



marking 50 years of the school
1973 - 2023

the school

Krishnamurti Foundation India

The Beginning of The School KFI - 1973

The two pieces attached below are extracted from articles by Padma Santhanam and Ahalya Chari on the beginning of school referring to both Poes Garden and Adyar published by KFI - Vasanta Vihar in 1998 on the occasion of the school's 25th year.

How it came to be 'The School'

After the Krishnamurti Foundations were established in England, America and India, there was talk of opening schools in these places. Brockwood Park in England was started in 1969 as an international residential school. When Krishnaji later came to Madras, the members of the Krishnamurti Centre, an associate committee of the KFI, met him and expressed their wish to start a school. Krishnaji was happy to hear this.

We assured him that we would initiate the school and take the responsibility of running it. Krishnaji discussed with us as to what sort of school we should have, the extent of land for the campus, finding teachers who would be interested in the teachings and communicating it by the way they lived and related to students and others.

Then we asked him what name the school should have. Krishnamurti said, 'Why not simply call it The School since that is what you are going to do. You are not going to mould the child. The child should feel at ease. Feeling secure and free, the child would want to do what he loves to do and pay attention to all the things around.' Finally, he said, 'Each school must flower on its own, as one flower is unlike another flower. It is really the feeling of doing things together and out of this comes independence - not independence first and then working together.' In the end he said, 'I hope the school will be a great success and flourish.'

Krishnaji used to visit the school during his stay in Madras. Once he chanted Sanskrit slokas with the children and on another occasion, gave a talk to the children, which ended with a story. The children were delighted when Krishnaji sat through a play they put up under the banyan tree. His last visit to the school was on the 10th of January 1986, a few weeks before his passing away in Ojai, California

(Extracts of an article by Smt Padma Santhanam, an associate of J Krishnamurti, initiated the formation of The School KFI and was closely involved in all ways with the work of the school ever since its inception till her passing away in 2006.)

“Like the sands of the sea”

I think it was in the early '80s. There was a discussion at The School between the executives of the Krishnamurti Foundation India with those of the Theosophical Society about locating The School in Damodar Gardens. Krishnaji was present but preferred to walk in the gardens. I happened to be there so joined him. He had been talking to me about the school.

There was no compound wall at that time and so we meandered all over the place up to where our playgrounds are at present. 'Where will you have the classrooms?' he asked. 'We need to draw up a masterplan for the place, sir,' I said. 'Good idea,' he said and added with some excitement, 'Will you send me the plan to Brockwood?' That was Krishnaji - who gave of himself abundantly to anything he started.

We then walked towards the gate. He stopped at the ancient trees on the way, touched their trunks with great feeling, looked at the roots, at the branches and said very quietly, 'Do take care of these. Get someone who knows about trees to advice. These are old trees.'

We stopped at the pond. There was just a little water but overgrowth all around. He recalled there were lillies at one time. 'You must attend to this pond,' he said. 'It can be a beautiful place. Grow lots of trees. See what you can do about the bunding...' After a while he added, 'You know, you could have a Quiet Room here for the teachers to retreat to and just be quiet after their business of teaching and all that.' I too thought it was a marvellous idea.

We walked back to where the banyan is. He looked at it fondly, held the roots and again said, 'Take good care. He paused on the lawn a long while, stood in the silence and then said: Let the school grow like the sands of the sea. I looked up, a question in my eye. 'You know', he added, stretching his arms, head thrown back, smiling: Eternal.

I felt it was a blessing.

(Extracts from an article by Ahalya Chari, an associate of J Krishnamurti and eminent educationist was Principal of The School KFI and followed its work closely till her passing away in 2013.)



the beginnings

poes garden, 1973



A new school is being started in Madras, and we have talked over together with Pragna and Pragna who came from Madras.

First, they will form a Committee who will be totally responsible for the running of the school. On that Committee will be the two ladies mentioned above and two or three members of the Foundation and two or three outsiders. The majority should be either the Foundation members or K Centre members (to be discussed at Bombay). The Principal or the Headmaster of the School will be chosen by the Committee who will also become a member of the Committee.

