



## **The Late Chelliah Gunapalasingam (1974-1982)**

Hailing from Urumpirai, he graduated from the University of Peradeniya with a B.A. degree in 1951. A superb teacher of Geography, he should be proud of having turned out excellent geographers who are the helm of affairs in our motherland and overseas as well. He was actively engaged in the Northern Province Teachers Association (NPTA). Mr. Gunapalasingam was its unanimous choice, time and time again, for the much coveted position of its secretary for many years.

He was appointed as Principal of our school in 1974 and served with distinction till 1982. His white dress, grey hair, punctuality and personality remain ever green. During his period in office, he followed the footsteps of his predecessors and he upgraded the academic and administrative standard of the college. The school began to develop rapidly; the number of students was increased; and an increased number of students gained admissions to Universities for the faculties such as Arts, Science, and Engineering. A new building for the library and a new playground was built in his period as well.

He engaged not only in matters of the educational system but also in the cultural and sports activities of students in the school. Though Mr. & Mrs. Gunapalasingam had no children of their own, they were the proud foster-parents and grand parents whose welfare they have always lovingly cared for. That was another feather to the cap of the Gunapalasingams!

He wish to serve at our school till his retirement, but it was very unfortunate that he was transferred in 1982 due to a political issue. Even after retirement he never failed to honour invitations sent by the college administration and OSAs for ceremonies and functions. His attachment to Velanai Central was so much. He had acquitted himself to the applause of the community at Velanai and its surrounding areas , so much so, soon after his retirement he was invited to UK and Canada by its old Students Association as its Guest-of-honour for their get-together and was felicitated most warmly. That alone speaks volume of the man!

Mr. Gunapalasingam, whom I had known for over three decades was indeed an A-plus personality who shunned the lime-light, led a life of plain living and high thinking far from the maddening crowd, ignoble strife! We have lost an eminent educationalist and a perfect gentleman when he passed away in Jaffna on the 31st January 2005. I had the privilege to be in school when he was the head of the school. The Principal Emeritus is no more but my close nexus with him will ever remain green in my heart.

**By: S. Elancheliyan**