

Chinmaya Smrithi



A Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC)

Volume 20, Number 4-- July 16, 2010



Sri Gurubhyo Namah
IN THIS ISSUE

Events & Library

- Events and Links
- From The Desk of The Secretary
- News Briefs
- Flyers: CMW 2010 Vedanta Course; 2010 Mahasamadhi Family Camp; 2011 Bala Vihar Flyer
- Sankara Jayanthi Report by Ram Nayak

Bala Vihar Articles and Stories

- Poem: Ceremony – Atman Panigrahi
- Speeches on Religion – Jitesh Nadimpalli

Vedantic Thoughts

- Series: Brief Introduction to Gita: Ch 11– Nilkanth Bhatt
- On Bhakthi Yoga - Acharya Dr. K Sadananda

Om

Calendar and Upcoming Events (www.chinmayadc.org, Link – Calendar of Events)

- July 25 – Guru Poornima (see announcements)
- July 26 – Aug 20 – Summer Camp in Virginia
- Aug 3 – Pujya Gurudev Mahasamadhi Day observed as Sadhana Day – Program starts at 7:30PM at Chinmayam (46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring MD 20905)

Study Groups

- Please contact Sri Vijay Kumar ji by email at vijaykumar@rocketmail.com, if you are interested in forming or learning more about study groups.

Bookstore/Library

- Please contact Mr Vijay Singh by email at publications@chinmayadc.org to order any books, CDs, DVDs, etc.. Browse online at www.chinmayadc.org; and http://www.cybermatics2.com/acb/webpage.cfm?&DID=6&WebPage_ID=2. Review list of Chinmaya Publications by downloading <http://www.cybermatics2.com/Catalog2008.pdf>
- Srimad Bhagvad Gita is online at www.myholygita.com

Next Issue

- Articles for the next issue - September 2010, are due by August 30th 2010
- Email submissions to smrithi@chinmayadc.org. Submission instructions at www.chinmayadc.org, Smrithi link, "Information on publishing in Smrithi"

Useful Links:

CMWRC – Washington Regional Center
 Chinmaya Mission Trust
 Chinmaya Mission West
 Chinmaya International Foundation, E-Vedanta Course
 Washington Region – Dulles VA Chapter website
 Washington Region – Frederick MD Chapter website
 Washington Region – Springfield VA Chapter website

www.chinmayadc.org
www.chinmayamission.com
www.chinmayamission.org
www.chinfo.org
www.chinmayadulles.org
www.chinmayafrederick.org
www.chinmayava.org

Please Note

The opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of Chinmaya Mission or CMWRC

Editorial Staff: (smrithi@chinmayadc.org)

Raju Chidambaram, Sitaram Kowtha, Acharya Vilasiniji, Acharyas, Chapter Coordinators and Teachers. &

Bala Vihar students - Vishnupriya Krishnan, Asmi Panigrahi, Harsha Neerchal and Srikanth Kowtha

Please contact us if you are interested in joining the editorial staff!

From the Desk of the Secretary

Hari Om!

CMWRC Sevaks,

A Sevaks Get-together with Swamiji, organized on June 27, was a very productive meeting and was well attended, with representatives from the Maryland and Virginia chapters. We had the benefit of listening to the inspiring message of Swamiji. Many of you who attended gave a number of suggestions for improving our operations and efficiency. Those were all very valuable to us and need to be followed up. **In order to get all of them in the right flavor and emphasis, I need your help. Please give a brief description of your suggestions, including implementation ideas and strategies, and send an email to me at sbalan@cox.net.**

If you did not have the opportunity to attend the get together, we encourage you to send in your suggestion now. We are eager to hear your thoughts and suggestions for improving and growing our centers in the DC area, as the vibrant centers for spiritual and cultural growth.

I would appreciate if you could send your reply as early as possible.

In the Service of the Lord

S. Balan

sbalan@cox.net

July 12, 2010



Camps at Chinmaya Vibhooti in 2010

The Magic of Love (Narada Bhakti Sutra) Camp– in English

By Swami Swaroopananda

Dates: 15th to 21st August 2010

We request for a minimum donation of Rs 4000/- per person to cover all expenses of the camp
(this amount is non-refundable)

[For more information or to download the registration form click here](#)

Sampoorna Geeta (Essence of all 18 Chapters) Camp– in Hindi

By Swami Advaitananda

Dates: 12th to 19th November 2010

We request for a minimum donation of Rs 4500/- per person to cover all expenses of the camp
(this amount is non-refundable)

[For more information or to download the registration form click here](#)

Guruji in Good Health



***Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji releasing the "Ah!
Wisdom Book" in June 2010***

Happy 60th Birthday, Guruji



CMWRC Events Held

- May 22nd at Sri Siva Vishnu Temple in Lanham Maryland - Swami Dheeranandaji and Bala Vihar children from Dulles Chapter joined celebrations to honor Bhagavan Adi Sankaracharya on the occasion of Sankara Jayanthi (More in this newsletter in an article by Ram Nayak)
- May 22nd at Chinmayam - CMWRC celebrated graduation of 2010 class of Bala Vihar children. Graduation souvenir issue and photos are posted on the CMWRC website
- May 29th and 30th – Acharya Sadanandaji conducted Memorial Day Camp on Gita Navaneetham (The Essence of the Gita). The video from this event is available for free at www.advaitaforum.org
- June 12th and 13th – Bala Vihar sessions concluded ahead of summer break with Annual Day performances at the various chapters
- June 28th – Marked the start of four week summer camp at Maryland

Announcements

Chinmaya Somnath Project

You can follow the progress on Chinmaya Somnath project – new center in Northern Virginia at

www.chinmayadc.org/ChinmayaSomnath/chinmaya_somnath.htm

The page is continually updated to show progress and designs. Please review the fund raising appeal and use the pledge form, available for your convenience at the site, to support this important CMWRC initiative.

Chinmaya West Newsletter

Be sure to read the July 2010 newsletter from Chinmaya Mission West.

Browse and download at www.chinmayamission.org/newsletter:

<http://www.chinmayamission.org/newsletter.php>



Announcements

Guru Purnima Celebration on July 25th, 2010

July 25th is Guru Poornima, also known as Vyasa Poornima. On this sacred full moon night we invoke the Grace and Blessings of our Puja Gurudev and the entire Guru Parampara. We are blessed to have Puja Swami Dheerananda in Virginia to celebrate this auspicious day. We invite you to join for this Puja in the presence of Swamiji and other Acharyas.

