

Commentary on
Purnamadah
Purnamidam

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PURNAMADAH PURNAMIDAM

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Om

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

**pUrNamadah pUrNamidaM
pUrNAt pUrNamudacyate
PUrNasya pUrNamAdAya
pUrNamEvAvashiSyate**

This is an innocuous looking verse: one noun, two pronouns, three verbs and a particle for emphasis. Yet, someone once said: "Let all the UpaniSads disappear from the face of the earth - I don't mind so long as this one verse remains."

Can one small verse be so profound? "Of course not. Utter nonsense!" would have been the response of a certain Englishman, who did not find the verse sensible at all, let alone profound. This Englishman, who was something of a scholar, asked a pundit to teach him the

UpaniSads. The pundit, agreeing, began the course of study with ISAvAsyOpaniSad, the text traditionally studied first by a new student. The text begins with the SantipaTa (prayer verse): "Om pUrNamadah pUrNamidaM." The pundit carefully translated the opening verse into English:

That is whole; this is whole;
From that whole this whole came;
From that whole, this whole removed,
What remains is whole.

The Englishman stopped his study at that point and did not go further! He said that the UpaniSads are the "prattlings of an infantile mind."

Which point of view is correct? Is this verse something which is wondrous and profound or is it just "infantile prattlings"?

Idam, This PurNam, the single noun in the verse, is a beautiful Sanskrit word which means completely filled - a filledness which (in its

Vedic scriptural sense) is wholeness itself, absolute fullness lacking nothing whatsoever. Adah, which means 'that', and idam, which means 'this', are two pronouns each of which, at the same time, refers to the single noun, pUrNam:

pUrNam adah - completeness is that,

pUrNam idam - completeness is this.

Adah, that, is always used to refer to something remote from the speaker in time, place or understanding. Something which is remote in the sense of adah is something which, at the time in question, is not available for direct knowledge. Adah, that, refers to a jnEya vastu, a thing to be known, a thing which due to some kind of remoteness is not present for immediate knowledge but remains to be known upon destruction of the remoteness. Idam, this, refers to something not remote but present, here and now, immediately available for perception, something directly known or knowable. Thus it can be said that adah refers to the unknown, the

unknown in the sense of the not-directly known due to remoteness, and idam refers to the immediately perceivable known.

Traditionally, however, idam has come to have a much broader meaning. Idam is stretched to stand for anything available for objectification; that is, for any object external to me which can be known by me through my means of knowledge. In this sense, idam, this, indicates all driSya, all seen or known things. Idam can be so used because all adah, all things called 'that' become 'this' as soon as their thatness, their remoteness in time, place or knowledge is destroyed. It is in this sense that the SantipAta "pUrNamadah" uses idam.

The first verse of IshAvAsyOpaniSad, following the SantipATa makes clear that idam is used in the traditional sense of all driSya, all known or knowable things:

idam sarvam yat kinca jagatyAm jagat

“ all this, whatsoever, changing in this

changing world..”

Verse 1, ISAvAsyOpaniSad

Given this meaning, idam, this swallows up all 'that's' subject to becoming 'this'; in other words, idam stands for all things capable of being known as objects. So when the verse says pUrNam idam, "completeness is this", what is being said is that all that one knows or is able to know is pUrNam.

This statement is not understandable because pUrNam means completeness, absolute fullness, wholeness. PurNam is that which is not away from anything but which is the fullness of everything. If pUrNam is total fullness which leaves nothing out, then 'this' cannot be used to describe pUrNam because 'this' leaves something out.

What? The subject. 'This' leaves out aham, I, the subject. The world 'this' does not include I. I, the subject, is always left out when one says 'this'. If I am not included then pUrNam is not wholeness. Therefore, pUrNam idam appears

to be an untenable statement because it leaves out I.

Adah, That What about the other pronoun, adah, that? What does adah mean in context? Does 'that' have a tenable relationship with pUrNam? Since idam, this, has been used in its traditional sense of all knowable objects, here or there, presently known or unknown, the only meaning left for 'that' is to indicate the subject. Idam, this, stands for everything available for objectification. What is not available for objectification? The objectifier - the subject. The subject, aham, I, is the only thing not available for objectification. So, the real meaning of the pronoun adah, that, as used here in contrast to idam, this, is aham, I.

