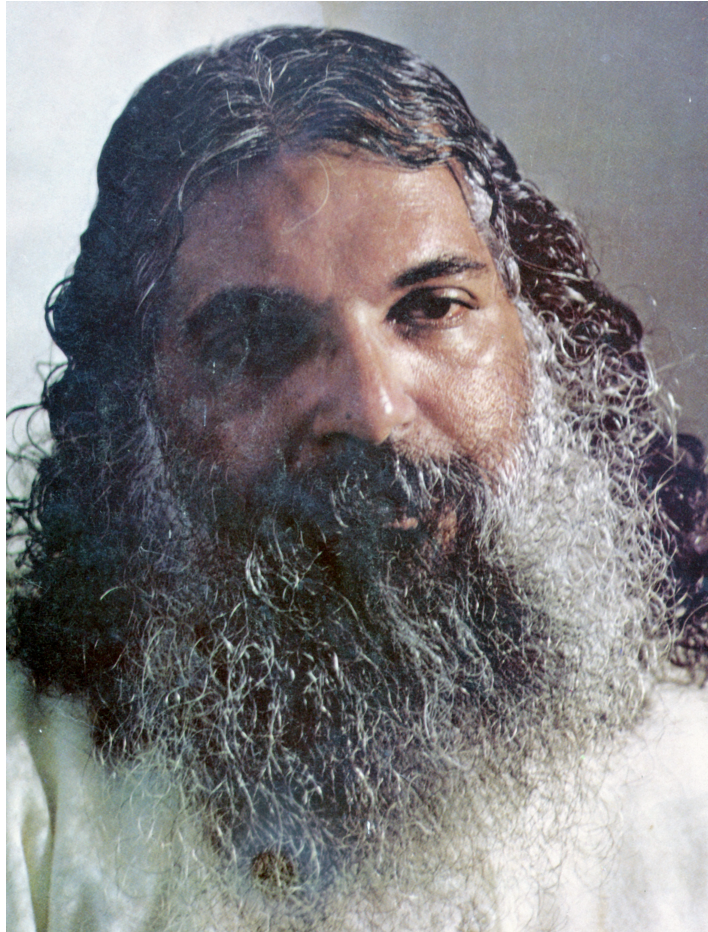


Interview: Swami Nitya Chaitanya Yati  
Psychic Magazine, December 1970



Nitya Chaitanya Yati arrived for his first visit to the US in the summer of 1970, at the age of 45. There was a first stop in Hawaii followed by a lecture series at UCLA, in Los Angeles, beginning the project that would eventually become the book *The Psychology of Darsanamala*. En route to Portland, Oregon for his semester teaching the Bhagavad Gita, he spent a few days in San Francisco, where the following interview with Psychic magazine took place. The primary focus of the magazine was, as

you might expect, psychic phenomena, which gives the interview a certain tone.

Some of Nitya's ideas presented here underwent significant change over the rest of his life, but it remains a fine introduction to some of the core ideas he was passionate about. Nitya was always strongly opposed to drug use of any kind, and the country was awash in drugs. It is fair to say that a majority of Americans interested in Eastern spirituality in that time period were brought to it by insights gleaned from psychedelic medicines.

Nitya's thoughts on reincarnation became more dismissive over the years, possibly because he thought the subject was a distraction from a more serious approach to spirituality. He disliked the honorific title "Swami" even as it was ubiquitously applied to him. It's also worth mentioning that later in his life the word wonder became associated with joyous contemplation and even realization, but here it is used for what he might later call lurid interest or superficial attraction. That being said, a number of Nitya's key ideas are well and simply presented here, making it an ideal introduction to his philosophy of life.

The magazine included a brief biography, appended at the end of the interview.

*Nitya Chaitanya Yati is a leader in the world-wide Narayana Gurukula Movement, a relatively new spiritual philosophy which has come out of India. The Yati, a renunciate, has dedicated his life to the Movement and is in direct line to become head leader for millions of its followers. He openly discusses his philosophy and its relation to life, psychic phenomena, man, God, and the universe.*

Psychic: What is a swami?

Swami: A swami is usually a man who has left his home and who has taken a vow of poverty and celibacy—living the life of an ascetic, a renunciate. 26

Swami is a very general term; it can cover a number of things; it is used as a term of reverence much as Christian priests are called reverend.

I have not fully accepted the word swami as part of my name, because the word Yati has almost the same meaning, yet it has a more specific meaning. It means that I must restrain my life in such a way that it never gives me any temptation to accumulate, to hunt or seek fame.

The other parts of my name mean “eternal consciousness.” That is, Nitya means “eternal,” and Chaitanya means “consciousness.”

Psychic: Why are you required to be a celibate?

Swami: Celibacy has not been inflicted on my life from outside. Rather this practice was adopted because of something more meaningful in life which takes my whole attention and which causes me to almost forget many other things in life. So if I am not interested in sex, it is not because I have an aversion to it, but rather because I find something else so absorbingly interesting that it catches my attention and keeps it all the time.

Personal relations between individuals can be very stimulating and interesting, but when you relate yourself to that aspect of the psyche which belongs to all, you find that it is a thousand times more interesting and more absorbing so that you no longer think or want to have a personal companionship or anything of that sort.

