

Rajghat Besant School

A Krishnamurti Foundation School

“This is a place of learning and austere living with inward discipline, and work, without guru, without leader, and without a system of meditation or working. It must last a thousand years, unpolluted-like a river that has the capacity to cleanse itself- which means no authority whatsoever for the inhabitants. And the teachings in themselves have the authority of the truth.”





KRISHNAMURTI SCHOOLS:

The intent of the schools is to enable the child to develop fully as a complete human being. This means giving the child the opportunity to flower in goodness so that he or she is rightly related to people, things and ideas, to the whole of life. To live is to be related. The child must also be equipped with the technical skills to function effectively in a changing world, but with a quality of mind that is reflective and compassionate.

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986) whose life and teachings spanned the greater part of the 20th Century, is regarded by many as having had a profound impact on human consciousness in modern times.

He stated in 1929 that his purpose was to set humankind unconditionally free from the destructive limitations of the conditioned mind. To this end he travelled around the world till the age of 90 giving talks and meeting innumerable people individually and in groups. In addition to the books that he wrote, several of his talks and dialogues have been transcribed and published.

The Krishnamurti Foundations in India and abroad continue to be very actively engaged with archiving and disseminating his teachings. They also oversee the educational work in schools and a college, as well as various outreach initiatives.



INTRODUCTION:

A centre of learning on the banks of the Ganga: what could be more idyllic? Established in 1934 by Krishnamurti with a vision of holistic education, Rajghat Education Centre (REC) was J Krishnamurti's second such initiative. Today the centre consists of the Rajghat Besant School, Achyut Patwardhan School, Vasanta College For Women, the Krishnamurti Study Centre and rural units that are engaged in community development including the Unit for Women's Empowerment.



THE SCHOOL

The Rajghat Besant School is residential and co-educational, and follows the CBSE curriculum. With approximately 350 students in Classes III-XII it has a teacher-student ratio of 1:7 and class strengths of less than 25 across the school.

Junior School (Classes III-VII) places greater emphasis on learning through art and craft, story telling, yoga, music, dance and drama, and various other activities, while simultaneously building basic academic skills so that children are prepared for the higher classes. The children do not take any exams in these classes.

Senior School (Class VIII-XII) sees a shift in emphasis towards academic rigour, with students also expected to take greater responsibility for their learning. They are introduced to formal testing and eventually take public exams in grades X and XII. In grades XI and XII they choose from a variety of subjects offered in the Humanities, Commerce and Science streams. Meanwhile they continue to be involved in several co-curricular activities.



BEYOND CURRICULUM:

Field Trips are carefully planned to ensure that children set learning objectives, gain a lived experience in an alien setting, face physical challenges that they would not otherwise experience, engage with socially meaningful work, and reflect on what they have learnt. They have included memorable visits with notable NGOs like Development Alternatives, Navdanya, Barefoot College, School for Democracy and Tarun Bharat Sangh.

Physical Activities, often on the beautifully grassed 'Downfield', include a variety of games and sports, as well as yoga. Children are encouraged to take part in these with intensity and joy, and to the best of their abilities. In the process they have the opportunity to experience and reflect on issues such as success and failure, competition, the importance of teamwork etc.

Cultural Activities include fine art and a variety of crafts (tie and dye, batik, clay-modeling, pottery, graphic art, needle craft, paper craft, macramé); music, dance and drama. All of these have dedicated teachers, some of them bringing creative sensibilities honed in Shantiniketan. The school also draws upon local talent in Varanasi and, during an annual cultural week, upon resource people from around the country.

Varanasi is a culturally rich city that attracts a number of talented people in various walks of life. (Some of them are also parents of the school). They are regularly invited to the school for talks, interactions and workshops.

Rural Exposure and Work Experience Being situated on an urban-rural cusp, the school provides opportunities for children to be exposed to some realities of rural India, and for hands-on work with the Centre's agricultural farm, dairy, rural school and livelihood projects. Students are also involved in the upkeep of the campus, through cleaning and maintenance in their hostels and classrooms as well as in public areas such as the dining hall. There are opportunities for them to pick up skills in gardening, garbage segregation, carpentry, plumbing and repairing electrical gadgets.

Culture Classes are non curricular but timetabled spaces where teachers and students together reflect on fundamental issues such as anxiety, pleasure, hurt, ambition, competition and cooperation etc. The purpose of these sessions is to help open the mind and to question received wisdom.



OTHER ENDEAVOURS

Achyut Patwardan School

Born out of his deep compassion for the underprivileged, Krishnamurti invited his friend and social reformer Achyut Patwardhan to engage with the impoverished villages in and around Rajghat. The Achyut Patwardhan School (APS) which has been providing educational opportunities to the local community for over 60 years, currently has about 300 children from nursery to class VIII. The children mostly come from the surrounding villages of Sarai Mohana, Kotwa and Bharoti. In addition to academics, the school focuses on extracurricular activities like sports, art and craft, music, gardening and farming.

Unit for Women Empowerment (UWE)

For over two decades, the Women Empowerment Unit has brought livelihood and social empowerment opportunities to the women of the surrounding villages. The training-cum-production units, with the marketing support of the entire centre, imparts basic skills of tailoring and embroidery to young women. The Centre, in partnership with Bangalore based Sampark, has also worked on a women empowerment initiative covering 12 villages in the vicinity of the school.

Vasanta College for Women

Established by Dr. Annie Besant in 1913 and originally in the campus of The Theosophical Society, Vasanta College is a pioneering institution that aims to provide excellent higher education for girls. The college has a mission to make women independent, with an appreciation of their own culture combined with a modern sensibility. The college offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the Arts, Social Sciences, Education and Commerce, and is affiliated to the Banaras Hindu University. The college has its own hostel and is a highly respected institution in Varanasi that caters to a large hinterland in northern India.

Environmental Initiatives

The initiatives encompass energy, waste, water and soil management. A 100 KVA solar plan meets day needs of the centre while an integrated waste management approach extracts resources from waste while, food and dairy waste go onto become rich compost. A grey water recycling plant has helped recycle laundry waste water. Our agri farms that are managed in an environmentally sustainable manner supply a significant part of our vegetables and grain needs.

STUDY CENTRE

Ensnored amidst lush green trees that overlook the majestic Ganga, the Study Centre hosts a well-stocked library of books by Krishnamurti and translations of his works, copies of out-of-print materials, videos, audio tapes, biographies, evaluative studies of the teachings and bulletins of the Krishnamurti Foundations. It organizes residential retreats around specific themes as well as interactions with daytime visitors. Students and teachers in the school are also encouraged to spend time at the Study Centre.

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KFI SCHOOLS: Rishi Valley Education Centre, Madanapalle • Rajghat Besant School, Varanasi • The School KFI, Chennai
The Valley School, Bangalore • Sahyadri School, Pune • Pathashaala, Elimichampet