

IN MEMORIAM

BIMAL KRISHNA MATILAL

1935 –1991

All Indianists will be saddened by news of the death of the editor of this Journal, Bimal Krishna Matilal, of bone cancer, on June eighth of this year. His loss brings a special pain to me, for pupils are supposed to outlive their teachers and Bimal was generous enough always to regard me as his teacher even in the days when I was learning more from him than I had taught him.

Bimal Matilal first came to me at Harvard in 1961, a young man of 26, already well trained by his Bengali teachers in Sanskrit and the traditional disciplines of a shastri. At Harvard he studied Navya-nyāya under me. He studied mathematical logic under Quine and Føllesdal. He took courses in the philosophy of language and broadened his former training by courses in Vedic studies and in Buddhism. His goal was to achieve a sufficient mastery of Western disciplines in those areas which had been explored in ancient and medieval India so that he could with fairness compare Indian and Western thought.

After taking his doctorate at Harvard, Matilal taught briefly at the Universities of Pennsylvania and Chicago and then for a number of years at the University of Toronto. From 1976 he was the Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford.

I shall not give a bibliography of Professor Matilal's many published works. In general, he moved from a careful exposition of particular Indian texts, as in *The Navya-nyāya Doctrine of Negation*, 1968, to a broader consideration of whole schools of Indian thought, as in *Epistemology, Logic and Grammar in Indian Philosophical Analysis*, 1971, and on to general comparisons of Indian and Western thought, as in many articles and in his *Logical and Ethical Issues of Religious Belief*, 1985. His greatest achievement, perhaps, was this Journal, which he founded in 1972 and edited for the next 19 years. In it he brought together the best articles of our time on Indian philosophy, written by authors from all over the world.

Bimal Matilal accomplished a truly noble work. He had the courage

to confront traditional Indian thought with the sciences and philosophies of modern world. Nowhere did he make excuses for India or, as many have done, retire into a pseudo-mysticism and sweep science under the rug. Time and again he threw light on the Indian traditions and showed them to be a worthy and admirable part of our total human accomplishment. This illumination excited him to continue his efforts even through the last painful years, when chemotherapy and radiation proved of no avail and when he was finally reduced to moving about by wheel chair.

I can still see him and hear him: tall, thin, of dignified demeanor, speaking very rapidly in a soft voice, in perfect English idiom but with a pronounced Bengali accent which he never lost. He was a patient and kindly man, always worrying about his family or his students or his journal, but never, as I remember, about himself. He was a courageous man and, in my estimation, a superb scholar.

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