Psychic: Are you also a vegetarian?

Swami: Yes, because the reverence for life is one of the dynamic impulses of my spiritual life. I therefore cannot kill an animal or an insect.

You see, I feel that I hurt my self if I take such lives, or even if I pluck a flower. It hurts my feelings, for lives which are expressed around us in every way come to me almost like music. Each has a resonance of its

own. So thoughts of taking the life of something else comes as a shock to my mind, and it is the one reason that I limit myself to vegetarianism.

Yet I do not make a religion of it. If somebody else takes nonvegetarian food, I will not try to correct them or try to bring them to my conviction. And if someone wants to take meat at my table, I will sit there and take my own food with no kind of reservation in his taking his.

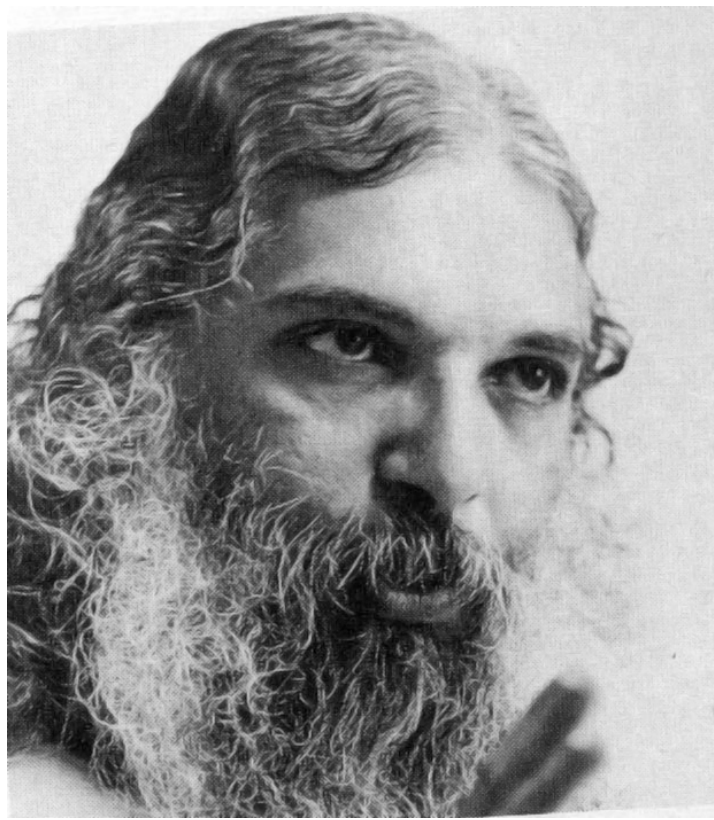
Psychic: But isn't harvesting and taking vegetables in a sense taking life also?

Swami: Yes, that is true. But vegetables, in my philosophy, are permitted since they are a different part of life and to a lesser degree.

It is less agonizing to see the cutting of a cucumber or peeling of a potato than seeing a dear little lamb bleeding or a fowl trying to escape the butcher.

Psychic: Do you consider yourself a psychic?

Swami: I think a spiritual man who lives entirely in relation to the unknown and also within the benevolence of the unknown hand which is directing this world, lives all the time with psychic experiences, such as



precognition, telepathy, clairvoyance. But as his life is constituted every day with such kinds of experiences, after a while he loses the novelty of them and he doesn't feel enamored with them.

I have occasional psychic experiences. One in particular which I notice is anticipating a letter from a person who for no reason writes to me. Or I think very strongly about someone spontaneously in whom I have had no interest, then I read in the paper that he died.

But I do not like terms such as clairvoyant or telepathist because they are professional terms in the popular sense. I still don't believe one can become a professional clairvoyant or telepathist. My own experiences in this field indicate that they are spontaneous experiences and cannot be produced at will. And so I have my own reservations about these subjects.

Psychic: Why did you become a swami?

Swami: I think I became a swami like a seed germinates, becomes a plant, and then a tree. I am unfolded to live as a yati.

Since my earliest childhood it was natural for me to sit alone, with eyes closed, away from everyone—though I cannot say meditating. Why I did this, even now I do not know.

Also, my father was a poet and a teacher. He would gather the family to read to us—works of Shelley, Keats, Shakespeare, and classical Indian works such as of Kalidasa, as well as spiritual material.

Once when he was reading to us about the Buddha, I became very moved about this great man's compassion for suffering people. I was only twelve years old. I later asked my father if I could also be like the Buddha, and he just smiled. But my mother took it very seriously, and said that I could. She also said that she would help.

So the next morning, which was a very cold one, my mother woke me at four o'clock and said for me to get up. I protested, but she said "You wanted to become a Buddha, so you must get up for your bath." I

appealed to my father, but he said I had made my choice. It was a cold bath, too.

At noon when I returned from school, I found my father, sisters and brother being served their food on the table, but I was given food on the floor, on a banana leaf. So from that day on my whole life began to change and I was made to read more spiritual books. Yet at that time the whole idea of spirituality looked to me like a bundle of superstitions.

Later I finally decided to become a fully ordained renunciate.

Psychic: As someone without means, how are you able to travel?

