

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

I. The ROI of Spirituality	11
----------------------------	----

PART 2: THE DRIVING FORCE OF ENERGY

II. Soul Energy	27
III. Why are we here? Creationists vs. Evolutionists	47
IV. Waiting Rooms and Reincarnation	57
V. Heaven, Hell, and our Happy Graph	
• The Happy Graph	73
• The Seven External Factors of Attachment	82
• Science and the Mind	94
• Heaven and Hell	100
VI. The Ego	105
VII. The Mirror in the Stranger	109
VIII. Karma—Can it be Proven?	123
IX. Karma—How does it Work?	153
X. Vegetarianism and Squashing Bugs	169
XI. Channeling and Tracking Energy	
• Astrology	183
• Palm Reading	195
• Colors, Numbers, Stones, and Sugar	199
• Chanting, Mantras, Prayers, and Meditation	202
• ESP	205

PART 3: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

XII. Religion—our Personal Trainer	213
XIII. Intermittent Meditation Flashes (IMF)	225
XIV. Putting 3 Chips on God—Conclusion	235
1. Choosing a Spiritual Path	
• Monkhood or Money?	237
• I Like Life	238
• More Action, not Knowledge	241
• Big Bang or Big Kahuna? Agnosticism	247
2. Incorporating Detachment	
• Maslow's Hierarchy & my Attachment Bucket	252
• The 10-80-10 Rule & my Attachment Bucket	256
• Expected Problems & my Detachment Bucket	259
3. Incorporating Karma	
• Budgeting for Bad Karma	263
• Following the Golden Rule	265
• Small Acts of Kindness	268
• Turning Negative Karma into Positive	273
4. Reaching Happiness and Enlightenment	
• Surrounding myself with Positive Energy	282
• Surrounding myself with Smart Energy	284
• Confrontation, not Consolation	287
• Keep Exercising	290
• We can find Happiness	292

*In any Battle,
Knowledge is the first half,
and Action is the other half.*

—Anonymous—

THE BATTLE

Introduction



PART

1

Chapter I

The ROI of Spirituality



I was never one of those philosophical college students who pondered and debated the secrets of the Universe with fellow students late at night. If I was at any of these gatherings, I was probably the one in the corner too lazy to voice an opinion and more fascinated by the pizza.

Where do we come from? What are we doing here? What is the meaning of life?

Is this the last slice of pepperoni?

In all other respects, I was a nice, thoughtful person. Got good grades. Didn't get into trouble. Was making progress on the approved path of a solid education, prestigious job, timely marriage, suburban house, 2.5 kids, and the requisite yearly vacation to some exotic destination. I had yet to accomplish all of these goals, but I was well on my way.

Then midlife hit. And like any adult at that stage, I had gone through a variety of experiences by then. I had achieved many of the milestones that society expected of me. I wasn't completely satisfied with everything but I had stability and cable TV on my comfortable, predictable path. As my ever-practical parents would say, what more could one want?

Well . . . something . . . anything . . . I don't know . . . I mean, was this as good as it gets? Where do I head to next?

Like many people from the newer generations, I had always thought of myself as *spiritual* but not deeply *religious*. If anyone ever asked me, I would say—feel free to chime in—“I don't follow any one Religion, but I am spiritual and I believe in being a good person.”

Sound familiar?

Now what does this mean, exactly? What is Spirituality vs. Religion? Do any of us know? Given that one out of every three adults calls themselves spiritual, you would think there would be a standard definition by now.

I've heard people say that it means you are free to live as you please as long as you don't harm others. Some go further by adding that it means helping people out and doing good deeds and contributing to society. Others say that they believe there is a God, and perhaps a Heaven and Hell, but they are not sure that any particular Religion is the correct one to follow.

“Spirituality is feeling happy every day, no matter what you have. Enjoying the small things in life, enjoying the journey.”

“Spirituality is experienced in your own being. Being spiritual means

standing on a cliff feeling the rushing wind . . . and understanding the beauty of nature.”

“Spirituality means freedom from life while living life.”

“Little children are spiritual. They are innocent, they are free from society's expectations and brainwashing. I am trying to be more like I was when I was five, free and uninhibited, that would mean achieving true Spirituality.”

Um . . . What? Eh? Huh?

I was still confused.

I didn't know the answer either. My own definition of *Spirituality* is something I began to wonder about.

