building and we had to water them every day. We had to carry heavy water cans. One planter would take one can of water. And we had to do this in the extremely hot conditions in the afternoon after our exams were over. I think that was the biggest challenge that we had to face.

*Response of a teacher when asked about his views on these students engaging with the farm activity:*

Of course, it's good that students are involved. It's definitely good exposure for them. I would also like them to be involved in the general gardening activity on campus.

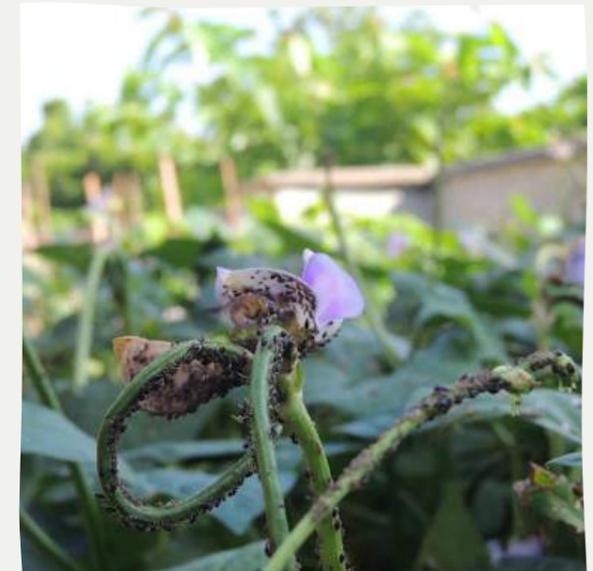
Every class, in fact, has a patch with plants and trees outside. I've even been wondering if the indoor plants can be kept and taken care of by the students.

I think nurturing does something to a human being. It gives them a sense of responsibility. I think plants give the opportunity for even the smallest of children to engage with the process of nurturing. I think that brings about a lot of sensitivity in human beings in general - Children and teachers, of course.

It's something I hope to have that there is no specified designated gardener. All of us are gardeners.

*What do you do for the insects?*

We use the neem spray on them.

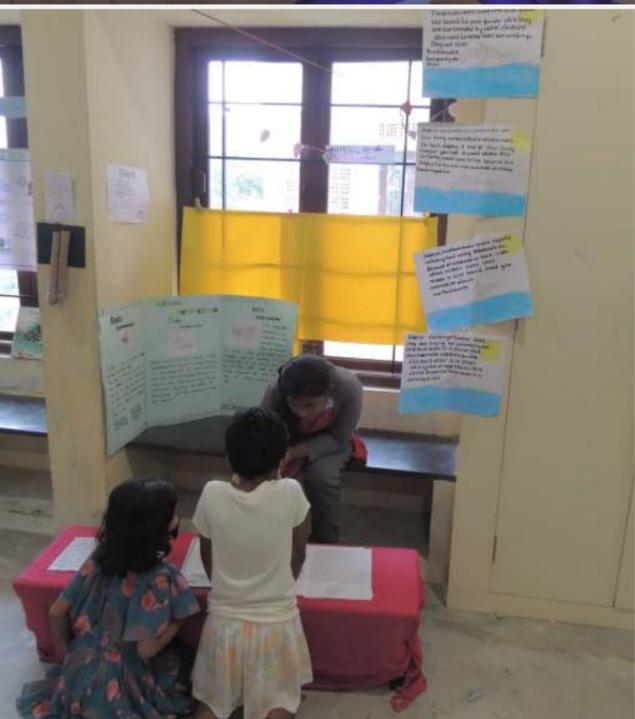


*What were the different crops that were cultivated?*

Palak, Okra, Karamani, Kothavarangai, Tomatoes and Keerai.

The Palak that we harvested was used in the kitchen for making Keerai -vadas.