Swami: When I became a renunciate, I was impressed with two statements: one in the Bible, which reads “Look at the birds of the sky, they do not sow or reap, yet your Heavenly Father looks after them.” The other was in the Bhagavad Gita, which says “Those who surrender everything to Me, I look after all their needs.” I was very impressed that these two sacred books from two different cultural groups and two different places made the same promise. So I accepted this very seriously.

Ever since I left my home until this day, all these thirty years, I have never been let down. It is as if there is a very benevolent, hidden hand arranging everything for me—the people I meet, the places I stay, the food I take, and the clothes I wear have always been provided for me. In fact, nothing which I now possess has ever been purchased by me. Everything has been given by somebody. Yet I never make any requests for any of my needs. Neither do I ask for money nor for any help. Everything comes just as it is—so natural. Even this trip to America, which came without any previous planning on my part.

You see, when I left India, I only intended to go to Kuala Lumpur to attend the Malaysia Hindu Peace Conference and to preside over one of the sessions. While there, I was invited to give Gita lectures in Singapore, where we have a Gurukula Center. From there I was invited to visit America. It is my first time here.

Psychic: Have you come to bring a spiritual message?

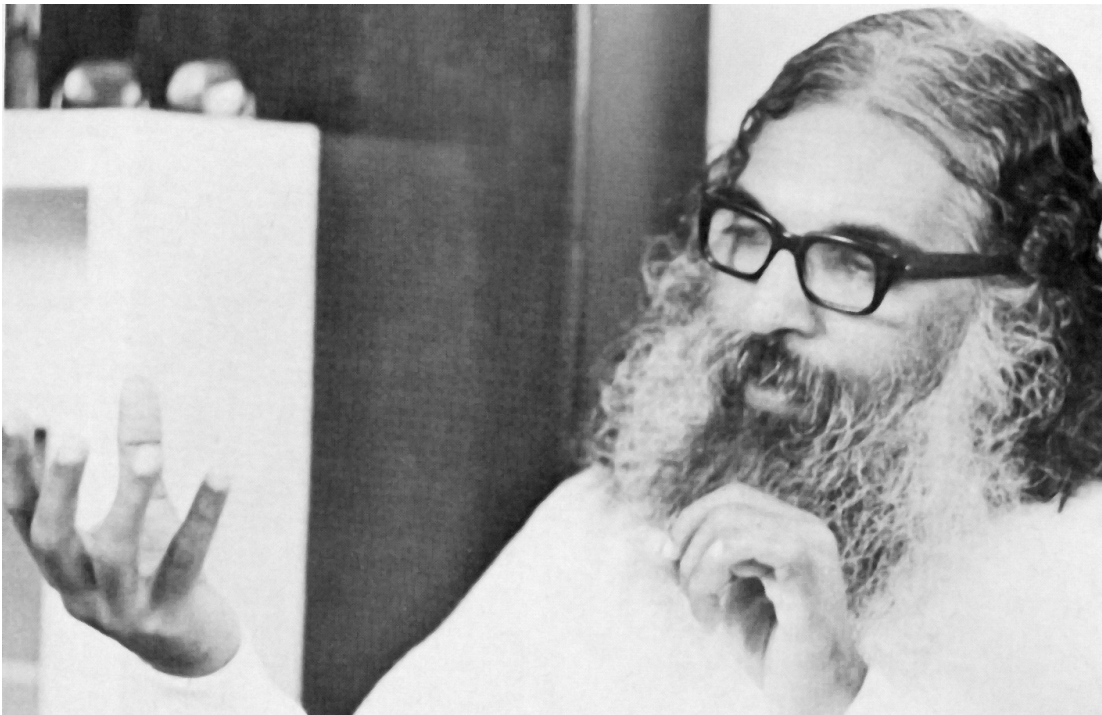
Swami: I am not a missionary, nor do I have a missionary's zeal to propagate anything.

Personally, I never believe in converting another person to my ideas or my views. When I go to a garden and see different kinds of flowers, I like to appreciate each flower as it is. And when I go to a country and meet people with different kinds of minds, I like to appreciate them as they are, without making any attempt to change them to my views.

So it is not with any purpose of changing the world or the people that I have come here, but rather with the attitude of a student, an observer. Perhaps my life and my attitude may change from what I learn from others here.

Neither is it my intention to become the Guru of anyone. But if somebody finds me interesting and my views stimulating, it is always a great pleasure to share that experience, since I like to be more on a mutual, reciprocal level rather than a unilateral one.

Psychic: What is the Narayana Gurukula Movement?



Swami: I should start first by saying that *guru* means teacher, and *kula* means home or family; thus *gurukula* means a teacher's home or a teacher's family.

Narayana Guru, my guru's guru, who was a great exemplifier of the Vedanta philosophy, lived and moved among the people almost exactly as did Jesus in Galilee. The people of India showed him the same respect, and took ailing patients to him to be healed. Narayana Guru emerged at the dark period in Indian cultural history, around 1854, when there was much caste prejudice, and when the vast multitude of the Indian working class was kept under a kind of slavery. He took up their cause with a challenge that did not adopt any violent means, initiating a positive determinism in the hearts and minds of the people.