However, it was said that adah, that, indicates a jnEyavastu, something to be known; in other words, something not yet directly known because it is remote from the knower in time, place or in terms of knowledge. If that is so, how can adah, that, mean aham, I? Am I remote? I am certainly not remote in terms of

time or place. I am always here right now. But perhaps I may be remote in terms of knowledge. If in fact I do not know the true nature of myself I could be a jnEyavastu, a to-be-known, in terms of knowledge. Because it is only through the revelation of shruti (scripture functioning as means of knowledge) that I can gain knowledge of my true nature, it can be said that in general the truth of aham is remote in terms of knowledge - something that is yet to be known.

So in context, adah, the pronoun 'that', stands for what is meant when I say, simply, "I am", without any qualification whatsoever. 'That' so used as 'I' means AtmA, the content of truth of the first person singular, a jnEya-vastu, a to-be-known, in terms of knowledge. When that knowledge is gained, I will recognize that I, AtmA, am identical with limitless Brahman - all pervasive, formless and considered the cause of the world of formful objects.

So far, then, the first two lines of the verse read:

PUrNam adah - completeness is I, the subject

AtmA, whose truth is Brahman, formless, limitlessness, considered creation's cause;

PUrNam idam - completeness is all objects, all things known or knowable, all formful effects, comprising creation.

PurNam, Completeness

The statement, "Completeness is I, the subject" on its face does not seem any more tenable than the statement, "Completeness is all objects." Both statements seem to suffer from the same kind of defect. Each looks defective because it fails to include the other. Moreover, each looks like it could not include the other; and, pUrNam, completeness, brooks no exclusion whatsoever.

If aham, subject, is different from idam, object; if idam, object, is different from aham, subject, if pUrNam, to be pUrNam, cannot be separate from anything, then the opening lines of the verse seem not to be sensible. But this conclusion comes from failure to see the two statements as a whole from the standpoint of

pUrNam. To find sense in the lines, do not look at pUrNam from the standpoint of aham, I, and idam, this, but look at aham and idam from the standpoint of pUrNam. The nature of pUrNam is wholeness, completeness limitlessness. There cannot be pUrNam plus something or pUrNam minus something. It is not possible to add or to take away from limitlessness. The nature of pUrNam being what is, 'that' pUrNam must include 'this' pUrNam; 'this' pUrNam must include 'that' pUrNam.

Therefore, when it is said that aham, I, am pUrNam and idam, this, is pUrNam, what is really being said is that there is only pUrNam. Aham, I, and idam, this, traditionally represent the two basic categories into one or the other of which everything fits. There is no third category. So if aham and idam, represent everything and each is pUrNam , then everything is pUrNam. Aham, I is pUrNam which includes the world. Idam this, is pUrNam which include me. The seeming differences of aham and idam are swallowed by pUrNam - that limitless fullness which shruti

(scripture) calls Brahman.

If everything is pUrNam, why bother with 'that' and 'this'? Is it just poetic license to make a riddle out of something which could be stated simply? It seems an unnecessary confusion to say 'that' (Which really stands for aham - I) is pUrNam and then to say 'this'

(Which really stands for all the objects in the world) is pUrNam when one could just describe the fact and say: everything is pUrNam. PurNam is absolute fullness; absolute fullness is limitlessness which is Brahman.

Why not such a direct approach? Because it would not work; it would only add to confusion, not clear it. Although such simple statements are a true description of the ultimate fact, to communicate that fact so that it can be seen as true, something else must be taken into account. What? Experience. My everyday experience is that aham, I, am a distinct entity separate and different from idam jagat, this world of objects which I perceive. My

experience is that I see myself as not the same at all as idam, this. When I hold a rose in my hand and look at it, I, aham, am one thing and idam, this rose I see, is quite another. In no way is it my experience that I and the rose are the same. We seem quite distinct and separate. Because shruti tells me that I, aham, and the rose, idam, both are limitless fullness, pUrNam. I may come up with some logic that says, "Therefore I must include the rose and the rose must include me' but that logic does not alter my experience of the rose as quite separate from me.

