

## Personal Reflections on My Spirituality

In this article, I share my own personal reflections on life and existence. Let me proceed, to the best of my objective reasoning, based on the *facts of personal lived experience* (however, I also realize that I have been conditioned by a unique combination of background, experiences, and perceptions, which have shaped my memories, thoughts and feelings):

- Fact #1: I have a physical body. At some point, it will decay and no longer exist in its present physical form. This physical existence is experienced through six senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking (facilitated by the brain).
- Fact #2: I have a mind capable of *awareness, knowing* – that is, *experiencing*. These are its functions. It is *consciousness*, or awareness itself. It is a subtle, nonphysical kind of energy. "It is clear in nature and reflects everything that it experiences, just as a still lake reflects the surrounding mountains and forests" (Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate*, 2005, p. 5). At death, this mind or consciousness continues. Also, this mind or consciousness has existed from beginningless time – the mind "is a beginningless continuum, like an ever-flowing stream: the previous mind-moment gave rise to this mind-moment, which gives rise to the next mind moment, and so on" (McDonald, 5). The consciousness of all beings who have ever lived continues.
- Fact #3: A timeless, universal law in the physical realm is *karma* – the principle of cause and effect, or action and reaction. I am 100% responsible for my actions – therefore, I must do all I can to live in the best way for all concerned.
- Fact #4: I have one basic desire – to be happy, and to not suffer. I recognize that this is the basic desire of all sentient beings!
- Fact #5: I realize that I am an imperfect being – capable of skilful and unskilful actions, in mind, speech, and body. I accept the fact that I have performed many unskilful actions in the past – as well as good actions. However, guilt over unskilful actions is generally not useful – it does not bring positive results and leaves a person miserable. Regret, on the other hand, is intelligent and constructive – and is based on understanding karma. I can feel regret, but then immediately do whatever I can to clear up the karmic results.
- Fact #6: I recognize that skilful actions bring happiness; unskilful actions bring suffering.
- Fact #7: To be happy and to not suffer, I need to eliminate and avoid unskilful actions of mind, speech, and body.

- Fact #8: I realize and accept that there are other beings who have advanced further on the path of understanding and enlightenment than I have – these I need to accept as my teachers and learn from them.
- Fact #9: Since I can progress in understanding, there must be beings who, over eons of time, have become fully enlightened (who have progressed on the spiritual path and eradicated all unskillful actions of mind, speech, and body) – these are the buddhas! These beings can exist in the realm of form (as did the Buddha about 2,500 years ago), as well as in formless realms.
- Fact #10: These enlightened beings would have minds of pure love, compassion, joy, and wisdom. These beings would also have a heart of love and compassion toward imperfect human beings. However, they furthermore recognize the need for imperfect human beings to accept 100% responsibility for their actions and so develop their potential. If a human being has done 100% all that they can do, an enlightened being may intervene on their behalf.
- Fact #11: Knowing that fully enlightened beings exist, I may ask them for help and assistance – providing that I have accepted 100% responsibility and done all that I can do. I can believe that I will receive help – if I have first done 100% all I can do.
- Fact #12: Having a mind capable of visualization, I can choose to visualize an enlightened being, knowing that they exist and have fully enlightened qualities (such as wisdom and compassion) – however, I must realize that it is only a visualization; nevertheless the reality of the being exists.

Note: This short article has not addressed the concepts of the "Spirit of God", the Soul, the Ego, the Divine Spark, or the idea of an Eternal Entity.

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