The students will be chosen by the school Committee, who will post their judgments impersonally of each student, so that the material is suitable for this kind of school. Naturally, the teachers will have to be those who are interested in the teachings and who are concerned with carrying out these teachings in the school through the way they teach the subjects or in their talks with the students. The whole Committee plus the Principal and the teachers must be concerned with the teachings. We feel it is important that when the students come to the school, they should not have to face when they reach home, a contradiction as school is one thing and the family another, so as not to put the student into a difficult, opposing position. I think it is understood that when the student comes to the school, he is completely at home, completely secure and has

... this feeling of freedom - not to do what he likes but a sense, an atmosphere in which freedom, security and a feeling that he is being totally looked after, both physically, psychologically and intellectually. Because, after all, this will be his home rather than the home he comes from because he will spend more time at the school - either residential or day school. This will be his real home where the Principal, the teachers and the Committee are totally concerned with the student. This concern is not a superficial window dressing, but rather concerned with his environment, with his food, with his clothes, with the intellectual and moral movement of his life.

Another point which must be borne in mind from the very beginning is that if it is working in co-operation with K.F.T. the school should not introduce - to which we have all agreed - various contradictory or opposing elements with their guru, sectarian spirit and formulae however wise or old, but be only concerned with the teachings of K. This is not said in any spirit of exclusion or narrowness, but rather as the teachings in themselves point out the tradition, following, a guru or obedience but any formula, hierarchy does not free the mind in its investigation to find truth. Ideology has no place in this teaching, but doing, music which is traditional, has its place.

It was also discussed that the teachers must be very carefully chosen by the Committee, for they must be interested in K's teachings. They should have sufficient money and physical comfort, so that the worry and the tension of physical discomfort does not interfere with his daily activity.

The environment is very important as the atmosphere. Obviously, if this is going to be a residential school, there must be enough space for the students to play, the right kind of food, exercises, games and so on. Also where they live, matters a great deal, the rooms, the halls, their dormitories, must have a sense of beauty, space and a feeling of intimacy

with nature. This school should not be a copy of Rajah or Rishi Valley or Brockwood or any other future school that may be found. Each school, like the one in Bangalore or in Madras or in other future places, must flower on its own like any flower that is sown other flower. It is really in association with a feeling of doing things together and really out of this comes independence, not independence first and then work together.

I hope the school will be a great success and will flourish.

3.1.1973



THE SCHOOL
KRISHNAMURTI FOUNDATION INDIA

Poes Garden
Kodambakkam 400 006
July 2, 1973

Dear Sri Krishnamurti

I am happy to be in a position to inform you that the School - Krishnamurti Foundation India is about to be started on the 9th of July, 1973, at Poes Gardens, Madras. The building is completed and the classrooms, kitchen and the bathroom are fully furnished and ready for work.

We advertised for the teachers and had a good many applicants. The interviews were not very encouraging in the beginning, but we finally got two very enthusiastic young girls, both of them graduates with just a little experience in teaching young children. One of the girls was trained under the personal supervision of Mr. Jostson, who is the representative of Maria Montessori in India. The other teacher has done some work on her own in teaching, although both are hardly 21 years old. They are very cheerful girls receptive to new ideas.

We also inserted advertisement in the papers thrice for the children between 4 years and 6 years. The response has not been very encouraging - may be due to the fact that most of the schools in the city close their admissions by April or May and we were very late with our advertisement only in June. Our meeting with Dr. Balasubramaniam in which final decision could be made was possible only on the 9th June. We are beginning work on the 9th of July, 1973 with only seven children. There will be three classes, consisting of the nursery, the kindergarten and the first class. The Nursery will follow the Montessori system with suitable adaptations. Regular classes begin on the 9th July.

The work begins at 8:30 in the morning with a general assembly. The work programme is given below:

8:30 AM to 9:45 AM General assembly
9:45 AM to 10:15 AM First period
10:15 AM to 11:45 AM Second period

- contd -

Page Two

9:45 AM to 10:15 AM Juice and biscuits will be given to the children.

Regular supply of good oranges and fruits in season has been arranged for. Each child will be given a glass of fresh orange juice and a fruit of the season like banana, papaya, apple, pear or guava.

