

Quotations From Scriptures:

Selections From Acharya Umasvati's TATTVAARTH SUTRA¹

Introduction

Acharya Umasvati's TATTVAARTH SUTRA presents a systematic and comprehensive view of the seven aspects of reality, relating to the basic principles of Jainism. The universe is an important element of reality. In the third and fourth chapters of the TATTVAARTH SUTRA, Acharya Umasvati presents some aspects of Jain cosmology depicting the structure of the universe.

Chapter 4 deals with DEVS - celestial beings, their mental states, activities and habitations. The word 'DEV' implies beings possessing certain uncommon and special capabilities, who roam freely in heaven, hell and the terrestrial world and derive pleasure from unusual exploits.² They belong to four categories: Residential (BHAVANAVAASI) - those who live in mansions; Peripatetic (VYANTAR) - those who live in desolate places like forests and caves; Stellar (JYOTISHKA, Luminous) - those who live in stellar bodies; and, Empyrean (VAIMAANIK) - those who live in celestial vehicles (VIMAANS) in the upper regions of the universe. This higher region consists of sixteen levels of heaven (SVARGA). The regions above SVARGA are called GRAIVEYIK, ANUTTAR and SARVAARTHASIDDHI.

Chapter 4

The four categories of celestial beings:

DEVAASHCHATURIKAAYAHA [4-1]

¹ Based on the following commentaries on TATTVAARTH SUTRA:
TATTVAARTH SUTRA by Acharya Umasvati, commentary by Pandit Sukh Lal Sanghvi, English translation by K. K. Dixit, published by L. D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, 1974.

TATTVAARTH SUTRA by Acharya Umasvati, commentary by Pandit Phool Chandra Siddhantacharya, published by Varni Granthmala, Varanasi, 1949.

TATTVAARTH SUTRA by Acharya Umasvati, commentary by Pandit Mohan Lal Shastri, published by Saral Jain Granth Bhandar, Jabalpur, 1983.

Reality, English translation of Acharya Pujya Pad's SARVAARTHASIDDHI by S. A. Jain, published by Vir Sasana Sangha, Calcutta, 1960.

'That Which Is', a commentary on TATTVAARTH SUTRA by Dr Nath Mal Tatia, published by Harper Collins, 1994.

MOKSHASHASTRA, VIMAL PRASHNOTTARI TEEKA by Aaryika Syaadavaadamati, published by Bharatavarsheeya Anekaant Vidvat Parishad, 2004.

² 'Dev' also means an estimable personality in some contexts.

There are four categories of celestial beings.

The celestial beings belong to the following categories:

1. Residential (BHAVANAVAASI) - those who live in mansions,
2. Peripatetic (VYANTAR) - those who live in desolate places like forests, rivers and caves,
3. Stellar (JYOTISHKA, Luminous) - those who live in stellar bodies, and,
4. Empyrean (VAIMAANIK) - those who live in celestial vehicles (VIMAANS) in the upper regions of the universe.

Shades of passion of celestial beings:

AADITASTRISHU PEETAANTALESHYAAH [4-2]

The first three categories of celestial beings have shades of passion (LESHYAS) up to yellow (PEET).

The most favorable shade of passion of the Residential, Peripatetic and Stellar beings is yellow (PEET). This implies that celestial beings in these three categories can also have the inferior shades of passion, dark (KRISHNA), blue (NEEL) and grey (KAAPOT). In this context, shades of passion imply the quality of thoughts and feelings of the celestial beings.³

Subclasses of celestial beings:

DASHAASHTAPANCHADVAADASHVIKALPAAH KALPOPANNAPARYANTA AH [4-3]

Up to the sixteenth level of heaven (KALPOPANNAPARYANT), the four categories of celestial beings are divided into ten, eight, five and twelve subclasses.

The Residential (BHAVANAVAASI) beings have ten subclasses, the Peripatetic (VYANTAR) beings have eight subclasses, the Stellar (Luminous) beings have five subclasses, and, the Hierarchical Empyrean (KALPOPANNAPARYANT VAIMAANIK) beings have twelve subclasses.

