How make sense of the Hindu pantheon? Viṣṇu and Devī [Nagaraj Paturi]

1. Vishnu has Asura-samhāra (Demon-killer) feature. Devi has the same feature.

2. Vishnu is dark in complexion. Devi has the same complexion.

3. The word Avatāra is used in reference to Vishnu. The same word is used in reference to Devi.

4. Vishnu is called Mohana (fascinatingly/deludingly beautiful) / Jaganmohana (World-deluder or deluder of all). Devi is called Jaganmohini (World-deluder or deluder of all)/ Trijaganmohini (deluder of the three worlds: the human, the divine and the demonical).

5. Vishnu has Varāha (wild-boar)- form. Devi too has Vārāhi (wild-boar) form.

6. Vishnu and Devi are called Sahodara- Sahodari (brother and sister, literally persons sharing the same source of birth)

7. Gada, Dhanus, Khadga, etc. are common weapons of Vishnu and Devi.

8. Vishnu and Devi both have Chaturbhuja four handed forms.

Simply listing these similarities between Viṣṇu and Devī, already known to many Hindus, in a single email does provide a convenient basis for delving into their respective meanings and raison d'être as distinct deities. However, it might have been more illuminating for our readers to have simply stated the underlying rationale (still unclear…), which was the main point of the student exercise, before demonstrating it through such similarities/contrasts. There is also the (logical) fallacy of too wide/narrow in many of the binaries below: destruction (samhāra) of demons (asura) is also true of Śiva (and even of the 'demoniac' Bhairava…); (not just Kāla-) Bhairava is also mostly Black; Śiva in his mendicant form (bhikṣāṭana-mūrti) likewise bewitched the wives of the sages; four-handed forms are common to many deities, including the famous Śiva-Naṭarāja; etc.

Again, I feel it would be more productive to respond to the three questions in the order they were listed, i.e., starting with the Viṣṇu / Śiva contrast.

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1. The issue has its narrative/ deity-form level and the tattva (concept) (behind the narrative/deity form) level.

2. The student-exercise seems to be narrative/deity level information with the students.

3. My listing was to provide justification at that level only.

4. Rationale at tattva level and a discussion on the historical, archeological, anthropological aspects involved was avoided keeping the limitations of the student exercise in mind.

5. Since this forum has no such limitations I shall proceed to the reserved aspects in my next message.

Before I proceed to provide the rationale for Vishnu-Devi identity etc., in my next message, let me clarify as follows:

1. Devi is the Shakti (power) possessed by Shiva and not the feminine version of Shiva whereas Devi is the feminine version of Vishnu.

2. Since the very basis of the 'Hindu-trinity' (Trimoorti) concept is functional, Brahma being for Srishti (creation), Vishnu for sthiti (sustenance) and Shiva for laya (devolution/destruction) , Shiva being favourite of the destructive Asuras, Shiva being as gullible as getting played into the hands of destructive Asuras, etc. are all part of Shiva's function just as Vishnu's Asura samhara is part of his function of sustenance which is secured through the destruction of the destructive.

3. Shiva's anger-born 'son' (form) Virabhadra has killer-weapon-holding four hands. He resorts to Killing of one of the Prajapatis (creators) and troubles the Devas/Suras during Dakshayajna vidhvamsa (destruction of the sacrificial ritual by Daksha one of the Prajapatis).

4. Bhairava's dark color has got to do with the killing function. Shiva needs forms such as Virabhadra and Bhairava for his occasional killer roles which are treated as distinct from Shiva. For instance, Kalabhairava the place-protector of Varanasi is different from Vishvanatha, the lord of Varanasi.

In any case, Devi is the Shakti (power) possessed by Shiva and not the feminine version of Shiva. Whereas Devi is the feminine version of Vishnu is crucial for the present discussion.

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1. At the Tattva level, this is viewed in terms of Prakriti-Purusha system (Neither of the concepts Prakriti or Purusha has gender). Vishnu is taken as the concept of Purusha (not purusha as male) and Lakshmi as Prakriti. In the case of Shiva-Devi, Devi is taken as the concept of Purusha (not purusha as male) and Shiva as Prakriti.

2. Does it then mean Lakshmi and Shiva are the same? Yes, at least the word Shiva and names such as Sri of Lakshmi have the same meaning 'auspicious'.

3. In Yantras such as Sriyantra, in each pair of triangles, one is Shiva triangle, the other the Shakti triangle. Even this is interpreted in terms of mutually complementary intricately interwoven entities such as Prakriti and Purusha, Shabda and Artha. The Shakti triangle can be viewed as Vishnu triangle. The Shiva triangle as Lakshmi triangle. Shabda and Artha are viewed as Brahma and Saraswati.

4. When it is said that Devi/Vishnu is (the power) possessed by Shiva, in terms of the Prakriti-Purusha interpretation , it can be said that Purusha is possessed by Prakriti.

5. In the Lakshmi- Vishnu pair , Vishnu is described as 'having' Lakshmi . In terms of Prakriti-Purusha interpretation, it can be read as Purusha (not Purusha as male) is 'having' ('possessing'/'containing') Prakriti.

6. It is the mutually complementary intricately interwoven nature of Prakriti and Purusha that makes the simultaneous validity of 'Prakriti possesses Purusha' and 'Purusha possesses Prakriti' possible. The arrangement of the pairs of triangles in Sri yantra is seen as representing this mutually complementary intricately interwoven nature of Prakriti and Purusha. As a representation of of Brahma and Saraswathi, Sriyantra is interpreted as representing mutually complementary intricately interwoven nature of S'abda and Artha (Sound/word/speech/signifier) and Artha (meaning/signified).

