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Asanga Tilakaratne

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Professor David Jinadasa Kalupahana (1936–2014)

REMEMBERING PROFESSOR DAVID JINADASA KALUPAHANA (1936–2014)

Professor David Jinadasa Kalupahana (1936–2014)

It is with a deep sense of sadness that we received the message of the passing of Professor David J. Kalupahana. Professor Kalupahana lived a life devoted to Buddhist studies. In addition to being a dedicated teacher, he was a researcher and writer with enormous energy. Even after his retirement from active university teaching, he kept on producing works on Buddhist philosophy and attending seminars and conferences on Buddhist studies in various parts of the world. His passing is a loss to the Buddhist academic world.

Professor Kalupahana was a former head of the Department of Philosophy, University of Hawai'i, where he served as a professor from 1972. Prior to joining the University of Hawai'i, he taught at the Pali and Buddhist Studies Department, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Professor Kalupahana graduated from University of Peradeniya in 1959 with a degree in Pali, Sanskrit, and philosophy, and subsequently received his PhD from University of London.

Professor Kalupahana was one of the leading interpreters of the early Pali Buddhist tradition and Nagarjuna. A salient feature of Professor Kalupahana's interpretation of the early Pali Buddhist tradition was that it represented a form of empiricism with pragmatic tendencies. He devoted much of his academic energy to establish this approach to Buddhist philosophy. He interpreted both early Mādayamaka and Yogācāra along similar lines.

Professor Kalupahana was an untiring researcher and writer who has had many publications on various aspects of Buddhist philosophy. Based on his doctoral research he published *Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (1975). His work *A History of Buddhist Philosophy* (1973) won admiration from students of Buddhism as a concise statement of the history of Indian Buddhist philosophy. In *Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way* (1986), Professor Kalupahana presented a new way of interpreting Nagarjuna's Mulamadhamakakarika. The last of his major contributions to the study of Buddhism was his two-volume *Sourcebook on Buddhist Philosophy* (2008), a substantial work that runs to almost one thousand five hundred pages.

A striking feature of Professor Kalupahana's academic life is that he believed in what he taught. His life-long interest, Buddhist philosophy, was something much more than an academic discipline for him. It had deep existential meaning. This conviction made him defend and passionately argue for what he taught. In Professor Kalupahana's life his principles featured more prominently than individuals or institutes.

Professor Kalupahana was a very warm personality who went out of his way to recognize and respect people. I know that he had an abiding sense of oneness with his senior and contemporary colleagues at the University of Hawai'i such as Win

Nagley, Eliot Deutsch, and Roger Ames, to name but a few. We were pleasantly surprised and deeply touched by his magnanimity when he dedicated three of his more recent works to Sanath Nanayakkara, his contemporary at University of Ceylon (later Peradeniya University); P.D. Premasiri, emeritus professor of Buddhist philosophy, Peradeniya University; and myself, who had been his graduate students at the University of Hawai'i. For my entire stay in Hawai'i, Professor Kalupahana's place, with Indrani's ever-present hospitality, was my second home.

On behalf of all the relatives, friends, colleagues and students in Sri Lanka, including Sanath Nanayakkara, P.D. Premasiri, and my own family with Menaka and Lahiru, let me take this opportunity to convey our oneness to Indrani, Chandrika, Nandana, and Milinda.

Finally: Professor Kalupahana believed that nirvana, the highest good taught in Buddhism, is freedom from all forms of unpleasantness in life. He not only endorsed it for others, he himself set it as his own goal in life. May he achieve his goal: freedom from suffering!

Asanga Tilakaratne
Professor of Pali and Buddhist Studies,
University of Colombo,
Colombo, Sri Lanka