

Sixteenth Loksabha

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Title: Regarding need to confer Bharat Ratna award to Shri Sri Shivakumara Swamiji.

SHRI BHEEMRAO B. PATIL (ZAHEERABAD): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to raise a matter of urgent public importance in the House.

I would like to speak about a noted religious figure and humanitarian Sri Sri Shivakumara Swamiji, who headed the Siddaganga Mutt in Tumakuru, Karnataka.

He was an Indian supercentenarian, humanitarian, spiritual leader and educator. He was a Lingayat religious figure. He joined the Siddaganga Mutt in 1930 and became the Head Seer in 1941. He also founded the Sri Siddaganga Education Society. Described as the most esteemed adherent of Lingayatism, he was referred to as a walking God in the State of Karnataka. In 2015, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan, India's third highest civilian award by the Government of India.

Swamiji founded a total of 132 institutions for education and training that range from nursery to colleges for engineering, science, arts and management as well as for vocational training. He established educational institutions which offer courses in traditional learning of Sanskrit as well as modern science and technology. He was widely respected by all communities for his philanthropic work.

The Swami's *gurukula* houses more than 10,000 children from age 5 to 16 at any point in time and is open to children from all religions, castes and creeds and they are provided free food, education and shelter. The pilgrims and visitors to the Mutt also receive free meals. Under the pontiff's guidance, an annual agricultural fair is held for the benefit of the local population. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the former President of India, visited him at

Tumakuru and praised the initiatives of Swamiji in the field of education and for his humanitarian work.

Keeping in view of all the great things that Swamiji did for the welfare of the people, I demand that Bharat Ratna may be conferred to Sri Sri Shivakumara Swamiji.