Furthermore, it is not my experience that either I or the rose are, in any measure, pUrNam, completeness - limitless fullness. I seem to me to be totally apUrNah, unfull, incomplete, inadequate, limited on all sides by my fellow beings, by the elements of nature, by the lacks and deficiencies of my own body and mind. My place and space are very small; time forever crowds me; sorrow dogs my path. I can find no limitless fullness in me. No more does there seem to be limitless fullness in this rose even now wilting in my hand, pressed by time,

relinquishing its space; even in its prime smaller and less sturdy than the sunflowers growing outside my window. It is my constant experience that I, aham, and all I perceive, idam, are ceaselessly mutually limiting one another.

Based on one's usual experience, it is very difficult to see how either aham, I or idam, this can be pUrNam; and, even more difficult to see how both can be pUrNam.

PurNam, completeness, absolute fullness, must necessarily be formless. PurNam cannot have a form because it has to include everything. Any kind of form means some kind of boundary; any kind of boundary means that something is left out - something is on the other side of the boundary. Absolute completeness requires formlessness. Sastra (scripture) reveals that what is limitless and formless is Brahman, the cause of creation, the content of aham, I. Therefore, given the nature of Brahman by shruti, I can see that pUrNam is another way for shruti to say Brahman. Brahman and

pUrnam have to be identical; there can only be one limitlessness and that One is formless pUrnam Brahman.

Thus, the verse is telling me that everything is pUrnam. Purnam has to be limitless, formless Brahman. But when I look around me all that I see has some kind of form. In fact, I cannot perceive the formless. The only things I can perceive are those which I can objectify through one of my means of perception. Objectification requires some kind of form. How then can it be said that idam, this, which stands for all objectifiable things is pUrnam - is formless?

It is easier to accept the statement that adah, that, which refers to aham, I, is pUrnam, has no form. Upon a little inquiry, it becomes apparent that the nature of adah which stands for the ultimate subject, I, has to be formlessness. The ultimate subject can have no form because to establish form there would have to be another subject, another I to see the form - the other I would then become the ultimate subject which if it had a form would require another subject,

which would require another subject, which would require another subject, endlessly, in a condition called anavastA, lack of finality. But, this is not the case. Adah does not stand for a state of anavastA, but for an ultimate being. Sastra reveals and inquiry confirms that the essential nature of the ultimate subject, I, is self-luminous; "I" is self-proving formless being.

Duality is False.

Thus, shruti's revelation of the formlessness of I is confirmed by inquiry as a logical necessity for the ultimate subject. But neither the revelation nor the confirmation by logic change the contradiction of experience. Whether aham, I, is formful or formless, my experience remains that I am not full, complete, and this world is different from me. "The world limits me and I limit the world, too."

This paricchEda, limitation, is the experience of every individual: aham parichhinnah - I am limited. Everything else limits me and I limit everything else. Therefore, there is a relationship of mutual limitation, between the

individual and the world. So, I become a paricchEdaka for other things. ParicchEdaka means that which limits another. Then again I am paricchinnah, that which is limited by others. So I am a limiting agent and I am a limited object. I seem to myself to be a separate, distinct conscious entity in a world of many different things and beings.

My experience proclaims "differentness" - difference. But there can be no difference in fullness, pUrNam. Fullness requires that there be no second thing. Fullness is not absolute if there is something different from it. Fullness means nonduality - no second thing. Difference means more than one thing. There must be a second thing for difference. The nature of experience is difference. Difference is duality: the seer and the seen; the knower and known; the subject and the subject. When there is difference, duality, there is always limitation.

When I consider myself paricchinnah, limited, I cannot but struggle to be free from my sense of limitation. No human being can accept the

sense of limitation. Everyone struggles against the conclusion that one seems to be a limited, inadequate, incomplete mortal being. Behind all life's struggles is rebellion against this basic conclusion. Therefore, since I have this experience-based limitation - in fact, experience itself is a limitation - I always am seeking a solution to the problem of being a 'wanting' person.

