

The examples given in the three verses are very telling. A father may be suffering agony and mental agitations due to his debts. In such a case, his children, dutiful and sympathetic, can certainly relieve him of his debts by their cooperation and help. But the sorrows and agitations which are due to his spiritual delusion can be relieved only by himself, no one else can do it.

If a traveller is fatigued and exhausted because of the extremely heavy load he is carrying on his head, he can be helped and relieved by fellow travellers, nay, even an inanimate load rest can relieve the man. But the pangs he suffers from hunger, which is an inner disturbance, cannot be removed by somebody else eating a sumptuous dinner on his behalf. To remove hunger, his own stomach must receive the food and be appeased.

The Teacher, not satisfied with these two striking examples, adds yet another verse to drive home to the student the necessity for conscious personal effort. He says, 'Only those patients are cured of their ailments who faithfully follow the prescribed diet and take the right medicines themselves.' A person suffers because of some maladjustments in his physical system, and the medicine must be assimilated and absorbed by his body, so that it may remove the causes of his illness. One cannot cure one's illness by the medicines another has taken.

In fact, health is the natural condition of man. Some causes enter the system which obstructs the experience of the body's true vitality, and the person suffers. The medicine does not create health, it only removes the causes of ill health. Similarly, the misunderstandings created by ignorance can be removed and the conditions required for a fuller expression of the Reality can be brought about in him only by his own efforts. In short, each one of us must walk the path by himself but properly guided by the instruction of the Teacher and the scriptures.



वस्तुस्वरूपं स्फुटबोधचक्षुषा स्वेनैव वेद्यं न तु पण्डितेन ।  
चन्द्रस्वरूपं निजचक्षुषैव ज्ञातव्यमन्यैरवगम्यते किम् ॥ ५४ ॥

*vastusvarūpaṁ sphuṭabodhacakṣuṣā svenaiva vedyam na tu paṇḍitena,  
candrasvarūpaṁ nijacakṣuṣaiva jñātavyamanyairavagamyate kim. (54)*

54. The actuality of things is to be known by a first hand personal experience through the eye of clear understanding and not through the report of learned men. The beauty of the moon is enjoyed through one's own eyes; can one appreciate it through the description by others?

Śaṅkara reinforces the idea in the above three examples with yet another verse, hammering, as it were, the last nail on the coffin of our doubts.

The beauty, the brilliance, the soft glory, the queenly dignity, the serene consolation, the message of love and leisure, of peace and quietude, which the moon sheds as it glides across the springtime skies cannot, indeed, be captured in words but they are experiences to be enjoyed subjectively only. The vision of its majesty is to be perceived by one's own eyes and experienced in satisfying suggestive silence. A blind man cannot enjoy the love messages of a moonlit night.

When the Self rises in the dark bosom of our ignorance and glides across the horizon of our experiences, that experience cannot be described fully by us to another, even though he may have experienced it himself. Each must experience it for himself, in himself. This analogy of moonrise is indeed the most poetic and by far the most appropriate example to indicate the soft silvery light of knowledge that illumines, with its sublime peace and perfection, the dark atmosphere in the bosom of the ignorant.



अविद्याकामकर्मादि पाशबन्धं विमोचितुम् ।  
कः शक्रुयाद्विनात्मानं कल्पकोटिशतैरपि ॥ ५५ ॥