Hierarchy of celestial beings:

INDRASAAMAANIKTRAAYATRIMSHAPAARISHADAATMARAKSHALOKAPAALAANEEKA
PRAKEERNAKAABHIYOGYAKILVISHIKAASHCHAIKSHAH [4-4]

Hierarchy of celestial beings is: INDRA, SAAMAANIK, TRAYATRIMSH, PAARISHAD, AATMARAKSH, LOKAPAAL, ANEEK, PRAKEERNAK, AABHIYOGYA and KILVISHIK.

The connotations of these ranks are chief (INDRA), co-chief (SAAMAANIK), minister (TRAYATRIMSH), counselor (PAARISHAD), bodyguard

³ For details, please see 'Shades of Passion' by Manish Modi, Jain Study Circular, January 2000, pages 16-21.

(AATMARAKSH), police (LOKAPAAL), soldiers (ANEK), citizens (PRAKEERNAK), attendants (AABHIYOGYA) and menials (KILVISHIK). It is interesting to note that these ranks correspond to the structure of our society.

Exceptions to the above:

TRAAYASTRIMSHALOKAPAALAVARJYAA VYANTARAJYOTISHKAAH [4-5]

The Peripatetic and Stellar beings do not have the ranks of minister (TRAAYATRIMSH) and police (LOKAPAAL).

Two INDRAS in the first two categories:

POORVAYORDVEENDRAAH [4-6]

The Residential and the Peripatetic beings have two chiefs (INDRAS).

Manner of sensual gratification:

KAAYAPRAVEECHARA AA AISHAANAAT [4-7]

Up to AISHAAN level⁴, the manner of sensual gratification is copulation.

The Residential, Peripatetic, Stellar and Empyrean beings up to AISHAAN level possess karmas that are responsible for feelings of affliction and uneasiness. Consequently, they indulge in copulation for sensual gratification.

Manner of sensual gratification in higher levels of heaven:

SHESHAH SPARSHAROOPASHABDAMANAH PRAVEECHAARAH [4-8]

In higher levels, sensual gratification is achieved by touch, sight, sound and thought.

In SAANATAKUMAAR and MAAHENDRA levels, the sensual desires of the Empyrean beings are fulfilled by merely touching the bodies of their spouses; in BRAHMA, BRAHMOTTAR, LAANTAV and KAAPISHTHA levels, just seeing their spouses; in SHUKRA, MAHAASHUKRA, SHATAAR and SAHASRAAR levels, by hearing the sweet voices of their spouses; and, in AANAT, PRAANAT, AARAN, ACHYUT levels, the Empyrean beings attain sensual gratification by forming an image of their partners in their thoughts.

Absence of desire for sensual gratification in the highest levels:

PAREAPRAVEECHAARAH [4-9]

Celestial beings in the highest levels of heaven possess no desire for sensual gratification.

The pursuit of sensual pleasures entails anxiety. Therefore, an individual who is free from sensual desires is free from anxiety and

⁴ This is one of the levels of Empyrean beings, described in aphorism 4-19.

possesses equanimity - peace of mind. Such an individual is like the celestial beings in the highest levels who enjoy exemplary peace and happiness.

Ten subclasses of Residential beings:

BHAVANAVAASINOASURANAAGAVIDYUTSUPARNAAGNIVAATASTANIDODADHIDVEE
PADIKKUMAARAH [4-10]

The sub-categories of the Residential beings and their insignias (given in parentheses) are: ASUR (crest jewel), NAAG (snake), VIDYUT (thunderbolt), SUPARN (vulture), AGNI (jug), VAAT (stallion), STANIT (pair of bowls), UDADHI (crocodile), DVEEP (lion) and DIK (elephant) KUMAARS (princes, youths).

The word 'KUMAAR' (prince or young individual) is added to the names of Residential beings because of their appearance, demeanor and disposition. They are identified by the respective insignias on their crowns.

Eight subclasses of Peripatetic beings:

VYANTARAH KINNARAKIMPURUSHAMAHORAGAGANDHARVAYAKSHARAAKSHA-
BHOOTAPISHAACHAH [4-11]

The subclasses of the Peripatetic beings are: KINNAR (defaced human), KIMPURUSH (disfigured person), MAHORAG (gargantuan serpent), GANDHARVA (musician), YAKSHA (treasurer), RAAKSHAS (demon), BHOOT (devil) and PISHAACH (goblin).

The Peripatetic beings reside in a variety of places such as hollows of trees, caves and forests. Their names follow their respective physique-determining (NAAM) karmas.