When I turn to the Upanishads for an answer to my problem of limitation, shruti tells me that I am the limitless being who I long to be. But, at the same time, shruti recognizes my experience of difference. In this SantipATA, the two separate pronouns adah and idam (together comprising everything in creation) are used to indicate pUrNam, not for the sake of a riddle, but to recognize the experience of duality. Adah recognizes I, the subject - I who seems to be a being separate and distinct from all else; idam recognizes all known and knowable objects which appear to differ from me and from one another. Thus, shruti says there is nothing but fullness, though fullness appears to

be adah, that (I), and idam, this (objects). In this way, shruti acknowledges duality - experiences of difference - and then, accounts for it by properly relating experience to reality. Shruti accounts for duality by negating experience as nonreal, not as nonexistent.

Thus, to the VedAntin, negation of duality is not a literal dismissal of the experience of duality but is the negation of the reality of duality. If one to be pUrNam, a literal elimination of duality is required, fullness would be an intermittent condition brought about by a special kind of experience - an experience in which the subject-object thought forms in the mind resolve in a state of undifferentiated consciousness. Such experiences - nivikalpa samAdhi, special moments of resolving joy, of even drug born 'trips' are compelling and enchanting; in them all sense of limitation is gone. But experience, any experience, is transitory. Even nirvikalpa-samAdhi, the conscious state of mind-resolution, free from subject-object duality, the goal of the practices of yoga, is not

free from the force of difference. SamAdhi is bound by time. It is an experience. Its boundary is 'before' and 'after'; it comes and goes.

A fullness dependent on experience grants reality to duality. To enjoy such a fullness one engages in various practices seeking the release of nirvikalpa-samAdhi, or one courts moments of great joy. Courting the experience of nonduality is based on fear of the experience of duality. Duality is seen as something from which one must escape. But escape by means of experience is false freedom. You, the limited being, and this world which limits you, are always waiting when the experience is over.

Shruti-praMANa

Shruti is not afraid of experiential duality. The problem is the conclusion of duality - not experience of duality. The problem lies in the well-entrenched conclusion: "I am different from the world; the world is different from me." This conclusion is the core of the problem of duality - of samsAra. Shruti not only does not

accept this conclusion but contradicts it by stating that both 'I' and 'this' are pUrNam. Shruti flatly negates the conclusion of duality.

Is shruti's negation of one's conclusion that the world and I are different, a matter for belief? No. Statements by shruti in the upaniSads, negating this conclusion, are a pramANa. A pramANa is a means for gaining valid knowledge of whatever the particular pramANa is empowered to enable one to know. For example, eyes are the pramANa for knowing colour; ears are the special instrument for sound. The statements in the upaniSads are a pramANa for the discovery of the truth of the world, of God and of myself - for gaining valid knowledge about the nature of Reality. The upaniSad vAkyAs (statements of ultimate truth), when unfolded in accordance with the sampradAya (the traditional methodology of teaching) by a qualified teacher are the means for directly seeing - knowing - the nondual truth of oneself. The teacher, using empirical logic and one's own experience as an aid, wields the vAkyAs of the upaniSads as

pramANa to destroy one's ignorance of oneself.

A teacher would unfold the meaning of the vAkya, "pUrNam is that; pUrNam is this" by relating it to other statements of shruti and by using reasoning and experience to corroborate shruti. It should be pointed out that what is here called pUrNam, elsewhere shruti defines as Brahman (satyam jnAnam anantam brahma - existent, conscious, boundless is Brahman - TaittirIya UpaniSad, II.1.1). That in other statements shruti describes Brahman as the material cause of creation, the upAdAna-kArANa (yato vA imAni bhUtAni jAyante; yena jAtAni jIvanti, yatprayantyabhisamvishanti;. tadbrahmeti - Wherefrom indeed these beings are born; whereby, having been born, they live; that toward which going forth (upon death), they enter;.. That is Brahman - TaittirIya UpaniSad, III.1.1.) but that no shruti statement directly names Brahman as the efficient cause, the nimitta-kArANa; however, the implication [So'kAmayata bahu sham prajAyeyeti - He (Brahman) desired, "Many let me be; let me be

born (as many)." - Taittiriya UpaniSad, II.6] is clear and logic requires that limitless Brahman, which is the material cause of creation, also must be efficient cause. A limitless material cause does not allow any other to be the efficient cause - the existence of an 'other' would contradict the limitlessness of Brahman.