Through his efforts, hundreds of temples of worship were opened to all who had no temples, and many schools were established for those who had none. For the poor he started movements whereby a person could become industrially trained and thereby become economically self-sufficient. He became a great solace and inspiration for the people.

Today, Narayana Guru is probably the only saint in India whose birthday and death date are both officially declared holidays.

Psychic: Where was he born?

Swami: In Kerala, the southernmost state of India.

Psychic: How many followers does he have today?

Swami: In the sense that all Christians are followers of Jesus, there are more than six million people devoted to the Guru. The total movement has many different aspects, such as social, educational, and spiritual—each taken care of by its own particular organization.

The spiritual aspect is cared for by what we call the Gurukula. It was instituted by Narayana Guru's immediate disciple, Dr. Nataraja Guru,



who was trained and given spiritual instruction from childhood and who founded the movement in 1923.

Nataraja Guru was also trained in the formal sense, taking a master's degree in geology and another in zoology, and then went on to the Sorbonne in Paris, where he took his doctorate in educational psychology.

So as a scientist and Western-trained man, he knew the Western mind. In him we have the Eastern and Western disciplines combined, which makes it easy for him to interpret to the modern world both the mystical and spiritual insights of India. I became his disciple.

Psychic: Do you follow a particular scripture, such as the Bhagavad Gita?

Swami: Here I should qualify the question. When you ask if I follow something, it implies an acceptance of a particular dogma, and this is not so because I reserve the right to criticize anything— to accept or reject a hypothesis or even to experiment with it.

But sometimes a skeptical attitude may not be very helpful, and so I begin with great sympathy, and with a kind of self-assurance that these great books—including the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Bible, the Koran, the Zend-avesta, the Dhammapada, the Tripitakas, and Tao Teh Ching—are all expressions of enlightened minds. So I would not rush to make judgments even if I did not see the light at the first instance. I am willing to be very patient over the years, and to examine the validity of each in my own life.

Therefore I do not limit myself to the scriptures of any particular group. My personal background, of course, is that of a Hindu sannyasi, and therefore the Upanishads and the Gita are nearer to my mind. They are the spiritual grass roots of my life.

Psychic: It sounds as though you don't have a formal religion.

Swami: Religion in Sanskrit is called *dharma*, which means having a special pattern of life. All established religions, you might agree, have their own specific or ideal pattern of behavior.

But a renunciate is a man who wants to get out of *all* conditionings, *all* prejudices and *all* dogmas. Therefore, as a renunciate I do not like to be tied down to any particular religion. So I say I don't have a religion in a closed sense.

Henri Bergson, the French philosopher, used to say, "There is a static religion and a dynamic religion, a closed morality and an open morality." So I look for a dynamic religion which has an open morality, not a static one with a closed morality.

For example, a religion makes certain prohibitions on its members— if they indulge in such and such a thing, there will be punishment such as hell. Fearing hell, some people may not do certain things. This is a closed morality—a man is truthful because he is afraid of the police or afraid of public or religious censure.

But if he is truthful just for the joy of being truthful, it is called an open morality. Therefore, if I am moral it is for my joy of being moral and not because of anything else.

Psychic: Then how do you practice your spiritual beliefs?

Swami: Here again, we should qualify the question because of certain implications.

The word "practice" has a connotation which does not suit my attitude. When you say "practice," it is different from living. You practice something to gain a certain proficiency—then you utilize that proficiency. A plant just grows and brings forth the flowers, and every moment of its life is an unfoldment. Likewise, I consider life has to be a natural, spontaneous unfoldment all the time. So I do not practice anything, I just live. It is better to refer to my beliefs as my philosophy of life, rather than as my religion.

Psychic: You are also a Yogi. How does this fit into your philosophy?

Swami: If I accept the term “Yogi,” it will be in a very wide sense. I treat the whole of life as a theme for Yoga, since “Yoga” means a harmonized life where your mind is in harmony with a universal mind—a mind that operates behind the mind of all. In that sense, if I relate myself continuously and consistently to a universal mind, never losing the grip of it, then I am a Yogi.

If I see human beings and other living beings around me participating in the life of which I am also a participant, and if I am living in harmony with them and helping them in their pursuits, never obstructing their ways of happiness, then I can call myself a Yogi. And if I am given an environment and I am able to make it more congenial to my mind and



the minds of others for a more harmonious life, then my enduring for that purpose is also the life of a Yogi.

So I do not search for any kind of a special program such as Yoga exercises or Yoga meditation. I always wake up with the feeling of how wonderful it is that another day has come, and I hold my life in a state of continuous contemplation of the significance of life. I do not have any special prayer, except a feeling that there should be well-being among all with whom I live in this world—whether it is a little ant, a bird or a human. My heart goes to all these equally. I make my whole life a life of prayer because I do not think of a personal God.

Psychic: This seems a little different from the popular conception of Yoga in this country.

Swami: Well, I have my own reservations about the benefits of certain physical or breathing exercises which I have seen in this country.

For instance, I found some schools teaching what they call *Yoni Mudra* or *Kundalini Yoga*—names which are not so familiarly used in India. However, the name “Kundalini” does appear many times in various Yoga books and Yoga disciplines.