Five subclasses of Stellar beings:

JYOTISHKAAH SOORYAACHANDRAMASAU GRAHANAKSHATRA-
PRAKEERNAKATAARKAASHCHA [4-12]

The subclasses of Stellar beings are: SOORYA (Sun), CHANDRA (Moon), GRAH (planet), NAKSHATRA (constellation), PRAKEERNAK TAARAK (scattered stars).

The Stellar beings reside in the innumerable astronomical bodies such as the sun, the moon, planets, constellations and stars, situated far above the middle world (MADHYALOK).

Revolution of stellar bodies located in the region inhabited by humans:

MERUPRAKASHINA NITYAGATAYO NRILOKE [4-13]

In the region inhabited by humans, the stellar bodies incessantly revolve around Mount Meru.

The sun, the moon, planets and stars located in the region inhabited by humans continually revolve around Mount Meru.

Division of time:

TATKRITAH KAALAVIBHAAGAH [4-14]

The divisions of time such, as day and night, are caused by these revolutions.

The rising and setting of the heavenly objects such as the sun, the moon and stars are responsible for day and night, and for other units of time like hour, minute and second.

Stationary stellar bodies:

BAHIRAVASTHITAAH [4-15]

The stellar bodies in the region outside human habitation are stationary.

The stellar objects located in the outer regions, which start at the outer half of PUSHKAR Island, are immobile.

Empyrean beings:

VAIMAANIKAAH [4-16]

The Empyrean beings belong to the fourth category of heavenly beings.

Two subclasses of Empyrean beings:

KALPOPAPANNAH KALPAATEETAASHCHA [4-17]

The two subclasses of Empyrean beings are: Hierarchical (KALPOPAPANNA) and Equitable (KALPAATEET).

The Hierarchical Empyreans have ranks such as chief (INDRA), minister (TRAAYATRIMSH) and counselor (PAARISHAD). All the Equitable Empyreans enjoy equal status. All of them are INDRAS and are called AHAMINDRA, meaning I am INDRA. This concept exemplifies the inimitable paradigm of equality of all men.

Locations of Empyrean beings:

UPARYUPARI [4-18]

Locations of Empyrean beings are one above the other.

The Empyrean beings reside in celestial vehicles (VIMAANS), which are located one above the other.

Celestial vehicles:

SAUDHARMAISHAANASAAANATKUMAARAMAAHENDRABRAHMABRAHMOTTARALAN
TAVAKAAPISHTHASHUKRAMAHAASHUKRASHATAARASAHASRAARESHVAANATAPRA
ANATAYORAARANAACHYUTAYORNAVASUGRAIVEYAKESHU

VIJAYAVAIJAYANTAJAYANTAAPARAAJITESHU SARVAARTHASIDDHAU CHA [4-19]

The Empyrean beings reside in celestial vehicles (VIMAANS) named SAUDHARM, AISHAAN, SAANATAKUMAAR, MAAHENDRA, BRAHMA, BRAHMOTTAR, LAANTAV, KAAPISHTHA, SHUKRA, MAHAASHUKRA, SHATAAR, SAHASRAAR, AANAT, PRAANAT, AARAN, ACHYUT; realm of NAVAGRAIVEYAK; and four ANUTTARS including VIJAY, VAIJAYANT, JAYANT and APARAAJIT, and SARVAARTHASIDDHI.

The Hierarchical Empyrean beings reside in the following pairs of celestial vehicles:

Pair of celestial vehicles	Hierarchical Empyrean beings
SAUDHARM, AISHAAN	SAUDHARM, AISHAAN
SAANATAKUMAAR, MAAHENDRA	SANATAKUMAR, MAHENDRA
BRAHMA, BRAHMOTTAR	BRAHMA
LAANTAV, KAAPISHTHA	LAANTAV
SHUKRA, MAHAASHUKRA	SHUKRA
SHATAAR, SAHASRAAR	SHATAAR
AANAT, PRAANAT	AANAT, PRAANAT
AARAN, ACHYUT	AARAN, ACHYUT

Thus, as mentioned in aphorism 4-3, twelve subclasses of Hierarchical Empyrean beings reside in sixteen celestial vehicles.

Above the vehicles of Hierarchical Empyrean beings lie nine GRAIVEYAK and nine ANUDISH. Then there are four ANUTTARS, named VIJAY, VAIJAYANT, JAYANT and APARAAJIT, and above all is SARVAARTHASIDDHI.

