



Sri Sri Auniati Satra Vaishnavite Monastery

For Prelims: Sri Sri Auniati Satra Vaishnavite Monastery, Majuli Island, Assamese Vaishnavism, Bhakti Movement, Wetlands.

For Mains: Sri Sri Auniati Satra Vaishnavite Monastery, Salient features of Indian Society.

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Why in News?

Sri Sri Auniati Satra is a more than 350-year-old **Vaishnavite** monastery in Assam's Majuli district.

What are the Key Facts about Sri Sri Auniati Satra Vaishnavite Monastery?

- **Establishment:**
 - The Sri Sri Auniati Satra was established in the year 1653 in Majuli, Assam. It has a history of over 350 years, making it **one of the oldest Satras** in the region.
 - A Satra is an **institutional centre for Assamese Vaishnavism**, a bhakti movement that emerged in the **15th century**.
 - The Satra is located in Majuli, which is the **largest inhabited river island in the world**. Majuli is situated in the Brahmaputra River in the northeastern state of Assam, India.
- **Religious Significance:**
 - The Satra is a **center of Assamese Vaishnavism**, a bhakti movement that revolves around the worship of Lord Krishna.
 - The original idol of **Lord Krishna in the form of Govinda** is said to have been brought from the Lord Jagannath Temple at Puri.
- **Cultural Heritage:**
 - **Vaishnavite monasteries like Auniati Satra** are not only places of worship but **also centers for the preservation of traditional art forms, literature, and cultural practices**. These Satras **play a crucial role in promoting and sustaining the cultural heritage** of the region.
 - Vaishnavite Satras traditionally serve as centres for learning and spiritual activities. Monks and disciples engage in **religious studies, meditation, and community service**.
- **Bhaona and Traditional Art Forms:**
 - **Bhaona, a traditional art form, is practiced at the Satra**. It is a combination of acting, music, and musical instruments.
 - Bhaona is a significant performing art form that aims to **convey religious messages to villagers through entertainment**.
 - The main drama is usually preceded by a **musical performance called the Gayan-Bayan**.

What are the Key Facts Related to Majuli Island?

- Majuli is a river island located in the Brahmaputra River in the northeastern state of Assam, India.

It is recognized as the largest river island in the world.

- The island is a result of the dynamics of the Brahmaputra River system, characterized by the shifting courses and channels of the river.
- The island is surrounded by the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries, creating a unique fluvial landform. **Wetlands known as Beels and Chaporis (islets)** contribute to the ecological diversity of the region.

What is Vaishnavism?

▪ About:

- Vaishnavism is a **prominent bhakti (devotional) movement within Hinduism**, and it emphasises deep devotion and love towards the god Vishnu and his various incarnations.

▪ Key Features:

- **Devotion to Vishnu:** The central focus of Vaishnavism is devotion (bhakti) to Vishnu, who is considered the Supreme Being and the sustainer of the universe. Vaishnavas believe in a personal relationship with Vishnu, expressing love, reverence, and devotion toward the deity.
 - Vishnu is believed to have incarnated on Earth in various forms known as avatars to restore cosmic order and righteousness. The ten primary avatars are collectively known as the Dashavatara, with popular incarnations including Rama and Krishna.
- **Dashavatara:** The ten avatars of Vishnu are Matsya (fish), Kurma (turtle), Varaha (boar), Narasimha (half-man, half-lion), Vamana (dwarf), Parashurama (the warrior with an axe), Rama (the prince of Ayodhya), Krishna (the divine cowherd), Buddha (the enlightened one), and Kalki (the future warrior on a white horse).
- **Bhakti and Liberation:** Vaishnavism places a strong **emphasis on the path of bhakti**, which involves **intense devotion and love toward Vishnu**. The ultimate goal for many Vaishnavas is liberation (moksha) from the **cycle of birth and death (samsara)** and union with Vishnu.
- **Variety of Sects:** Vaishnavism encompasses a variety of sects and groups with different interpretations of the relationship between the individual soul (jiva) and God. Some sects emphasise **qualified nondualism (vishishtadvaita)**, while others subscribe to **dualism (dvaita) or pure nondualism (shuddhadvaita)**.
 - **Srivaishnava Sect:** Emphasises qualified nondualism based on the teachings of Ramanuja.
 - **Madhva Sect:** Professes dualism, asserting the separate existence of God and the soul, following the philosophy of Madhva.
 - **Pushtimarg Sect:** Maintains pure nondualism according to Vallabhacharya's teachings.
 - **Gaudiya Sect:** Founded by Chaitanya, teaches inconceivable duality and nonduality.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. The world's second tallest statue in sitting pose of Ramanuja was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India at Hyderabad recently. Which one of the following statements correctly represents the teachings of Ramanuja? (2022)

- (a) The best means of salvation was devotion.
- (b) Vedas are eternal, self-existent and wholly authoritative.
- (c) Logical arguments were essential means for the highest bliss.
- (d) Salvation was to be obtained through meditation.

Ans: (a)

- Ramanuja, born in Tamil Nadu in the 11th century was deeply influenced by the Alvars (Vishnu worshippers). According to him the best means of attaining salvation was through intense devotion to Vishnu. Vishnu in His grace helps the devotee to attain the bliss of union with Him. He propounded the doctrine of Vishishtadvaita or qualified oneness in that the soul even when united with the Supreme God remained distinct.
- Ramanuja's doctrine greatly inspired the new strand of bhakti which developed in north India subsequently.
- Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

Mains:

Q. Evaluate the nature of Bhakti Literature and its contribution to Indian culture. **(2021)**

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