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ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Times of India ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE : 30/12/2019

Pejawar seer, a spiritual guide and political mentor, passes on

Had Reached Out To Dalits And Muslims

Stanly Pinto and Sandeep Moudgal | TNN

Mangaluru/Bengaluru: Pejawar mutt pontiff Vishweshwara Teertha — who played a key role in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, besides being a spiritual guide for lakhs of his followers and a mentor for two generations of political leaders — passed away in Udupi on Sunday morning due to complications arising out of pneumonia. He was 88.

The pontiff was admitted to Kasturba Medical College in Manipal, about 60km from Mangaluru, in the early hours of December 20 after he

FULL COVERAGE: PAGE 2

complained of breathlessness. The seer was declared dead around 9.20am on Sunday after he was brought back to Pejawar Mutt in Udupi as doctors treating him said his health condition had irretrievably deteriorated.

Chants of 'Govinda, Govinda' filled the air as the pontiff's body was brought to Udupi's Ajjarkad and was later flown to Bengaluru's Basavanagudi National College grounds to enable the public to pay homage to the seer.

He was laid to rest at Pooranapragna Vidyapeetha in south Bengaluru at 9.02pm with full state honours.

Born in 1931 in Dakshina Kannada district, Vishweshwara Teertha was more politically aware than most religious leaders of his time. He took sanyas at the age of eight

UNTOUCHABILITY A BLACKMARK ON DHARMA

- > Pontiff rose above straitjacketed role of a religious leader, took social reformative steps
- > Opened doors of Udupi Krishna Mutt to dalits and other backward communities
- > Hosted iftaar for Muslims within Udupi mutt premises, invited criticism from hardliners
- > He termed untouchability 'a blackmark' on dharma and society, refused to accept it
- > Co-founded Vishwa Hindu Parishad, donned active role in Ram Janmabhoomi movement
- > Had hundreds of admirers and followers among political parties, mainly BJP

Hindus should co-operate in the construction of a mosque, and Muslims in the construction of temple in Ayodhya

MISTAKE ON INTOLERANCE

Killing (of scholar MM Kalburgi and writer Gauri Lankesh) is grave injustice. Whatever the differences, violence or murder is not the answer. There are other means of protest as Mahatma Gandhi has showed



VISHWESHA TEERTHA | 1931-2019

PM Narendra Modi | PRIME MINISTER
 "I'm blessed to have had many opportunities to learn from the swamiji. Our recent meeting, on the day of Guru Purnima, was memorable. His impeccable knowledge always stood out. A powerhouse of service and spirituality, he continuously worked for a more just and compassionate society"

LK Advani | SENIOR BJP MEMBER
 "Apart from his contributions as a spiritual leader, I always admired the person he was — an embodiment of kindness, compassion and humility. His simplicity and austere living were other stellar qualities that always inspired me"

- ▶ Seer wanted to see a Ram temple at Ayodhya, P 2
- ▶ Pejawar mutt seer put Udupi on national map, P 2
- ▶ Vishwaprasanna Teertha set to succeed seer, P 2

years, held the reins of Parayaya (which allows administration of eight mutts of Udupi, besides offering puja to Lord Krishna) for a record five times, and travelled the country to understand the pains of the people.

A founding member of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the pontiff actively worked towards addressing the issue of untouchability by allowing entry of dalits and other backward castes into Udupi

Krishna Mutt and hosted iftaar for Muslims to break their fast during Ramzan.

His proximity to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former PMs, CMs and other political functionaries was a clear indication of the respect he commanded over the past 67 years, at the helm of the Pejawar mutt. Chief minister BS Yediyurappa said participation in the Ram temple agitation was the pontiff's "biggest contribution".

PM Modi, Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu, Union home minister Amit Shah and former AICC president Rahul Gandhi paid their tributes to the swamiji.

"Deeply pained to learn about the demise of Swamiji. He was an epitome of humanity, kindness and knowledge. His selfless contribution towards the welfare of people and society has no parallels," the Union home minister tweeted.