The Skantha Varodaya Old Students Association of Canada has requested me to write a brief history of the college to be included in the souvenir which they propose to release on the tenth year of their inauguration. I feel that this task has been assigned to me because of my close connection with the school, its principal, teachers, and students during the most vital period of its history. The small B-grade school I joined in 1948 had become a super-grade school, by the time I left in 1958. To write the story of how this small school in a remote unknown village in Jaffna blossomed into one of the finest colleges in the Island is a demanding, but fascinating exercise. A dip into the early history of Skantha Varodaya (1894-1967) will, I feel, be of interest and value to the readers and posterity. My father, Late Mr. C. Subramaniam (Orator), Principal of Skantha from 1944 to 1962, was a very close associate of the Founder and the Manager, Dr. S. Subramaniam (P.S). He has written in detail about them and the school in his autobiography and elsewhere. In this article I have included copious extracts from these writings. I can do no better! (his writings appear in italics).

Hundreds and thousands of students have passed through the portals of the mighty institution at Kantherodai and to most of them this tiny village is known only as the abode of Skantha Varodaya. They are unaware that they had received their education in one of the most ancient historic cities of Sri Lanka. History has it that the northern territory of Sri Lanka was at one time occupied by the Nagas. The capital of the Naga Kingdom was Kadiramalai, near the present Kantherodai. It is presumed that the great temple, Thambaleswaram, built by King Vijaya, stood near the present village of Kantherodai. It is also believed that the sacred Pattini Devi’s relics were brought to this revered place by King Gajabahu. Archeological finds also show that Kantherodai was once inhabited by Buddhist and was a pilgrimage centre. What is now left of this two thousand years old city are a few archaeological sites and unexplored mounts. Exploratory investigation and excavation of an area in Kantherodai has revealed many interesting finds of archeological interest bearing on religious and historical events of the past. Archeologists have dated the Kantherodai civilization as being of the BC 500-BC 100 period, i.e., about 2500 years ago. The hundred year old Skantha Varodaya stands in this ancient city.

During the later half of the eighteenth century, foreign Christian Missionaries, Saiva Paripalana Sabai and the Hindu Board of Education, together, gave a big boost to education in the Peninsula by building and managing a fine string of schools. As a result, Jaffna attained an enviable position in the field of education. But our story here is not about a missionary body or an association, it is about a lone visionary who founded a school and the men who continued and built it to perfection.
Why did our Visionary - Kandiah Upathiyayar, start this school? What were his ideals? What were his dreams? To answer these questions let us digress a little into the history of our land.

In the seventeenth century the Portuguese assumed control of the Jaffna peninsula and were followed by the Dutch and then the British. Two successive foreign governments, the Portuguese and the Dutch had smothered the vestiges of our national life and culture. The Portuguese, during their occupation of our land demolished all Hindu temples and carried out measures for the subjugation and eradication of any religion other than theirs. The Dutch who succeeded the Portuguese followed the same policy of their predecessors with regard to the native religions. They made use of education to convert the locals to Christianity. When the British became rulers of the Island they allowed full freedom of public worship.

The British Government while professing neutrality in religious matters entrusted the education of the country to missionary societies. Proselytizing non-Christian children in schools by holding out to them the bait of secular education was part of the system of evangelization by some of the missions. The Tamil provinces came under intense educational and missionary activity and the Tamils were quick to take advantage of these facilities. Jaffna benefited immensely by their work and the Tamils gained a great headway over other ethnic groups because of the education they received in Christian schools. As a result, the Tamil provinces during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced eminent men in all branches of learning. English education opened the eyes of the Hindus, as it made them set their house in order.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century when the American and European missionaries began their work in Jaffna, the system of education prevalent in these areas was entirely traditional. There were only a few Tamil schools here and there, and only a few could read and write on the palm leaf. The school was only a small hut with a thatched roof and an elevated mud floor. The pupils sat cross-legged on mats and their books were palm-leaf manuscripts. Their writing exercises were done on the sand with their forefingers. The American Missionaries, the most enterprising of educators during the British colonial era, established Free Schools in the villages of Jaffna. How keen the Jaffna man's desire for education was, may be seen from the fact that only five years after the arrival of the first American missionaries, twenty four schools existed in Jaffna villages, with an attendance of over one thousand children.

There were at that time, many impediments for Hindus to provide themselves with schools of their own. Throughout the nineteenth century English and vernacular education were in the hands of foreign missionaries. The non-Christian children had no other choice but to attend Christian schools for their education. These children had to forgo all their Hindu customs and were forced to follow Christian practices at school. Patriots and leaders among enlightened Hindus saw in the missionary activity, a danger to their own cherished beliefs and traditions.

