CHAPTER V

VEDARATNAM PILLAI AND GURUKULAM

In the history of mankind we came across persons of outstanding humanitarian service care such person who served to emancipate the weather and neglected sections of society was Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai. The 'Shantiniketan' founded by Ravindranath Tagore still speaks of his contributions to social values. Similarly the Gurukulam formed by Vedaratnam Pillai speaks volumes of his concern and case for society.

Vedaratnam Pillai being a Gandhian was not only a politician but also a social worker. He fought for social justice such as removal of untouchability and prohibition among the lower classes of society. As a humanitarian he wanted to start a Gurukulam in his native place Vedaranyam. Gurukulam type of education was ancient in origin. Later, in modern days, it was encouraged by Arya Samaj. It was this organisation that
started many Gurukulams in the country imparting Vedic principles and teachings\(^1\). But Vedaratnam Pillai's Gurukulam was to be based on Gandhian ideals of Basic education.

It was during this time, Gandhiji evolved a scheme of National Education. He formulated this scheme in view of the needs of the country. It was called Wardha Scheme or Basic Education\(^2\). Gandhiji combined modern education with handicraft industry. His type of basic education was Indian\(^3\). It was to train children for the "Learning and Doing". It is centred on small crafts like weaving, smithy, agricultural etc. and other subjects are taught indirectly in the light of principal crafts\(^4\).

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4. B. Nuniya, p. 525.
Gandhiji's scheme of Basic Education was meant to remove illiteracy and solve unemployment problem. The Sergeant Scheme of Education of Government of India of 1933 was also based on Gandhiji's Wardha Scheme. Numerous schools for Basic Education had been established all over the country during 1940's and the government after August 1947 encouraged this type of education. As Vedaratnam Pillai was a disciple of Gandhiji, these ideals influenced him to start a Gurukulam based on basic education. At the same time he wanted to help two destitute girls on humanitarian grounds by making use of them in his Gurukulam.

Vedaratnam Pillai came to know of a Gurukulam started by V.V. Subramania Iyar at Cheranmadevi of Tirunelveli District, known as "Bharat Vihar Ashramam". It was this Ashramam that was also publishing a Journal namely Bala Bharathi. Its editor was Suddhanantha Bharathi. This was a famous journal read by all freedom fighters.
fighters. It was through this journal, Vedaratnam Pillai came to know the activities of Gurukulam and he had an intention of visiting this Gurukulam.

In 1924 he visited the Gurukulam. Impressed by this institution he revealed his feelings to Kaviyogi Suddhanantha Baharathiyar and sought his help in starting a similar one in his own native place. But he got no encouragement from him. Hence, his idea of starting a Gurukulam in 1920's had not materialised.

In the meantime Vedaratnam Pillai devoted his services for the cause of freedom. He fully involved himself in Salt Satyagraha in 1930s and went to jail. His frequent involvement in political activities in early 1930's made the British officials to arrest him three times and the result was that Vedaratnam Pillai had to spend many days in prison. Later, he participated in individual Satyagraha in 1940.

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7 *Ibid.*,.
In 1942, the Indian National Congress launched the Quit India Movement but he considered the Quit India Movement against the principle of non-violence. Hence he was not involved in this movement. It was at this time he was thinking of starting a Gurukulam at Vedaranyam. To materialise this programme there came an opportunity for him to help two poor girls.

In 1945 one Narayanasamy Iyer came to him with his two daughters Saradha and Kamala. He was once a mirasidhar in the village of Thalaiyur of Mayavaram Taluk. He was a Gandhian. He took part in all freedom struggles and went to jail often in the years between 1921 and 1930. He helped Vedaratnam Pillai in all his political activities especially during the Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha. He sold all his lands and properties for the cause of Freedom struggle and also for the uplift of Harijans. The result was that he became penniless and came to Vedaratnam Pillai at his old age with his two daughters and entrusted them to Vedaratnam Pillai. Thus, the responsibility of looking after these two girls fell on Vedaratnam Pillai. T. Krishnamurthy, A brief History of Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai, p.172.
being humanitarian wanted to help these two girls at any cost, educate them and involve them in social and constructive activities.