Time: 5.00 - 8:00 PM

*Location: Residence of Madhuri and Bhaskar Dasari
21683 Channing Ct, Ashburn, VA 20147 Ph: 703-724-7424*

Puja Program

Guru Paduka Puja

GURU POORNIMA Message From Acharya

Guru Bhajans

Chinmaya Arati

Maha-Prasad

Patrons are invited to sponsor the Paduka Puja in the following categories. The proceeds will support Gurudev's centenary celebrations and our own CHINMAYA SOMNATH project.

- **Puja Sponsorship as Yajamaan - \$108.00 or higher**
- **Arati Sponsorship - \$51.00**
- **Prasad Sponsorship - \$25.00**

RSVP is required via email to gurupurnima@chinmayadulles.org by July 20th with a count of family attendees expected. Sponsorship details may also be communicated to the same email.

* * *

CDs and DVDs available for Jnana Yajnas conducted in April and May at Chinmayam

1. "The Art of Healing" DVD based on Sri Adi Sankara's Panchikaranam, Jnana Yajna by Swami Chidatmananda Ji, April 26-30, 2010 (a set of 5 DVDs for talk of 5 days for \$20)
2. "Gita Navaneetam": Essence of every chapter of Bhagavad Gita by Acharya Sadananda Ji, Memorial Day Camp, May 29-30, 2010, MP3 CD (\$10).
3. "The Art of Healing" based on Sri Adi Sankara's Panchikaranam, Jnana Yajna by Swami Chidatmananda Ji, April 26-30, 2010, MP3 CD (\$10).
4. "Chinmaya Jayanti Bhajans 2010" performed on May 8, 2010 by CMWRC Silverspring's Balavihar students: Purvi Nanavaty, Vishnupriya Krishnan, and Amol Mehta, CD (1 hr) (\$6).

Mr Vijay Singh will happy to mail this you if you email him with your interest and mailing address to vk Singh85@yahoo.com



CHINMAYA
MISSION®
WEST

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

ONE-YEAR,
RESIDENTIAL,
FULL-TIME, INTENSIVE
VEDANTA COURSE

AUGUST 2010-2011

AT CMW'S
KRISHNALAYA ASHRAM
IN NORTHERN
CALIFORNIA, AMIDST
SERENE REDWOODS

CONDUCTED
IN ENGLISH

ENHANCES ONE'S
UNDERSTANDING AND
CLARITY OF BASIC
AND ADVANCED
VEDANTIC CONCEPTS

HARI OM



With the blessings of His Holiness Swami Tejomayananda, Head of Chinmaya Mission worldwide, Chinmaya Mission West (CMW) is pleased to announce its one-year, residential Vedanta Course at CMW's headquarters, the ashram of *Krishnalaya* in Northern California, amidst the serene Redwoods.

This residential, full-time course, without any holidays, will be conducted in English.

ELIGIBILITY

This Course is open to sincere seekers between the ages of 20 and 70 years.

REGISTRATION

\$12,000 (covers registration, lodging, boarding, and books; payable in installments)

DATES / ACHARYAS

The course will commence on August 7, 2010 and conclude in August 2011.

Full-time Resident Acharya

Acharya Smt. Sharada Kumar

August 2010

Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

August-October 2010

Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya

November-December 2010

Swami Ishwarananda

January 2011

Swami Shantananda

February-March 2011

Swami Ishwarananda

April-May 2011

Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya

June-July 2011

Acharya Smt. Sharada Kumar

August 2011

Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda



TO REGISTER

Complete the online form at
www.chinmayamission.org/plyrcy

All applications received will be reviewed. Eligible candidates will be asked to schedule a personal interview, the details of which will be provided at a later date.

For more information:

prabodh@chinmayamission.org
(707) 207- 5011

TEXTS

His Holiness Swami Tejomayananda: Mandukya Upanishad, Tattva Bodha, Essence of Shrimad Bhagavatam and Ramayana

Swami Shantananda: Dakshinamurti Stotram, Sat Darshanam

Swami Ishwarananda: Shrimad Bhagavad Gita

Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya: Upadesha Sara, Atma Bodha, Drg Drshya Viveka, Panchadashi Ch. I, and Upanishads (Ishavasya, Kena, Katha, Mundaka)

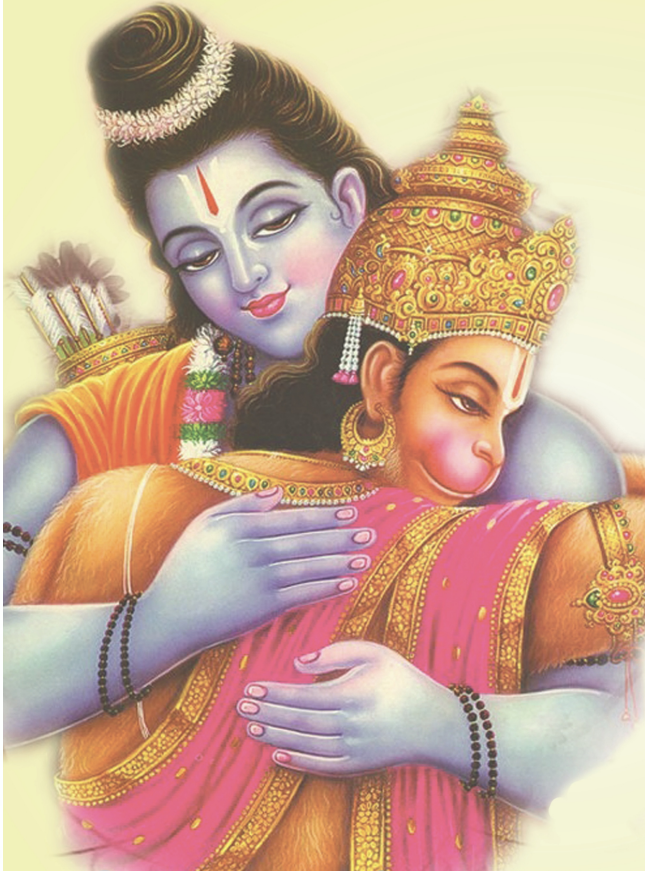
Acharya Sharada Kumar: Taittiriya Upanishad, Vivekachudamani, Vedic Chanting, Sanskrit, Sahasranamavalis, Bhajans



Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles Presents

17th CHINMAYA MAHASAMADHI FAMILY CAMP

July 29, 2010 • 6 p.m. PST – August 3, 2010 • 11 a.m. PST
Marriott Hotel & Convention Center • Burbank, California



CAMP HIGHLIGHTS

- Spiritually focused approach
- Multi-track breakout sessions/ panel discussions on contemporary topics
- Cultural programs depicting important episodes in the life of Sri Rama
- Unique events designed for spiritual reflection
- Elaborate children's curriculum
- Special interactive sessions for youth
- Great ambience, conducive weather, catered Indian food

RAMAYANA SOUNDARYAM

Discourses on the beauty of "Ramayana"
by H.H. Gururji Swami Tejomayananda
Head of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide



Rare opportunity • Friendly payment plan • Special Rudra Puja

1-866-HARIOM-0 (1-866-427-4660)
2010msc@gmail.com

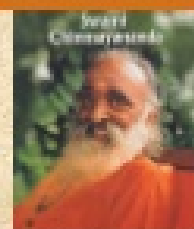
Information and registration:
www.chinmayamahasamadhi.com



CHINMAYA MISSION WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

www.chinmayadc.org

46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring MD 20905



BALA VIHAR PROGRAM - AGES 4-18

(Structured curriculum geared to children growing in the US)

Conducted Weekends from September 10th/11th 2010 through June 11th/12th 2011

- ♦ Inculcates noble ideas, healthy emotions, and spiritual strength
- ♦ Children learn important values through stories, songs, arts & crafts
- ♦ Moral education through Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Bhagavatham
- ♦ Pujas, Bhajans, Festival celebrations
- ♦ Discussions encouraged to understand why we do things a certain way
- ♦ Shloka Classes
- ♦ Classes in Indian arts and languages
- ♦ Concurrent Adult classes on Bhagavad Gita

REGISTRATION FOR 2010/2011 CURRENTLY UNDERWAY IN MARYLAND & VIRGINIA

CMWRC Chapters	Web Site	Venue
Dulles, VA	www.chinmayadulles.org	Dulles South Multipurpose Center 24950 Riding Center Drive South Riding, VA 20152
Springfield, VA	www.chinmayava.org	West Springfield High School 6100 Rolling Road, Springfield, VA 22152
Richmond, VA	http://www.chinmayadc.org/ActivitiesRichmond.htm	Vision Learning Center, Grove Park Square 11537- A Nuckols Rd Glen Allen, VA 23059
Frederick, MD	www.chinmayafrederick.org	Walkerville Middle School 55 Frederick St Walkerville MD 21793
Silver Spring, MD	www.chinmayadc.org	Chinmayam 46 Norwood Road Silver Spring MD 20905

Children are not buckets to be filled, But lamps to be lit.

Children are the architects of the future world.

*It is the most sacred task of parents as well as teachers to mould their lives
In accordance with the sublime Indian tradition.*

- Swami Chinmayananda

Sankara Jayanthi Celebration at Shiva Vishnu Temple

Ram Nayak,

Bala Vihar Teacher, Dulles Chapter

On Saturday, May 22nd, Chinmaya Mission participated in the Jagadguru Sankara Jayanti celebrations, put together by a group of individuals across multiple organizations, primarily Sringeri Vidya Bharati Foundation (SVBF) and Kanchi Kamoti Peetam (KKSF). It was hosted at Sri Shiva Vishnu Temple (SSVT). This was the concluding day of a 5 day celebration in the traditional style.

There was a children's cultural program where children from different organizations chanted stotrams, performed dances and a skit based on Adi Sankara's childhood.

The children of Chinmaya Dulles Chapter were invited to recite Stotrams as a part of the children's program. This was the highlight of the program. We had over 40 children who participated from the two Dulles shloka classes. They chanted the following four stotrams:

- *Ganesha Sankata Nashana Stotram* (Ganesha)
- *Sri Sharada Bhujangam* (Saraswati)
- *Thotakashtakam* (Guru - Shankara)
- *Nirvana Shatakam* (Advaita Vedanta)

After the cultural program, the children were given the opportunity to lead the "Pallaki" procession around the temple, chanting "Jai Jai Sankara, Hara Hara Sankara". This was a unique experience for the children and they were very excited to take part. They were carrying along a picture of *Sharada Devi* which was a memento for their participation of this event.

Pujya Swami Dheerananda was the invited guest speaker. Swami ji was greeted with all respect by the organizers and Chinmaya children led the Poorna-kumbha welcome in the traditional style.

Swamiji in his characteristic and inimitable style got everyone's attention; especially the kids by stating that what can be learned from billions of books can be said in one line or even half a line of Sanskrit. Swamiji's message to the kids was "**Paropakara Punyaya, Papaya Parapeedanam**" – By hurting others, we will be sorrowful but helping others gives you happiness.



Om

Addressing the adults, Swamiji's half a line Sanskrit message was what Sankara said "**Brahma Satyam, Jagat Mithya, Jivo Brahmaiva Naapara**" which is the essence of Vedanta. Consciousness alone is real, world is unreal. World is referred to whatever you are conscious of. What you are conscious of is unreal and cannot exist by itself. It can exist because of Consciousness which is real. Swamiji always comes up with creative acronyms. For this talk, it was "**ALARAM**" – Attentive Listening, Attentive Reflection and Attentive Meditation. By proper "**Shravanam, Mananam and Nidhidhyasa**" you wake up to that awakened state and become Sankara himself.

As the children had chanted Thotakashtakam, Swamiji explained the meaning of the verse:

*bhava-eva bhavaan-iti me nitaraam
samajaa-yata cetasi kautukitaa
mama vaaraya moha mahaa-jaladhim
bhava sankara desika me saranam*

In this verse Thotakacharya says he is filled with joy when he realizes that Sankara is Lord Shiva himself. He implores Sankara, the teacher, that he takes his refuge and asks Sankara's help to cross this ocean of sorrow.

After the talk and Maha-aarti, Swamiji gathered up the children and asked for an encore recitation of Thotakashtakam and Medhaa Suktam. It was a wonderful sight – the children and their beloved Swamiji.

It was truly an enlightening event.



Om

The Ceremony

Atman Panigrahi, Shivanandam

A coming of age ceremony has begun.

Family and friends have gathered from far away, rejoicing.

A morning sun shines brightly in the sky as the dark rain clouds had parted the night before,

Just for me.

The usual honking and din comes from the road and I can hear hagglers in the distance.