When the Hindus were straying away from their religion, language and culture, Srila Sri Arumuga Navalar; scholar, patriot, social-reformer, and a consummate master of debate
appeared on the scene. By his clarion call, he summoned his people back to their national way of life. For more than thirty years he carried on a vigorous campaign for the growth and development of Saivism both in India and Ceylon. He criticized the proselytizing work of Christian missionaries and extolled the greatness of Saivism. Societies for the propagation of Saivism were started. Newspapers, tracts and pamphlets were published and schools were established. He declared that education without the religious and cultural background of the child was not worthy of its name. "Hindu schools for Hindu children everywhere", was the quest that fired Navalar in all his labours in Sri Lanka and South India. The movement he set afoot rapidly began to spread throughout the length and breadth of the Tamil country. As a result, a society named Saiva Paripalana Sabai was started in 1888 to work for the growth and development of Hindu Education. This society founded the Jaffna Hindu College (1890) and its sister institutions.

Sir Muttucumaraswamy, the first Tamil Legislative Councilor described Navalar as "the champion reformer of the Hindus". His nephew Sir Ponnapalam Ramanathan who entered the Council after him, mainly on the efforts of Navalar, cleared the ground and paved the way for building Saiva Schools for Hindu children - a project that was obstructed by many an oppressive legislation that favoured the foreign missionary in his rapid establishment of Christian schools.

The momentum generated by the forces set in motion by Srila Sri Arumuga Navalar in the cause of a revival in Hinduism developed into an active movement after his demise in the year 1879, at the early age of fifty-seven. A band of dedicated young men, inspired by the life and works of Srila Sri Arumuga Navalar, launched a campaign to counter the proselytization of Saivite children and to establish Hindu schools. Kandiah Upathiyayar was one of the foremost workers in this campaign and he started the Tamil English School at Kantherodai. It was meant to be a challenge to the many schools in the Jaffna peninsula established by powerful missionary bodies whose objective was not merely education but also conversion of children of other faiths to their own religious denomination.

Realizing the benefits of a sound education in a Saivite environment, Kandiah Upathiyayar started the 'Kantherodai Tamil English School' in 1894. He maintained it with his own resources. After four years, to obtain certain concessions from the government, this school was separated into the Tamil and English schools. S.Kandiah Upathiyayar was in charge of the English School and A.Kandiah Upathiyayar, popularly referred to as Tamil Kandiah Upathiyayar, was in charge of the Tamil School. In 1902, Kantherodai English School, as it was then named, was made a grant-in-aid school and had about 300 students on the roll. The school attracted students from all over the peninsula; many of them paid no fees, while some received free board and lodging. Kandiah Upathiyayar with his band of equally dedicated teachers continued to work tirelessly and the school moved to its present site in 1907.

(From the 'Skantha' 1966)

I remember with reverent gratitude and affection Kandiah Upathiyayar, who, with undaunted courage and vigorous idealism of service as his only resources and inspired by the life and work of the great Hindu Reformer, Sri la Sri Arumuga Navalar - the father of Tamil Renaissance and
the leader of the Saivite Reformation, founded this school and toiled hard for well over half a century in the education of the poor and brought happiness and sunshine into the lives of many families. As Mr. K. S. Arulnandhy (Director of Education), one of his most distinguished and devoted pupils, wrote in 1953 in the Founder Memorial Number of the 'Skantha', "Skantha Varodaya College born of the vigorous idealism of this ambitious youth 58 years ago has grown steadily and beautifully under his wise, loving and incessant care to a stature that must have certainly gladdened his heart in no ordinary measure. He has erected his monument - that colossal achievement of over half a century of ceaseless activity of his creative genius - Skantha Varodaya College." He was a man beyond fame or fortune, who knew how much good can be done in this world if one does not care who gets the credit. History would record him as "the Man Who Made a School." It is gratifying to remember that he lived long enough to see his infant institution of humble status rising to the rank of a First Grade College. His memory should ever inspire all, connected with Skantha and Hindu education, to greater efforts.

On the 6th September, 1952, a gloom was cast on the College by the passing away of the Founder. The news was received with great sorrow by his past students both in Ceylon and Malaysia. Thus passed away a noble soul whose life had been dedicated to the service of the poor, who had brought sunshine into the lives of many families and to whom helping a poor pupil and putting him on his feet, was the highest form of religion.