Gandhiji advised the Congressmen to do some Constructive programmes such as Basic Education to the people in the country. In many parts of the country the followers of Gandhiji had been spreading his programme of Basic education to the nook and corner. In Tamil Nadu too, his programme of Basic education was upheld by the Gandhians like N.M.R.Subharaman of Madurai. An organisation for the development of Basic Education in Tamil Nadu had also been formed under the Presidentship of Bakthavathsalam. Under the patronage of this organisation, an institution for imparting training in Basic Education to teacher trainees had also been started in Gandhi Ashramam in 1945 at Tiruchengode in Salem District. This Ashramam was under the control of veteran Gandhian, G.Ramachandran. He was giving training in Basic education to the teacher trainees and volunteers. Vedaratnam Pillai in order to help the two girls Saradha and Kamala sent them to Tiruchengode Ashramam to receive training in Basic Education. By sending these girls to this school Vedaratnam Pillai
had the intention of starting a Gurukulam in the line of Gandhiji's ideals of Basic Education with the help of these two girls.

A camp was held on at Vedaranyam to give training in the Constructive programmes of Gandhiji to the Volunteers in 1945. Veteran Gandhian of Tamil Nadu like R.V.Rudrappasami Chidambaram, R.Vinayagam Pillai and Arunachalam took up the responsibility of imparting training in Gandhian constructive programmes to those who attended the camp. Leaders like Sucheta Kripalni, Soundaram Kailasam and P.Alagesan attended the valedictory function of the camp. They advised the Gandhian followers in Tamil Nadu to propagate the ideals of Basic Education to the public. Vedaratnam Pillai took up the responsibility of propagating the ideals of Basic Education by means of distributing pamphlets to the people. The following are the aims of Basic education:

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9 Pamphlet distributed by Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai on Basic Education in 1945.
01. To provide real freedom to the people.

02. To inculcate the spirit of tolerance among people.

03. To achieve equality among people.

04. To impart efficiency in the administration of one's country.

05. To prevent education on the one prevalent in western countries.

06. To promote and safeguard the basic tradition and culture of India.

07. To make people treat one another on equal footing.

08. To make people shed hatred for others.

09. To prevent acquisition of knowledge only for material gains as in the case with Western countries.

10. To impart dignity of labour and devotion to duty to everyone.

11. To make people to translate their ideas and principles into action.

12. To enable one to do righteous things and thereby hold his head high.

13. To make one imbibe the qualities of forbearance, tolerance and bent of mind not to bend before "insolent might".

14. To impart bravery, fortitude, love and affection for others.

15. To make one realise that the interests and well-being of others are greater those of his.

16. To make one to be simple in his food and dress habits.
17. To inspire everyone to safeguard their cultural ethos as reflected in their arts and architecture.

18. To maintain the country's character of "Unity in Diversity".

19. To make everyone economical and thrifty in life.

20. To make every one a useful and good citizen of the country living in amity and friendship with others.

At the completion of training at Tiruchengodu G. Ramachandran organised a function at Madras in which he invited Mahatma Gandhiji specially to bless the 26 Basic Education trainees of the Ashramam and to distribute their certificate also in 1945. In the function Gandhiji spoke about the importance of Basic Education and advised the Gandjian followers to start at least 10 Basic training institutions in Tamil Nadu. With the encouragement given by Gandhiji, Vedaratnam Pillai undertook the responsibility of taking over the Government aided school at North Main street of Vedaranyam which was hitherto under the control of "Pasumatam" and wanted to convert this school into Basic Education and named it as "Kasturba Gandhi Kanya ------

10 Tamil Encyclopaedia, p.519.
Gurukulam". Accordingly on 7 February 1946, the school was inaugurated in a function by Rudrappasamy a North Indian Saint under the presidentship of Devakottai Sivasubramanian. His wife Kamala Subramaninan hoisted the flag. The inaugural address was given by L.N.Gopalsami of Karaikudi\textsuperscript{11}.

Saradha and Kamala were appointed as teachers of this school. Initially only two students joined the school\textsuperscript{12}. Saradha after having worked for two years i.e. upto 1948 in this school became secretary to Vedaratnam Pillai. Saradha left the school in 1961 after her marriage.

At the beginning, Vedaratnam Pillai spent an hour everyday going round the streets especially in the Harijan streets persuading them to join the school. Within three days, he was able to admit 20 girls to the school.

\textsuperscript{11} 1952 Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Annual Report, p.27.