10:15 AM to 10:45 AM Third period
10:45 AM to 11:15 AM Fourth period
11:15 AM to 11:45 AM Children in lower classes will have also.

Lunch break
11:45 AM to 1:00 PM (Soup, chapatti, dal, two vegetable dishes, a cup of curries, rice and papaya)

1:00 PM to 2:00 PM Sleeping time
2:00 PM to 2:15 PM Washing faces
2:15 PM to 2:40 PM Music and dance
2:40 PM to 4:00 PM Hobbies
4:00 PM to 4:30 PM Milk will be given to the children. A cup of cow's milk and sandwiches (vegetables, egg and cheese)

As we do not have our own dairy, cow's milk for the children has been arranged for from a reliable source. A good ayah has been chosen to look after the children. The bathroom are airy and will be kept clean.

We have also formed an advisory committee consisting of

- 1) Sri K.R. Ramani, B.A., B.L., a lawyer
- 2) Dr. K. Srinivas Moorti (Madras), M.D. (Neuro)
- 3) MCF (London), MCF (London) - a doctor
- 4) Sri Viji Sankaran, M.A., an auditor
- 5) Sri Prakash Babji, a Management Expert
- 6) Sri Ch. Subramanian, B.A. (Hons.), Madras (Civil)
- 7) AIA - an Architect-Consultant.

They will be called in when necessary. They have already been helpful to the school. Their position is strictly advisory on technical matters.

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Page Three

The number of admissions is so far seven, which is a good beginning and by September, a few more admissions are expected. There has been a delay in initial proceedings. The authorization letter from Krishnamurti Foundation came only in May. We have been at work ever since. Dr. Balasubramaniam personally saw what has been going on and he would have informed you about this. Prospective and the application form and the invitation for the opening function are enclosed for you to get an idea of things happening here. We shall post you photographs of the school at work later.

On the opening day on 9th July 1973, we will have the following programmes:

5:30 PM A lamp will be lit.
A short welcome and thanks address by Sri N. Anantharamayyan
A tape recording of Sri Krishnamurti's speech (London talks) will be played.

The outdoor equipment and educational apparatus have been made under personal supervision. For this, we consulted our teachers and the 'Childcraft' people from K.F.I. who decided the proportions, colours and the other details.

Afternoon work is mainly recreative - music, painting, paper-cutting and the like. Physical exercise according to Swedish method is being imparted at this time. These are a set of exercises designed especially for overcoming the muscular activity without strain. The movements are rhythmic and to the accompaniment of music and no part of the body is neglected.

One of our teachers is already undergoing training from a Swedish lady (Mrs. Stina Vass), who is authorized by the Swedish Home Exercises Academy to conduct their exercises and this lady will also come once a week to supervise the work. The general assembly which starts the work of the school in the morning is to have no religious bias. A lady with good knowledge of music is to sing the songs, one of which in Sanskrit is composed by Mr. S. S. Iyer, one of our Executive Committee Members, and also some more songs in Hindi and in Tamil.

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We look forward to your coming in December early enough to spend some time with the children. The holidays will be beginning only in the third week of December.

I shall keep you informed regularly of the School's progress.

The Executive Committee joins me in sending our kindest regards to you.

Sincerely
PRAGNA SHREYANAN

Encl

THE SCHOOL, K.F.I., Madras was inaugurated formally at a public meeting on 9th July 1973, when Mr. N. Anantharamayyan, retired High Court Judge, Madras explained briefly the distinctive principles to be kept in view in its working, laying particular stress on the promotion of all spontaneous activity among the children without the taint of comparison and competition. The actual work of the school began on the 9th July, 1973.

The site of the school now located in Poes' Gardens has been taken on lease. It has an area of 8½ grounds. A building with a plinth area of 3,369 sq.ft. has been put up with three class rooms, a dining hall, an office room, a staff room, a kitchen & store room and four toilets. There is an ample play ground covering 8,500 sq. feet with a sand pit, a slide, a Jungle Jim, and a sit-out with an umbrella roof. The three class rooms 20' x 28' each are provided with fans. There is also a refrigerator. Furniture specially made to suit the small pupils and all the necessary Montessori and Kindergarten equipment have been acquired for the school.