Certain characteristics of Empyrean beings:

STHITIPRABHAAVASUKHADYUTILESHYAAVISHUDDHEENDRIYAAVADHIVISHAYATOAD
HIKAAH [4-20]

As the level of celestial abode increases, there is an increase in lifespan, prestige, happiness, complexion, purity of shades of passion, sharpness of senses and acumen of clairvoyance of Empyrean beings.

Evidently, higher the level of an Empyrean being, the better is his/her quality of life, thought activity and level of happiness.

Some other characteristics of Empyrean beings:

GATISHAREERAPARIGRAHAABHIMAANATO HEENAAH [4-21]

As the level of celestial abode increases, there is a decline in physical activity, bodily stature, possessions and ego of the Empyrean beings.

The Empyrean beings of higher levels maintain equanimity and contentment. Consequently, they have fewer possessions and less indulgence in external activities.

Here on earth, it is observed that individuals who have minimal passions of anger, pride, intrigue and greed, and are content with their simple lifestyle, enjoy genuine happiness and earn the respect of their fellow beings. They have little anxiety and suffering. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has observed,⁵ "... a soul with the satisfaction of a life well lived is in heaven. The reward for virtuous living is the good life itself. Virtue, it is said, is its own reward."

Shades of passion of Empyrean beings:

PEETAPADMASHUKLALESHYA DVIVISHESHESHU [4-22]

The Empyrean beings in the first four levels possess yellow shade of passion and those in fifth through tenth levels possess light pink (lotus) shade of passion. The Empyrean beings in the higher levels possess white (crystal clear) shade of passion.

As stated above that the purity of the shades of passion of the Empyrean beings increases with each level. The Empyreans in SAUDHARM, AISHAAN, SAANATAKUMAAR and MAAHENDRA levels enjoy yellow shade of passion. Those in BRAHMA, BRAHMOTTAR, LAANTAV, KAAPISHTHA, SHUKRA and MAHAASHUKRA levels possess light pink shade of passion. The Empyrean beings residing in levels above these possess white (crystal clear) shade of passion.

Hierarchical Empyrean beings:

PRAAGGRAIVEYAKEBHAYAH KALPAAH [4-23]

The Empyrean beings below the GRAIVEYIK realm are called HIERARCHICAL (KALPA).

As stated above, the Empyrean beings residing in the sixteen celestial vehicles belong to various ranks such as chief, minister, counselor, soldier and attendants.

Ultimate Empyrean beings:

BRAHMALOKAALAYA LAUKAANTIKA [4-24]

The Ultimate (LAUKAANTIK) Empyrean beings reside in BRAHMALOK (higher realm).

The Empyrean Celestial beings that are destined to attain salvation in the next birth reside in BRAHMALOK. The Ultimate Empyreans belong to a special category of celestial beings. They are well versed in Scriptures.

⁵ The Present Crisis Of Faith by S. Radhakrishnan, Orient Paperbacks, 1994, page 19.

They have no desire for sensual pleasures. The Ultimate Emphyreans are also called DEVARSHI (celestial sages).

Names of Ultimate Emphyrean beings:

SAARASVATTADIYAVAHNYPARUNAGARDATOYATUSHITA AVAYAABAADHAARISHTAA
SHCHA [4-25]

The names of the Ultimate Emphyrean beings are: SAARASVAT, AADITYA, VAHNI, ARUN, GARDATOYA, TUSHIT, AVYAABAADH and ARISHT.

The Ultimate Emphyreans are spiritually advanced beings. Their names are meaningful and fascinating. SAARASVAT means well-versed in scriptural knowledge. AADITYA means radiant like the sun. VAHNI implies glowing like fire. ARUN is one who gleams like the rising sun. GARDATOYA implies one who sounds like a placid stream. TUSHIT means one who enjoys contentment and peace of mind. AVYAABAADH is one who does not indulge in pursuit of sensual pleasures as it may lead to discordant mental state. ARISHT means the individual who refrains from improper activities.

Indeed all Ultimate Emphyreans possess the virtues imported by their names.

Two final births for certain Ultimate Emphyrean beings:

VIJAYAADISHU DVICHARMAAH [4-26]

Certain Ultimate Emphyrean beings attain salvation in two more births as humans.