\textsuperscript{12} T. Krishnamurthy, A brief History of Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai, p.78.
school. Vedaratnam Pillai treated the Harijan children on par with other children. In fact, he gave special attention for their upliftment. Knowing their conditions fully well, he himself taught these children the rudiments of cleanliness. He combed their hair and gave them new dresses. Above all, he also took meals with them. Persons like Rudrappasamy and Appakutty Pillai also joined with him in taking meals with Harijan children. Vedaratnam Pillai joined with these children in singing songs. This kind of personal involvement, at a time when social disabilities against the Harijans were conspicuous in the country made the parents of the Harijans in this area to hold Vedaratnam Pillai in high esteem. Hence, the Harijan parents of this locality found no hesitation to send their children to this school.

The school had only five classes from I to V standards. Within a few months pupils from far away places came to attend this school. There also came a necessity to start one hostel for the girls students.

Interview with V.Appakutti Pillai, the son Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai, 25, November 1992.
Vedaratnam Pillai made arrangements to start an hostel for these students. The hostel was also inaugurated by Gandhian R.V.Kuppusamy at a function under the presidency of Arunachalam one of the Renovation Committee Member. As Vedaratnam Pillai had a high esteem for the preachings and services of Ramakrishna Paramamosar and his wife Saradha Devi, he named this hostel as Saradhambal Devi hostel. About 29 girls from the area of Tiruthuraipoondi joined the hostel. Food and cloths were given to them.

The number of inmates of the hostel later increased. Among them, nearly 50% of the pupils belonged to poor caste Hindu families and the other 50% belonged to scheduled castes. Eradication of untouchability in the society was one of his major ideals and he wanted to set an example in this context by mingling with the Harijan children.

For the growth of Gurukulam, Vedaratnam Pillai strived hard to get financial aids from organisations.

and some individuals. First he sought help from Gandhiji to get financial assistance to this Gurukulam from Kasturba Gandhi Welfare Fund in 1947. But his request was turned down on the ground that Vedaranyam with a population of 2000 people with no basic facility was not suitable to start a Gurukulam. Further the present locality in which the Gurukulam was situated did not have any adequate facility and space for further expansion. Then Vedaratnam Pillai sought the help of Sucheta Kripalni in getting financial aid from Kasturba Welfare Fund for this Gurukulam. She suggested to Vedaratnam Pillai to shift the Gurukulam from the present locality to a place outside Vedaranyam where Vedaratnam Pillai could get sufficient space for further expansion. So Vedaratnam Pillai shifted the Gurukulam to Maharajapuram, a village situated outside Vedaranyam in the lands belonging to him. The institution also got recognition and financial assistance from Kasturba Gandhi Welfare Fund.¹⁵

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The school began to function in the new locality from 26 January 1947. The school at Vedaranyam came to be called "Thayumanavar Vidyalaya". In due course, it grew into a big middle school with standards I to VII. After the shifting of Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam from Vedaranyam to Maharajapuram, Vedaratnam Pillai was able to get financial assistance from various sources also. For the management of Gurukulam a trust was created and it was registered under the Society of registration Act at Vedaranyam in October 1946. The members of the trust were:

1. T.S.Avinasilingam Chettiar
2. N.M.R. Subbaraman
3. A.Krishnasamy Vandaiyar
4. V. Nadimuthu Pillai
5. V.S. Thiagaraja Mudaliar
6. K.S. Sambasiva Iyer

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16 Ibid.,

17 Society Registration Act XXII of 1860.

18 A Brief History of Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, p.2.
7. C.K. Subbiah Pillai
8. A.Ku.Ra.Muthukumara samy Pillai
9. A.J.Ananda Rajayam Mudaliar
10. A.Vedaratnam
11. V.Appakutti Pillai - Managing Trustee

For the growth of Gurukulam, Vedaratnam Pillai himself donated a total extent of thirty acres and seventy two cents of both dry and wet lands.¹⁹

Donation in the form of cash also came to the Gurukulam. The members of the endowment board gave Rs.250, each. Besides politicians, Ministers belonging to both and Central or State Governments, merchants and liberal minded people also gave cash donations for the

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¹⁹ A Brief History of Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, p.2. Some Philanthrophists also came to donate lands to the Gurukulam for its growth. One, Pondy Kalyanasundaram Pillai donated to an extent of 29, acres and 48, cents of land. S.Thayumanasamy, nephew of Vedaratnam Pillai donated 20, acres of wet land. One Ananda Rajayyam Mudaliar gave an extent of 16.32 acres to Gurukulam.²⁰ Besides, Vedaratnam Pillai purchased an extent of 21.28 acres and added. The Gurukulam thus came to possess a vast area of both wet and dry lands.