There are three teachers, all graduates. One is a Montessori trained young lady, another is also a lady who has had experience in handling children as Principal of a school with classes upto 8th standard. The third is an elderly gentleman and who is one in our Committee and he is a teacher with good experience in handling children. The strength of the school at present is twelve (9 boys and 3 girls). We have kept 9 seats in reserve for further admissions to be made in September. The idea is to have only 20 pupils on the whole for the current year.

A full time cook, an ayah and a watchman have also been engaged. The school work is from 8.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m. Fruit juice is given at 9.45 and the children have also a fruit each. The lunch is at 12 noon and special care is taken to see

that the diet is balanced and nutritious. After lunch the children are put to bed in individual cots. The afternoon is mostly occupied in music and outdoor games and the children have milk and snacks at 4 p.m. They leave the school at 4.30 p.m.

The Doctor Mrs. Purna Devi who is also one of our Committee members is in daily attendance and the children have been enjoying good health all along. They have begun to feel quite at home at school. The parents are kept acquainted with the nature and quality of the food taken by their children every day and with their general behaviour.

We are hopeful of maintaining the present state of well being.



moving to damodar gardens
adyar, 1978





The Site!



Planning the buildings - A collaborative effort involving all stakeholders



Ground breaking ceremony

The school moves to Thalambur

Planning: 2016-2017

Construction: 2017-2018



Children creating artwork on boundary walls



Teachers taking active part in the construction



Start of marking and excavation



Foundation and Footings



Casting of plinth beams: Staff Room



Senior School



Junior School



Raising of columns: Library



Preparing to cast roof slab



Staff Room and Senior School



Senior School



Children help build pathways using construction waste



An aerial view of the ongoing construction- Assembly Hall and Junior school



The buildings seamlessly weave around the existing 76 trees



Near net zero energy and water use, sensitive waste management, eco-friendly building materials ensure a holistically sustainable campus

- IGBC Green Schools certification with Platinum rating (2018)
- Winner of the All India GRIHA award for exemplary environmental performance (2022)
- Winner of the HUDCO National award for green building design (2023)



Staff Residences Completed: 2022

the school

Krishnamurti Foundation India

Poster by: Green Evolution

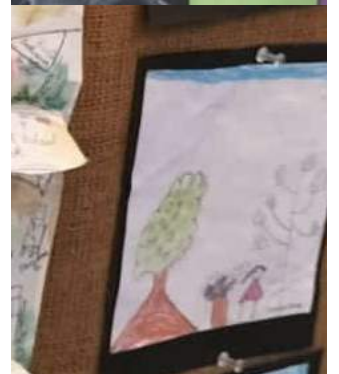
thazhambur
early years, 2018 onwards





JULY 6th - 2023
the school KFI began in 1973

an assembly, early students and staff speaking, wishes from alumni and a birthday cake





Rhythms of Life
A celebration in dance

An invitation

Rhythms of Life

A Celebration in Dance - Marking the completion of the 50th Year of the school :

20th and 21st September, 2023



KFI - Teachers' Conference

29, 30 and 31 October 2023

at the school-KFI, Chennai

The Humane Educator Education, Environment & Empathy

DAY 1 The School

Arrival and breakfast - 08.00 - 09.00

09.00 - 09.15	Assembly - music
09.15 - 09.30	Welcome
09.30 - 10.45	Session 1 - Speaker: G Gautama - The Role of a Teacher has got That Much More Difficult - Followed by question and answer. <i>G Gautama is an educationist and writer. He has been the Principal of The School KFI and the Director of the Centre. He is presently the Director and Secretary of Pathashaala Centre for Learning and Trustee of KFI</i>
10.45 - 11.15	break for tea/juice
11.15 - 12.45	Session 2 - Talking Together - in groups taking two strands from Session 1 further
12.45 - 14.30	meeting over lunch and some rest
14.30 - 14.45	a quick cup of tea or juice
14.45 - 16.00	Session 3 - In Quiet - a selection of activities/tasks
16.00 - 16.30	meeting over tea and snacks
16.30 - 18.30	Walks – lake, beach
19.00 onwards	Dinner and Departure at 8.00pm