The Emphyrean beings residing in VIJAY, VAIJAYANT, JAYANT, APARAJIT and SARVAARTHASIDDHI are destined to attain salvation in two more births as human beings.

Worldly beings other than infernal, celestial and humans:

AUPAPAADIKAMANUSHYEBHYAH SHESHAASTIRYAGGYONAYAH [4-27]

The living beings other than infernal, celestial and human are said to belong to the animal kingdom (TIRYANCH, subhuman).

This aphorism summarizes all worldly beings, infernal, celestial, human and subhuman.

Maximum lifespan of certain celestial beings:

STHITIRASURANAAGASUPARNADVEEPSHESHAANAAM
SAAGAROPAMATRIPLYOPAMAARDHAHEENAMITAAM [4-28]

The maximum lifespan of ASUR, NAAG, SUPARN, DVEEP KUMAAR, and the rest of Residential celestial beings are one SAAGAROPAM, three PLYOPAMS, two and one-half PLYOPAMS, two PLYOPAMS, and one and one-half PLYOPAMS, respectively.

SAAGAROPAM and PALLYOPAM, as defined in ancient books, are extremely long periods of time. SAAGAROPAM is considerably longer than PALLYOPAM.

Maximum lifespan of Empyrean beings in the first two levels:

SAUDHARMAISHAANAYOH SAAGAROPAME ADHIKE [4-29]

The Empyrean beings in SAUDHARM and AISHAAN levels have a maximum lifespan of a little more than two SAAGAROPAMS.

Maximum lifespan of Empyrean beings in the next two levels:

SAANATKUMAARAMAAHENDRAYOH SAPTA [4-30]

The Empyrean beings in SAANATKUMAAR and MAAHENDRA levels have a maximum lifespan of seven SAAGAROPAMS.

Maximum lifespan of Empyrean beings in middle levels:

TRISAPTANAVAIIKAADASHATRAYODASHAPANACHADASHABHIRADHIKAANI TU [4-31]

The maximum lifespan of Empyrean beings in higher levels are three, seven, nine, eleven, thirteen and fifteen more than seven SAAGAROPAMS.

In plain words, in BRAHMA - BRAHMOTTAR, the maximum lifespan is 10 SAAGAROPAMS; in LAANTAV - KAAPISHTHA, it is 14 SAAGAROPAMS; in SHUKRA - MAHAASHUKRA, it is 16 SAAGAROPAMS; in SHATAAR - SAHASRAAR, it is 18 SAAGAROPAMS; in AANAT - PRAANAT, it is 20 SAAGAROPAMS; and, in AARAN - ACHYUT, the maximum lifespan is 22 SAAGAROPAMS.

Maximum lifespan of Empyrean beings in top levels:

AARANAACHUTAADOORDDHAMAIKIKEN NAVASU GRAIVEYAKESHU VIJAYAADISHU SARVAARTHASIDDHAU CHA [4-32]

Above AARAN and ACHYUT levels, in NAVAGRAIVEYAKS and in four ANUTTARS, from VIJAY to APARAAJIT, and in SARVAARTHASIDDHI, the lifespan of Empyreans successively increase by one SAAGAROPAM. Thus the maximum lifespan in SARVAARTHASIDDHI is 33 SAAGAROPAMS.

Minimum lifespan of Empyrean beings in the first two levels:

APARA PALLYOPAMAMADHIKAM [4-33]

The Empyrean beings in SAUDHARM and AISHAAN levels have a minimum lifespan of a little over one PALLYOPAM.

Minimum lifespan of other Empyrean beings:

PARATAH PARATAH POORVAAPORVAANANTARAAH [4-34]

The minimum lifespan of Empyrean beings in successively higher levels are equal to the maximum lifespan in the preceding lower levels. For example, in SAUDHARM and AISHAAN levels, the maximum lifespan is two SAAGAROPAMS. And, the minimum lifespan in SAANATKUMAAR and MAAHENDRA levels is two SAAGAROPAMS.

Minimum lifespan of infernal beings in hells below the first one:

NAARAKAANAAM CHA DVITEEYAADISHU [4-35]

The minimum lifespan in the next lower hell is equal to the maximum lifespan in the immediately preceding hell.

Minimum lifespan of infernal beings in the first hell:

DASHAVARSHASASTRAANI PRATHAMAAYAAM [4-36]

The minimum lifespan in the first hell is ten thousand years.