²⁰ Interview with S. Thayumanasamy, the son of Vedaratnam Pillai elder brother's son, Vedaranyam, 30, November 1992.
development of this Gurukulam\textsuperscript{21}. In 1965, an industrialist, N. Mahalingam of Pollachi was good enough to donate a sum of Rupees 10,000/- for purchase of a powerloom for this institution. The purpose of this powerloom was to train students in producing Khadi cloth. The production of Khadi cloth also brought some income to Gurukulam\textsuperscript{22}.

The Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam which was started in the beginning with two thatched sheds, two lady teachers and two girl students has at present emerged into a big establishment of having nine concrete roofed buildings, ten tiled roofed buildings and seven thatched sheds. The school got recognition from the government in February 1948. From 1949, the institution began to receive teaching grants from the government\textsuperscript{23}.

\textsuperscript{21} Interview with A. Vedaratnam the present Managing Trustee (Vedaratnam Pillai's grand son) Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedaranyam, 5, March 1993.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{23} Interview with R. Janakiraman, Manager Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedaranyam, 20 November 1993.
The institution for its maintenance also received grants from various departments of Tamil Nadu Government such as the Education Department, Harijan Welfare Department, Backward Class Department and Social Welfare Department. Likewise, the Central Social Welfare Board also provides grants to this Gurukula to the tune of Rupees 10,000 every year. The Gurukulam in Maharajapuram has standards from VI to XII. It has now 1509 girls in its roll. This includes 183 scheduled caste girls, 542 most backward caste girls, 142 backward class girls and 42 girls belonging to other communities. Free books are given to scheduled caste, backward and most backward girls.

Ibid.,


The Thayumanavar Vidyalayam at Vedaranyam is also under the control of the Gurukulam. This is a basic education school for primary classes. Now there are nine lady teachers and one Headmaster. The student strength of the school in the year 1993 was 590. Among them 345 were boys and 245 were girls. Scholarships are given by Gurukulam to the girl students. The following table shows the number of students receiving scholarships in each class in the year 1993.

The Gurukulam serves the educational needs of the girl students coming mostly from rural areas adjoining Vedaranyam. Nearly 65% of the girls are from

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste to which belonged</th>
<th>Class Studying</th>
<th>No. of Girls</th>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule Caste</td>
<td>XI Standard</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>XII Standard</td>
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<td>Backward Class</td>
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<td>XII Standard</td>
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<td>Most Backward Class</td>
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<td>XII Standard</td>
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<td>Denotified Tribes</td>
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<td>XII Standard</td>
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Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedaranyam, Students Scholarship Register, 19, November 1993.
neighbouring villages around Vedaranyam, viz. Pushpavanam, Kodiyakarai, Katharipulam, Kuravapulam, Karappambulam, Kodiakkadu.

Vocational subjects are also taught to the students. Printing was started in 1975. Radio, television course in 1982 and Electronic course in 1984\(^9\). These courses were started as part of the syllabi for the vocational students of the higher secondary standard\(^{30}\). In the year 1993, there were 40 girl students studying in the printing course, 6 and 25 girl students were studying in Electronics and Radio Television courses respectively.

Nearly 60 to 70 percent of the students in vocational courses pass every year\(^{31}\). They leave the

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\(^{29}\) Interview with A. Vedaratnam, present Managing Trusty, Grandson of Vedaratnam Pillai, Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedaranyam, 15, March 1993.

\(^{30}\) Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Register, 17, March 1993.

\(^{31}\) Ibid.,
institution with necessary knowledge and confidence that they can lead their life in future under self employed schemes.

Apart from curricular courses both academic and vocational, the Gurukulam conducts extra curricular activities like the National Cadet Corps and the Junior Red Cross etc. The girls also involve themselves in social service activities too. On every birthday of Vedaratnam Pillai, the students of the Gurukulam undertake the social service activities such as cleaning of slums in the neighbourhood villages\(^{32}\). Besides some special courses are also taught to the students. One such course is siddha medicine. The students who pass X standard class can join this course in the Gurukulam. Students who had studied this course became successful in their career\(^{33}\).

