

# THE THINGS WE CARRY WITH US

---

by

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

The Divine Life Society  
Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India

Website: [swami-krishnananda.org](http://swami-krishnananda.org)

(Spoken at a Retreat on December 26, 1996)

I take it that this is a spiritual group. Am I right? It is a spiritual group. Am I right or not? Here is the essential point. Nowadays, anything and everything goes by the name of spirituality, but it is a great secret, which always escapes the notice of even a careful attentive mind.

When you go anywhere, you carry your belongings, your luggage, and your property for the itinerary. These are the visible accompaniments of your travel, but there are certain things which follow you wherever you go, and they follow without you knowing that you are being pursued by them. These things which invariably are associated with you, day in and day out, right from your birth till the end of life, are those things about which you know nothing, and which you never think in your mind at any time. What are these?

When you move, you carry with you all those things which are vitally connected with you. That which does anything, or moves from place to place, is the person that moves. Now, the person is not the physical body that moves. Your mental structure is what you really are. You carry memories, for instance. Memories are not characteristics of the body. You have loves and hatreds, fears and anxieties, expectations, and many other characteristics which go with

you wherever you go. You cannot throw your sorrow somewhere into the jungle, and then go on a travel. The sorrow will pursue you, and your joys also will come with you.

There is what is known as environment, very much emphasised these days by environmentalists. You carry with you, wherever you go, the environment in which you are placed. Like a shirt that you put on, the environment always comes with you, and you must know what that environment is.

As an individual, as a person that you are, you are a conglomeration of feelings, determinations, and decisions. Every person is a psychological entity. Sometimes we look like psychophysical individuals, inasmuch as the body cannot totally be dissociated from the operations of the mind. But, truly speaking, our fortune is not in the conditions of the body; it is in the conditions of our mind.

You not only belong to your own self, but you belong to a large area of human society. It is not possible for any individual to totally dissociate oneself from social associations or social conditions. You know very well how much dependent anyone is on the structure of human society. No individual is complete by one's own self. There are things which you can give to others, which others lack and do not have; but there are things which you would like to take from others, which you lack but others have.

Farmers produce wheat, rice, and sugarcane, and shopkeepers move the commodity from place to place for distributing it in the proper manner. Some produce things; some consume things. There is a mutual agreement and understanding between the process of production and consumption, which is one of the characteristics of human society. You cannot yourself till the land, grow harvest, and carry wheat bags with you; and your own self must cook and eat. You require associations from outside.

Not only that, apart from these visible characteristics of social relation, there are unavoidable relations which we maintain; namely, we feel within ourselves that we cannot exist unless we belong to society. We form, generally, small societies for the sake of our security, like family. Family is also a society. It may be of two or three persons. The cooperative coming together of these three or four persons called the family gives security to this group. The family is secure. A single person, totally independent, sitting in the wilderness, cannot feel that one is secure, because the winds of society will blow over the head in any manner.

But even a family cannot be secure unless it has the sanction of protection from a wider atmosphere, which is a larger society. You may call it the nation, or the country. The whole country and the national law protects you, takes care of you. The family cannot be secure if the nation is in danger. Even a nation is not fully secure if the international setup is not well balanced. Nowadays, the world situation affects even little families. The whole world has become one family now, so social associations extend up to the farthest corner of the earth, though we do not think deeply along these lines. None of us feels the necessity to think that we are existing here comfortably because of stable international relations. Theoretically, we may accept this fact, but we do not think that it is essential for us to go on worrying about this. How is it that we take this for granted? A tumult in international relations, which may be of great consequence, will affect every individual in the whole world, and how it will affect us is up to anyone to think for oneself.

The whole world is with you, and you carry it with you wherever you go. Wherever you go, you are in human society. Wherever you go, you are conditioned by these unavoidable associations with the external setup of social relation, even up to the limit of the United Nations. You have a vital connection with the United Nations. You may say, "What connection have I got? I am a simple individual sitting here. Let them do what they like." No, it is not like that. "Let them do what they like" is not correct, because if they do

anything which is untoward, this may affect the whole ground of the earth, and as a wise person, you know what it is all about.