Mom, dad, and I sit on a raised dais on the lawn, with a roaring ceremonial fire.

The priest chants in front of us, throwing oil and twigs into the flames.

They rise and billow, sending waves of heat into my face.

Soon I am sweating profusely, but the ceremony continues.

More mantras, more flames, more seemingly meaningless tasks for me to do.

Ants crawl around us like black sand, and I plead that they walk into the fire.

The day passes by far too slowly, as if Father Time had taken a much-too-long vacation.

My emotions take a turn for the worst, but I can't leave.

The sun beats down upon us and the flames maintain their outburst of heat.

The priest's chanting continues and my eyes search for escape

The clock ticks forward at an agonizing pace

Frequent pauses paint hopeless hope in my mind and I wish the ceremony would end

Yeah right.

Hunger claws through my stomach and I yearn for a bite of anything.

My pain increases and my frustration seems to grow beyond my tolerance.

My eyes are searching for an escape,

And then they meet my grandparents'.

Content that I was becoming a man.

Sparkling with such exhilaration they had never felt before,

Filled with joy and fulfillment, pride and bliss,

Soaking up the entire ceremony as if to replay it for every moment remaining in their lives,

And I know I can reach the finish line.

Not only that but I am ready to go through it endless times again.



Speeches on Religion

Submitted by Jitesh Nadimpalli, Tapovanam, Silver Spring

Editor's Note: The speeches were rendered by Boy Scouts, Troop 1325, to promote understanding and respect for peoples of different faith. The event was part of International Day, conducted on June 3, 2010 in Maryland. The speeches were made by Jitesh Nadimpalli on Hindusim, Jared Newman on Catholicism, Alex Ives on Protestantism and Marc Cobly on Judaism. Below, we have three of the four speeches.

Introduction by Jitesh

We are a land of immigrants. A nation touched by every nation, religion, race and culture. Immigration enriches our culture, our language, our sciences and arts, even our cuisine. We are still the country most other people in the World want to come to, to live. Living in this great nation, we come across people from various religions, race and cultures. The purpose of today's meeting is to understand other religions and cultures. People often tend to draw incomplete conclusions about other religions without understanding the context or framework of the faith. Educating ourselves and being open to learning about different viewpoints can help us appreciate the spirit of faith in the Divine that all religions share. This reminds of a story I read some time back.

Two knights of honor once met on the field and saw a shield hanging on a tree. One said: "What a fine silver shield." The other hastened to reply that it was not silver, but copper. Each disputed the other's statement until at last they got off their horses, drew their swords, and fought for several hours. After they were exhausted by the loss of blood, they staggered against each other and fell on the opposite sides from where they have been fighting. Then one chanced to glance up at the shield and said: "Oh! You were right my friend! The shield is in deed of copper." The other also looked up and said: "It is I who was mistaken, the shield is silver." If they both had little patience to look at both sides of the shield, in the first place, it would have saved the unnecessary loss of precious blood. I think, that if we care to dispassionately look at both sides of every question, perhaps there would be no argument or fighting. Most of us do not have the patience to see the other side. The lesson is obvious. Here is a humble attempt by troop 1325 to present the other side of the shield that we are all looking at.

Speech on Hinduism by Jitesh

Hi, I am Jitesh Nadimpalli. I would like to talk about my religion Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism. Hinduism is not only one of the numerically largest faiths, but is also the oldest living major tradition on earth, with roots reaching back into prehistory. Hinduism is not only a religion, but also "Way of life based on eternal, unchanging and sustaining Values of life". For the people who practice this religion, it is a way of life that encompasses family, society, politics, business, art, and health behaviors. A well known aspect is family life is sacred and marriage not only joins two individuals together but also their families. The relationship extends beyond one's life. Generally most marriages are arranged with the consent of the bride and the bridegroom and blessings of the elders in the family. The divorce rate is just 1%, mostly limited to the urban centers, compared to 40% in Australia, 48% in Canada and 50% in the US.

The Hindu Scriptures do not give any definition for Hinduism or Hindu as they are of recent origin. Hindu is the Persian name for river Sindhu or Indus. When the Persians came to India, they found a flourishing civilization in the Indo-Gangetic plain. So the Persians called them “Hindhus”, pronounced Sindhu as Hindu, with reference to the place where they lived. Therefore etymologically, the word “Hindu” means an inhabitant of the Land of Sindhu, modern India and not merely a person who follows a particular religion or faith. The term *Hinduism* was introduced into the [English language](#) in the 19th century to denote the religious, philosophical, and cultural traditions native to India. It is not necessary to live in India to be a Hindu. In fact, one must live in harmony with the land where one is located to be a true Hindu.

Sanatana Dharma does not depend upon the historicity of any individual or his spiritual experiences or doctrines propounded by any single person on his personal experiences; it is based on certain eternal principles and values of life which hold good for all people for all time, irrespective of personalities involved, thus becomes the most diverse religion of the world. Hinduism is a strictly “Monotheistic” and pantheistic religion, misunderstood as polytheistic in its concept by the large majority of the people, even among the Hindus themselves. The Gods and Goddesses of Hinduism amount to thousands, all representing the many aspects of only one supreme Absolute called “[Brahman](#)”. Hindus strongly believe that Brahman is the supreme reality, the unity behind all this diversity, the changeless truth behind all appearances. The entire world of phenomena rises, exists, dissolves and again re-rises in him. However, people who don’t know this, misinterprets the fact that Hinduism has a multitude of Gods! What one should understand is that although there are many manifestations of Brahman in the forms of deities each deity is really an aspect of the Brahman or, ultimately Brahman itself. So for Hindus, God is Sat, Existence; Chit, Knowledge; Ananda, Bliss. The three functions of Creation, Preservation and Dissolution are but different aspects of the activities of the same supreme reality. We call the Creator as Brahma, Preserver as Vishnu and Shiva as the Destroyer or Annihilator. These different concepts are ultimately for the convenience of the aspirant only, as the human mind is incapable of conceiving a formless Being.

Hindus strongly believe in [Dharma](#) Law of right living or righteousness, [Samsāra](#), The continuing cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth, [Karma](#), action and subsequent reaction or moral law of cause and effect, [Moksha](#), liberation from *re-birth*, and the [Yogas](#), paths or practices. Hindus believe that we are the creators of our own destiny. My present condition is due to my past thoughts, words, deeds and conduct and that my future state will depend directly on my past and present actions and thoughts. The soul is essentially divine, pure and perfect, infinite in power and free. It was never created, will never die, but will pass from body to body in its onward journey to realization and perfection.