I headed to the bookstore and started reading books by brilliant authors who I could see had a commanding and confident understanding of what Spirituality means. Deepak Chopra, the Dalai Lama, Eckhart Tolle

All of their teachings seemed to ring so true. It is hard to disagree with “enjoy every moment, be in the moment” or “love everyone, everyone is you” or “hear yourself breathe and know that you are alive”.

But while I felt inspired and ready to glide through life anew, the gliding seemed to sputter once I walked out the doors and made my way home. Wait, I forgot, what was I supposed to do? I wished there was a spiritual person who was, say . . . a cross between the Dalai Lama and Donald Trump . . . or Deepak Chopra and Britney Spears. Or just an everyday person, stuck in the rat race, feeling the pressure, but not wanting to get out because the goal of a nice house, car, or vacation prevents any crazy detours off the proven path. Yet that person still

managing to enjoy *every moment* of their 80 hour workweek, *feel intense love* for their annoying coworker, or magically bring about a promotion and *inner peace* even while having to get up every morning at 5 AM to achieve it.

Was it really, truly possible to enjoy every moment of every day, no matter what, and still live normally and pursue the usual goals? Or did it ultimately mean letting go of material wealth—or at least scaling down—and taking a lot of time out to meditate, or go to church, or possibly even staying single with no attachments so one could wake up every day with the ability to engage in the real world only when in the mood?

And before getting to all of that, how can one be sure of what is genuinely the “truth” and whether these teachings are correct? Was there any way to be more sure of what spiritual path to follow before taking precious time out of a busy, productive schedule?

For those of you familiar with the work of consultants, one of their main tasks is to help clients measure the ROI, or *return on investment*, of their resources to the benefits they receive. For example, how much time will workers save if the company invests in this new machine? On a more personal level, how much more can I sell my house for if I put in a new kitchen? 20 percent return—not worth it. 95 percent return—now we're talking!

And how guaranteed is the 95 percent return? What if all that time or money is invested and there is also a possibility that there will be a 0 percent return?

Well, my feeling is that many of us spiritual, but busy professionals, subconsciously assign a low ROI to being spiritual. All of us intend to

think about it eventually, when we are not so busy and have more time . . . when it's later in life and we are old and wrinkled anyway with not much else to do. But for now, it's not high on our priority list.

Being more spiritual is not going to get me the career advancement I am pursuing. It's not going to get me more money for my retirement. It's not going to get me more time to spend with my family.

Time and money—these are tangible, immediate, valuable resources and goals. Giving more thought to one's Spirituality might not take money, but it would require some time. It's better saved as a worry for old age, when we are closer to dying and have more time and wisdom to question the purpose of it all. When we want to secure our ticket to Heaven, if there is one. Or maybe, even then, we will feel no need to ponder any of it, since we'll be comfortably ensconced in our paid-up, upgraded homes with solid nest eggs and exciting travel plans and plenty of distracting hobbies. Regardless of whether we will or won't think about it later in life, Spirituality certainly doesn't have much to do with our current life, the here and now.

If we knew for sure that there was a God or a Heaven, if there was a guarantee, would we invest the time to reach them? Of course! Most of us are not selfish. We are decent people. We want to help others and know that there is a point to all of this. We want to secure our place in Heaven. It is scary to think that there is no one up there, or no other meaning to life, that we are completely on our own. If we could just be shown a sign, some proof of God's existence or which Religion to follow—a real, indisputable miracle that didn't happen centuries ago but instead would take place right before our very own eyes—then we

would be eager to spend time on the subject and think about it more deeply. Personally, I don't need something grand. If I were able to choose a miracle to witness, it would involve me being able to eat tubloads of chocolate and getting thinner the more I eat it. But I suppose any old miracle would do, just something to show me—us—that God or Heaven really exists.

However, since we don't know what path to follow and whether Spirituality is going to bring any benefit, it is easy to dust it off into a corner and plan to address it “later”.

That is how most of us think from what I have observed. I am no different.

I'll admit, I've thought the same way. What if there actually isn't anything beyond this life? What if this life is just a freak of nature, like the Big Bang? What if the atheists are right, there is no God, and our bodies are just physical matter or particles that will *transmogrify* into some other type of matter or particle after we're gone? What if the “afterlife” consists of being an ion instead of a neutron? I mean, imagine spending all this time writing and reading and thinking about God, and changing our behavior to be nice to other people, and we find out later, once we're dead, that the joke is on us? It was just the one life we had to live, and that was it, BABY! Ha ha!?