A few significant events of the early years of the school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>The foundation for the present main block was laid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>The main block was opened by Naganatha Mudaliyar. S. Eliathamby B.A, from Kaddudai, uncle of C. Subramaniam (later principal), was appointed Principal. Vice-Principal was T.N. Sinnathamby. T. T. Sangarapillai joined as teacher (retired in 1953).</td>
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<td>1913</td>
<td>Four candidates were presented for the Cambridge Junior School certificate and all were successful. S. Arulnandy, later Director of Education was one of them.</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>P. Sabathipillai B.A, L.T., former inspector of schools, Madras and uncle of C. Subramaniam (later principal) was appointed Principal. P. Thambimututu joined as teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>Murugesu from Erlalai and Chunnakam K. Ambalavanapillai joined as teachers.</td>
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<td>1919</td>
<td>L. Macrae, Director of Education visited the school and made the following minutes. &quot;This is one of the best elementary schools I have seen. The staff is on the whole good and there is excellent tone among the boys.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Cambridge Senior class was started. A small science laboratory was formed. A. Manickam was appointed science teacher.</td>
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<td>1924</td>
<td>S. Eliathamby succeeds P. Sabapathypillai as Principal.</td>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi visited the school.</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>The Founder visited Malaya to collect funds for the school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Eliathamby, retired and V. Muthukumaru M.A was appointed principal. The new science laboratory was opened.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>The school was renamed Skantha Varodaya College.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>N. Sabaratnam and S. Sethucavalar appointed as teachers. (number of teachers 10, Students 250)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>V. Muthucumaru was succeeded by S. Srinivasan M.A. He evinced great interest in games and physical education. Dr. S. Subramanam took over as Manager.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>The College was raised to grade B</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>The first College magazine was published.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>A. Manickam was appointed acting Principal. S. Sivapathasundaram M.A (Cantab) was appointed Principal in April. He left in December.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>C. Subramaniam B.A (Lond) was appointed Principal. V. Chuppiramaniam B.Sc. (Lond) was appointed Vice-Principal.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hon. C. W. W. Kannagara Minister of Education and father of the Free Education Scheme was the Chief-Guest at the prize day.</td>
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The new Principal and Vice-Principal formed a formidable alliance and worked together with a team of excellent teachers for a span of eighteen years (1944-1962). This period can rightly be called the 'Golden Era' in the history of the college. The achievements of the college both in studies and sports placed it on level with the best schools in the Island. The college was raised to Super Grade in 1957 along with two other schools in the Peninsula. The achievements
during this period are best summarised in the Principals Report on the Prize-giving and Founders Day 1962.

My memory goes back to the year 1943 when from his sick bed Kandiah Upathiyayar interviewed me. With tears in his eyes he told me that the school had been the breadth of his life for well over fifty years, that he had reared it more dearly and fondly than an affectionate mother would her child, and that he was entrusting it to me in the full confidence that I would fully dedicate myself to its service. Today on the eve of my retirement, if he were to ask me to render him an account of how I had discharged that trust, I could humbly but proudly lay these facts at his feet. "When you, Sir, entrusted this school to me in January, 1944, this school had declined considerably owing to your protracted illness. There were 225 pupils, 13 reaches, 15 classrooms, a small playground, science laboratories in name only, and no proper residential facilities. Today we have 20-15 pupils, 61 teachers, 57 class rooms, fully equipped laboratories, an additional playground and a hostel with 200 resident pupils. Our results in the G. C. E and University entrance classes have been uniformly so good that pupils from all parts of the Northern and Eastern Provinces have come to us in large numbers seeking admission. In sports, especially in soccer, we rank among the best. " Hearing this, I am sure Upathiyayar would smile with tears of joy as he was wont to do in his life time whenever I took to him news of some little achievement of the school, and tell me, "well done my Boy. " We, along with thousands of his old pupils remember him today with affection and gratitude.

The following are extracts from my father's life story entitled, 'About Myself and my Times'. These are included here in order to portray to the readers, the various conditions existent at that time, the growth of the school, teachers, and events of special significance.

At the request of some of my old pupils, I have dictated these notes about my life and times to be included in the souvenir which they intend publishing to mark my 90th birthday. I have drawn mostly from memory and I know that some of what I have said may not be correct. I request my readers to forgive me for lapses of memory due to my old age.

In December 1943 when I was safely placed in Jaffna Hindu, Hon. Rajaratnam (Hindu Board) sent for me and suggested my taking up the principal ship of Skantha Varodaya which had been vacated by Mr. S. Shivapathasundaram. I had known Hon. Rajaratnam closely, having worked with him as a director of the Hindu Board of Education. I was not at all enamoured of the request and did not consider the suggestion seriously. Chunnakam area was considered a 'rough area' at that time, and the school had only 291 pupils, 15 teachers and a few classrooms within a small campus. The prospect was dismal. My abiding faith in God, in Murugan, the presiding deity of the College and my own Patron Deity, gave me courage.

Dr. Subramaniam, the manager of the school gave me full powers to develop the school in the way I wanted. I wanted to make use of the opportunity to build a school according to my educational principles and I accepted the offer. My friend Handy Perinbanayagam was with me when the Founder interviewed me. My uncle Mr. Sabapathypillai who was principal under him for seven years had differences with him and left the school. I asked him whether he had any prejudice against him or against me. He replied he had none and said that my uncle was an honest man with high principles; but a poor school like his could not be run on principles. Mr.
S. Elaiathamby, my father's cousin was principal of Skantha for many years and one of the college houses is named after him. Then he suggested that Mr. V. Sivasubramaniam (Chuppiramaniam) be made the vice-principal. I agreed most gladly as I had known Mr. Sivasubramaniam as a good, intelligent and hard working teacher and was sure of his co-operation.