This is to say, you carry social relations wherever you go, up to the farthest limit of possibility, and you cannot ignore your obligation to society, inasmuch as the society is also giving you a helping hand in seeing to it that you are safe. Society supplies what your needs are. It gives security in the form of a government, and it produces commodities which you require. The foodstuffs, the clothing, and other facilities that you need come from sources which are outside the physical periphery of your personality.

You are a world individual in one sense. You are not a citizen of one place; you are a citizen of the whole world, if you think over this matter carefully. You belong to the whole world, and the world, in its gesture of goodwill and cooperation, has embraced you and taken you into its bosom. If that had not been the case, you would not have been here breathing the fresh air comfortably. You would be disturbed every moment about what is going to happen outside. You feel that everything is all right; nothing will happen, because of the stability of human society throughout the world. These associations which are inscrutable in their nature and not visible to the physical eye, always escaping the notice of even the greatest power of introspection, do exist.

So, the first thing to remember is that you are a social unit, apart from being a citizen of a particular country. Your belonging to the worldwide organisation of society is a more consequential relation than your belonging to a single country which gives you a passport or a visa. Human society is larger than a country and a particular nation, and that is with you wherever you go.

But, does anybody think like this? "I am a carefree individual. What does it matter? I go wherever I like." You cannot go like that. You cannot go wherever you like. You can go only on the surface of the earth, in the midst of society. This is possible only if the air that is outside, the atmosphere

external to you, is cooperative and friendly. You cannot even walk on the road unless the atmosphere of the road is cooperative. Suppose there is fear on the road; then, you cannot walk on the road. But you know that everything is all right. You can walk from here to Delhi without any kind of anxiety because society is so well knit together in a cooperative gesture of indivisibility. You are safe. Socially, you are safe because of the mutual cooperation.

So, in this context you will realise that selfishness is rooted out completely. No person can be selfish. "I mind my business, you mind your business." This kind of thing will not work in this world. You have no business of your own, even as nobody else has a business of his or her own. It is a total business of a world family, to which we belong.

This is to tell you one aspect of that which you carry with you wherever you go. This is also a commodity that you carry – your social relations. But there is another thing which is deeper than this – namely, you carry your relationship with the whole of nature. Nature includes anything and everything that this physical world is. This very earth supports you. I mentioned society supports you. Now I am telling you the earth is supporting you. There are five constitutive elements in physical nature – earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Ether or space gives us accommodation. What we call accommodation is nothing but availability of space, and that space is everywhere. You do not like a narrow, congested little area of space for you to exist; you would like to have a wide area.

The physical body cannot continue to live unless it is fed with the elements produced by the earth which you call diet – food, for instance. The food that is necessary to maintain this body comes from the production of essences of the earth itself. The physical body is made up of earth principle, so it requires to be plastered every day by that which comes from the earth. The earth is supporting itself. The body is a part of the physical earth, and it cannot continue independently without a relationship with the vast earth.

We require water to drink. Suppose there is no water; what will happen? We do not manufacture water. Even food we cannot manufacture, as we think it is. The earth has to permit the growth of foodstuff. It simply can withdraw its essences and there can be drought and dryness everywhere. The sun can heat up the whole earth, and there would be no food to eat, and no water to drink. The elements are our friends.

We said human beings are our friends; all right, agreed. Now we come to another thing; the elements are our friends. The earth can shake, simply; but it does not shake. Why should it not? It can simply blow up the ground if it wants, and what happens at that time? We call it an earthquake. We are sure that the earth, the dear mother of ours, on whose bosom we are sitting and walking, will not do such a thing. We have a faith that the earth underground will not break today. This is a faith, without any reason behind it. Faith has no reason. Why should such a faith be there, that the earth will not break? But we have faith: "No, no. It will not take place. The sun will rise every day." Why should the sun rise every day? Have we any control over that phenomenon? Let the sun not rise for a day and see what happens. All life will perish with cold.

You do not have to manufacture fresh air. Are you paying tax for the air that you get from outside? It is a gesture of God. Let there be no air. Can you manufacture air by any amount of money that you have? The earth gives you free food. Water is given to you freely; air is given you freely. Sunlight is free. What a wonder! All essentials are coming to you freely. What is man-made has to be purchased by a recompense of payment, but what God has made comes to you totally free. Suppose you have to pay a tax for the air that you breathe, or sunlight. What will happen? This is the bounty of nature.