Hinduism has developed numerous practices meant to help one think of divinity in the midst of everyday life. Most households have a shrine to a particular deity of choice as all these are manifestations of the Supreme Reality. People conduct a household puja or visit temples. Hindus perform their worship through icons. The icon serves as a tangible link between the worshiper and God. The lamp is lit during the puja as the light in the lamp symbolizes knowledge. It removes darkness, which symbolizes ignorance. The wick in the oil lamp symbolizes ego and the oil symbolizes our negative tendencies. When we are lit by self knowledge, the negative tendencies melt away and finally the ego perishes. When the ego perishes, we realize that we are all part of Brahman and that life is continuity.

You might have noticed many Hindus saying “Namaskar” instead of a handshake, and also touching the feet of elders. While doing a Namaskar, we fold our hands and bow. For Hindus this is a sign of respect for the age, maturity, nobility and divinity that our elders personify. It symbolizes our recognition of their selfless love for us and the sacrifices they have done for our welfare. It is a way of humbly acknowledging the greatness of another. This tradition reflects the strong family ties, which has been one of India’s enduring strengths

Hindus advocate the practice of *ahimsā* or non-violence and respect for all life because divinity is believed to permeate all beings, including plants and non-human animals. Hindus don't beef as the cow in Hindu society is traditionally identified as a caretaker and a maternal figure, and honors the cow as a symbol of unselfish giving. Cow-slaughter is legally banned in almost all states of India.

Hindu society has traditionally been categorized into four classes, called Varnas or castes. The **Brahmins**: teachers and priests; The **Kshatriyas**: warriors, nobles, and kings; The **Vaishyas**: farmers, merchants, and businessmen; and the **Shudras**: servants and labourers. The Bhagavad Gita state that the four varnas are created by god and that one's varna is to be understood from one's personal qualities and one's *karma* (work), not one's birth. There are indications that in its initial period, the caste system was flexible and it was merit and job based. One could migrate from one caste to other caste by changing one's profession. In its later stages, the caste system is said to have become rigid, and caste began to be inherited rather than acquired by merit. Even though discrimination based on Caste is banned in India, the Government documents caste as a basis for providing reservations (quotas) for people from lower castes.

Hinduism has many festivals throughout the year. The festivals typically celebrate events from Hindu mythology, often coinciding with seasonal changes. There are festivals which are primarily celebrated by specific sects or in certain regions of the India. Some widely observed Hindu festivals are **Maha Shivaratri**, **Holi**, **Ram Navami**, **Ganesh Chaturthi**, **Dussera**, and **Diwali**.

I am a Hindu not because I was born Hindu, but because Hinduism is about Law of right living or Dharma and law of cause and effect or karma. And I want to live a life guided by the principles of Dharma. I believe that God is one which expresses in trillion forms and Hinduism gives me the freedom to choose my favorite deity to pray. The first President of India Dr. Radha Krishnan rightly quoted that "Hinduism is not just a faith. It is the union of reason and intuition that cannot be defined but is only to be experienced." I want to conclude with a quote by an Indian Spiritual Leader Swami Vivekananda "BY the study of different RELIGIONS in the world we find that in essence they are one. And Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man."

* * *

Speech on Protestantism by Alex Ives

The term "Protestant" is today utilized to broadly define those professing Christians who stand apart from Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

Not surprisingly then, there are many "Protestants" who don't appreciate being called "Protestant," and who outright reject any such categorization. This makes understanding Protestantism all the more problematic.

What is Christianity?

Before one can fully appreciate Protestantism or basic Protestant beliefs, it's important to understand Christianity.

The term "Christian" comes from the New Testament book of Acts, where Luke (the likely author) explains that followers (or "disciples") of Jesus were first called "Christians" in the city of Antioch (Acts 11:26). The term stuck, and quickly came to define all those who believed in and followed Jesus of Nazareth.

Christianity is therefore a monotheistic faith that holds the first-century Jewish leader named Jesus of Nazareth to be the divine Son of God (John 3:16) sent to redeem the world from its sins (Romans 10:9-10). Christian beliefs about Jesus are drawn essentially from the New Testament.

Though the Christian faith is arguably in decline in Western Europe and, to some extent, in North America, Christianity remains the world's largest religion, with more than two billion adherents. Yet Christianity itself is divided into three main branches, which are Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism.

Definition of Protestant

Protestantism, as a historical movement, began in October 1517, when a monk named Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the wall of a German church. Luther's protests against the Roman Catholic Church and his enunciation of doctrinal differences gave him and his followers the name "Protestant" and launched the Protestant Reformation.

While the term "Protestant" historically referred to those who broke their allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church during the tumult of the Protestant Reformation, it has since come to describe virtually all non-Catholic Christians (particularly in the West), including Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, among others.

Principles of Protestantism

Luther's protests against Roman Catholicism united many who had long held disagreements with the Vatican and encouraged others to explore new differences. In addition, the printing press and the wider distribution of Bibles fueled more of the reformation.

While there was some diversity in the Protestant movement then (and much more today), there was general Protestant agreement on the following main points:

- *Sola Scriptura* - Doctrine is "by Scripture alone" as opposed to papal decree or council edict.
- *Sola Fide* - Justification is received "by faith alone" as opposed to works or sacraments.
- *Sola Gratia* - Salvation comes "by grace alone."
- *Sola Christus* - Atonement for sins is "by and through Christ alone."
- *Soli Deo gloria* - All glory is to be given "to God alone."

Major Branches and Movements within Protestantism

Since the middle Ages, Protestantism has grown to encompass a wide array of beliefs, traditions, and denominations. Most Protestants could be categorized in the following philosophical branches:

- *Anglicanism* - When the Church of England broke from papal authority, the Anglican tradition was born. At first, the split was primarily personal (King Henry VIII wanted a divorce) and political. It later became theological, as English Protestants laid out key differences with the Vatican.

- *Mainline Protestantism* - Churches and structured denominations that trace their origins to the European Reformers (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, etc.) or Anglicanism.
- *Modern or Postmodern Liberalism* - A school of thought within Protestantism that encourages conscience, Enlightenment-driven inquiry, and (in some cases) postmodern thought as a balance to *Sola Scriptura*.
- *Evangelicalism* - Christians who emphasize personal conversion to Jesus Christ, Bible study (and *Sola Scriptura*), morality and ethics (as defined scripturally), and the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- *Pentecostalism and "Spirit-Filled" Christians* - Those who believe that all the apostolic gifts, including faith healing, speaking in tongues, etc. are available to the church today. Some within this camp believe that these gifts are at the discretion of the Holy Spirit, while others believe they are a sign of salvation or spiritual maturity.