Minimum lifespan of Residential celestial beings:

BHAVANESHU CHA [4-37]

The minimum lifespan of Residential celestial beings is ten thousand years.

Minimum lifespan of Peripatetic celestial beings:

VYANTARAANAAM CHA [4-38]

The minimum lifespan of Peripatetic celestial beings also is ten thousand years.

Maximum lifespan of Peripatetic celestial beings:

PARA PALYOPAMADHIKAM [4-39]

The maximum lifespan of Peripatetic celestial beings is a little over one PALYOPAM.

Maximum lifespan of stellar celestial beings:

JYOTISHKAANAAM CHA [4-40]

The maximum lifespan of stellar celestial beings is also a little over one PALYOPAM.

Minimum lifespan of Peripatetic beings:

TADASHTABHAAGOAPARA [4-41]

The minimum lifespan of stellar celestial beings is one-eighth of one PALYOPAM.

Lifespan of Ultimate Empyrean beings:

LAUKAANTIKAANAAMASHTAU SAAGAROPAMAANI SARVESHAAM [4-42]

The lifespan of Ultimate Empyrean beings is eight SAAGAROPAMS.

Concluding Remarks

Jain scriptures state that the physical universe is divided into three sections: the upper or celestial world (OORDHVA LOK), the middle or terrestrial world (MADHYALOK) and the lower or infernal world (ADHO LOK). The seven substrata containing the hells are located in the lower world, while most abodes of celestial beings are located in the upper world. Obviously, it is not possible to reconcile these concepts with modern cosmological observations. Nevertheless, there are certain remarkable features of the Jain concepts of the universe.

First, the Jain concepts seem to be quite imaginative, ingenious and innovative. Second, the Jain concepts of heaven and hell follow the pattern of human life on earth and thereby convey a profoundly important message regarding our spiritual pursuit. Here are a few salient points:

As observed in the commentary of aphorism of 4-4, the hierarchy of celestial beings corresponds to the organization of our social and political systems. Although names of the ranks may be different but the various ranks essentially support all functions in the society such as administration, counseling, protection and service, required for maintaining order and peace.

It is observed that living beings in hellish existence and in celestial existence possess a variety of shades of passion, black, blue, grey, yellow, light pink and white. These correspond to the kind of mental state - thought activity of the individual. Various human beings at different times possess a variety of shades of passion. At times, an individual has pure thoughts and feelings, contentment and equanimity, and aspirations of spiritual pursuit. Such an individual has yellow or light pink or white shade of passion like the celestial beings in higher levels. At other times, the same individual may be irrational and disregard the facts that good and bad, desirable and undesirable, and, comfort and pain are parts of our worldly existence. Consequently, he/she may have feelings such as remorse, helplessness, selfishness, greed, anger, pride, intrigue and revenge. Such a state of mind corresponds to dark shades of passion, which are characteristic of hellish existence.

As stated in aphorisms 4-7 through 4-9, the celestial beings up to AISHAAN level indulge in copulation for satisfying their sensual cravings. The sensual desires of the celestial beings in higher levels are satisfied merely by touch, sight, sound and mental images, while the Empyrean beings in the highest levels have no desire for sensual gratification. Sensual longings involve mental twinge and anxiety, which arise due to undesirable karmas. The celestial beings in higher levels have milder karmas and so they have milder desires (or no desire) for sensual gratification. Similar traits are observed in human beings as well. This indicates that the modes of operation of karmas in all worldly beings are identical.

The Ultimate Empyrean beings constitute yet another remarkable concept. They epitomize all human virtues such as intellect, scholarship, contentment, equanimity, composure and renunciation of sensual pleasures. The Ultimate Empyreans are ideals for all human beings to follow in their pursuit of spiritualism.

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Sean D. DeWitt (Editorial Advisor):
(Comments 'Jainism: In The Eyes Of A Prudent Youngster'
by Priyanka Doshi)

Thank you for sharing this. As usual, I enjoyed the perspective of the writer very much. ... To me, the author is trying to encourage the reader to examine their own life and determine if spirituality is an important part of their existence. I think this is an important question. I often wrestle with this issue myself. My own spirituality has guided me to be involved in poverty alleviation work. ... It is something I am trying to work on every day, by incorporating many of the principles that the author describes in her article.