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\(^{32}\) Ibid.,

The Gurukulam conducts another special course in printing technology. In this rudiments of printing technology are taught. Girls who pass higher secondary course are admitted. As a result many destitute girls benefit by studying this course and many were also employed\(^{34}\).

The Gurukulam possesses a good library. It has nearly 6000 books of which 4000 books were donated by Vedaratnam Pillai\(^{35}\). Dailies in Tamil English and Hindi weeklies, bimonthlies, monthlies and Annual magazines and and journals are also available in this library\(^{36}\). Nadimuthu Pillai former Thanjavur District Board President inaugurated this library in 1952-53. He was very much pleased with the functioning

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\(^{34}\) Interview with R. Rajalakshmi, Headmistress, Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedaranyam, 14, February 1994.


of this library. On that occasion he granted rupees 250/- annually as a special grant from the District Board funds.

To make of the students good citizens of the country, citizenship training is also imparted to them. Training in citizenship activities is one of the main items of extra curricular activities for the boys in this institution. It also gives training to the students in the principles of democracy. Hence, it stresses that this kind of training should be given to the boys even at the very early stage of their school education. As a result the day to day affairs of the school is maintained by the students themselves with the help of the staff members. The students in each class is divided into different squads and each squad is allotted some work. For example a squad which is allotted the work of maintaining the discipline looks after the problems relating to the maintenance of discipline.

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38 Letter from T.M. Baskara Thondaiman, Thanjavur District Social Welfare Officer, 19, October 1951, to Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedaranyam.
Another squad is entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining cleanliness. In such a way the maintaining of classroom activities is entrusted to the boys themselves. Besides, the administration of the Gurukulam is also left to the students. By means of democratic principles they elect a council and call it a cabinet and entrust into the leaders.

This council resembles more or less the cabinet formation in a parliamentary democracy of a government. T.S. Avinashilingam Chettiar, former Minister for Education, while visiting this institution in 1952, spoke well of the citizenship training that had been imparted by the school staff to the students and he even went to the extent of saying that this type of training should be brought to all the schools in the country. The former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, K. Kamaraj and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy Naicker also visited


1. The Prime Minister
2. The Minister for Law and Order
3. Minister for Food
4. Minister for Classroom Activities
5. Minister for Arts and crafts
6. Minister for Agriculture
this school and appreciated the co-operative efforts of the teaching and the taught in maintaining the school in a democratic way\textsuperscript{40}.

Such type of training is also given to the students staying in the hostels run by the institution. These hostels were founded by Acharya Vinobhave in a function and were inaugurated by freedom fighter N.M.R. Subbaraman of Madurai in March 1958\textsuperscript{41}. These hostels were also maintained by the students with the help of the Gurukulam staff. In the hostel, the inmates themselves prepared their food, made their clothes and got other things done. There were group activities in the hostels. Apart from study, the inmates of the hostel were given training in some relevant activities of manufacturing some articles. They manufactured incence and vibhuti Holly Ashes and other useful articles in the hostel. The Government of India too complimented the Gurukulam as a model institute for Basic Education\textsuperscript{42}.

\textbf{\textsuperscript{40} Periyar E.V. Ramasamy Naickar, 20, December 1959, Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Visitors Book. p.102.}
\textbf{\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.}
\textbf{\textsuperscript{42} R.C. No. Fl-12-49 B.1 dated 3, December 1951.}
The Gurukulam also serves the needs of the children of working women. For the benefit of these children, creches were opened in villages like Agastiyampalli, Vannatheru and Thethakudi South. The Gurukulam gives importance in celebrating national festivals. One of the ideals of Basic Education is also to teach the students the importance of national festivals and thereby make the students to love their country and its cultural ethos. On these occasions, important leaders were invited irrespective of any political party and were made to give speeches on the significance and importance of the national festivals. On one annual day function, Kalyanasundaram, the leader of Tamil Nadu Communist Party of India was invited to this institution and he gave a speech. He was also satisfied with the functioning of the institutions and also wrote letters to Vedaratnam Pillai to improve this institution further.