There are, of course, spin-offs and variations with the above categories, and some "Protestants" who don't lend themselves well to any category. Indeed, many "Protestants" don't consider themselves part of Protestantism at all.

All labels come with limitations and difficulties. Rather than categorize and compartmentalize people according to certain denominations or movements, it's best to let each person speak for himself or herself.

Understanding the major movements and branches of Protestantism is important, but such understanding should be held with an open hand and considered with an open mind.

* * *

Speech on Judaism by Marc Coby

What is a Jew?

- Judaism is a religion that was founded almost 4000 years by a man named Abraham.
- There are about 15 Million Jews in the world. Although many Jews worldwide share common ancestry, many Jewish people are of different races and national origin.
- The original name for the people we now call Jews was Hebrews. One tradition states that the word Hebrew comes from the name Eber, one of Abraham's ancestors. Another tradition states that the name comes from the word *eyver*, "which means "the other side," referring to the fact that Abraham came from the other side of the Euphrates River.
- Today we call ourselves Jews, which comes from the Hebrew word , "Yehudi", or Judah which was the name of one of Jacob's twelve sons. Judah was the ancestor of one of the tribes of Israel, which was named after him.
- There are certainly cultural traits and behaviors that are shared by many Jews in many parts of the world. However, that culture is not shared by all Jews all over the world.

What Jews Believe

- What Jews believe is a far more difficult question than you might expect. Judaism has no dogma, no formal set of beliefs that one must hold to be a Jew. In Judaism, actions are far more important than beliefs, although there is certainly a place for belief within Judaism. In a nutshell, Jews believe that...
 - God exists
 - There is one God, God is everywhere
 - The words of the prophets are true
 - Moses was the greatest of the prophets
 - The Written Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) and Oral Torah (teachings now contained in the Talmud and other writings) were given to Moses
 - God knows the thoughts and deeds of men
 - God will reward the good and punish the wicked
 - The Messiah will come
 - The dead will be resurrected
-
- The Jewish house of worship is called a synagogue, or sometimes called a Temple. It is the Jewish equivalent of a church or other house of worship. It is the center of the Jewish religious community: a place of prayer, study and education, social and charitable work, as well as a social center.
 - Although every Jew usually knows how to lead others in worship, a Rabbi most often leads religious services. Occasionally a Cantor or Singer leads musical parts of the service.

Our formal religious services are held on Friday evening and Saturday Morning, during our Sabbath, or day of rest. Days in the Jewish calendar start in the evening, because it tells us in the Jewish Bible, There was evening, there was morning, the first day.

- When attending Worship Services one dresses modestly and covers their head with a skullcap called a yarmulke.
 - Our most Holy Scripture or book is the Torah, called by others as the Old Testament. Jews do not recognize the New Testament. We have other books that include the Prophets, Writings, and the Talmud.
-
- Many Jews, but not all Jews, follow a dietary law called Kosher. Only certain meat is eaten, dairy and meat is served on different dishes.
 - Jews enjoy many life cycle events, like marriage, the birth of a child, a coming of age service called a Bar Mitzvah, a Confirmation or Graduation from religious school.
 - Our Holiday celebrations include Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Jewish New Year in the autumn, a Sukkoth, a harvest celebration, Hanukah, Tu B'Shvat, a planting celebration, Passover, to celebrate freedom from Egypt. Our holidays are celebrated with family and friends by worship, celebration, and eating traditional foods.

Series – Summary of the Gita
Ch. 11 (Vishvarupa Darsana Yoga) The Cosmic Form

Nilkanth Bhatt, Richmond Chapter

Major schools of thoughts in the world prescribe to the idea of unity in the diversity of this universe. After all, science tells us that this universe, as we know, is a product of the big bang; when a singularity exploded into a plurality and it is continuing to expand. In other words the same singularity (single entity) has now become the plurality (world of many things and beings). The essential difference between the two is that in singularity, all its constituent parts are at one place at one time without being separated from each other, whereas in plurality they are separated from each other by the space between them.

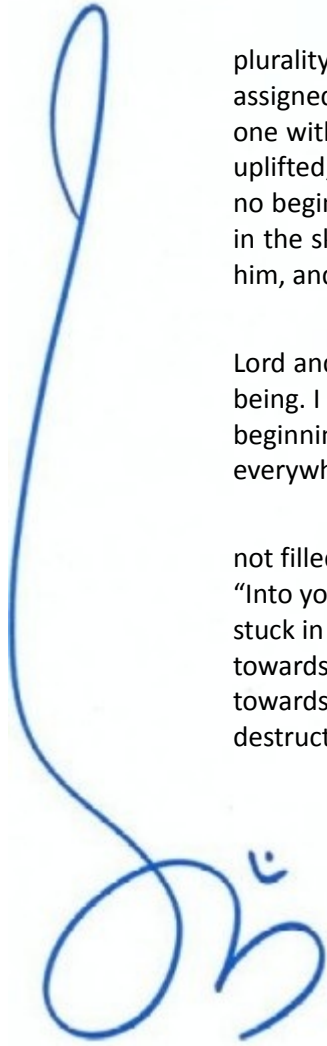
Now we know that the space and time are the concepts created by our mind, so what will be our worldview if we dry these concepts out of our mind? The world will be a single entity with all beings and things as its inherent parts, un-separated from each other.

Arjuna had heard from Krishna, the glories of the divine; that the divine is manifesting through all things and beings in this world. He appreciated this knowledge. However, he wanted to see and experience the divine in its totality. He expressed his desire to see the imperishable form of the divine in Krishna. Krishna told Arjuna that he will not be able to see that form with his normal vision, i.e., his normal viewpoint of the world. To see the all inclusive, all pervading, imperishable form of Krishna, Arjuna needs a completely new viewpoint. So Krishna gives him a divine vision, which gives Arjuna a transcendental view of the reality.