Yoga is a gentle way of life, so it institutes exercises that are very gentle. I think some of the exercises taught by certain teachers here may harm both the physical and mental life of many of the Yogi adepts.

*Pranayama*, for example, is described in various Western books as a breathing exercise, which it isn't. Rather, it comes in a very natural way. This refers to when you sit quietly, withdrawn from society and from your senses, with your eyes closed, and you begin to feel the heaving of your chest, the movements of your abdomen. You begin to notice your breathing, the asymmetrical up and down movement of it, which may become more and more harmonized as you consciously turn towards it. This is a state of pranayama. Then your mind goes behind the breathing and you find that there is a consciousness operating behind your mind.

Eventually this brings you to a mental state where you may experience various ideas and images. Slowly those images vanish and there remains only pure consciousness. When you have nothing on your

mind, it is said you are in a state of *dhyana*, which is a state where your consciousness does not waver. Then you are in a state of *samadhi*. This is all a very natural and gentle way of moving back into the Total.

And the word *asana*, or posture, given in the Patanjali Yoga Sutras comes only twice in the whole book. It never speaks of a hundred postures or even various ones. It says only that if you can sit back comfortably and steadily, then you are in a state of posture. So the asana that I understand, which is physiologically and psychologically stable and which is also conducive for further search, need not be a lotus pose.

That is why I think the methods I have seen in America thus far are a little out of the way when you compare them with the traditional Yoga teachings given in India. I do not say there are no Yoga teachers in America who are giving the right way of discipline—there may be many. But I have not seen them. Perhaps during my travel in this country I may meet them. But those whom I have seen I am rather disappointed in.

Psychic: Your description of Yoga sounds like the Western concept of meditation.

Swami: Yes. But the theme of true meditation is that aspect of the mind which is conscious when it is making a search of its own source or its true nature. That is, the source to which it is flowing back and where it ends.

For example, in Vedanta philosophy the individual who is immersed within ignorance sees the phenomenal world as though there is a cosmic ignorance which veils the cosmic consciousness—often called God—and which is responsible for the phenomenal appearance of this universe. And so one who aspires to a higher realization has to go beyond the concept of God. He has to come to the state of the Absolute.

So you can see that the Indian concept of meditation is not that one listens to the voice of God, as it is sometimes referred to in the Western world.

Psychic: You mentioned earlier that you don't believe in a personal God. What is your concept of God?

Swami: To me, God is really the very foundation of my life, and it is fundamental. It is that eternal notion in my mind which enables me to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil. This is a criterion which never varies and remains as my inner certitude, which is equally so for all people. So my life is entirely based on God in a purely mathematical, philosophical, and to a great extent mystical sense, but not in a religious sense.

Even in a bird or a plant one finds an inner principle which is contiguous in working out the course of life. Also, the structure of a crystal or the first organic expression of life contains one total principle which is functioning continuously, having the same law of operation—a meaningful and purposeful one—not just random chance. Upon examination of these one finds a beautiful inner mathematical inner harmony, collectively conceived. So all these I attribute to what I call God.

I believe that my total expression, my emotional system, my mind and the deeper aspects of it, all these are just a part of this whole. Therefore, the portion involving the senses and the mind becomes a kind of window of the universe enabling it to look at itself. And that window also enables me to see how I belong to the totality of beings. This awareness of my life keeps me ever in tune with the total, which I call God.

Also, I find this totality has an inner principle which is very benevolent and good, and which is also capable of becoming very malevolent and bad. So my God is not a God who is sitting in the heaven, but it is an all-embracing truth which is at once good and bad, and where light and darkness coexist. It is total Being. Therefore I should be careful not to violate its principles, or then it becomes drastic.

And if I understand its principles and live in harmony with it, it makes my life wonderful.



Psychic: Couldn't that also be said of a person who pursues evil—understanding its principles and living in harmony?

Swami: You cannot work out the course of life on wrong mathematics for long. Like scrap metal, the derailed pursuits that tumble downhill as evil will be thrown back in the melting pot. God is not in any terrible haste to correct. He revels in abundance.

Psychic: Then you must think we are given a dominating inner principle to strive for—say “goodness”?

Swami: Yes. So we have freedom of choice: a general determination as well as a general freedom which interlaces our lives.

For example, I can raise my hand, close my fist, open my finger or bend it. In all this I have freedom. But I cannot bend my finger in the other direction, it is limited. My body, like any other physical object, is controlled by physical laws. And yet by using that physical law for any purpose I want, I have freedom. So freedom and necessity coalesce. They are the two faces of life. On one side is rigid necessity; on the other side, spontaneity and freedom.

Psychic: What is your opinion of psychic phenomena?

Swami: Earlier I was skeptical about them, but I have found out that there are other worlds and experiences which are not easily accessible to most people. Yet I am still a little wary in accepting everything which is put across as a psychic occurrence or experience.

I believe psychic experience belongs to an area of the mind which can be called the irrational aspect—it is from that area that poetry, mythology, and also lies come.

So we may sometimes belie certain data so that it will give us the experience of wonder, and nothing tickles the mind more than a sense of wonder. I think man is prone to a kind of mythmaking for his own entertainment, and also for the benefit of others. The element of wonder is so fascinating.