Material and Efficient Cause

So in this verse, shruti's statement that aham and idam each is pUrNam, requires that, while appearing different, they be identical. Elsewhere shruti identifies Brahman as the material and (by implication) the efficient cause of creation, which makes Brahman the complete cause of aham, I, and idam, this; conversely, aham and idam are effects of Brahman, shruti's statements here and elsewhere are logically consistent.

For aham to be idam and for idam to be aham they must have a common efficient and material cause. Consider an empirical example, a single pot referred to both as 'that' and 'this': for 'that' flower pot which I bought yesterday

in the store to be the same as 'this' flower pot now on my window sill, there has to be the same material substance and the same potmaker for both 'that' and 'this'. It is clear that this 'twoness' of 'that' pot and 'this' pot is functional only; the two pronouns refer to the same thing which came into being in a single act of creation.

Similarly, it is clear that if both the seer (aham) and the seen (idam) are identical, being the effects of a common cause, the cause necessarily must be not only the material cause but also the efficient cause, due to the identity of the seemingly dual effects, and also due to the nature of the cause. The cause, being pUrNam, nothing can be away from it. Therefore, if in addition to a material cause, creation requires a nimittakAraNa, an efficient cause, a God, then God, the creator also is included in pUrNam. PurNam is the upAdAna-nimitta-kAraNa, the material-efficient-cause of everything: God, semigods, the world, the seer of the world. Nothing is away from pUrNam.

Is it possible to discover a situation in which two seemingly different things are in fact the non-different effects of a single, common material and efficient cause? Yes, in a dream. Our ordinary dream experience provides a good illustration of a similar situation. In fact, a dream provides a good example not only of a single cause which is both material and efficient, but also of effects which appear to be different but whose difference resolves in their common cause. In a dream both the dream's substance and its creator abide in the dreamer. The dreamer is both the material and efficient cause of the dream.

Furthermore, in a dream there is a subject-object relationship in which the subject and object appear to be quite different and distinct from each other. There is bhEda, difference, in dream. The dream world is a world of duality. The dream aham, I, is not the same as the dream idam, this. But this dream bhEda, difference, is not true - is not real. When I dream that I am climbing a lofty snow-covered mountain, the weary, chilled

climber, the dream aham is nothing but I, the dreamer; the snow-capped peak, the rocky trail, the wind that tears at my back, the dream idam, the dream object, are nothing but I, the dreamer. Both subject and object happen to be I, the dreamer, the material and creative cause of the dream.

As in a dream, where the creator and the material necessary for the dream creation happen to be I, the dreamer, so it is in the first quarter of the SantipATa where the nimitta-kAraNa (efficient cause) and the upAdAna-kAraNa (material cause) of adah (I) and of idam (this) are pUrNam, Brahman; and even, as I, the dreamer, swallow the bhEda, the experienced difference between dream subject and dream object, so too, does I-pUrNam Brahman, limitless fullness, swallow as unsubstantial - unreal - all experienced difference between aham, I, the subject and idam jagat, this world of objects.

Creation is MiTyA

After saying "pUrNam is that; pUrNam is this", shruti having recognized and swallowed the experienced difference between 'that' and 'this', for the rest of the sAntipATa deals PUrNAt pUrNam udacyate - from completeness, completeness comes forth.

From the grammatical construction and in the context of the analysis of the quarter, we know the meaning to be:

pUrnAt - from (adah) pUrNam, completeness, which is limitless Brahman, the content of aham-I, the efficient and material cause of creation;

pUrnAm - (idam) pUrNam, completeness, which is the known and knowable objects comprising the world, idam jagat, the effect called creation;

udacyate - comes forth.

