

Guru Nitya Produces *The Psychology of Darsanamala*

Excerpts from the Class Notes of Scott Teitsworth

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Darsanamala Introduction

Part III

As those of us with firsthand memories of Nitya roar toward oblivion, it is worthwhile to set down whatever we can about the life of the extraordinary gentleman we happened to be associated with. Here's my best recollection of Andy's story in class about the production of the present work:

Andy was in London in 1981 with Nitya, who was dictating some of the Darsanamala to Nancy, who, I think it is safe to say, has taken more dictation than the rest of the Gurukula combined. Andy remembers waking up at five o'clock, which he considers an ungodly hour. He grabbed a cup of coffee and went into Nitya's room. Nitya was sitting crosslegged on his bed, with his long hair and beard flowing out in all directions, like a sunflower. Andy was instantly aware that the guru was looking straight at him but not seeing him. His gaze was boring right through him. It was as if he was possessed. He began pouring out a long, intense, highly coherent exposition covering the subject of the hour. As was so often the case, the result emerged quite close to its finalized form. After this spine-tingling exposition, Nitya relaxed, resumed an air of normalcy, and quietly said, "Okay." Andy stumbled from the room in a daze, certain he had been a witness to a transcendental experience, some kind of celestial transmission.

I (Scott) want to second Andy's story. Most nonfiction writing is more or less academic, a painstaking compilation of other peoples' ideas in a comprehensible format. Nitya's style of the direct production of original material is quite different. It's what the word *darsana* indicates, actually. He would do his homework (boy, did he!), saturating himself in the subject matter, but when the time came to give his talk he would bring his unique take on it from out of the depths of his being. Not only was it astonishing how well-organized the result usually was, but there was the added thrill imparted to us of bearing witness to that process of accessing the wisdom of his inner self. It communicated a tacit teaching on how to tune in to the atman, that level of genius we all share but routinely ignore.

Later in life, in his classes (almost always one in the morning and one in the evening) Nitya would usually sit very relaxed with his eyes closed and talk softly and slowly. Earlier in his life he looked just like the topnotch teacher he was, with his charming manner and surefooted presentation, animatedly gesturing and drawing diagrams on blackboards (we still had them!), all the while radiating electric needles of intensity. Back then he once used the analogy of a light fixture: he pointed to one in the ceiling and said, "I am like this light bulb. Without electricity, nothing happens. It is inert. Dark. But I have been formatted to transmit electricity into visible light when it flows into me. The electricity is supplied by my guru, Nataraja Guru." This was in 1970, while Nataraja Guru was still alive, but we all felt sure that even after his death there was the same kind of symbiosis present.

[This is from Part I]:

This summer, Roby Rajan ran across an English language magazine in a Marxist bookstore in Kerala dedicated to Nitya Chaitanya Yati, and was kind enough to procure a copy for Deb

and me, as well as Nancy Y. It mostly reprints some of Nitya's shorter essays, but there are a few articles assessing his role in the lives of those who knew him.

MD Nalapat makes an important distinction in the article *Humanising the Godman*:

India has no shortage of Godpersons, and indeed, the gifting of such personages to foreign lands is a principal export of our country. To their followers these individuals have divine qualities that place them far above humanity as a mass. Some—Nityananda comes to mind—may use such faith in order to live lifestyles that may seem far from spiritual. Others, such as Sri Sri Ravishankar or Mata Amritananda Mayi, ensure that institutions get created which help hundreds of thousands of individuals in their lives. Both are regarded as divine by devotees. However, a century ago, Sri Narayana Guru entered on a different trajectory, rejecting the notion that he was endowed with special qualities. The Guru saw all human beings as equals of each other, and disregarded the barriers that practices such as caste had instituted in order to segregate human beings into self-sealing pools.

Sri Narayana Guru had a message that was magnificent in its very simplicity, and through his teachings and the example of his own frugal life changed the lives of millions by giving them the confidence that they could achieve anything other human beings could....

Nitya Chaitanya Yati was a seer-philosopher in the tradition of Sri Narayana Guru. He rejected any pomp or show, moving effortlessly among his many admirers both in India as well as abroad as one among them.

Those who sought to give him a more exalted status were gently corrected. He remained entirely faithful to the elite-less credo of his teacher, Sri Narayana Guru.

Very nice, MD! It is a curious paradox that by exalting a person as exceptional and different, which is meant to increase their mystique, their ability to influence ordinary people in meaningful ways is severely diminished. The crucial idea that we are all created in the same fashion despite all our superficial variations gives us hope that we can excel no matter what our circumstances. It is one of the key building blocks of the Gurukula philosophy, as well as of Vedanta itself.

[...]

Andy recalled a time when he was driving around with Nitya and they pulled into the Always Ashram. Nitya was immediately surrounded by the Swamis, but there wasn't much talk. Silence permeated the place, situated as it is on the banks of a gorgeous river. Andy was profoundly moved, and tuned in to the underlying stillness and peace of existence. He felt this epitomized the spirit of South India. In his retelling you could get an almost audible sense of the bliss he experienced there.

Nitya radiated stillness, even in the midst of activity. I remembered how he was like a bastion of strength and solidity against which my mind flung its chaotic projections, seeking for a comparable steadiness. Having Nitya as a contrasting pole to my psyche heightened awareness of my own imbalances, which stood out like a fistful of sore thumbs. Of course, chafing about them only made them worse, so the trick was to let go of all resistance and surrender to the peace of the environment. Being in Fernhill with him provided ample opportunities to calm down and become centered. Once in a while it worked. Andy's special fondness for that day in Always was undoubtedly one of the occasions when he successfully merged into the silence for a time, an almost unbearably intense nothingness.