Psychic: In some Eastern philosophies psychic phenomena are not given much interest. Is this also true of your philosophy?

Swami: Anyone who is seriously on the path is sure to get certain psychic experiences in his onward march. And if he becomes sidetracked or infatuated by psychic phenomena, there are two dangers: first, he forgets the very call of his life; second, he becomes ego-inflated and in turn starts developing within himself a kind of polarized personality. On



one side he looks into the spiritual possibilities, where he becomes bewildered with great admiration; and on the other side he makes himself a very special person who is benefitted by this kind of insight, and thus becomes very egoistic.

But if he just ignores these phenomena and marches on, then he finds more and more opening up to him, more and more wonder awaiting, until he comes to a state where everything is so wonderful. He goes almost to the threshold of abnormal behavior, he is so excited about seeing the Divine or the Absolute everywhere.

After this he begins to settle down to his new experience and a calm comes over him. He no longer sees any wonder in anything, because the element of wonder is only where you know the effect and you do not know the cause. And when you know what causes a certain effect, you have no sense of wonder.

In this case, the Great Cause which is held so far away from him now becomes very clear, taking away the sense of wonder. So psychic phenomena should not be pursued for the sake of wonder, but rather for a more profound understanding or as roadmarks along the path.

Psychic: Then perhaps you have an opinion about parapsychology, the new science which is trying to discover the causes of these phenomena.

Swami: Though it is not new to the Indian mind, it is commendable that some eminent scientists in the West have also contributed to the study of parapsychology. Their studies will certainly open up an area which has been forgotten for many years or which has not been taken seriously.

But I do have another comment to make. I think that if we study psychic phenomena only in terms of those physical laws with which we are so familiar in the physical laboratories, we are not going to get very far. This confined approach may only distort our notions and we may come to some entirely wrong conclusions.

Psychic: Perhaps you have a theory about the cause of psychic phenomena?

Swami: We know that we have certain limitations of our visual and auditory areas. According to certain preconceived thoughts about the vibrations of sound or light, we know we cannot see beyond a certain frequency of the vibration—on the negative side as well as the positive side. In the same way, our normal rational power has its own limitations when it is applied to investigating something which is sometimes beyond the negative side and sometimes beyond the positive side.

So I believe there are certain phenomena which are below the subnormal rational experience and some above the normal rational experience—call it the supranormal.

Most of that which is below the rational normal experience manifests itself in people who are also slightly subnormal in their rational faculty, such as a person with a sixth sense, a clairvoyant or a medium. But when it goes above the normal rational experience onto the positive side, a person becomes more proficient in higher spiritual understanding, which comes intuitively. This is my idea about it.

Psychic: Why do you think there is a growing interest in Eastern philosophy in this country?

Swami: Mostly because of the basic spiritual quest here, although I suspect there will be a kind of lapse coming soon.

You see, the flow of Eastern religion and mysticism, particularly from India and Japan to the Western countries, has not always been from the correct or the true sources of spiritual enlightenment. It was coming more from an adventurous group of people who wanted to take advantage of this new interest.

But soon interested people in the Western world will come to know that although there is a great Truth in Eastern religions and philosophies, they will have to be more cautious, wary, and critical in accepting them. And perhaps this may make them more serious researchers and seekers, and then they may dive more deeply into these

philosophies and ways of life, bringing a fresh face to it, more acceptable to both East and West.

I think this new enthusiasm will create a new generation in the West, who will in turn surely make themselves related to their serious counterparts in the Orient. They will make a common friendship and present to the world a more perennial and higher aspect of Eastern philosophy, which will not be either Oriental or Occidental. It will be a common heritage of mankind.

It is a paradoxical situation. When I see the young generation here I find they have a spiritual quest which is not seen in young people in India. And just as you have a generation gap, I think there is a generation gap in thinking between America and India. Young people there are throwing away religion and are pursuing modern technological studies. They think that through technology and science India may come up.

In the United States one sees the greatest evidences of the progress of science in the world and what science can do. But I think your youth are no longer enchanted with it; they no longer want it.

What European and American people were thinking a hundred years back is very seriously being thought of in India right now. This is the difference I see.

Here in America it is easier to have an expression of mystical or spiritual feeling with young people than with a group of young people in India.

Psychic: Have you ever had any experience with psychedelic drugs?

Swami: Yes, by accident when I was eighteen. I stepped into an Indian shop and was curious about a substance which the shopkeeper said would “give a great experience of the heavens.” I did not know it was a psychedelic drug and took it.

From this drug I had many hallucinations, such as a fish hiding in my rice wanting to jump in my mouth if I opened it.

Later I experienced an endless series of the most magnificent, most beautiful visions, which went on for several hours.

On the one hand, I had a horror that something terrible had happened to me, along with a sense of shame and guilt; and on the other hand it was so fascinating, so beautiful. The mind became light, as if flying in other dimensions.

Later in my life when I had spiritual experiences, I was able to compare the two. I think that the hallucinatory experience takes one to the negative side of the mind, whereas the spiritual experience takes one to the positive side of it. In other words, in entirely opposite directions.