In the same way as we have to be perpetually aligned to the requirement of the international social setup, we have also to be perpetually in harmony with natural conditions.

We cannot violate the laws of nature. You must know, as educated persons, what the laws of nature are. You cannot insult nature in any way. You cannot spit at the sun and condemn air, or criticise water, or hate fire. No, you should not say like that. They are divinities. God operates not only in the form of an indivisible social setup for the sustenance of our life; He also operates as nature. Philosophers tell us that the world is the body of God. When God created the world, He did not create human beings first. He created the elements only. Read the bible, the Upanishads, or the Gita. Whatever you read, you will find that man and woman were not created first; they are latecomers. These latecomers are now becoming so proud that they think they are the masters of the whole creation. This is a very great tragedy.

The causes are more important than the effects. That which came first is more important than that which came later. We are perhaps the least important, because we came much later. Nature is more important. But, there is something more which you carry with you.

You carry yourself as a psychological unit; that is true. You carry human society's relations; that is also true. Now, the third thing that you carry is the permission granted to you by nature to exist here. You know what permission nature has given to you. It gives you security. You want air to breathe: "Take," says nature. You want water; it rains. Who can manufacture rain?

Such an arrangement has been made by the natural laws, by the cooperation of oceans surrounding the earth's surface, and the sun in the sky, and the wind that blows. All these three cooperatively working create clouds, rain, showers, and we have rivers of water everywhere. Who can forget this wonderful operation in nature, to which we give scant respect?

In Indian traditional parlance, it is stated that when you wake up in the morning, you put your foot on the surface of the earth. This earth is a divine being. We generally offer a prayer in Sanskrit meaning "Oh, Consort to the Almighty, this

Mother Earth, please excuse me. I am putting my foot on your chest helplessly. You are a divinity. "Would you doubt that the earth is a divinity? Would you doubt that the sun is a divinity? Would you doubt that the beautiful waters that flow in the rivers are divinities? Would you doubt that the fresh air, the oxygen, is a divinity? There is divinity everywhere. There is nothing but that.

So, I mentioned about your individuality, psychological setup, which is very important, and your social relations, and then your obligation to nature. "Prostrate yourself, bowing your head down every day to anything and everything that you see around you," says a passage in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. "Prostrate yourself before a dog also, and a donkey. Do *namaskar* (a greeting with the palms of the hands placed together)." A donkey is not a wretched creature. It is as important as you are. A cow is very sacred. You must bow down and do *namaskar*. If you see a towering tree, "Oh, wonderful master, *namaskar*." We prostrate ourselves before Ganga.

Everything in the world is worthy of respect. That is Bhagavan Sri Krishna's admonition to his disciple; a parting advice he gives to a person called Uddhava. "We lose nothing by being humble. We lose everything by being proud and self-assertive, and wrongly imagining that we have all the power, while we have no power of any kind." The power that we seem to be having, even to walk with our legs, comes from the cooperative structure of the whole of nature: the nervous system, the bloodstream, the brain, the heart, the lungs. How do they operate? We are not contributing anything to their operation. Nature is kindly setting itself in tune with our structural individuality. We have the grace of God, with which we are living in this world.

Now, I am mentioning the word "God". It is the last, but not the least. You carry Him wherever you go. You carry yourself; you carry society, you carry nature, and you are carrying God Himself. This is the most difficult thing to conceive. To some extent, you may know what you are; to

some extent you know what society is, and to some extent, what nature is. But what God is, is beyond; it passes understanding. You do not know what it is all about. People say anything about God. It is not possible to meditate so easily like that, because you do not know what it is that you want. An incomprehensible, indivisible, enveloping, total perfection, beyond space and time – how will you contemplate such a thing?

If this exercise could be practicable, if you can feel at one and the same moment that you belong to all these things, the quarters of the heaven will guide you, protect you, and take care of you. The Yoga Vasishtha says, “The guardians of the eight quarters in the horizon will protect you.” This is not imagery; this is not mythology; this is not religion. This is scientific fact. You are inseparably existing from nature outside and the divinity that is behind nature. You are perpetually under the protection and guardianship of these divinities.

We see with our eyes due to the operation of the divine solar principle that is giving energy to our eyes inside. We have five sense organs – seeing, hearing, etc. All these are superintended by certain celestial operations. If you read the Chhandogya Upanishad, or the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, you will have some idea how these divinities operate. The moment you are born, the divinities enter you, and the child opens the eyes and begins to see; it hears, and it feels.

