

It was the year 1943. In the wake of the Second World War there loomed fear and frustration as a global phenomenon. During this period of turmoil and uncertainty, Swami Tyagishanandaji, the then President of Ramakrishna Ashrama Bangalore, keenly felt the need to impart the great ideas of religion to young men who were the future hope of the country. Being also conversant with the hardships of boys from outside Bangalore, he was eager to provide a good environment to at least a few of them.

With this two-fold end in view, Swami Tyagishanandaji decided to start a Hostel for boys. At the beginning the hostel was a small room adjacent to the Ashrama cow-shed having six students on its roll. In the early days, Swami Tyagishanandaji himself used to cook for the students for quite a few weeks. He was mainly responsible for overcoming the initial difficulties and giving a strong momentum to the starting of the Hostel.

In 1944, on the occasion of the birthday of Swami Vivekananda, a few devotees of the Ashrama and some philanthropists offered liberal donations to the Hostel. A devotee by name Dr. B Narayana Rao, a great friend and well wisher of the Ashrama, generously lent his private dwelling in Bull temple road for the use of students from 1944 to 1955 free of rent.

In 1947, two other small houses in the same compound were also handed over to the Ashrama. This enabled the authorities to increase the admissions from six to 35. Out of these, eight students were housed in the Ashrama premises itself in the first floor of the Ramakrishna Centenary Memorial Building(present Vivekananda Balaka Sangha Hall).

The three buildings in the original site where the Mandiram was functioning were all designed for families and so were ill-fitted to serve the purpose of a Students Hostel. The rooms were poorly furnished and there were no facilities like tap water, hot water for bathing, etc. Water had to be drawn from a well in the compound.

The Shrine and Prayer Hall were two contiguous small rooms, where daily prayer used to be held. There was special prayer on Wednesdays, Swami Tyagishanandaji used to hold religious classes for the boys on Saturdays in the Ashrama itself.

In 1951 Swami Tyagishanandaji passed away and Swami Yatiswaranandaji succeeded him as the next President of the Ashrama in 1952. Almost simultaneously Dr. B. Narayan Rao expressed his desire to settle down in Bangalore permanently after his retirement from Government service. So the Mandiram had perforce to be moved to a rented building in Gandhi Bazaar and a suitable permanent Home for Institution became an urgent necessity.

Thus the foremost task of the new President was to collect funds and raise a permanent Home for the boys. It was proposed to construct a building befitting the city of Bangalore and eventually accommodating about one hundred boys at a cost of Rs.2.5 lakhs on a plot of land belonging to the Ashrama and to convert a portion of the vast land into sports-cum-indoor games pavilion at a cost of Rs 50, 000. The whole scheme was to be completed in two stages - first, the ground floor, accommodating 50 students and estimated to cost 1.56 lakhs to be completed during 1955-56, and the first floor to be taken up next year.

Funds came pouring from generous public. The Mysore University was especially interested in the project, itself contributing a substantial amount of Rs 72,000. The Mysore Government waived conversion charges on the 3 1/2 acres plot. The construction work started enthusiastically in April 1954. Undoubtedly the task of collecting such a huge fund was onerous but it became possible through Divine help. The public also were eager to contribute their best.

Despite difficulties, the work completed its first phase and Mandiram moved to its new(present) premises on 3rd January 1956.

At that time the ground floor was only partly completed. There was still a dire need for a prayer hall, a play ground and a well-equipped library. By God's grace this too was fulfilled within the next two years.

The spacious structure in its present form is a single storeyed building of fine proportions and great architectural beauty consisting of 35 rooms, besides service portion store rooms, a prayer hall, a reading room and an indoor games-cum-auditorium. The complex accommodates 95 students. The necessary furniture, such as table, chair and cot have been provided for students.

Thus the Ramakrishna Vidyarthi mandiram, which started with the object of inculcating the ideas and principles of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, the exponents of our ancient Indian culture and traditions, has been striving vigorously and uninterruptedly till this day and marching ahead energetically in the same spirit to keep the lamp of knowledge burning in the hearts of thousands of students who go out as role-models, representatives of the worthy institution.