But the first fascination you get from spiritual experiences and hallucinatory experiences are so identical that it is confusing as to which is which. Therefore with a drug experience you may think the visions are the same as God realization, but in truth the drugs take you in the opposite direction. So I wouldn't mix these two things, since only the positive side leads you to the fundamental truth of life.

Psychic: Reincarnation is a popular aspect of Eastern religions that has caught on here. How do you view it?

Swami: To me, the whole universe of which we are conscious is an expression of a collective consciousness which we may call God. These impressions are rising and falling in it like waves in the sea. And so what I call my *dharma*, or my nature, is a bundle of such impressions which can come and manifest, taking from around it physical substances to form its organic structure called the physical body, which we live within. It can also disintegrate and go back once again to the matrix where it reassumes a new form. Each cycle is called an incarnation. This is how I look at reincarnation.

In the Gita you'll find the same process is referred to as *Ishwarah*. God takes away all life impressions of a person just like the fragrance from a flower by the wind, and again when it is reincarnated, it is He who is reincarnating. So it is God who is incarnating and not man. God is receiving into Him and He is incarnating. Thus every expression of a

man, a bee, or whatever, is an incarnation of the Divine. But it is having in it these impressions gathered by Him put in newer and newer forms. In a sense it is somewhat evolutionary.

Psychic: In regard to reincarnation, some people consider this world a school to which we return until we have earned a degree to go on. Is this your belief?

Swami: I think this has its limitation just as every analogy has its limitations. Since an analogy comes from that part of the mind where we think in terms of symbols and figures, one man's analogy may not suit another's experience.

The Christian world gives the analogy of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. The same understanding is expressed in the *Isavasya Upanishad* without any reference to a father or a son.

Also, Jesus says to love thy Father, thy God, with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy mind, and to love thy neighbor as thine own self. But the same idea is given in the *Isa Upanishad* as "See all beings in you and you in all beings, because it is the selfsame reality which manifested us all." Both have the same meaning, though they differ in expression.

In one sense you can treat this world as a training ground for the soul, where it gets educated for its own higher evolvment. But I don't think of a world here and a world hereafter. To me, this world is the only real world, not a rehearsal for anything else, since a rehearsal implies a kind of secondary imitation and not the true life. I consider this as the most real life, so I don't subscribe to the analogy of a training period.

Psychic: What about karma, which is often considered an inseparable part of reincarnation?

Swami: To me there are two aspects of karma: one is an expression of my innate structure, called *svadharma*, and the other my natural tendencies, called *svabhava*. These are basic tendencies which cannot be changed, but there are a number of behavioral modifications which can



be accomplished within the limits of my innate nature and my natural tendencies. And the environmental impact or the influence of other people and other kinds of actions around me can make me react in a certain way to any situation.

So karma is not to be seen just as an individual action, it is sometimes a bipolar action in the behavior. A linear way of looking at karma as a repayment or as an amendment to one's life is not always valid.

I may have behaved in a certain way because of the total impact of some other factors around me, which does not result as part of my karma. Only that which is a clear expression of my inner nature, my true personality and its expressions, form the continuity of my karma. This karma is considered as that impressionable aspect of my life which becomes my causal body to pass on from one physical manifestation in one life to another physical manifestation in another.

Psychic: What do you think is man's role in the universe, his purpose in the scheme of things?

Swami: I accept the Indian notion that life is a very long pilgrimage through this world—through several lives.

I don't think man comes here abruptly to live a few years—say sixty or seventy—and then disappears forever. Rather, I choose to believe I can come again and again to this world to continue where I left off and to make it more and more perfect. So this makes me quite optimistic for myself as well as others for a self-evolved, perfected life.

About the purpose of life, biologically speaking, I don't consider man has any higher purpose than that of a mosquito or bacteria. Each life has its own expression, so there is no special aim or purpose assigned to us from outside by anyone.

But I can see purpose to my life, which makes it at once meaningful to me. It gives an orientation to my thoughts and beliefs so that my expressions of life will always be guided by that which is conceived from within. And it seems that all people in some way or other find the purposefulness of their lives, sometimes by choice and sometimes by chance.

So taken as a whole, there is purposefulness in this world, when we look at the various creative expressions of life. When this participation in the universe is found, it takes us to greater beauty, greater harmony, greater goodness, and a clearer perception of truth.

So the true purpose that ought to be of man is always to make himself move in the directions where life would be made happy for all, beautiful and truthful.

Psychic: But what is and what should be has been a continuous struggle for man in his search for "true purpose."

Swami: In the actual living of it I find that there are two opposite tendencies, making a paradoxical situation all the time. One is our higher

ideals which always take us towards the goal of life; the other is the necessary aspects of the physical and material limitations of life here, which will always pull us in a different direction. And so man is at once “good” and “bad.”

Therefore, man cannot just live on the ground alone. He must live in the world of ideals as well as the world of facts. We all must have experience and understanding of these two worlds—freedom of the highest type of the soul, as well as food, which makes us barter our freedom for the sake of the flesh.

Resolving this paradox is the major challenge to any philosophy, and I think I have now succeeded with the help of the masters I had and also through the help of findings of people in other countries.