My Work

As I write these lines, I lift my hands in prayer to the Child-God of Thiru-Avinankudi, the presiding deity of Skantha Varodaya, whose image adorned the College Crest for many years but has disappeared after my retirement, for giving me the opportunity to steer the college through critical years and to bring it to a haven of secure prosperity. I thank Him for the gift of the Vice-principal, Mr. V. Sivasubramaniam, for the gift of 'Clerkar' Kandiah, for the gift of a gallant and enthusiastic band of teachers, for the gift of thousands of pupils from all parts of the island, who enriched the life of the college and for the gift of the splendid Principal-Teacher-Pupil relationship which prevailed at all times. All these enabled us to achieve what our Director of Education describes as "the phenomenal rise of the school in recent years."

In 1947, School Inspectors visited the school to assess the general standard and facilities of the school. We improvised laboratories and a library. I asked the boys to come well dressed, preferably in trousers, if they had them. There were some boys who had come from Malaysia and Singapore. They could speak English fairly well. I told the senior classes that if questions were asked by the inspectors, these boys should answer. About a dozen inspectors came and did a full inspection. At the end of the inspection, Mr. V. K. Nathan, the head of the Education Department in Jaffna and an old boy of Skantha, came to my office and sat mum for a few minutes. I watched him in tense suspense, fearing that his decision was going to be adverse. After a few minutes he spoke, "What a change from the Kantherodai English Institute of the old days. The boys in trousers and they mouth English better than boys in town schools, what a change." The school was placed in grade one.

Mr. T. Kandasamy MSc., Government Analyst, was the first student to enter the University in 1945. In a period of 15 years this school had sent about 400 pupils to the University of Ceylon, most of whom were for medicine, engineering and science. Our neighbour, Mahajana College, had done likewise. The achievements of these two schools - village schools which started almost from scratch, fully prove that, instead of using the pernicious principle of standardization for selection to the university, if the schools in backward rural areas had been well equipped and staffed with teachers, who worked conscientiously and gave of their best to the pupils, the village boys and girls would have done as well as or better than those in Colombo schools. Our results in public examinations were uniformly good every year. In 1961, 49 pupils entered the University of Ceylon - highest number among Jaffna schools and third in the Island that year.

We wished to impart in Skantha as good an education as that in the big schools to which the poor pupils in our area had not the means to go. We appointed efficient, qualified teachers. At one time we did not have a good physics teacher. I heard that one Durairajah at St. John's College was a good physics teacher. I offered a special post to him and made him join us. He did excellent work but, after some years, he lost his sight completely. I kept him for eight months longer, so that he might complete the ten years required for a pension. He proved a better teacher after he lost
his sight and the pupils wanted him. I allowed him to continue in spite of petitions against my action. He retired long after I retired. This is the kind of courage God gave me to serve Skantha.

I regarded the regulations of the Education Department as means to an end, namely full education of the pupils and I did not hesitate to disobey them if they were against the welfare of the pupils. There was a regulation that schools should send away all pupils above a certain age, over-aged pupils; but I kept them for a year more so that they may have another try at the public examinations and I might mention just one case which is typical of how my instincts worked. There was a pupil in my Senior School Certificate class whom I regarded as a very dull pupil because he was very poor in English. He had sat for the examination in December and gone to his home at Nainativu. He had not returned to school when it reopened in January of the following year. The examination results were received in April and to my surprise I found that he had obtained distinctions in five subjects which included pure and applied mathematics. I immediately sent for the boy and made him sit for the university entrance examination. He passed this examination with just seven months preparation. He subsequently graduated with a special degree in mathematics.

The ethos of the school had always been to help pupils from poor and disadvantaged homes. But, one of the conditions on which I was appointed was that I should not admit any boy or girl from the so-called depressed classes. Kandiah Upathiyayar's help did not extend to certain social groups like the minority Tamils who were denied admission to Hindu English schools in Jaffna. But two years later when I approached him and requested permission to right this great wrong in the name of humanity, he readily agreed and gave his blessings. Thus Skantha became the first Hindu college to open its doors to children from the depressed classes.

Most parents of my students were farmers or petty traders. During the forties and early fifties, children from far away places used to walk to school, some of them long distances after helping their parents in the farm. They helped in the irrigation of the farms by walking up and down the thula (well sweeps), driving the produce - laden bullock-carts to the Chunnakam market etc. They walked bare foot wearing vetty and some of them bare bodied drenched in perspiration and covered with red sand. They carried the shirt with the books and put them on at the entrance of the school. Most of them arrived without Belfast. However, they were all gifted students and did well in all subjects except in English. I devoted a great deal of time with them especially before the public exams and made them pass in English. When they passed, even some of those who obtained first divisions and distinction got into the government clerical services without opting for higher studies. The parents, being poor, were looking forward to their sons' earnings to ease their financial burden and to contribute toward their sisters' dowries. I had to plead with parents to let their children study and assured financial support if their children succeeded in entering the university. They had to obtain loans on their farms and other lands to raise money for their sons’ expenditure. When they got into the universities, most of them wore trousers and shoes for the first time. I did my best to obtain university grants (bursaries) for these students. The teachers contributed to a monthly scholarship fund to help poor students who received university admission and needed financial assistance. I knew some members of the University Bursaries Board personally and they knew how I was helping deserving pupils. My recommendations were always favourably considered and liberal bursaries were granted.