By grammatical construction, shruti indicates that the relationship is one of material cause and effect: pUrNAt in the ablative case which shows that (aham) pUrNam is the prakriti, the

material cause; whereas, (idam) pUrNam is in the nominative case, the subject of udacyate, a verb with the meaning, 'to be born', which makes (idam) pUrNam the product or effect of whatever is indicated by the ablative case, namely, of pUrNAt, which is aham-pUrNam. Thus, shruti grammatically sets up a causal relationship of material cause and effect between formless 'I' - pUrNam and formful 'this' - pUrNam.

How can 'this'-pUrnam, which comprises the world of formful object "come forth" from 'I'-pUrNam which is formless? (That which is limitless must necessarily be formless. Shruti in many ways and places defines Brahman, the content of I, as formless.

*Ashabdam asparsham arUpam avyayam
taTa arasam nityam agandhavacca yat*

"Soundless, touchless, colourless, immutable and also tasteless, time-free, odourless is that (which is Brahman).. "Katha UpaniSad I.3.15)

Are there after all two pUrNams? Formless

pUrNam and formful pUrNam? No. Limitlessness does not allow two pUrNams. Then did formless I pUrNam, the cause, undergo a change to become formful this-pUrNam, the effect? Aham pUrNam (I) is both the efficient and material cause of idam jagat, this world. In cause-effect relationship, the efficient cause does not undergo a material change, but for the material cause, some kind of change constitutes the very production of the effect.

So what happens? What kind of change can formless limitless undergo to produce 'formful' limitless? The only kind of change that the limitless can accommodate is the kind of change that gold undergoes to become a chain: svarNAt svarNam - from gold, gold (comes forth).

When one has formless gold (an unshaped quantity of gold relatively form-free compared to a chain made from gold) and from that form-free gold a formful chain is produced, there is a change that is no real change at all.

From formless, chain-free gold comes formful, chain-shaped gold. Is there any real change in gold itself? There is none. SvarNAt svarNam - from gold, gold. There is no change.

PurNAt pUrNam - from completeness, completeness. What a beautiful expression! It explains everything. See how brief but profound shruti mantrAs are. It is not necessary for shruti to repeat adah, I, and idam, this; grammar and context indicate what is cause and what is effect. But more than simple brevity, the beauty of the expression lies in what is made clear by what is left out! By leaving out the pronoun idam (by not saying that idam is produced by pUrNam but only saying that pUrNam comes from pUrNam) it is made clear that pUrNam alone is the reality - whatever is referred to as idam does not touch pUrNam but still udacyate, comes forth, pUrNam remains untouched, but an appearance comes forth. PurNam does not undergo any intrinsic change, but idam comes about; just as gold undergoing no intrinsic change, a gold chain comes about; or as the

dreamer undergoing no change, the dream objects come about.

So what is the relationship of pUrNAt pUrNam? Is it a cause-effect relationship? It is a peculiar relationship. But then, even within creation, any material cause-effect relationship is peculiar. Such relationships are peculiar because one cannot say anything definitive about any of them. No real definitive line can be drawn between any material cause and its effect. For example, you cannot say this cloth is an effect which has come from the material cause cotton.

Why not? Because cloth does not differ from cotton. The cloth is cotton. Then what came about? Cloth. Does that mean that there are now two things, cotton and cloth? No. Just one thing. Cotton is there. Cloth comes. Cotton is still there. Cotton and cloth cotton appearing as cloth - are one single nondual reality. That is all creation is about.

A rope that is mistakenly taken to be a snake is a favourite example used by VedAntins to

illustrate many things: ignorance, error, dismissal of the unreal through knowledge. This example, although useful, can lead to the feeling that it has applicability only for subjective projection and not to empirical creation - not to the 'real' world. This does not matter because the teacher does not need 'rope-snake', a subjective illustration, to show the unreality of creation in the 'real' world. The world - the empirical world itself is good enough: the creation of a clay pot, a gold chain, a piece of cotton cloth, all show that in empirical 'creation', effects non-different from their material cause, appear without intrinsic change occurring in the cause; and in fact, the given cause and effect never being other than one. The effect is but a form of the cause.