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## Biography

Swami Nitya Chaitanya Yati was born in 1924 in Kerala, a state in South India. His father was a teacher and poet who introduced his family to the literary classics, both Eastern and Western. His mother, a housewife, dedicated the Yati to a spiritual life at the age of twelve.

After completing his initial schooling in Kerala at the age of 16, the Yati took to the life of a wayfarer and mendicant in the age-old custom of a seeker of wisdom. His search took him throughout India to study life and to seek out those whom he considered as wise.

Convinced in 1946 that he had discovered a better solution than Mahatma Gandhi’s to ending India’s pressing social problems, he visited the famous man “to tell him of his better solution.”

Gandhi received the young wayfarer, listened patiently, and subsequently asked him if he was sincere in his convictions. When the Yati replied “Yes,” Gandhi told him that he, too, was as sincere in his own convictions and beliefs. Gandhi then asked: “Do you think it is possible for two people to have conviction and sincerity about the same thing while holding two apparently contradictory ideas?” The Yati



answered “I am finding it possible now.” As a result of this discussion he joined Gandhi’s camp as a volunteer helper.

After a period of helping in the Gandhi camp, the Yati entered the Union Christian College in Alwaye to study philosophy. This was in 1947, the same year he came into contact with Sri Ramana Maharshi, who is often called the great mystic of Tiruvannamalai, and who inspired him to become an initiate in preparation to becoming a renunciate. He took Sannyasa—became a renunciate— in 1950 while in college, and he completed his studies in 1952 with a master’s degree in philosophy.

It was also during the early 1950s that the Yati came under the influence of Dr. Nataraja Guru, the philosopher, founder, and head of the Narayana Gurukula Movement in Varkala. He subsequently became a disciple of the Guru and now is second-in-line as his successor. Nataraja Guru’s immediate successor is John Spiers, a Scotsman. [Spiers resigned this position around the time of publication.]

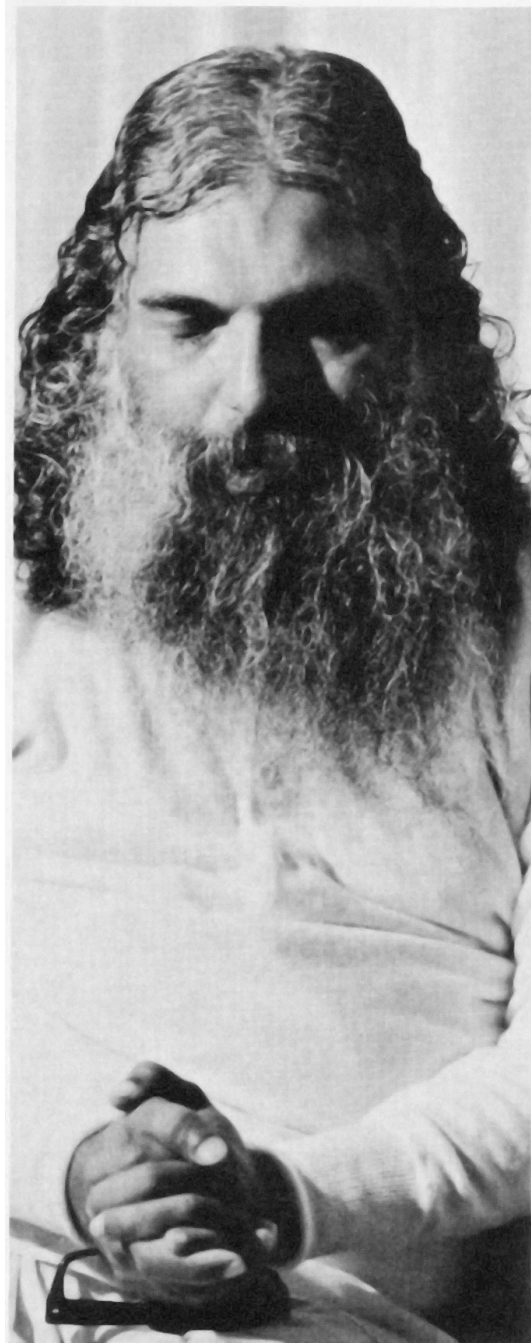
Immediately following his graduation from college, the Yati became head of the department of psychology at the S.N. College of Kerala University in Quilon, subsequently leaving that post to become senior lecturer in philosophy at Vivekananda College of Madras University in South India. In 1956, however, he resigned to spend a year in retreat, after which he became a research fellow at the University of Bombay.

For four years, beginning in 1963, he was director of the Institute for Psychic and Spiritual Research in New Delhi, as well as head of the Interdisciplinary Research Studies in Yoga for the Indian Council of Medical Research (New Delhi) sponsored by the Government of India.

By 1967 he began devoting full time to the Narayana Gurukula Movement. He became the director of the Institute of the Science of the Absolute in Varkala, manager of the Gurukula One-World School, secretary of the World Conference for Peace Through Unitive Understanding, and the editor of the philosophical journal Gurukulam— all posts he currently holds.

Although Nitya Chaitanya Yati has participated in some psychical research in India and is interested in the scientific approach to this field,

his major interests are devoted to the spiritual aspects of life and the



Narayana Gurukula Movement.