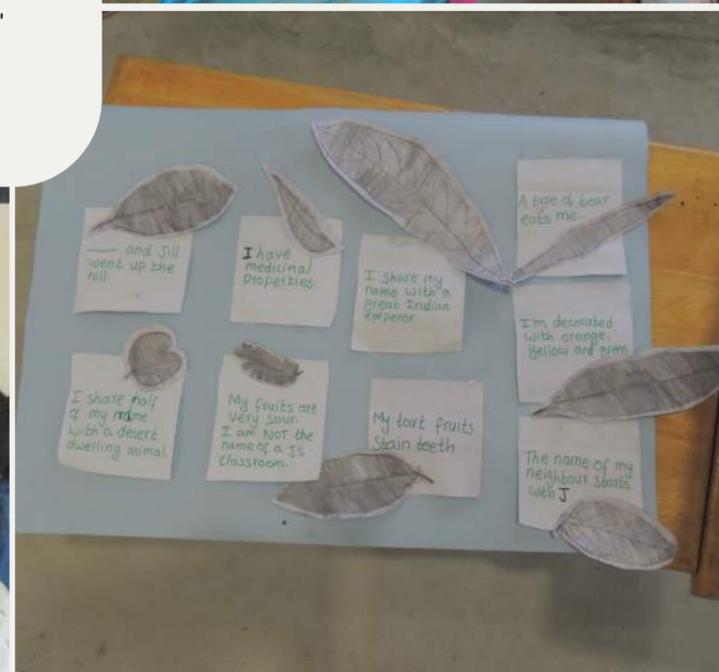
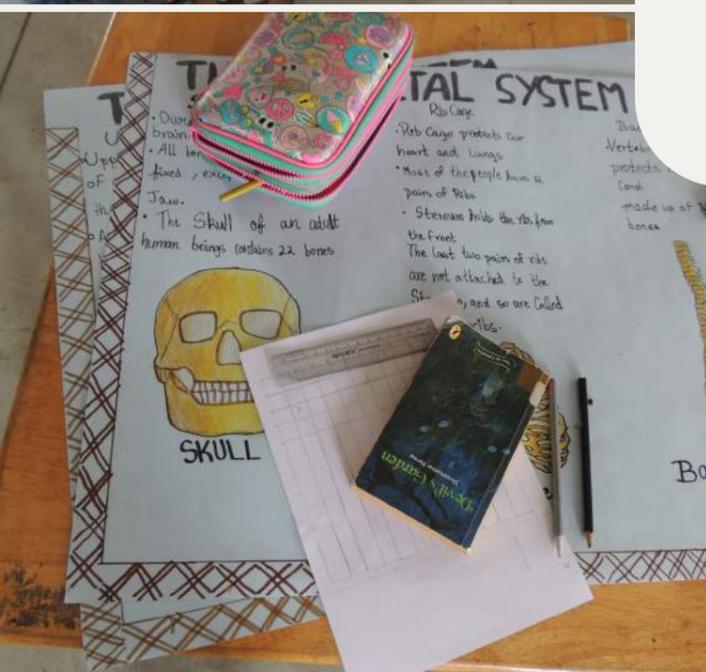




The Middle School came together to present a project day on 29th September 2022. Although the event was for a day, the students spent a considerable amount of time preparing for the same. Groups were formed and they put their thinking-caps together to decide a topic, finalise the number of charts and models and work towards preparing them. Horses, Egyptian Mythology, Reptiles, Extreme Weather, India's freedom Struggle, Stone Age, Amazon Forest and Greek Mythology were some of the topics they presented their work on.

What the students said:

- " Egyptian Mythology. How did we end up with this topic? Well, it only took two periods, three arguments and four other topics."
- "Some of the challenges I faced were completing the work on time, working in a group and doing the work neatly."
- "During the process of researching, model making, interviewing and making charts, I started enjoying myself and not taking the project too seriously."



One of the days in August, we made different shapes out of cooking dough. Thanks to Subramani Anna, who made these cookies in the school kitchen and guided us along the way. We made different shapes like the first letters of our names, flowers, circles, doughnuts and many other shapes! We enjoyed doing this activity. There were some challenges when we had to shift the cookies from our plates to the tray. But we made it. The baked cookies were really tasty. The class enjoyed doing this activity and is excited about doing more such activities.

- a Junior School student

The class went to the dining hall where the teacher put the children in groups. Each group got two different fruits to cut. The fruit plates were passed around and children took turns cutting the fruits. Finally, the Class-4 children collected all the plates and put the fruits into a big vessel where they were mixed together. They then served themselves and ate the fruits.

Students of class four interacted with children in the local primary school at Karanai. The school has sought to develop such an association for some time now. The initiative began with a contribution of about a hundred storybooks for young children. This was followed by class four children visiting the local school and playing games with the children there. The teachers enjoyed observing their interaction. The children were spontaneous while playing and uninhibited in making new friends. The School hopes to continue such visits in the future. Initially, it would be once a month. Different kinds of engagements are being thought of - doing art and craft, singing, reading and storytelling. This is an important step as the school sees the need to integrate and be connected with people and places in its immediate surroundings.