Most parents were ignorant of the courses their children were following in the university. These students eventually passed out as doctors, engineers and graduates. They became leaders in their
professions in Sri Lanka, England and in the States. They became very accomplished men and fitted perfectly in their society, though as students, they lacked so many facilities and comforts that their counterparts in richer homes and in the cities enjoyed.

As an assistant teacher in other schools I always pleaded the case of the backward pupil. When I became principal, I abolished all promotion and withdrawal tests. It was my view that teachers should teach well and make the pupils work hard, so that all pupils would be fit to go into the next class at the end of the year. I encouraged the staff to assume collective responsibility for the well being of the school and its students. It is the responsibility of the teachers to see that they promote everyone. I was always keen to see that they respect the personality of the pupils.

Compared to present standards, the students in my teaching period were all very well behaved. Plucking mangoes from some ones property, talking to friends sitting in a culvert, attending festivals in temples late in the night especially if there was 'notch' dancing, whistling, seeing Tamil movies (English movies were tolerated as it was felt that the pupil will improve his knowledge of English), etc, were all considered minor offences. The much more serious offences were, smoking, drinking, speaking vulgar language, cutting classes to go to Keerimalai or to the cinema, winking at a girl, copying at exams and these qualified for severe punishments. Writing love-letters was considered an offence meriting dismissal from school or public canning. There were very few cases of theft, fighting, unruly behaviour, arguments with the teacher etc. Times have now changed and most of these activities go unnoticed at present. I never dismissed any student or resorted to public canning.

The splendid principal - pupil - teacher -parent relationship that prevailed always and in all fields of activity ensured our success. This was amply demonstrated at all school functions and at the Skantha Lights Carnival (1955) which we ran for forty days in the Jaffna Esplanade. Paramanathan (Thothom, as he was popularly known) our popular goal keeper died as a result of a kick he received in a soccer match with Kokuvil Hindu College. He was a very good sportsman and captained the cricket and soccer teams. The prefect of games and the first team of many schools including Kokuvil Hindu attended the funeral and paid their respects to him. The whole school went to Keerimalai and joined in his 30th day rites, and had lunch there. The next day Paramanathan ’s parents invited the pupils and teachers to lunch at their home. The school was one community bound by love, good-fellowship and brotherhood.

**Teachers**

Lives of great men all remind us

We can make our lives sublime,

And, departing, leave behind us

Footprints on the sands of time

Let us then, be up and doing

With a heart for any fate;

Still achieving, still pursuing,

Learn to labour and to wait - (H. W.Longfellow-1809-1882)
I remember the enthusiastic band of teachers whose response to my call had always gone far beyond what mere duty dictated. They held extra free tuition classes for examination going pupils on weekends and on vacations. When we could not fit all those who sought admission, we had dual sessions for two years till we put up new classrooms; that is, the Junior School worked from 8.00 a.m. to noon and the Upper School from noon to 5.00 p.m. Some teachers worked almost eight hours a day. I will always remember and thank all those young teachers, who almost as an act of condescension, but unable to resist my entreaties, came to this remote village school and helped raise teaching standards and build healthy traditions in new fields of activity and shared with me the travail of a New Birth. I also remember with pride, all those old pupils who brought honour to their 'alma mater' in abundant measure. I have always paid my tribute to the teachers, pupils and parents who worked so hard in building modern Skantha. Friends have often told me that Skantha's successes were entirely due to me. My reply was that credit should really belong to the teachers who worked so selflessly and to the pupils who responded so splendidly.

After the take over of schools by the government, the complaint is that teachers generally have lost interest and are slack in their work and pupils have to pay dearly for private tuition. What teachers should bear in mind is that though the government has taken over the schools, the children still remain their charge and that they should not betray the trust. We had faith in our pupils and respected their personalities. Pupils who were condemned and given up by other schools found asylum here. They left us with their angularities rounded, their personalities well adjusted and are doing well in life.

During the early 1950s there was a dearth of graduate teachers to teach science subjects in the university entrance classes. We had to bring these teachers from India. Whenever teachers were needed, I went to Madras, interviewed applicants and appointed graduates with honours or first class degrees from the Madras University. They all proved to be good and extremely dedicated teachers. Many of them were good sportsmen and they helped to raise the standard of sports and enrich the school in various ways. Srinivasa Iyengar, Sivasubramaniam, Menon, Matthews Nanian, Daniel, Gurunath, Ramamoorthy, Rajapandian, Prabhakaran and Pankajam were some of the teachers who became lecturers and professors in Indian colleges when they returned to India. Later, we appointed our old students who qualified from Ceylon and Madras universities. They did their best with whole hearted dedication and produced excellent results in public examinations. Sivasubramaniam for mathematics, Arulchelvam and Selvaratnam for Botany, P. V. Nadarajah for Physics, Mylupillai and Kanthaswamy for Chemistry, Sivapatham and Kanagasabai for Zoology, were all outstanding teachers.