What Arjuna saw was the Lord's divine form devoid of space and time and therefore devoid of plurality; where everything and every being existed at the same time in the self of the Lord. Sanjaya, the assigned narrator of the Mahabharata war to Dhritarastra, the blind king, describes this divine form as the one with innumerable mouths and eyes, wearing innumerable ornaments and having innumerable weapons uplifted, wearing divine garlands and clothes, having divine fragrance, all wonderful and resplendent, having no beginning or end, facing all sides. Its splendor was similar to thousands of Suns blazing at the same time in the sky. He saw the entire universe resting in the body of the Lord and all mouths in the world belong to him, and all eyes in the world belong to him. All ornaments belong to him and all weapons belong to him.

Having seen such form of the Lord, Arjuna is filled with wonder and humility. He bows down to the Lord and says, "I see all gods, various types of beings, Brahma seating on the lotus and various Rishis in your being. I see a boundless form with manifold arms, stomachs, mouths and eyes. I see neither the end, nor the beginning or the middle of your form. I see you with the mace, discus and club, a mass of radiance shining everywhere. It is very hard to look at such a form of yours."

He continues to describe that there is no space between the earth, heavens and all quarters that is not filled with the Lord's form. He also sees the fearsome side of the Lord's form. He goes on to describe, "Into your mouth with the fearsome teeth, all mighty heroes of the world enter precipitately. Some are seen stuck in the gaps between teeth with their heads crushed to powder. Just as many torments of rivers flow towards the ocean, the beings of these worlds enter your flaming mouths. Just as moths hurriedly rush towards fire for their own destruction; it seems all creatures in this universe rush into your mouth for their destruction."



Arjuna did not understand this form of the Lord, which he had never perceived before. So he asks, “Who you are, so fierce in form? And what is your purpose? We ask these questions all the time. What is the purpose of this life, which is rushing from birth to death? Why all these miseries and sufferings in life? Krishna responds by saying “I am the mighty all devouring time. All things and beings, good and bad, are all eventually get destroyed by time, therefore, while you have time on your side, do your duty as best as you can and conquer this world of yours.”

Even though Arjuna had this divine vision of the unity of all things in the imperishable self of the Lord, he was not yet ready to give up his individuality. He wanted to return to his familiar world where Krishna was his friend, philosopher and guide. He said “Even though I am delighted to see this form of yours never seen before by me, my mind is distressed with fear. Oh Lord, I want to see you in your form familiar to me with crown on your head and mace and discus in your hands.”

We are only familiar with this world of plurality, where we can maintain our own identity. In pursuit of seeking unity of all things, we see danger of losing our own self; therefore, we are afraid of exploring it. However, there is no other way of entering into the divine self other than losing our own egocentric self.

Bhagavan says neither by the study of Vedas, nor austerities, nor charities or sacrifice can one see this Universal form of mine. But by the single pointed devotion one can know, see and enter this reality. He who does actions for me, he who is devoted to me and sees me as the supreme, he who is unattached and bears enmity to none, comes to me and becomes one with me.

* * *

On Bhakthi Yoga

Acharya Dr. K. Sadananda ji

Krishna lists only two yogas in sloka Ch. III-3. There are two paths – one is karma yoga for those whose mind-set is in yoga of action and the other is jnaana yoga for those whose mind set is in yoga of knowledge. Bhakti yoga is not separately mentioned. The reason is very simple – both have common theme and that is yoga. Yoga means whose mind is yoked to the higher nature of reality. That demands commitment towards the higher which is nothing but Bhakti or devotion towards the goal. Hence karma yoga means Bhakti through action and jnaana yoga means Bhakti through knowledge. Thus, although Lord Krishna does not consider Bhakti as separate yoga since it is the bottom line for both karma and jnaana, Bhakti is emphasized through out Gita. For example, Krishna says in Ch.9-29:

samoham sarva bhuuteShu na me dveShyosti na priyaH |
ye bhajantitu maam bhaktyaa mayi te teShu caapyahaM | |

I maintain equanimity to all – I do not favor anybody or disfavor anybody. However, those who worship me with devotion, they are in me and I am in them'. Karma yoga involves Iswraarpita buddhi that is offering the action as the prayer to the Lord. When action itself becomes a prayer, then we have to make sure what we offer is the best that we can offer; therefore dexterity in action is essential for a karma yogi – yogaH karmasu koushalam-says Krishna.

The whole of 12th chapter is called Bhatiyoga but in that the emphasis is -

etu sarvaaNi karmaani mayi sanyasya matparaaH |
ananye naiva yogena maam dhyayhanta upaasate | |
teShaamaham samudharthaa mRityusamsaara saagaraat |
bhavaami na ciraatpArthaa mayyaaveshita cetasaam |

Those who surrender all their actions in me, and meditate on me without any other thoughts, and those who have surrendered everything and whose minds are fully abiding in me, I shall err long uplift them from the thrallldom of cycle of birth and deaths.

Shankara defines Bhakti in VivekachuudaamaNi as -

moksha kaaraNa samaargryaam bhaktiH eva gareeyasii |
swaswaruupanusandhaanam bhaktirtyabhidlyate |
swaatmatatvaanusandhaanam bhaktirityaparE jaguH | |

Of all the paths for liberation Bhakti is the supreme. That bhakti is continuous contemplation on one's own essential nature. Others say that continuous contemplation of the truth of one's own Atma is bhakti. Atma jnaana vichaara is therefore supreme bhakti as per Shankara. Krishna says while classifying all the devotees into four groups, ArthaH (One who thinks of me when they are in despair), artharthii (One who prays for things, artha), jignaasu (one who has desire to know Me) and jnaani(one who knows Me), Jnaani is the highest bhakta since he loves me the most and I love him the most.

Hence Bhakti is not a choice here but is the essence in all saadhanas. To understand Bhakti how a karma yogi perceives bhakti in relation to jnaana yogi, and why Krishna says jnaani is the highest Bhakta, we should examine what is involved in Bhakti or devotion.

Let us look first at devotion. The difference between devotion and love (word used in common parlance) is love towards higher is devotion and love towards lower is actually lust but mistakenly called love. Hence one rises in devotion while one falls in love. Now what is higher and what is lower? Higher is that wherein the mind becomes calm, quiet and surrenders itself. The surrendering implies all mental agitations are sublimated at that alter of love. This is also called prapatti – a term which has a special significance in VishiShTaadvaita. In Gita we find that until Arjuna surrendered, Krishna did not start teaching – shiShyatvoham saadhimaam tvam prapannam – I am your disciple (prapanna) that I am ready to subject myself to your discipline. That should be the attitude of a student as Krishna himself enumerates that one should approach a teacher with that attitude of surrender – tat viddhi praNipaadena praripraShNena sevayaa – That is devotion towards the teacher and the teaching is essential for knowledge– Only in that attitude of devotion the mind becomes free from agitations and ready to learn. In contrast, lower is that wherein the mind gets more and more agitated – one cannot sleep or eat or do anything constructively since mind is always pre-occupied – that is what happens when one is falling in love.