The Junior School MAG children visited the Pallikaranai Eco-Park. The 45-minute journey offered an opportunity to watch the traffic of vehicles, converse and sing with their peers and wait patiently till they reached their destination. At the marshland, they could watch the pelicans, black kites, and other birds swimming, flying, or sitting still. They saw trees like the Banyan, Indian Tulip, Bulletwood, Arjun, and many more. They came up with many questions on waste generation and disposal upon noticing the huge dump yard at some distance from the clean ponds. After an exhausting walk around the place, they sat down to eat bread, jam, and bananas, talking about what they found and noticed that day.

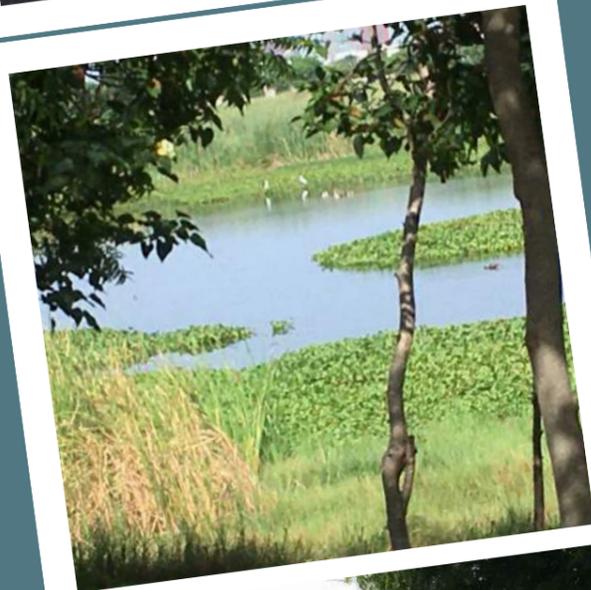
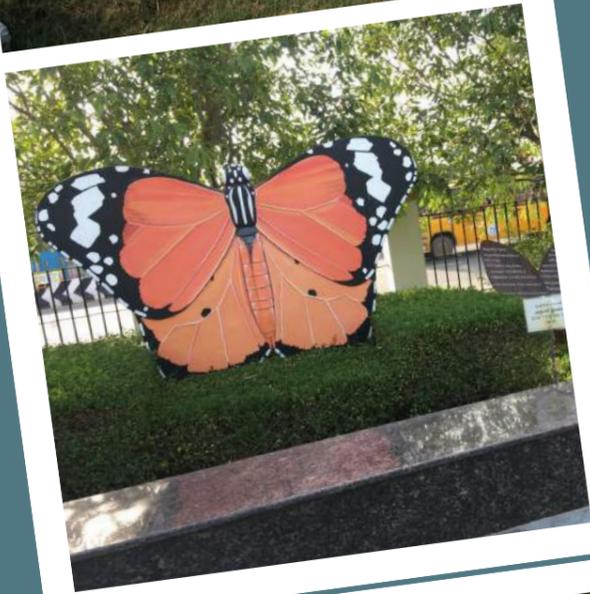
Thoughts on the trip:

*"The slugs are so big here!"*

*"Why are the birds sitting so still? Won't they get bored?"*

*"Why are they dumping waste here?"*

*"Boom! It was like a brand new world, right off the shelf in a shopping mall. We entered onto a tiled platform. A beautiful fountain residing in its centre"*



## Jamun dyeing

Nature has beautiful colours. Middle school Children with the help of a few teachers have used *Anthocyanin*, a naturally occurring pigment that gives characteristic colour to the Indian Summer fruit Jamun, for dyeing. They are skin-friendly, eco-friendly, and non-toxic. A teacher shares her experience during the course of this experiment:

"During July, an Akka and I were walking towards the Middle School Building. We saw a few students picking up fresh Jamuns nearby. While they were doing this, some of the Jamuns that were in the periphery were getting crushed. We saw the colors sticking to their heels. Immediately we came up with an idea. Why can't we try using Jamuns as a dyeing agent!

