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## OBITUARY

Lal Mani Joshi (1935–1984)

Professor Lal Mani Joshi passed away in June, 1984, at the prime of his life, leaving the field of Indian Buddhist Studies poorer by his sudden demise. We had great expectations from this youthful and energetic distinguished scholar of great potentialities in the field of Buddhist Studies.

He died suddenly of a ruptured ulcer a few weeks before his forty-ninth birthday. He had just spent three years in America: the first as Henry R. Luce distinguished Visiting Professor of Comparative Religious Ethics at Amherst College, and the next two as the Margaret Gest Professor of World Religions at Haverford College. During these years, his circle of devoted students and colleagues had widened considerably, and his writings had been published in journals and encyclopedias world-wide more numerous than ever. His important book, published just before his death, *Discerning the Buddha: A Study of Buddhism and of the Brahmanical Hindu Attitude to it* (Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1983), leaves us in no doubt that the late scholar made a penetrating analysis of the traditional Brahmanical approach towards Buddhism in an historical perspective. Few scholars have shown mastery over materials on the subject as Joshi did.

During his third and final year of leave from his Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies at Punjabi University in Patiala, he received information about his appointment to a Professorship in Buddhological Research, at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, affiliated with Varanasi Sanskrit University. Having spent fifteen years at the Punjabi University, he was not happy to leave his home in Patiala. But he felt that Buddhist studies in India required his move. He returned to Patiala to pack, amid the difficulties of the summer of 1984 in the Punjab. His library, possibly one of the best Buddhological collections in India, was shipped to Sarnath. Tragically, Professor Joshi never reached there himself, dying in the hospital in Delhi.

Professor Joshi was born on July 27, 1935, in a traditional Brahmin family in the Almora district of the Kumaon hills of Uttar Pradesh, near the ancient pilgrim route to Mt. Kailash. He was proud of the fact that his birth was in July of 1935, only a few weeks after H.H. the XIVth Dalai Lama was born, which he used to say was an "omen" of their shared concern for the

spread of appreciation of Buddhism in the world. As a young man he had strong spiritual inclinations, and a favorite story he liked to tell was how his parents were worried at one point that he might become a *Sadhu*, so intensely did he spend time meditating in the small but famous Yoga Ashramas in the Almora area. Fortunately, he met the lovely Janaki, his bride, who, as Uma did for Lord Śiva, effectively re-kindled his interest in the world.

In the late fifties he received his M.A. in Pali from Banaras Hindu University and, as well as his Ph.D., another M.A. in Ancient History and Culture from Gorakhpur University. His doctorate dissertation was on "Buddhistic Culture of India during the 7th and 8th Centuries." He started his career as Assistant Professor in the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture at Gorakhpur University from 1961 to 1967. He went on to join the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies at Punjabi University, Patiala, becoming a key figure in that thriving center of the study of world religions. He was made Dean of Faculty of Religious Studies, in 1980-81. His international reputation rose steadily as he ably edited the *Journal of Religious Studies*, and his milestone work in Indian religious history, *Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India* (Delhi, 1967), was more and more widely acclaimed. Another major project of his, with Bhikkhu Pāsādika, was the translation of the *Arya-vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* into Hindi (Sarnath, 1981). Other publications include *Dhammapada*, Pali Text in Gurmukhi Script (Patiala, 1969); *Brahmanism, Buddhism and Hinduism* (Kandy, 1970); *An Introduction to Indian Religions* (Patiala, 1970); *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā* with the commentary of Asaṅga and its translation in Hindi (Sarnath, 1978); *Facets of Jain Religiousness in Comparative Light* (Ahmedabad, 1981); and a chapter on "The Monastic Contribution to Buddhist Art and Architecture" in *The World of Buddhism* edited by Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich (London, 1983). He attended many international conferences, in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Russia, Europe, and the United States, as well as all over India. He was a member of the editorial board of our *JIABS*, as well as a member of the Board of Directors of the IABS. He was a valued member of the Board of Advisers of the American Institute of Buddhist Studies at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts, USA. His contributions to various seminars and conferences on Buddhist Studies and allied disciplines are still fresh.

He was liked for his gentle, humorous, sincere personality, and his gracious warmth of heart and he was well respected for his courage, honesty and his critical acumen, coupled with a personal commitment to the practice and study of the Buddha Dharma, in all its varied forms. The late scholar is missed by all very much. He leaves behind him his wife and three children. In his

death Buddhist scholarship has lost an eminent and beloved person. We can but remember the Buddha's abiding message: *sabbe saṅkhārā annicā*.

N.H. Samtani  
Robert Alexander Farrer Thurman

*NOTE:*

Professor Joshi leaves all of us, his friends and colleagues, to reflect on the lesson of *anitya* and *duḥkha*. His remarkable library is presently in storage at the Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, awaiting decision on the part of his family as to its disposition. I personally have had in mind an appeal to those Buddhologists world-wide who knew and admired Lal Mani and would wish to see his life's work fruitfully continuing, in spite of this tragic surprise. I would like to see if we could not establish a fund with an appropriate non-profit international organization which would be expressly designated to purchase his library from his family and establish it on its own at Sarnath, at that holy center of Buddha's teaching activity, perhaps nearby the Central Institute, perhaps nearer the center of the town, near the Dharma Chakra Stupa. Such a library, perhaps accompanied by a small "Lal Mani Joshi Research Institute" staff of scholars and translators, could become a wonderful resource for Buddhist scholars from all over the world, many of whom visit Sarnath yearly, and would doubtless be delighted to hold scholarly conferences there from time to time. Our little American Institute of Buddhist Studies here at Amherst would certainly contribute from its very modest means to the establishment of such a library and center, as would I personally and many of our colleagues.

I put forward this idea as I consider that he would consider any movement in the direction he walked throughout his days by far the most fitting tribute. Let us please join together in his memory and work toward maintaining the momentum he generated in helping his countrymen and the world re-discover the precious Buddhist heritage of India.

Robert Alexander Farrar Thurman