When it is time to depart, the divinities take leave because the time of departure is like an emergency situation arising in the body. When there is an emergency in a particular country, the ambassadors coming from other countries flee that place immediately. All the embassies will be withdrawn to their respective countries when there is an emergency in a particular land. So, what can be a greater emergency than the event of death taking place? It is going to take place in a few minutes. The divinities, the ambassadors of God, withdraw themselves, and then we cannot see anything. The dying person cannot see, cannot hear, and he

cannot think, also. This is a serious situation which is before us. We cannot escape.

The Upanishad tells us when the time of this order to quit comes to us, a little light emerges from our heart; a little flame, as it were, shoots up from the tip of the heart. It is the quantum of energy in our system. That little tip of flame – you may compare it to the soul that we are – is trying to extricate itself from the clutches of the bodily condition. It wants exit immediately. When it pulls itself out, what happens? It pulls the sense organs, and drives the divinities out. They are not necessary anymore. Then, the last thing that it pulls is the *prana*, or the vital force, and the body becomes cold. The fire element has been withdrawn; water element is withdrawn. The body becomes dry, chilled, and nothing is left except this physical substance, bereft of all the energies and the divine forces.

What will happen afterwards? This little flame will rush out like a rocket, with the speed of a rocket, we may say, or with a greater speed still, the speed of light. It is with incalculable speed. It will rush to the spot where you can fulfil those desires which you have been harbouring in your heart in this world, but which you could not fulfil in this world, due to various factors.

Therefore, be careful. The Upanishad says, “Oh human beings, be careful. Beware of what is going to happen to you.” Where are you going? You will go to that particular area, that atmosphere, that thing which you have been brooding over throughout your life. If you had chaotic thoughts, confused ideas, a muddled way of thinking, and distracted desires, the less said the better. You would like to be a wonderful, glorious luminous, happy angel, if possible. How can you deserve that wonderful state of a divine angelic existence if you have not aspired for it in this world? Is anyone wanting to be an angel? Is it possible? Then you have to live the life of an angel in this world. If a person lives like a pig in this world, how will that person become an angel in the next world?

What we become in the next world is only a carrying forward of the balance left in the previous life. It is like a clear balance sheet. If there is a debit, a debit will be carried; if it is a credit, a credit will be carried, and you must know what it is that is going to be carried with you. Be very careful. Decide: "I want to be a shining angel in the high heaven. This is my desire. I want to be fit enough to visualise the Almighty Creator, God. I shall depart from this mortal coil and enter into the bosom of the Supreme Creator."

Has such a desire arisen in the mind of any person? Even if that desire has arisen, has it taken a root in one's heart? If it has taken a root in the heart, for how many minutes does this thought continue? Is it a waste of time to think like this, or is it the only proper thing that we have to do in our life? Is there time for us to waste in wool-gathering, and chit-chatting, talking nonsense and meaningless things, wasting hours and minutes? Is it going to be worthwhile? How long are we to live in this world? Nobody knows, but we think another fifty, sixty years is quite all right. Who told you this? Where is the guarantee? It may be fifty or sixty minutes, also, but you think it is years. This is another illusion that is catching hold of the person, so that the person will never be able to do any worthwhile thing.

If we are not in a position to do anything worthwhile for our own selves, what is the use of asking whether we can do some worthwhile thing for other people? People talk of service, social welfare, running about here and there, doing good to the whole world. What good have you done to your own self? You yourself are in a state of emergency and danger.

We started with the word "spirituality". Here is spirituality. It is a comprehensive, total dedication to the cosmic structure that the Almighty God has created. That is spirituality. It is not chanting some *mantra*; it is not rolling a bead; it is not going to a temple, ringing the bell, or going to a church. It is not taking a bath in a river. Nothing of the kind can save us when the time for it comes. We have to gather

ourselves up into a centre of absolute concentration on that great wonderful Totality, the Supreme Being.

People come to this ashram of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj to find time to think like this; because they cannot think like this in a marketplace, in a railway station, or a club, they come here. But if even here you cannot find time, then who is to blame? Be happy. I have uttered these few words to you from the bottom of my heart. It is that which is important to me, and I consider it is important to you all.