We approached an Anna to help us make a dye using the crushed Jamuns. To a quarter kg of Jamuns, we added one liter of water and allowed it to boil. While it was boiling, we added a pinch of salt, which acts as an adhesive that will make the dye stick to the cloth. We boiled this until the mixture reduced to half a liter. The dyeing was completely uniform and was perfect. The color was intense.

The entire process requires a lot of patience. We also have to be careful while trying to get a uniform dye on the cloth. It is a very challenging and tricky process. Simply dipping a cloth in the dye will not work; it has to go through a certain type of folding before it is dipped. And that is where the expertise of perfect dyeing comes. And this in turn comes with practice. "

## Western classical music assembly

Some students of Middle School and High School participated in the Western Classical Music Assembly. The event was one and a half hours long. After weeks of planning and practise, they played various instruments and it really was music to one's ears!

What the students said:

- "I brushed up on the piece for a week. I played well during the assembly, but with a few mistakes. In the end, it was quite satisfactory and I enjoyed listening to everyone else."
- "When the day of the assembly came, I felt nervous. My friend also felt nervous. During my turn, I felt nervous again but suddenly I got a burst of inspiration and I did my assembly well."
- "When it was one turn away from mine, I tried to calm down and breathe. I sat down and hoped for the best when my turn finally came."
- "On the day of the assembly, I felt really excited. I played both my pieces. I looped in the Jasmine Flower song. After assembly, I felt really good."
- "Every Monday and Wednesday, I practised for an hour until I got it perfectly. Then for every week, I practised for 14 hours."
- "I started improvising on the piece and it turns out it was not bad!"
- "I missed a note! So, I calmly started playing from the start...Then I forgot the notes!!!"



Dance is the language of dancers. And the classical Indian dance forms allow for the expression of feelings, ideas, and thoughts in a uniquely brilliant and profound way. Many danseuses from middle school and senior school performed on a long assembly day in the school.

These pictures convey so much more about the whole event than the words. Students take up responsibilities and organize many events in school. This is a student writing about her experience of putting together the Classical Dance Assembly:

"I was eager to take charge of organizing the Classical Dance assembly, and I am quite glad that I did. Given our exam schedules, it was quite challenging for me to spare the necessary time for putting it together. Despite this, I got to interact with several people, something I would've perhaps not done otherwise. I learned to work constructively and collaboratively with inputs from those working with me. This experience taught me the importance of managing time and deadlines. In the process I realized that all these years I had never fully appreciated or given adequate importance to punctuality.

I was constantly worrying about who was dancing to what composition, and who had not verified their content with me. We were missing classes for looking over each participant's practice of their dances in the Assembly Hall. All of this occurring amidst my exam schedule was definitely quite demanding and a little exhausting too! Though I enjoyed little moments like signaling to each other for making announcements, and staying back to discuss and prepare for the Assembly. I am thankful to my peers from class 10 and 11 and a few teachers for helping me with the organization of the Assembly."

The 30-Hour Project is a space given to the students of Class 11 to work on something that interests them or the things they want to pursue in the future. Most people choose to work on topics that are close to their hearts. Some people felt overwhelmed while thinking about the multiple choices. They spoke to their teachers and attained clarity. The topics were chosen from various fields like physical fitness, learning first-aid and card tricks. There were quite a few challenges in each project but the students didn't give up and persevered throughout the project.



