

Nitya Chaitanya Yati (1924-1999) was a philosopher, psychologist, author and poet. His writings have made him one of the world's leading exponents of Advaita Vedanta, including how it dovetails with modern scientific discoveries.

Guru Nitya is the third great teacher in the lineage of Narayana Guru. Narayana Guru was a revolutionary seer and contemplative who also fought against the caste and gender prejudices paralyzing nineteenth century India. His disciple Nataraja Guru was a brilliant philosopher who developed a structural interpretation of his guru's mystical teachings and began the Narayana Gurukula, the wisdom school for the dissemination of Narayana Guru's philosophy. Guru Nitya succeeded him as head of the Narayana Gurukula after a long apprenticeship. Together these three have brought a scientific understanding to bear on India's treasury of wisdom.

## BIOGRAPHY

Nitya was born Jayachandran Panicker, in the matriarchal compound of Vakayar, near Konni, Kerala, South India, as the first son to Vamakshi Amma and her husband, the poet Raghavan Panicker.

As a youth, Nitya left home and wandered India for eight years as a mendicant, meeting and studying with Sufi, Jain and Buddhist teachers, as well as Mahatma Gandhi and Hindu masters such as Ramana Maharshi and Nityananda. After attaining his master's degree in social psychology at Bombay University, he continued his spiritual search in earnest. Among other posts, he served as director of the Indian Foundation for Psychic Research in New Delhi in the mid-1960s, charged with investigating the claims of yogis and fakirs.

In 1951 he accepted Nataraja Guru as his spiritual preceptor, and after Nataraja Guru died in 1973, he became the Guru of the Narayana Gurukula. Throughout his life he has been instrumental in sustaining Narayana Guru's legacy as the emancipator of

women and eradicator of caste distinctions, as well as interpreting his unsurpassed mystical vision for the modern seeker of truth. He traveled throughout the world as a teacher, with a special flair for the meaning of the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible, and continued to welcome seekers of truth to his retreat at the Fernhill Gurukula, near Ooty, until his death in 1999.

## LEGACY

Nitya published over 120 books in Malayalam and more than 20 in English, as well as a number of articles on philosophy, psychology, social ethics and aesthetics. He established numerous Gurukulas in India as well as two in the US, in Portland, Oregon and Bainbridge Island, Washington. He was the founder-chairperson of the East-West University of Brahmavidya, and also worked as the Commissioner for World Education and as a sponsor of the World Government of World Citizens. Of world citizenship, Nitya wrote:

“The term ‘world citizen’ can be better understood with a negative definition than with a positive one. If a citizen of a state with political frontiers is expected to pay allegiance to the government of the state to which he or she belongs and is expected to take arms against aliens who might invade the territory of the state, a world citizen recognizes the entire world as one’s state and in principle does not recognize any member of one’s own species as an alien to the world community to which oneself belongs. Such a person recognizes the earth as one’s sustaining mother, the innate inviolable laws of nature as one’s protecting father, and all sentient beings as sharing one’s home. The world citizen’s allegiance is to the foundation of truth, the universality of knowledge and the fundamental ground of all values.”

Nitya believed that mysticism should be brought to bear in the everyday world as a force for justice and understanding between people. He addressed many meetings convened between

Christian, Muslim and Hindu leaders to help them diplomatically work out their differences. Many credit him, as the torch-bearer of Narayana Guru's wisdom, with being a major force for peace in South India, which has been relatively free of the violence plaguing the North.

### INIMITABLE STYLE

Guru Nitya's anonymity was intentional and jealously guarded, and his intimate friends appreciated that the distortions of fame seldom intruded into the peaceful atmosphere around him. There are several stories of the Guru actively avoiding the limelight, but one of the most amusing took place in the late 1970s. In those days Indian gurus were big news in the USA, with their exotic trappings and weird philosophies. Nitya and a small entourage were passing through Las Vegas, and the anchorman of a local TV affiliate arranged an interview. Cameras ready and notebook in hand, he asked a few innocuous questions, building to a stereotyped climax. Prepared for a soundbite revelation to frighten his viewers, he asked: "And what kind of belief is it that binds your group together?" Nitya looked thoughtfully into the middle distance and slowly answered, "We are all united by our... deep love... of the avocado." He looked questioningly at his students to see if they were willing to go that far in agreement with him. The interviewer closed his notebook and tucked it away with the flicker of a pitying smile, the cameras were turned off, and Nitya was able to continue on his way as an ordinary human rather than as a cult hero. The subtle point that no self-respecting guru would demand any kind of belief from anyone was completely missed.

### MOST IMPORTANT BOOKS IN ENGLISH

--available through DK Printworld, Publishers ([dkprintworld.com](http://dkprintworld.com)), or Scott Teitsworth ([rsteitsworth@yahoo.com](mailto:rsteitsworth@yahoo.com))

That Alone, the Core of Wisdom (DK)

Love and Blessings (Autobiography, ST)  
Meditations on the Self (ST)  
Psychology of Darsanamala (DK)  
Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (3 vols, DK)  
In the Stream of Consciousness (ST)  
Saundarya Lahari (ST)  
Bhagavad Gita (DK)  
Living the Science of Harmonious Union (Patanjali's Yoga  
Shastra, DK)