Love or devotion can be classified into three types: 1) Means Love 2) End-Love and 3) Self-Love. Means love means love of the means to achieve some goal in mind – that is the path to achieve the goal in mind. Some are so obsessed with the means that they forget the goal and fanatically fight for the means. We can remind ourselves the story in Gulliver's travels where the two Lilliputian countries fight among themselves – the cause is how to break the egg – One country says Egg should be broken from the fat end while the other insists on breaking from the thin end. The Means became more important than the end. Religions try to survive in fighting that theirs is the only means to reach the goal while the other means will take you to eternal hell. Some are ready to kill others in support of their cause to save life of the unborn babies.

Since I love the end or the goal so much that I tend to love the means too. That is one kind of love. But some love only the means so that they can get the goal they want. Once the goal is reached there is no more love for the means since the mission is accomplished. I love my uncle so much since I like to have the wealth that he has; but once I got that wealth, uncle is of no importance; in fact he is considered more a nuisance to me.

How is this related to Bhakti? For the most of the people, God's love is only a means-love. That is God is considered as a means to achieve some goal in mind. What I love is actually the goal that I want, and means is only a means for what I want – Everybody has lots of desires – I want this, this and this and without this I cannot live, etc – I include all of mine too, that is, my child, my wife, my children, grand children, etc. and 'this' includes health, wealth, position, power, etc all that is included as the goals of my life. I want to be on the good side of God, since I have learned that he is the one who is the giver. Hence I go from a temple to a temple, one holy place to the other, of course with a big list of what I want from Him. I will make sure I do not forget to prostrate all the gods in the temple (nowadays there are many in each temple) to make sure that I am not in the black list of any one of the Gods there. Whenever we go to a temple, the pujari asks during sankalpa that involves informing the God who are we and why are we praying the Lord, etc. - our gotram and our star, etc, so that when God sends goodies he has the right address. Pujari has a standard list for all that he repeats for every body without even asking what we really want. Thank God, Krishna lists us also as one of his Bhaktas under the category of artha arthiis – that is all those who are always with begging bowls, however much he has already given. That is called Means-Love

The second one is called End-Love not end of love. God itself is the end not the goodies that he gives. I do not care for the goodies, what I love is God. This kind of love is rather rare and is what is really emphasized in most of the devotional paths. The nine modes of Love are the modes of expressing this love towards God. He is the master and I am the servant is the one that is mostly emphasized in VishiShTAdviata. The service according to them involves serving the forms of God – that includes the daily puja and vigra ArAdhana, etc. This bhakti is exemplified by the twelve alvars in the vishiShTAdviata tradition. The bhakti includes not only in bhagavat sava but also bhaagavata save, that is serving the Bhaktas of the Lord. It is easier to serve the Lord than serve the bhakta of the Lord. LakshmaNa was serving the Lord while ShatRighna was serving Bharata who was serving the Lord. In Mukundamaala Kulashekhara Alwar says – tat bRitya bRitya paricaaraka bRitya bRityasya iti maam – I am the servant of the servant of the servant.. .

There is interesting communication between an advaitin and vishiShTaadvaita. Advaitin signed his letter as SOHAM meaning He is me – the mahaavaakya. Obviously the vishiShTaadvaitin did not like that – he put da- in front making it as daasoham. I am (His) servant. When advaitin saw the letter he put another –sa- in front making it sadaasoham – the identity of He and I as always. Of course the vishiShTaadvaitin put another da in front of it making it daasadaasoham – servant of the servant. This cross communication is still going on!

The third type of love is the self-love that Shankara emphasized in the above quoted sloka from VivekaUDAMaNi. This is considered as the supreme love. How can the self love is the supreme love? Yajnavalkya says to his wife Maitreyi in Br. Up. – aatmanstu kaamaaya sarvam priyam bhavati – essentially we love everything or anything else only because we love over selves. I love this – this can be anything (means love) or even God (end love) – not for the sake of this but for my sake. I love any ‘this’ so that only because ‘this’ that I love gives me happiness. Hence whether it is means love or end-love the real love is only self-love. What I love is actually happiness that I want to be than the thing for the thing sake. Hence even God lovers do not love God for God’s sake but for their sake. What they really love is the self that is contended or full. They want to be complete without any inadequacies since full and contended mind is the happy mind. Shree Vidyaaranya says in pacadasi – the love for oneself is the supreme – parama premaaspadam and expresses as – maanabhuuvamhibhuuyaasam – Let me not cease to exist that is Let Me Be All the Time. I love myself so much that I want to live eternally. Lakshmiidhara Kavi also makes the same statement in Advaita Makaranda – ahamasmi sadaabhaami kadaachinnaahapariyaH – I am not only existent and conscious but also ananda swaruupa since never I dislike myself.

A jnaani is the one who loves himself – since he revels by himself in himself –atmanyeva aatmanaa tuShTaH, and he has no desire for anything else including God since he has discovered that the God he loves is nothing but his own essence. I am in everyone’s heart; and heart in Vedanta means the very core of one’s individuality. Hence Krishna says he is jnaani – the one who realizes that- sarva bhuutastam aatmaanam sarva bhuutaanicha aatmani – one who realizes that he is the self in all and all are in himself – he is jnaani and that jnaani is the one Krishna says is the supreme bhakta. The self realization is also God realization as Krishna himself in the very next sloka says– yo maam pasyati sarvatra sarvan ca mayi pasyati – those who sees Me everywhere and everything in Me.

Hence pure Bhakti should culminate in jnaanam hence Self-love is God-love – not as a God separate from him – it is the culmination of Bhakti where lover and loved have become one- that is advaita. In advaita, bhakti reaches its pinnacle – and that is moksha and that is liberation. That is the culmination of Bhakti yoga – same as culmination of jnaana yoga. Hence, Shankara’s definition of Bhakti – swaswaruupa anusandhaanam bhaktirityabhidhiyate.

PS. This write up was inspired by a talk given by Swami Paramarthanandaji on Bhakti yoga.