Well it's possible, of course. There seems to be no guarantee. That's the biggest reason we are able to shove the issue to the back of our Minds. Yet . . . like the annoying relative who keeps sending emails and demanding that we stay in touch, the idea of there being a higher purpose pops up regularly enough that it can't be swatted entirely away.

First of all, how does one explain the discrepancies in this world? Rich, young celebrities that seem to have everything they want, and poor, struggling slum dwellers whose luxury aspirations include clean water. An innocent young kid getting cancer, and an eighty-year-old chain smoker still going strong. Countries with plenty of freedom and opportunities, and countries where going out to buy bread could mean death. I could go into a string of examples, but I'm sure you already know what I am talking about.

What about unsolved mysteries like ESP and ghosts and twins living continents apart yet still wearing the exact same color of shoelace, and all that jazz? Where did all that come from?

And the biggest reason for hoping, *wanting*, to believe in something—surely there is more to life than just the here and now? Surely there is more out there for me than my gnarly old boss and twitchy bitchy customers and nice but boring routine? The increasing breakdown of my body parts as I get older and have to add a new patch-up every month— dye the hair, get facials, buy wrinkle cream, bathe myself in sunscreen, consume my calcium, eat my vitamins. I'm fighting nightly visions of morphing into the decrepit Goldie Hawn from *Death Becomes Her*.

Please, *please*, let there be more! And better!

Mostly life is good, good enough, or even really good, and I conveniently ignore the desire to want more because I'll have to *work* for more. Rumor has it that it takes a lot of effort and it is not easy pickings. From what I know you have to EARN your way into Heaven or Nirvana.

Yawn . . . I'll just hit the snooze button on my Spirituality Clock

for a little while longer . . . just five more minutes, years, decades, whatever . . . and I promise I'll wake up and jump out of bed and get on with it, just let me sleep for five more minutes. Please?

What's this? Someone just dumped a bucket of cold water on my bed? A job loss? A disease? A tragedy? A tsunami? Hey, that's no fun! It's uncomfortable in here now! Fine, I'm getting up already, sheeeesh . . .

Hi God. How are you. Sorry I'm late, I overslept a bit. Hey, something awful just happened to me, so I have a favor to ask you . . .

Maybe there is nothing out there and the atheists are right.

Or maybe there IS something out there . . .

Maybe.

And maybe not.

The big question is, how many chips do you want to put on the MAYBE square and how many chips do you want to put on the MAYBE NOT square? Do you want to put *all* your chips on one or the other? Or would you prefer splitting them up, say 3 chips go on Maybe, and 7 on Maybe Not? Do you want to completely ignore the issue of Religion or Spirituality or a higher power for the rest of your life? Or do you want to invest at least a little time in it? How confident are you, that you will win your bet when the dice are rolled?

And how many of you are rolling your eyes at my cheesy gambling analogy?

I don't know about you, but *just in case* . . . just in case there is an eensy-weensy tiny-winy miniscularian chance of Heaven, Hell, or getting to be reborn again in a rocking celebrity body . . . I'm going to spend at least some time thinking about it. Now. Today. Not a lot of

time, I've got a busy life to lead. But I don't want all my chips stacked on only one square. I'd like to diversify my portfolio. Hedge my bets. *Put 3 chips on God.* Just in case the dice get rolled earlier than I thought, and it's my time to go. Or in case something happens in this life itself and I need God and good Karma on my side.

With that, let's set up a few ground rules here for explaining how to get through the rest of this book without losing your Mind or feeling that you are on a drug-induced hallucination trip.

Commandment 1

Thou shalt not take things literally.

Let me explain that I am just like you. I am not some wise, all-knowing, enlightened guru who has studied various scriptures for the past 29 years and . . . um . . . 120 months of my life. I'm a rather lazy person with a short attention span. I could have spent hours or even years researching my material in order to bring you a tightly written, solidly factual, intellectual book. But I conveniently and truly decided that defeated the purpose. I'm trying to write for people like you—me—*us*. Someone in India once spent a patient afternoon explaining to me the meanings of different prayers, which ones to apply where, the types of devotion, and various meditation positions, and I sincerely enjoyed hearing his teachings and inhaled his every word and then promptly forgot it all by breakfast the next morning.