Rev. Gunaratna Thero, a Buddhist monk, taught Sinhalese, which was a compulsory subject in many Jaffna schools up to the ninth standard. Students were able to read, write and understand Sinhalese. Nearly all schools in Jaffna had Sinhalese teachers at that time. There were many Sinhalese students studying at Skantha. Two of these students entered the university and one, Dayananda Srisena, became a Member of Parliament. All these students were able to speak Tamil fluently and whenever Dayananda came to Jaffna to address meetings, he did so in Tamil. When Sinhala was made the official language and with the resultant political upheavals the teaching of Sinhala was stopped and all the Sinhala students went back to schools in the South.

The retirement of S.Sivakumaran - witnesses the end of an era - an era that, passing through periods of darkness and despair, trials, and tribulations, successes and failures, finally emerged
triumphantly to reach glorious heights of achievement in many fields. The sweat and toil of many men went into the building of Skantha Varodaya College - dedicated men who, along with the Founder, faced undaunted, the early ordeals and thus were imbued with his humanity, courage and faith. I count three among them as outstanding. When I became principal in 1914, Chuppiramaniam (Sivasubramaniam), Clerkar Kandiah and Sivakumaran were there, still labouring as their master had taught them. They stood by me loyally, through fair and foul weather, worked as hard as or harder than I and shared with me the happiness of seeing the school being one of the three from the Northern Province to be raised to Super-Grade level.

**Mr V. Chuppiramaniam. (Sivasubramaniam) (Teacher 1928-1943, Vice Principal 1944-1962. Principal 1963 1969)**

In my prize day report of 1962, I have said: "Mr Chuppiramaniam has laboured as hard as or even harder than I have done, spending all his time for the building of the school. He was really responsible for the internal administration of the school, looking after all the details of the time table, organizing school curricula and in brief the whole content of education. ... He carried out willingly and cheerfully the building programme of the college. He was the minister of Home Affairs while I was in charge of Foreign Affairs." Nevertheless, today, when I look back on the past I realize how inadequate are the above words to evaluate the sterling worth of his services. I had failed to mention his equally valuable teaching abilities. It is amazing how besides the heavy administrative work, he could teach Mathematics, Chemistry and Geography in the Advanced Level classes and produced excellent results. Generations of Engineers, Accountants and Research Scholars owe their present position to him. I again express my gratitude to him.

When I retired in 1962 the mantle fell on Mr. Chuppiramaniam who, not only consolidated the gains of the earlier period, but struck out into new fields of activity. The college reached its highest peak in 1964 with 2237 pupils, with excellent results in public examinations, an all time record of 43 entrants to the Ceylon Universities.

**Clarker TKandiah.**

A great landmark in Skantha’s annals disappeared when Mr TKandiah retired in May 1968, after a service of thirty-seven years. He had guided me through the intricacies of the code and the departmental regulations. He has been, through all these years, my Chief Counselor, Financial Secretary, Controller of Establishments, Builder, Supervisor of Works, Student and Teacher Counselor - all rolled into one. Clerker, has husbanded our slender resources so well that we have put up all these buildings at minimum cost. He had almost renounced his family and spent all his days and nights in the College and looked after its welfare in a way that no one could have done. Many believed that he never even slept. He knew every pupil, their parents and their background, he also knew how many bunch of plantains lay ripe on the trees and if some were missing he even knew who took them. The College can never be sufficiently grateful to him.

**Mr. Sivakumaran (teacher, vice-principal, principal)**

Mr. Chuppiramaniam had the good fortune to retire when the school had reached the zenith of her glory. He must now be happy in the thought that he had not stayed longer. Clerker Kandiah had passed into the great Beyond, where mundane matters will not touch him. Mr Sivakumaran alone remained to face the problems that the nationalization of schools brought in its trail. The
transition was a hard one, and while principals and teachers changed, he took over the arduous task and measured up to it in every way with deeper awareness of the changing world and sensitive to new ideas and modes of thought.

In an article like this I cannot help reminiscence a little. That was a time when I spent rich, happy days, filled with the excitement of a new experience in education. Each new achievement was a personal adventure and a source of immense pleasure to the Founder who was then bed ridden. Then my chief concern was the choice of the right man for the particular work. I was looking for people with intelligence, who loved the school, who would be ready to shoulder responsibility, give of their best and put in much work than what mere duty required. With almost uncanny foresight, I spotted out Mr. Sivakumaran, pulled him out of the lower classes and put him in charge of some subjects in the higher forms. He lived up to my expectations, and when he returned after training, I gave him full charge of the middle school. He organized it beautifully and in a course of time, it became almost the best part of the school.