## Tree saplings in the school farm

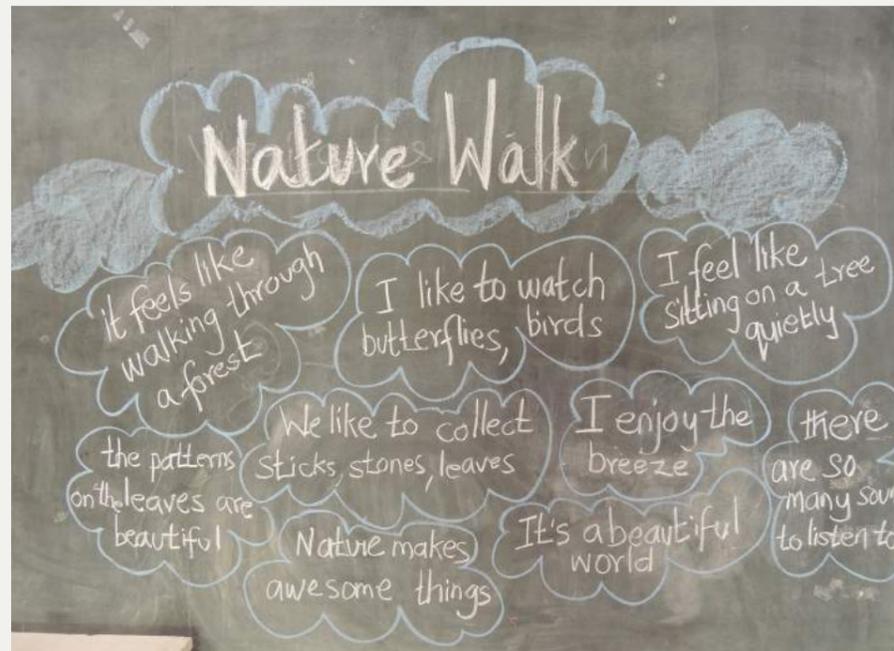


## Junior school harvesting

Students of Class Four visited Jacob's Farm. Some observations by students are recorded below.

- "While being in the farm, I liked eating sweet-lime the most."
- "My friends and I got to see snake-skin"
- "I liked the trip. There were cows, dogs and different types of trees."
- "I saw ducks, chickens, dogs, calves and a bull"

# Open house in Kinder Garten and Junior School





### On Weaving (In the words of children of Peepul group)

"I like going in and out with the thread."

"I like making knots, changing the colours and being helped by my partner."

"I liked doing the u-turn on the weaving board."

"I enjoyed choosing the colours of the thread and going around in a circular manner."

"I learnt to do it carefully and learnt to make knots. I did not take help from anyone."

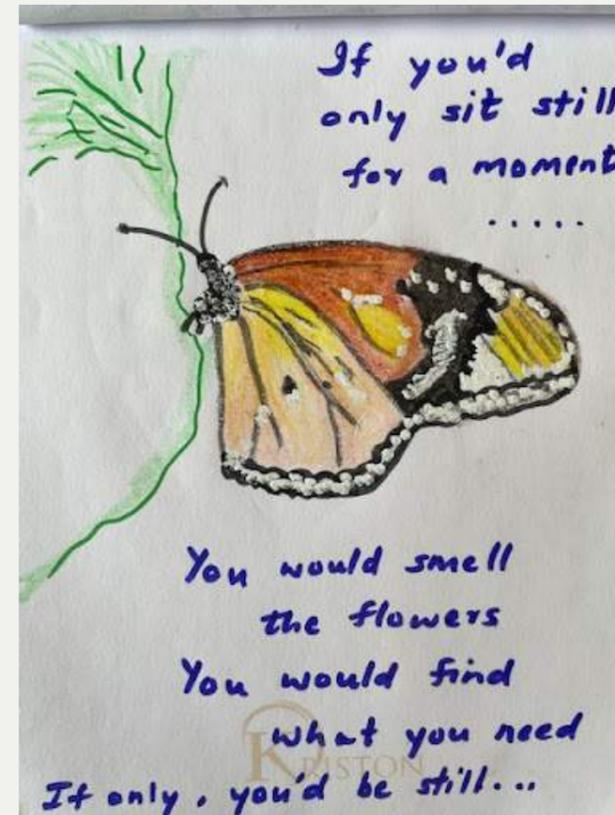
"I learnt to knot. I liked all the colours of the thread. Akka helped me weave."

"I learned that my hands are growing. Weaving is easy, if we learn it."

Recently, the area near our school was being cleared up. Some of the greenery was removed from the site. We asked our students regarding their thoughts of the change.

" I feel sad when I saw people cutting the trees"

"The forest-type area which had recently been cleaned now looks like a bunch of trees in the open-space area."



Poems and drawings by a senior school teacher



The school relocated to the campus at Thazhambur in 2018 - the campus initiated, designed and built in varying ways and to varying extents by students, staff, parents, friends, the architects and the workers. In the final phase of the relocation, the construction of residences for out-station staff are nearing completion. Made with porotherm bricks and teak wood salvaged from old buildings around the city and contemporary interiors, we hope the building will be aesthetically pleasing, merge with the surroundings. With accommodation on campus the school is able to invite teachers from outside the city and campus, in turn, remains alive and taken care of after school hours. The residences are expected to be ready for occupation late January.



The school's website carries two features on the construction of the entire school under 'At Thazhambur' called 'An Architectural Case Study' and 'Construction Diary'.