The students of the Gurukulam also involved themselves in national services too. The students exhibited patriotic tendencies whenever there was a national crisis. For instance during the Sino-Indian war of 1962, the students of this institution collected about one thousand and five hundred rupees as contribution to war activities and handed over it to Kamaraj, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

As Vedaranyam situated on the eastern coast of Tamil Nadu in Tanjore district, it is often prone to cyclonic weather. On 3 November 1952, there came a terrible cyclone. This caused damages to many of the buildings of Gurukulam. Rajaji who was then the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, visited the Gurukulam, saw the damages of the buildings caused by cyclonic storms and granted some financial aid from the state funds to reconstruct the damaged buildings.


On another occasion, Rajaji donated Rs.11,000/- from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund and also granted another Rs.11,000/- from government fund for relief work\textsuperscript{46}. In addition Vedaratnam Pillai sought the help of Ramakrishna Mission for relief work. The Mission constructed a Harijan colony "Ramakrishna puram". This was inaugurated in November 1957 at a function by the then Governor of Tamil Nadu A.J. John\textsuperscript{47}. At that time the Governor visited the Gurukulam and he donated Rs.2,500/- to Gurukulam for the reconstruction of the buildings\textsuperscript{48}.

Help came from Pollachi Mahalingam, to protect the children of Gurukulam from future cyclonic dangers. Vedaranyam is prone to cyclonic storm on account of its proximity to the coast. In order to help the Gurukulam, he approached the traders in Holland for

\textsuperscript{47} Interview with V. Appakutti Pillai, Vedaranyam, 25, November 1992.
financial aid. A sum of rupees two lakhs was collected and with that amount a cyclonic shelter was constructed in the Gurukulam. It gives protection to the children and staff of this institution at times of inclement weather and cyclonic storms. Now this cyclonic shelter is used as prayer hall on other days.

Vedaratnam Pillai died on 24 August 1961. His son took it as a challenge and determined to run the institution on the lines and principles of his father Vedaratnam Pillai. The Gurukulam had grown as one of the Model institutions for Basic Education in the country thanks to the efforts taken by Vedaratnam Pillai. But for him, the institution would not have grown well. As Gurukulam was one of the few important institutions in the country imparting Gandhian way of

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Ibid.,
At present, A. Vedaratnam, grand son of Vedaratnam Pillai is acting as the Managing Trustee of this institution. He runs the institution following the footsteps of his grandfather.

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Ibid.,
life and offers to the destitute girls irrespective of caste and religion, it is natural that important personalities mostly followers of Gandhian ideals visited this institution and appreciated the work of this institution. Accordingly O.P. Ramasamy Reddiar, then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1947 visited the institution and said. "I stayed in the Gurukulam which is being run on Gandhijis favourite Basic Education system. The managing body and staff sincerely work for the development of the institution"52. T.S.Avinasilingam Chettiar, in the year 1952 said, "Whether there could be any institution like the Gurukulam elsewhere in the country"53. N.M.R.Subbaraman, a freedom fighter of Madurai District observed that under the benign guidance of Vedaratnam Vedaratnam Pillai, the Gurukulam grew into an admirable centre of learning54 G. Ramachandran, Director of Gandhigram spoke of the Gurukulam as a

52 O.P. Ramasamy Reddiar, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Visitors Book, 8, September 1947, p.80.
53 Letter to wrote Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedaranyam.
"republic" of children and as the best girls basic school, he had ever seen in the country. He regarded that institution as a miniature India of Gandhiji's dreams.\(^55\).

C. Subramanian, Minister of Education of Tamil Nadu in the year 1953 visited the Gurukulam and said, "I have no doubt that the New India of Gandhiji's dreams would emerge from schools like Gurukulam founded on Gandhiji's ideals and it would be an institution working of emulation.\(^56\). Sri Prakasam, Chief Minister of Madras Presidency during his visit in 1946 observed, "this is a model school catering to the educational needs of the orphans and the destitute women.\(^57\).

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55 Letter from G. Ramachandran, Director, Gandhigram to Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedaranyam, 8, April 1953.

56 Letter from C. Subramanian to Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedaranyam, 28, April 1953.

Conclusion

Thus the Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam at Vedaranyam stands as a monument for the great services rendered by Vedaratnam Pillai for the upliftment of women with special attention to Harijan children.