Sivakumaran’s punctuality has become almost a legend at Skantha; so have his other qualities. conformity, high standards of perfection, system and thoroughness and his absolute commitment to Skantha’s welfare. With me, he was frank and forthright in his criticisms, which were always expressed in a courteous way. His praise of any good done by me had no tinge of flattery in it. I welcomed his advice but dreaded his adverse criticism.

Mr. VDharmalingam, MP.

Secretary of the former Board of Trustees, has always taken an abiding interest in the school. He had been our good friend helping us in all manner of ways and more than that, he has been a very dear member of the Skantha family- known, respected, and loved by all pupils and teachers. We have made free use of all his resources. He has at no time used his position to get me to do any favour to his friends even when he was contesting the parliamentary elections or after he had become Member of Parliament. He has always respected the views of those who differed from him. Although two of my assistants belonging to opposing political parties were in the fight, he was most friendly with them.

Younger Teachers:

A sense of fellowship, a sharing concern, a togetherness with teachers and pupils, bound us all at Skantha as a family. Nevertheless, younger teachers were extremely loyal to me and volunteered to do more work than their mere duty required. While I socialized with them freely outside school hours, I was very hard with them at school. I shouted at them if they came late, or did not go to their classes in time. Hearing this, even senior teachers subject to similar lapses, were quick to reform. The late S.Sunthrasivam was the leader of the younger group and he was my trusted and loyal assistant. He proved an asset to the school and worked very hard to make Skantha shine in all fields. He brought to this task all that he had learnt at St. Joseph’s and Trinity Colleges and wanted to make Skantha as good as these schools. He was almost reckless in the way he used his talents to achieve this.

Sports and School Functions

SA. Wijeyatteike, Wilmot Perera and E.B. Wickremayake Q. C., were friends of mine and were all chief guests at our functions at Skantha. They were fine gentlemen, absolutely free from
communal prejudice. S.A. Wijeyatileke who was principal of Ananda College made a very moving speech and pleaded for communal harmony. The other Chief Guests from the South at our prize day functions were Dr. Kannangara, A.MA.Azeez, Dr. Ananda Guruge, Jinadasa Samarakody, Dr. G.P. Malalasekera and Shirley S.C. Corea.

In March 1948, the new sports field was formally opened by Dr. S. Subramaniam. The interhouse sports meet was held in July under the distinguished patronage of the Founder. Although bed-ridden at that time, he had the pleasure of being taken round the spacious grounds and of visiting the various 'Houses' and meeting the present students. This he did every successive year till his death in September, 1952. Skantha excelled in all sports and were Jaffna schools soccer champions for two years (1958, 1959). The first physical training teacher was Thangarajah. The soccer teams were coached by Kirupakaran and Thiagarajah. Nithiananthan, (later Proctor and Judge), and S. Selvaratnam, were responsible for introducing cricket at Skantha. The students who arrived from Malaya introduced Badminton. We had a very good indoor court and the standard of badminton continued to be very good. Sebastianpillai beside being an excellent teacher was a very dedicated and excellent cricket and soccer coach. Skantha won the Jaffna schools soccer championship (second eleven) in 1964.

True to the ideals of the founder and the great men who built it up, Skantha imparted a true Saivaite education to generations of students. During my time, the Sivapuranam and Thirwnurugatrupadai were chanted in the general assembly every Tuesday and Friday. Vidwan Arumugam with his mellifluous voice led the chanting. When they left school, there was hardly anyone who did not know these holy verses by heart. All school functions stated and ended with the singing of Thevaram. Thavarajah and Pon Suntharalingam delighted the audience by their soul-stirring renderings.

There were great teachers of Tamil and Hinduism. Two of the earliest were Brahmasiri Visuvanatha Kurukkal, Pundit in Tamil and Sanskrit, and Arnalavanar, son of the great poet - Chunnakam Kumaressamy Pulavar. Kurukkal was not blessed with a good voice but he made up for it by his captivating lectures on the Siva Puranas and the Ramayana. Arnbalavanar Master taught Saiva Siddantha. Being an academic, he was the first editor of the Eelakesari. Eelakesari was published by Eelakesari Ponniah at his Thirumakal Press in Chunnakam and was an extremely popular literary weekly during the nineteen forties and fifties.