Some may argue that I should know all the different types of prayers or rituals or beliefs if I am going to be writing a book like this, but I

think not. To me what is important is whether the general concept of Karma or Heaven makes sense, and what I need to do in my everyday life to apply it. Details and Religion, to me, are man-made attempts to understand the overall truth. I think what is more important is feeling your way around a common teaching or belief and seeing if it becomes a natural part of your Soul as you go through the experiences of life. I think I first learned about Karma and the three types (or was it five?) as a child, when I was dragged to some religious lecture against my will. I didn't give it much thought right afterwards, but the concept of Karma stewed and simmered in my Mind, over the years, without my realizing, until slowly and unexpectedly I began to feel there might be some truth to it. Not truth to there being three types of Karma, necessarily, but truth to the idea in general.

So I might make references to existing concepts—the Soul, Karma, Dharma, Reincarnation, Chakras, Meditation, and Detachment. I might be influenced by the fact that I was born into a Hindu family and these were the types of words used to describe these concepts. But remember, I don't consider myself from any one Religion in particular, I consider myself *spiritual*. If I use the word *Karma*, you might substitute the word “sin” or “blessing”. As in, “She sinned”, instead of “Her actions resulted in bad Karma”. Or “She was blessed”, instead of “Her good Karma kicked in”. Don't go by the literal word I use, and don't get annoyed when I butcher details and facts and names of various scriptures and doctrines (and I will, I promise you, despite my best efforts not to). Just go with the flow of the concept, or simply humor me and suspend your own thoughts for a time as you open your Mind to mine.

Thou shalt not hold me to my current beliefs.

First of all, I don't really have "beliefs". I know OF beliefs and teachings and have squeezed and poked and pulled at them in my attempt to see if they make sense. If I feel that one particular teaching or idea does seem to explain life and the world, I do find myself following it and imbibing it as part of my daily practices. But I am a female, and I am from generation X, and I'm entitled to change my Mind at any time. If the stranger across the street offers me a more tantalizing ice-cream cone, I'll drop the one I'm having and promptly switch. I like logic, and I like concepts that are applicable to the whole world and all of life's mysteries. I'm never going to be one of those people who devoutly follow one path because of *faith*. Instead I'm like the kid who keeps asking "but why?" every time you answer his question.

In fact, as I chat with you in the following chapters, I am also going to be like one of those entertainers who plays a dual role while acting or singing a song. You know, the ones that put on a fake mustache and a hat when they are singing the male's part of the song, then run over to the other side of the stage and hold a frilly parasol while they skip around to the female's voice. I am going to constantly switch sides and dissect issues from both points of view. That's what we skeptical agnostics do. Agnostics are those who neither believe nor disbelieve in the existence of God—they are open to either possibility being true.

I am an agnostic, and I am not partial to any one side. What I talk about in this book is where I am at the moment, in terms of which

concepts or theories I feel make the most sense. If tomorrow someone were to show me a better way, or an indisputable, miracle-backed proof that *their* way is the *correct* way and I will go to Hell if I don't squat on one foot chanting 3.5 times a week, I will happily abandon my favorite chocolate cone for strawberry. In addition, I welcome your criticisms and disagreements. If you can back what you say with clear, sound reasoning, I will be open to it and respect you all the more for it.

Commandment 3

Thou shalt not make too much fun of my analogies.

In order to try and explain the Alice-in-Wonderland mess going on in my head from the years of observations and experiences I've had, I'm going to use a lot of hokey and far-fetched analogies, metaphors, and examples. It's much more convenient for me to describe my thoughts in terms of televisions, socket plugs, and teacups, than to try and read up on physics and electromagnetic fields. I am sure there will be times when you are reading and pause to say to yourself "What the ?!##!!" But I'm relying on the morbid fascination we all have for slowing down and gawking at accidents, to compel you to finish the rest of this book.

With those rules in place, on we go to the next chapter. Where I will now invoke visions of Vacuums, Sailboats, Cavemen, Bombs, Cocktails, War, Science, Mathematics, Singing, and Dancing.

?!##!!

Yes, *really*. Read on and see for yourself . . .

You may call me an agnostic, but I do not share the crusading spirit of the professional atheist whose fervor is mostly due to a painful act of liberation from the fetters of religious indoctrination received in youth. I prefer an attitude of humility corresponding to the weakness of our intellectual understanding of nature and of our own being.

—Albert Einstein