

Memorial Resolution

Gerald Larson
1938-2019

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of the Dhar India Studies Program's founding director and first Rabindranath Tagore Professor of Indian Cultures and Civilization, Gerald Larson (April 24, 1938–April 27, 2019).

Gerry came to IU in 1995 after retiring from a long career in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California-Santa Barbara. He was not only our first director, but he travelled relentlessly around the state of Indiana furthering the cause of the academic study of the subcontinent and raising funds to ensure that IU could continue to host India Studies for many years to come. He worked tirelessly with Indiana's Indian community, university leadership, faculty and students to create the foundation of what we now enjoy today as Dhar India Studies, creating a Ph.D. minor and undergraduate major and minor, as well as a certificate program. He developed the first iteration of the India Studies "core course," required for the major and the minor, as well as several other courses to add to the repertoire of Hindi and Sanskrit (and now, also Bengali and Urdu). Within a few years the program was vibrant enough to separate from its first home in the religious studies department to stand on its own. Gerry retired (again) from IU as professor emeritus of religious studies in 2003 and continued to visit Bloomington from time to time to give a lecture and visit with his many friends in the area.

Gerry was the author of many books on classical Indian philosophy as well as on contemporary Indian religion (including *India's Agony over Religion*, published in 1995). He continued his scholarly work through conference papers, lectures, and publications until his death. His specialty was the *samkhya* philosophical system, and we were fortunate to have him here with us in October 2018 for a wonderful celebration and discussion of his monumental work, published with Motilal Banarsidass, *Classical Yoga Philosophy and the Legacy of Samkhya*.

In 2018, Brill published a volume of essays in Larson's honour, *Theory and Practice of Yoga*. In that volume, among many other tokens of respect, Jeffrey S. Lidkey described Larson's "extraordinary grasp of the textual sources on yogic practice and philosophy."

Reviewing *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*, edited by Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, Stuart Ray Sarbacker comments that the "landmark" volume forms a "long-awaited sequel" to their *Samkhya: A Dualist Tradition*, and among the most important books on the subject in half a century, as in Sarbacker's view it "represents the culmination of the trajectory of Larson's engagement with the material over the course of his prolific career."

His books include the following; articles are too numerous to cite:

- 1969 *Classical Samkhya: An Interpretation of its History and Meaning*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

- 1974 *Myth in Indo-European Antiquity*. Editor. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- 1980 *In Her Image: The Great Goddess in Indian Asia and the Madonna in Christian Culture*. Art Exhibition Catalog. Principal Editor, with Pratapaditya Pal and Rebecca Gowen. Regents of the University of California and the National Endowment for the Arts.
- 1987 *Samkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*. Edited with Ram Shankar Bhattacharya. Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, Volume IV. Princeton University Press.
- 1988 *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*. Edited with Eliot Deutsch. Princeton University Press.
- 1995 *India's Agony over Religion*. State University of New York Press.
- 1997 *Changing Myths and Images: Twentieth Century Popular Art in India*. Edited with Pratapaditya Pal. Indiana University Art Museum and the Indiana University India Studies Program.
- 2001 *Religion and Personal Law in Secular India: A Call to Judgment*. Editor. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001; and Social Science Press, Delhi.
- 2008 *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*, edited by Gerald J. Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, Volume XII, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, General Editor: Karl H. Potter. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- 2018 *Classical Yoga Philosophy and the Legacy of Samkhya*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Upon his retirement, his friends in the area announced the founding of a scholarship in his, and his wife Claire Larson's, names for students working in South Asia. Gerry was a great friend to many of us here at IU and India Studies, and will be sorely missed.

We request that this memorial tribute to Gerald Larson be presented to the members of the Bloomington Faculty Council, that it be preserved in its minutes and archive, and that after its presentation a copy be sent to his wife Claire Larson.

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