Vidwan Arumugam, a first class Vidwan from Annamalai University joined our school in 1948. At Annamalai he had some of the most illustrious Tamil academics of his time like Sri Thandapani Thesikar as his teachers. The latter was a great musician and under him, young Arumugam developed into an accomplished singer. With poetry and music as his forte he infused the love of Tamil and religious music into thousands of his students. One of his first acts at Skantha was to compose and set to tune the College Song. I remember being one of the many who were enthralled when this song was first sung by him at the assembly. The other great teachers of Tamil literature were Kurumbasiddy Pundit Nadaraja, Mathakal Kanthaswamy (later of Peking Radio).
A compulsory subject for the senior public examination was English and this was anathema to most of the students of my days. But we had some excellent teachers who took care of the results. I learnt English first from Mr. S.Selvaratnam (popularly known as Lawton) and from Mr. J.Vijayaratnam. Mr. Selvaratnam was educated in Colombo and after graduation he came to this remote village school to teach. He was tall, handsome and always impeccably dressed. He may have been the first teacher in western attire at Skantha. Beside being a good teacher he was keenly interested in sports and did so much to promote cricket and athletics at Skantha. He was for many years, the Prefect of Games. Mr.Vijayaratnam joined Skantha fresh from his training at the Teachers' Training College, Maharagama. He too was always stylishly dressed but in national dress. His great love for English Poetry was reflected in his teaching. After all these years, I could still remember most of the poems he taught us. What Vidwan Arumugam was to Tamil Poetry, Vijayaratnam was to English Poetry. Mr. Selvaratnam now lives in Colombo and Mr. Vijayaratnam in Vavuniya.

In the Senior classes I was fortunate to have my father as my English Teacher. If the students eagerly waited for any class to start, it was his. Text books were not touched until the final exams approached. Until that time, topics of discussions were many, varied and extremely useful. It was like attending a hilarious comedy show. These are what two of his pupils said about him:

Your contributions to the uplift and enlightenment of our society are many. You were an active figure in the Youth Congress. As a teacher you educated generations of youth and positively influenced their values. We saw you as an embodiment of a radical humanism. You were a daring, active humanist not a passive one. You stood up for your ideas, ideas which were ahead of the times. And everyone knew where Orator stood in a social conflict. He always stood on the side of the underprivileged in a casteist society. He identified himself with progressive causes even when it was not so popular to do so in Jaffna. At school, you inspired us to think against the orthodoxy. Often you conveyed your powerful critique of our society's dominant values with brilliant humour. We learnt as we laughed. These are all great virtues and you still personify them'. (N.Shanmugaratnam, Kyoto, Japan 12.11.1992.)

"Orator Subramaniam, who was given a free hand by the manager of the school, the late Dr.S.Subramaniam P .S., transformed Skantha Varodaya College from its village beginnings, to a first rate school comparable to the best in the North - indeed in the whole Island. Apart from his personal qualities of head and heart, which alone would qualify him to belong to the' greats' of all time, this by itself was an achievement that will leave his indelible impress and stamp in the annals of Jaffna in particular and Sri Lanka in general. With English and Latin as his forte - this was indeed the favourite combination of his famous contemporary and compatriot in the Youth Congress, Handy Perinbanayagam- Orator was a teacher of excellence. He mesmerized his students and kept them spellbound with his classical allusions and their local rendering in picturesque vernacular. (S.Jesuratnam -1994)

Benediction

In the words of the poet Wordsworth, "the thought of our past years in me doth breed, perpetual benediction;" perpetual benediction first and foremost to the
Founder. Today we remember with reverent gratitude and affection Kandiah Upathiyayar, who, with undaunted courage and a vigorous idealism of service as his only resources, founded this school in 1894 and toiled hard for well over half a century in the education of the poor and brought happiness into the lives of numerous families.

Let us also offer benedictions to others who had helped the Founder in rearing this great monument. It is not possible to assess the value of the contribution Dr. Subramaniam has made to the growth of Skantha Varodaya College. What we owe to Dr. S.Subramaniam, our benefactor, cannot be described in words. He has been associated with the Founder from its very inception and in the early years of struggle when the Founder had not the financial resources to run the school with the poor fee collections. The Doctor was always there to help pay teachers' salaries, to put up buildings, and to provide furniture and other equipment. With all his courage, the Founder would have been crushed and gone under the burden of running the school, but for the timely help given by the Doctor at various times. He gave freely and largely and at all times, sums which ran into many thousands as Skantha expanded rapidly into a modern school. We will always treasure his memory.

We remember all those principals who worked under great hardships and gave of their best to the school. We remember all those dedicated teachers who, in a spirit of self-denial, worked on almost a pittance, and helped the Founder educate free, a large number of poor pupils. We thank all those young teachers of a later day, who almost as an act of condescension, but unable to resist my entreaties, came to this remote village school and helped raise teaching standards and build healthy traditions in new fields of activity and shared with me the travails of a New Birth. We remember with pride all those old pupils who brought honour to their alma mater in abundant measure.

I am afraid I have overstepped the Editor's space and I must abruptly close. There are, of course, many personal memories and outstanding events that I could record - but since this is a very short history, it seems to me that I should focus only on a few important aspects regarding the growth of the school. Whilst writing this piece I have had the feeling that my words fail to convey the affection they seek to express. I retain a kind of nostalgic longing for all these events remain etched forever in my mind. "Bliss, was it in that dawn to be alive. But to be young was very heaven."