

## 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 achool is being started in Madras, and we have talked over together with Padmaji and Premaji who come from Madras.

First, they will form a Committee will be totally responsible for the running of the school. On that Committee will be the two Indies mentioned above and two or three members of the Foundation and two or three members do be discussed all bumbay). The Principal or the Resinants of the School will be therene by the Committee who will such become a member of the Genumittee.

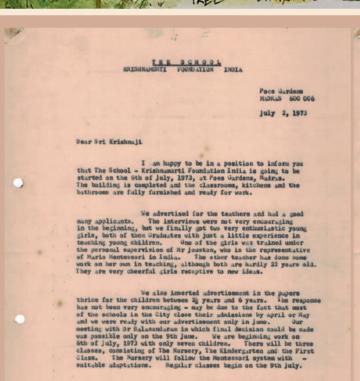
The students will be chosen by the exhool Committee, who will pool their judgments importantly of each student, as that the material is statishe for the latin of school. Naturally, the teacher will have to be those who are interested in the teaching and who are concerned with carrying out these teachings is the school through the way they teach the subjects or is their talks with the triadents. 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 theyback home, a contradiction as a cheel is one thing and the foundly souther, so a not to put the surface 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 consistent with the school, he is completely at home. completely secure and has chool.

This will be his real home where the Principal, the teachers and the Committee with the circular and the committee with the circular contradiction of committee and the committee with the committee with the circular and the Committee with the circular contradiction of the committee with the circular contradiction of the committee with t









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## Page Inc. 9-45 AM to 10-15 AM juice to the Regular and fr arrange be give juice.

i 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 banama, papaya, apple, pear or sapota.
Third partial

10-45 AN to 11-15 AN

11-15 AN to 11-45 AN

11-45 AN to 1-00 PM

11-45 AN to 1-00 PM

10-45 AN to 1-05 AN

10-45 A

1-00 PM to 2-00 PM Sleeping time
2-00 PM to 2-15 PM Washing faces
2-15 PM to 3-00 PM Music and dance
3-00 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 syah has been chosen to look after the children. The bathrooms are airy and will be kept clean.

We have also formed an Advisory Committee consisting of

Srik R Ramamani, B.A., B.L., a Lawyer
Dr K Sriniyas MHBS (Madras), BM (Neuro),
MCCF (Langow), MCCF (Lonion) - a Doctor
Sri Viji Santhanam, AGA, MBA., an Auditor
Sri Prakash Ahuja, a Hanagoment Expert
Sri CN Raghavendran, B.Arch (Home), N.Arch (Calif)
AIIA - an Architect-cun-Engineer.

helpful to the School. Their position is strictly advisory of technical matters.

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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 authorisation letter from Krishnamurti Foundation came only in May. We have been at work ever since. Dr Balasundram personally saw what has been going on and he would have informed you about this. Prespects and the application forms 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 5th july 1973, we will have the following programme:

-30 PM A lasp will be lit.

A short velcome and thanks address by Sri M Ananthanarayanan

A tape recording of Sri Krishnaji'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 U.S. who decided the proportions, colours and the other details.

Aftermon work is mainly recreative - music, painting, papercutting and the like. Physical exercise according to Swelish method is being imparted at this time. These are a set of exercises designed especially for co-ordinating the muscular activity without strain. The movements are rightheic and to the accompanisment of music and no part of the body is neglected.

One of our teachers is already undergoing training from a Swedish lady (Mrs Stim Yasu), who is authorised by the Swedish isome Exercises academy to conduct their exercises and this lady will also come once a week to supervise the work. The general assembly whice starts the work of the School in the moning is to have no religious bias. A lady with good knowledge of music is to sing the mongs, one of which in Sanskrit is composed by Mr R S S Iyer, one of our Executive Committee Numbers, and also some more songs in Hindi and

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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

PREMA SKINIVASAN

THE SCHOOL, K.F.I. Madras was inaugurated formally at a public meeting on 6th July 1973, when Mr. M. Ananthanarayanan, retired High Jourt Junge, 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.

8-30 AM to 8-45 AM General assembly 8-45 AM to 9-15 AM First period 9-15 AM to 9-45 AM Second period

The site of the school now located in Poes' Gardens has been taken on lease. It has an area of 9½ grounds. A building with a plinth area of 3,38½ 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 2½ each are provided with fans. There is also a frigidnire. Furniture specially made to suit the small pupils and all the necessary Montessori and Kindergarten equipment have been acquired for the school.

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 8 seats in reserve for further admissions to be made in September. The idea is to have only 20 pupils on the

A full time cook, an ayah and a watchman have also been engaged. The School work is from 8.30 a.m. - h.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

