

Shaiva and Bhagavata Religion

These notes are your ultimate revision weapon to revise Shaiva and Bhagavata Religion history. We've distilled years of previous exam questions (PYQs) into one powerful, concise resource. Everything you need to know, nothing you don't.

- **PYQs, Decoded:** All key concepts from past exams, organized and simplified.
- **Revise in Record Time:** Short, precise, and designed for last-minute review.
- **Focus on What Matters:** Master high-probability topics and boost your confidence.

Ancient Indian Religion & Philosophy

I. Cosmology & Time Cycles (Yugas)

- The cycle of four epochs (Yugas) is sequential.
- **Correct Order:** Krita Yuga → Treta Yuga → Dwapara Yuga → Kali Yuga.

II. Major Sects & Traditions

A. Shaivism (Worship of Shiva)

- **Sects:** The **Mattamayura** was a notable Shaiva sect during the ancient period (mentioned in Chedi Dynasty records).
- **Saints:** The **Nayanars** were Tamil poet-saints devoted to Shiva.
- **Iconography - Ardhanarishvara:** A composite form of Shiva and his consort Parvati (half-male, half-female).

B. Vaishnavism & The Bhagavata Cult (Worship of Vishnu/Krishna)

- **Origin & Key Figures:**

- The **Bhagavata religion** (an early form of Vaishnavism) was originated by **Vasudeva Krishna** (son of Devaki of the Vrishni clan, Mathura).
- The **Bhagavatas** were the first to worship Vasudeva Krishna.
- **Earliest Textual Reference:** *Chhandogya Upanishad*, where Krishna is a disciple of Ghora Angirasa.
- **Patronage:**
 - The **Gupta dynasty** were great patrons, making it a state religion.
 - Gupta rulers adopted the title '**Parama Bhagavata**' (supreme devotee of Vishnu).
 - **Garuda** (Vishnu's mount) was the official state symbol of the Gupta Empire.
- **Beliefs & Practices:**
 - Prescribed **Navadha Bhakti** (Nine forms of devotion) as a path to Moksha.
- **Iconography:**
 - **Balarama** (Krishna's brother), also known as Haldhar, is consistently depicted holding a **plow**.
- **Saints - The Alvars:**
 - Tamil poet-saints devoted to Vishnu.
 - Prominent Alvars included Poigai, Pudam, and Thirumangai.
 - **Note:** Tirugyan was **not** an Alvar saint.

C. Shaktism (Worship of the Goddess)

- **Text:** The ***Kalika Purana*** is a minor Purana associated with Shaktism.
 - Its purpose was to bring Shiva out of asceticism.
 - Thought to have been composed in Assam by the sage Markandeya.

III. Philosophy (Darshanas)

A. Core Classification: Astika vs. Nastika

- The key distinction is the **belief in the authenticity of the Vedas**.
 - **Astika** (orthodox) systems accept the Vedas as true.
 - **Nastika** (heterodox) systems do not accept the authority of the Vedas.

B. Vedanta Schools

- **Foundational Text:** The *Bhagavad Gita* gives equal importance to **Jnana (knowledge), Karma (action), and Bhakti (devotion)**.
- **Major Vedantic Philosophers & Their Schools:**
 - **Shankaracharya:** Founder of **Advaita Vedanta** (Non-dualism).
 - **Ramanujacharya:** Founder of **Vishishtadvaita Vedanta** (Qualified non-dualism).
 - **Madhvacharya:** Founder of **Dvaita Vedanta** (Dualism).
 - **Vallabhacharya:** Founder of **Shuddhadvaita Vedanta** (Pure non-dualism).
- **Prasthanatrayi (Three Canonical Texts of Vedanta):**
 - *Upanishads* (Shruti Prasthan)
 - *Bhagavad Gita* (Smriti Prasthan)
 - *Brahma Sutras* (Nyaya Prasthan)
 - **Note:** The *Bhagavata Purana* is **not** included in the Prasthanatrayi.

C. Other Philosophical Systems

- **Purva Mimamsa:**
 - Key concept is **Apurva**—the invisible force generated by rituals that yields results later.
- **Charvaka (Lokayata Darshan):**
 - A materialistic and hedonistic school.
 - Considers direct perception as the only valid source of knowledge.
 - Encourages a joyful and pleasurable life.

IV. Scriptures & Literature

A. Epics

- **Mahabharata:** The first public narration of the entire epic for an audience of **60,000 sages** took place at **Naimisharanya** (Sitapur district, UP).
- **Ramayana:** The first meeting of **Lord Rama and Hanuman** is described in the **Kishkindha Kanda** (fourth section).

B. Sanskrit Grammar & Linguistics

- Key texts and authors:
 - **Ashtadhyayi** (on grammar) by **Panini**
 - **Mahabhashya** (commentary on Panini) by **Patanjali**
 - **Nirukta** (on etymology) by **Yaska**
 - **Varttika** (explanatory notes on Panini) by **Katyayana**

V. Iconography & Incarnations (Dashavatara)

- **Varaha (The Boar Incarnation):**
 - The **third** incarnation of Vishnu.
 - Purpose: To defeat the demon **Hiranyaksha** and lift the Earth (Bhudevi) from the cosmic ocean.
 - **Iconography:** Boar's head, human body, four arms holding conch, discus, mace, and lotus, carrying the Earth in his tusks.
 - **Note:** Hiranyakashipu was defeated by the Narasimha incarnation.

VI. Pilgrimage & Festivals

- **Rath Yatra (Chariot Festival):** Celebrated at **Puri, Odisha**, in honor of **Lord Jagannath** (a form of Krishna).
- **Kumbh Mela:** Held every 12 years on the banks of four rivers:
 1. The Godavari River at Nashik.
 2. The Ganga at Haridwar.
 3. The confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna at Prayagraj.
 4. The Kshipra River at Ujjain.

VII. Deities & Terminology

- **Kamadeva:** The Hindu god of love and desire.
- **Ananga:** "The bodiless one," another name for Kamadeva.

VIII. Holy Sites of Various Religions

- **Jainism:** **Pavapuri** (Bihar) - Place of Mahavira's Nirvana.
- **Hinduism:** **Varanasi** (UP) on the banks of the Ganga - Holiest city.
- **Islam:** **Medina** (Saudi Arabia) - Second holiest city after Mecca.
- **Christianity:** **Vatican City** (Italy) - Headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church.

IX. Historical Evidence: The Besnagar Inscription

- **Artifact:** The **Garuda Pillar at Besnagar** (Vidisha).
- **Significance:** The first stone pillar monument associated with the Bhagavata religion.
- **Erected by:** **Heliodorus**, a Greek ambassador from **Takshila** (Taxila).
- **Key Message:** The inscription declares Heliodorus as a '**Bhagavata**' (devotee) and praises **Vasudeva** as the '**Devadeva**' (God of Gods).
- **Importance:** Provides crucial historical evidence of a Greek convert to the Bhagavata faith.

Know More about Shaiva and Bhagavata Religion:

- [Shaiva and Bhagavata Religion One Liner Questions & Answers](#)
- [Shaiva and Bhagavata Religion – Old Year Questions and Answers](#)