DAY 2 The School

Arrival and breakfast - 08.00 - 09.00

09.00 - 09.30	Assembly - music
09.30 - 10.45	Invited Speaker - Vinuta Gopal - Climate Action - Unpacking Personal and Political spaces free of Fear, Anxiety and Guilt - Followed by question and answer. <i>Vinuta Gopal is Co-founder and CEO of ASAR, an independent organisation that seeks to address the big environmental and social challenges facing India.</i>
10.45 - 11.15	break for tea/juice
11.30 - 12.45	Invited Speaker: Shailesh Shirali - On Having a Healthy Mind Followed by question and answer. <i>Shailesh Shirali is presently the Director and Secretary of Sahyadri School. He has been a teacher of Mathematics and the Principal of Rishi Valley School and is a Trustee of KFI.</i>
12.45 - 14.30	meeting over lunch and some rest
14.30 - 14.45	a quick cup of tea or juice
14.45 - 16.00	Talking Together - in groups taking strands from Sessions 1 and 2
16.00 - 16.30	meeting over tea and snacks
17.00 - 19.00	Games and Get Together
19.00 onwards	Dinner and Departure at 8.00pm

DAY 3 Vasanta Vihar

07.30 -09.00	A Reflective / Meditative Concert by Bindhumalini <i>Bindhumalini Narayanaswamy is an award-winning singer and composer. Bindhu, trained in both South and North Indian classical forms, constantly strives to explore avenues outside of her strict classical roots to other forms and traditions in search of the pure soul stirring power that music has.</i>
09.00 - 09.45	Breakfast
09.45 - 11.00	A Direct Conversation Panelists Talk -Questions Raised and Conversation Moderated by Venkatesh Onkar
11.00 - 11.30	Tea
11.30 - 12.45	Video / Audio - Talk of J Krishnamurti
13.00	Lunch and looking around Vasanta Vihar
15.00 - 16.00	Concluding Session
16.00	Tea
17.00 onwards	visits/shopping/being in Vasanta Vihar/a walk in either of two beautiful campuses near Vasanta Vihar

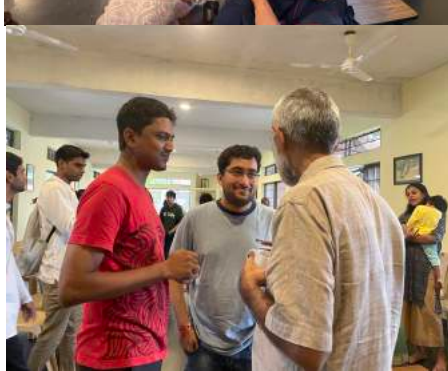
OPTIONAL DAY 4 - 1st November - Trip to Mahabalipuram

Alumni from across the 50 years of school addressing parents at the All Parents Meeting of 2023-24.



the school

Krishnamurti Foundation India



January 5th and 6th Alumni Get-together



In gratitude

The year we marked the completion of 50 years of the school also became the year two significant teachers who shaped the school passed away.

Chinna Akka

Dr Chinna Oommen on the right with Ms. Ahalya Chari, the first Headmistress and the first Principal of The School KFI. Dr Chinna Oommen created and nurtured the Kindergarten and Junior classes of school, and after that as the school grew, the middle and senior classes - from the beginning in 1974, through the first batches of the ICSE and till 1994. It is the care each student felt in her presence and the initiation of teachers into the demands of responsible teaching not just of the languages but all subjects that students and teachers recall with deep appreciation.



Revathi Akka

The same month of July, 2023 saw also the passing away of Revathi Srinivas. Revathi Akka worked with Chinna Akka in the Kindergarten and continued to nurture this oldest section of The School KFI till she retired from work after twenty years with the school. Her work was a rare combination of deep affection, an understanding of the order and varied experiences Kindergarten needs, and much, much delight in working with each child. The teachers of the school who have worked with her are indebted to her careful instruction and the Kindergarten bears her mark in much of what is done. Students who recall little incidents of care with which gave them confidence and strength and remember the love they experienced in their early years at school. She was a member of the school's Executive Committee and guided many colleagues of senior classes in times of difficulty and conflict.



the school

Krishnamurti Foundation India