PurNam Alone is

What next? What else does the verse have to say? The last two quarters of the verse are taken together. Here shruti says:

PUrNasya pUrNam AdAya - taking away pUrNam from pUrNam, adding pUrNam to pUrNam

PUrNam eva avashiSyate - pUrNam alone remains

AdAya can mean either taking away from or adding to - both meanings are in the verbal root and both meanings have relevance in the verse. What is being said is whether you take away pUrNam from pUrNam or whether you add pUrNam to pUrNam, all that is there is pUrNam alone.

In context the meaning is: whether you take away (idam) pUrNam (formful object pUrNam) from (adah) pUrNam (formless I, Brahman pUrNam) or whether you add (idam) pUrNam to (adah) pUrNam, all that is there all that ever remains, is pUrNam alone.

If you have a gold chain and take the chain away what remains? Gold. If you restore the chain to the gold, what is there? Gold. The

second half of the verse is needed to make certain that one sees that pUrNam undergoes no change whatsoever. PurNam is always there, available. Idam, the objects of the world, do not have to be eliminated to reveal pUrNam any more than the chain has to be melted to see gold. What is called chain is no different from gold. It is gold now; it was gold before. From gold alone this gold has come. Take away this gold, gold alone remains.

Similarly, addition of idam, the name-form-appearances which are the objects comprising creation, to pUrNam, the formless, limitless, I, Brahman, does not make any addition to pUrNam; taking away creation from pUrNam, taking away the names and forms experienced as objects, does not eliminate anything from pUrNam. Nothing need be taken away to reveal pUrNam. PurNam is always there, available. Shruti mentions "adding to" and "taking away from" pUrNam not because there is any need to take anything away from pUrNam in order to discover limitlessness - to discover that I am that limitless which I long to

be. Shruti makes the statement to make clear the opposite fact - the fact that whether anything is added to or eliminated from pUrNam makes no difference. Why does it make no difference? Because there is nothing that can be added to or taken away from absolute fullness.

Any 'adding to' or 'taking away from' is purely an appearance. There is no real different thing to add to or take away from another different thing. All difference - object / object difference; subject / object difference; formless/formful difference - is but an appearance. Difference is miTyA - that which makes an appearance but lacks reality. From me alone came the dreamer subject and the dreamt object. Remove the dreamer and the dreamt and I alone remain. The dreamer subject and the dream resolve in me alone. PurNam eva avashiSyate. PurNam alone remains.

In shruti's light one sees that there is no real bhEda, difference between drishya and drishya, between object and object. Even at the empirical level of reality, inquiry reduces the apparent

substance comprising any object to aggregation of sub-atomic particles. Modern physics, from its standpoint, confirms lack of substantiality by finding lack of 'real' difference in apparently 'real' things.

Shruti-based inquiry (which defines real as what cannot be negated) reveals any known or knowable object, to be unreal because it is negatable by time, limited by space, and, in actuality, only a name and form reducible to some other apparent substance or substances which in turn are but names and forms reducible again to other substances. No known or knowable thing reduces to a known or knowable substance incapable of further reduction. A knowable thing, anything which can be objectified, defies final definition - has no reality of its own. Things are but names and forms, ever changing aggregate processes, limited by time and space, dependent for their apparent reality upon a real substratum, formless, limitless, time-free Brahman.

Thus, when I pick up from the stream bed a

shiny, solid stone and hold it in the palm of my hand, I can appreciate and enjoy the apparent difference seen by me between this smooth, solid object and the flowing rippling water which had been rushing over it. But at the same time that I enjoy the apparent difference between rock and water, I can also see and appreciate, with no uncertainty, the fact of non-difference between these two drishyas, these two known things each of which is but a name and form, limited, reducible, negatable and their differentness - their 'twoness' - resolving in the single, nondual reality of pUrNam Brahman.

Although I see nondifference between the objects that comprise idam, the things of creation that constitute idam jagat, this world - I find it more difficult to see the absence of difference between me and idam: between I, the seer, and this stone, the seen. I, whose skin, the sense of touch, divides me from the world, see the stone outside while I am inside; my skin is the wall, my senses the windows through which I view outside, and my mind the master

of the house who takes stock of what is seen. This long conditioned conclusion of internality and externality between the seer and the seen can be a problem. But like all false conclusions, it yields to inquiry.

