

**OSTS Lecture, Winter 2026, 1st Term
January 5th to February 2nd**

Course I ***An introduction to Saivism***

Lecturer Reverend Doctor J. Bavani Rajan

Course Objectives

1. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the origins, evolution, and spread of Saivism. – A brief explanation about the long-propagated idea of Saivism as a denomination of Hinduism – its facts and myths.
2. To analyse the key Saivite Scriptures such as Panniru Thirumuraigal (The compendium of Saiva religious texts.), the Vedas, Agamas, and Puranas, that form the foundation of Saivite thought and to study the work of the four important Saivite saints and its role in revival and Bakthi movement in South India.
- 3.. To explore the difference between the Saivite primary texts in comparison to Brahminical Hindu texts such as Vedas and Upanishads.
- 4 To discuss the relevance to Saivite philosophy in relation to Christian theology with special emphasis to sin, forgiveness and salvation.
5. To explore the miracles in the Saivite religious tradition and its role in the propagation Saivite teachings. – A comparison with Christian thought and message.

Course descriptor

This introductory course delves into the rich and ancient tradition of Saivism, considered to be a denomination of Hinduism. Students will embark on a fascinating journey to explore the fundamental principles, beliefs, and practices of Saivism and a comparison with Christian faith and practice with special reference to forgiveness and salvation.

Outline

Week 1: To provide a basic understanding of the origins, evolution and spread of Saivism – Is Saivism a denomination of Hinduism or an Independent Indian religious sect? – The myths and reality – the understanding of the west and the competent scholars' views within Indian context.

Week 2: To analyse the key Saivite Scriptures such as Panniru Thirumuraigal (The compendium of Saiva religious texts that form the foundation of Saivite thought.) - the contribution of four important Tamil saints; Appar, Sundarar, Thirunavukarasar and Manikavasagar and their role in Bakthi movement and revivalism. – an examination of the writings of Tamil Siddhars (saints, reformers and prophets).

Week 3: To explore the difference between the Saivite primary texts in comparison to Brahminical Hindu texts such as Vedas and Upanishads. – A brief survey of origin and development of Vedas and the Upanishads – Are Saivite thoughts influenced by the teachings of Vedas? etc.

Week 4: Christian missionaries' contribution to the spread of Saivite thoughts to the west – examining the translation works of missionaries like G.U. Pope, Italian missionary Constantine Beschi (Veeramamunivar) and few other notable personalities.

Week 5: Veiled revelation of Christ in Tamil religious literature –A brief survey – The concept of Sin, confession and forgiveness (Pathi, Pasu, Pasam) with special reference to the writings of Tamil Scholar and Saivite exponent Thiru.vi.ka. - A comparison between Christianity and Saivism with special reference to miracles in the Saivite religious tradition (a few selected stories).

Bio

Rev. Rajan's education and service is wide and varied. He has served as a pastor in several congregations with the Lutheran Church in India. He has a Masters Degree in Christian Studies at the University of Madras, and a PhD from Missiological Institute Dayspring University, Dallas. He also served as a trainer on "The Purpose Driven Church" by the Evangelical Churches in India.