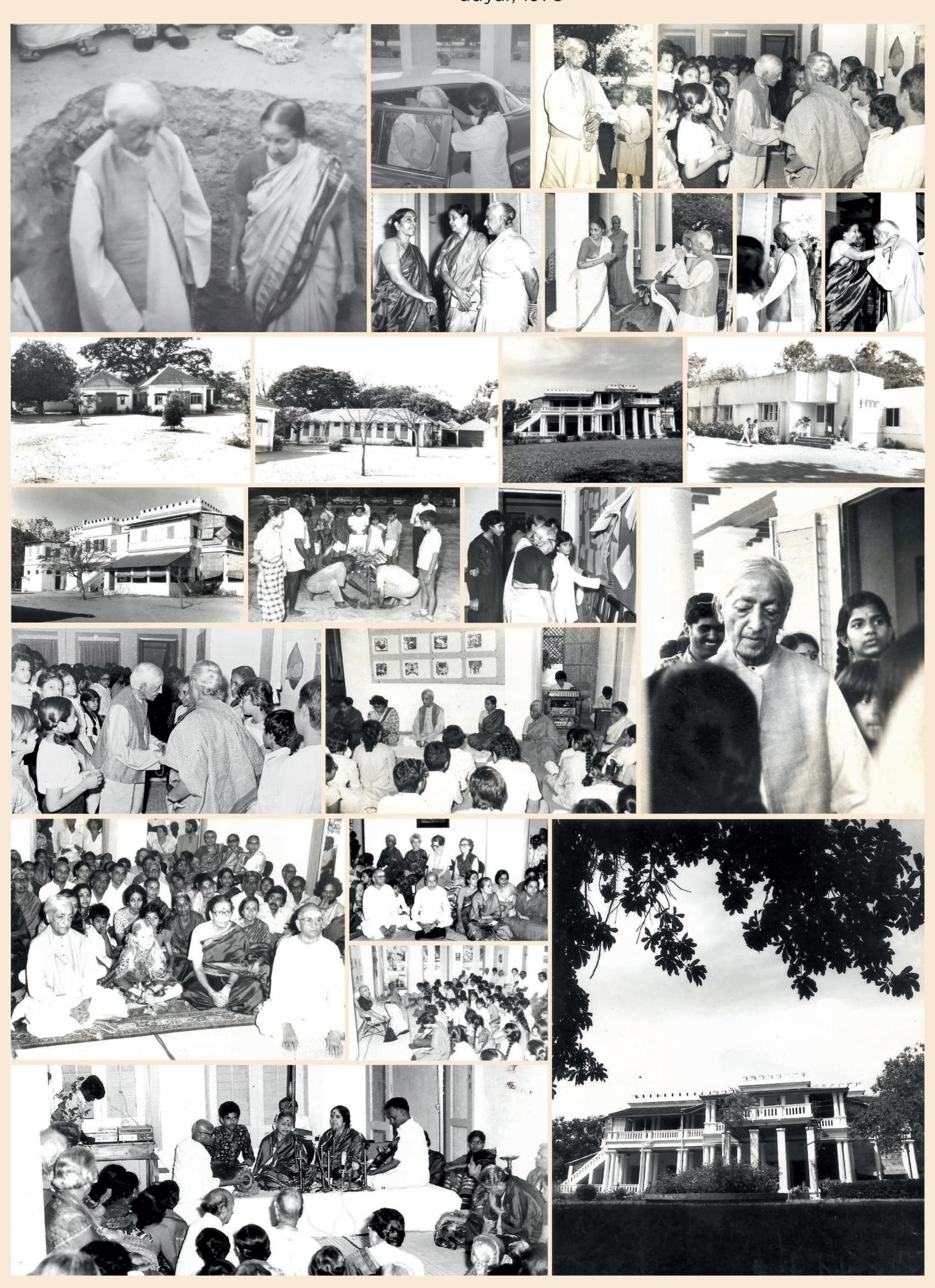
that the diet is balanced and nutritious. After lunch the children are put to bed in individual cots. The afternoon is mostly occupied in music and outdoor games and the children have milk and snacks at 1 p.m. They leave the school at

The Doctor Mrs. Prem Punja 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 school -



The Site!



Planning the buildings - A collaborative effort involving all stakeholders



Ground breaking ceremony







Children creating artwork on boundary walls



Teachers taking active part in the construction



Start of marking and excavation



The school moves

to Thalambur

Planning:

2016-2017

2017-2018

Construction:

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, ecofriendly 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

## early years, 2018 onwards



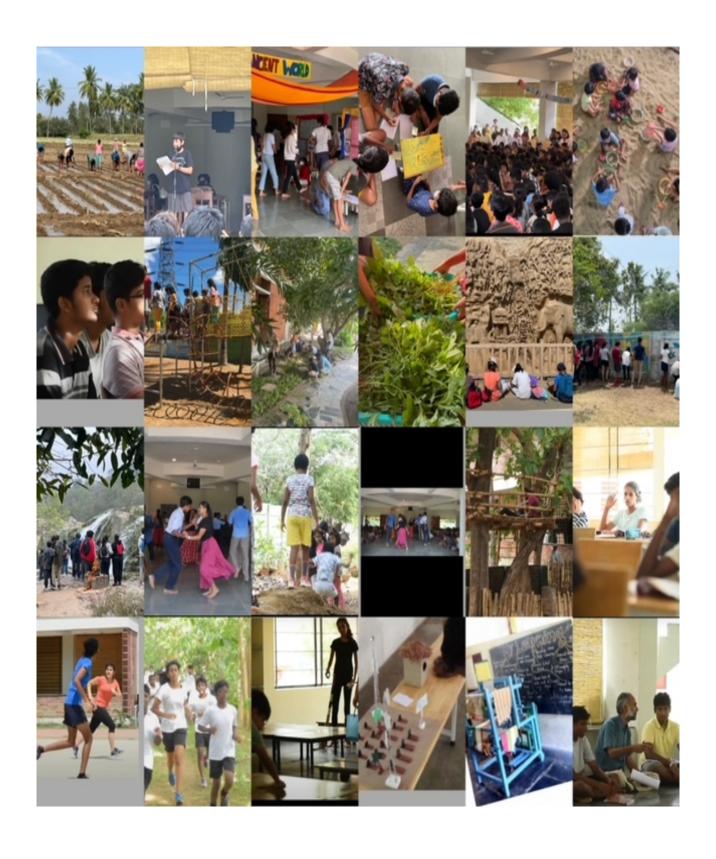


## JULY 6th - 2023 the school KFI began in 1973

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. 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
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

	100.00 - 00.00
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.  Vinuta Gopal is Co-founder and CEO of ASAR, an independent organisation that seeks to address the big environmental and social challenges facing India.
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. 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.
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 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.
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**









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 based 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