Idam (this) or drishya (the seen) indicates anything that is known or knowable - anything which is objectifiable. My skin is part of and the boundary for a given physical body and its functions. This body is a known thing, drishya, something objectifiable. Associated with this body and its functions is a certain bundle of thoughts, comprising sense perceptions, decisions, judgments, memories, likes and dislikes, and a sense of agency (a sense of, "It is I who am the doer, the enjoyer, the knower, the possessor"). Each of these thoughts is known - is objectifiable, is drishya, a known thing. No thought or any collection of thoughts is nonobjectifiable. Thoughts, including the pivotal I-the agent thought, are known things.

Steps by step, inquiry finds no separating gap between I, as seer, and this stone as seen - no

place to draw a line between seer and seen. Everything knowable by me through my senses or inferable through sense data is drishya. All objects, all events, this body, mind, memory, sense of agency and interval measuring time as well as accommodating space - all are known or knowable, all are drishya. Drishya establishes no difference. No real difference can be established between the seer and the seen. The only difference between known things is the apparent difference of ever changing name-forms projected upon never changing formless reality of pUrNam Brahman. I, as seer, have no greater reality than the stone, as seen, Each of us has for its reality only nondual, formless Brahman, pUrNam.

Thus, the difference between seer and seen have no independent reality; they are apparent only being negatable by the knowledge gained through inquiry into the reality of the experience of difference. Try to find a line dividing the seer and the seen. It cannot be found. Every time you find a place where you think the seer is on one side and the seen on the

other, both sides turn out to be the seen, drishya. The only thing you can see, the only thing you can objectify is drishya. However, viewed experientially from the point of view of their common reality level, subject/object differences seem very real. The knowledge aham idam sarvam, "I am all this". (or, "This stone and I are one") is not a conclusion to be reached experientially. When subject and object enjoy the same degree of reality, the experienced difference will seem real. That experienced difference is not eliminated as experience but is negated as nonreal through knowledge. Simple reasoning - logical inquiry shakes the reality of difference. Shruti, as pramANa, a means of knowledge, destroys difference and reveals Oneness.

A dream is good example of the 'realness' of experienced difference within its own level of reality. If I dream of a fire which I am trying to put out by throwing water on it, then that dream water which puts out the dream fire is as real as the fire - and the fire is as real as the water. And I, the dream fire fighter, am as real

as the water and the fire. But I am no more real than the fire or water. Enjoying the same degree of reality, the fire fighter, the fire, the water, all seem real, all seem different, but all resolve as unreal. Upon waking I find no ashes on my bedroom floor. Dreamer and dreamt have both resolved. Dreamer has no greater reality than dreamt. Both resolve. Nothing is left out. I alone remain PurNam eva avashiSyate.

Now the question can be answered: Is this verse profound or prattle? The Englishman was wrong. It is not prattle; it is very profound. This one verse has everything. Nothing is left out. Subject, object, cause, effect, experience and fullness - nothing is omitted. It is not an ordinary verse. It contains the vision of the upaniShads - the truth of oneself.

I am PurNam

The reality of I is limitless pUrnam. I as seer of the stone am but an appearance, no more real than the stone I see. In reality I am limitlessness alone, one non-dual existent boundless consciousness pUrNam. Subject and object are

nothing but passing projections superimposed upon I; they neither add to I nor take anything away from I. I, unconnected to any appearance, am the One unchanging, non-negatable formless reality - pUrNam - into which all appearances resolve.

I am pUrNam, completeness, a brimful ocean, which nothing disturbs. Nothing limits me. I am limitless. Waves and breakers appear to dance upon my surface but are only forms of me, briefly manifest. They do not disturb or limit me. They are my glory - my fullness manifest in the form of wave and breaker. Wave and breaker may seem to be many and different but I know them as appearances only; they impose no limitation upon me - their agitation is but my fullness manifest as agitation; they are my glory, which resolves in me. In me, the brimful ocean, all resolves. I, pUrNam, completeness, alone remain.

Om ShAntih ShAntih ShAntih