7. Brahma is the creator, Sarasvati is the creativity. Creativity in the form of artistic skills (poetic, musical, graphic, sculptural etc.) are part of the general creativity. 'Savitri' is the synonym of Sarasvati. 'Savitri' is the word for fertility , the ability to give birth in general.

Creator's consort is creativity. Creator 'has'/'possesses' creativity.

8. The distinction between destruction/nullification and devolution is very important for the cyclic system of Trimurti functions. Shiva's function is devolution and not destruction to naught. This is where he needs to 'have the power of the sustainer Vishnu/Devi.

9. It is again the cyclic nature of the Trimurti system which is the basis of Brahma's birth from the navel of the sustainer Vishnu.

10. Kali is the feminine version of Kala, one of the main forms of Shiva. Kala = time is the synonym for death, destruction. Kali, the destroyer (devolver) of the manifest world (into its unmanifest/seed form) is different from Devi/Vishnu the destroyer of the destructive. Kali is a version of Shiva whereas Devi/Vishnu is the power possessed by Shiva.

11. Among various cyclic patterns, the Vishnu to Brahma cyclic relation is analogous to the tree to fruit/seed cyclic relation. Brahma the seed 'creates' the tree, the Viraat the cosmic manifest universe visualized as Vishnu, from which/whom the fruit/seed for the next creation gets generated. Brahma from the navel of Vishnu is a depiction of this cyclic relation.

12. Shiva is Prakriti in the devolving, devolved form , Lakshmi is Prakriti in its evolving, evolved form. Purusha possessed by or in the possession of this Prakriti is Devi/Vishnu the anti-anti-evolutionary power (Asuras , demons are anti-evolutionary , Asurasamhaara, demon-killing is anti-anti-evolution) for Lakshmi or the power required by Shiva/ Shivaa/Kaala/Kaali to remain only a devolutionary but not a destructive/nullifying entity.

13. Shiva is Prakriti in the form of dusk and night. Lakshmi is Prakriti in the form of dawn and day . Shiva is Prakriti in the form of S'is'ira (ending season of the six seasons cycle) . Lakshmi is Prakriti in the form of Vasanta (beginning season of the six seasons cycle). In all the forms, Prakriti possesses or is possessed by Purusha in the form of Devi/Vishnu.

14. Brahma is Prajapati the creator. Any creator project not incorporating the dissolution/devolution program in itself does not fit into a cyclic system. In a cyclic system, a creator's project that does not 'honour' (involve/incorporate) the dissolver/devolver crashes. This is exemplified by Daksha Yajna. Daksha the creator ('prajapati') attempts to execute his project ('yajna') without honouring Shiva. The project crashes.

15. Equally, any dissolver/devolver project, in a cyclic system, that does not incorporate a creator program, moreover kills the creator program develops a snag with the killed creation program haunting it perpetually until the creation program is resurrected and the previous wrong program is properly 'cleaned' (redeemed).Shiva resurrects Daksha, Brahma's head hangs to the hand of Kaalabhairava, Virabhadra redeems his 'dosha' of Brahmahatya.

16. In a cyclic system, sustenance presupposes devolution and devolution presupposes sustenance. Vishnu contemplates/meditates on Shiva and Shiva contemplates/meditates on Vishnu.

17. A cyclic system implies conservation. 'na asato vidyatE bhAvah, na abhAvO vidyatE satah' -- Bhagavadgita.

(Nothing comes into presence from non-existing. From existing can never come absence.) All 'death' is loss of older form, all 'birth' is origin of new form. Sustenance is eternal (perpetual, incessant) all-pervading 'deaths' and 'births'. Vishnu is (the result of) eternal (perpetual, incessant) and all-pervading Shiva and Brahma.

18. Now, we can move on to the idea of Avataras.

The instructor who created the course exercise did the appropriate thing by first picking up a character and then asking 'As whose avatara can this character be considered ?'

It means 'Features of which principle highest level deity (such as Vishnu, Devi or Shiva) match with the features of this charater?'

19. Each Manvantara (creation cycle) has a Manu =creator. Each Manu is a Brahma.

Prajapati is another concept which has the meaning 'creator'. Each Prajapati is a Brahma.

Kasyapa prajapati begot Asuras through Diti and Suras through Aditi. Thus Suras and Asuras are step-siblings.

RaavaNa the asura is RaavaNabrahma, RaavaNa the creator. He is capable of creating an entire asura version of the Universe.

Vishvaamitra reached the level of Brahma in the course of acquiring powers. He created a Svarga ('heaven') for Tris'anku who was denied a place in Svarga with a Sthoola S'areera (mortal/gross body). (Only subtle (sensory) bodies are allowed into Svarga)

Maya, the sculptor is called Mayabrahma.

Visvakarma the sculptor of the sculpture called Vis'va (universe) is also Brahma.

20. But these various Brahmas are not called avatāras of Brahma, the member of the Trimūrti system.Brahma is considered to be a pada, a position to which creatures can ascend through tapas. (Avatāra is exactly opposite to ascendance. The word avatāra is derived from the root tar= to cross. Ava+tar = to cross downwards from a higher plane to a lower one, in other words to descend from a higher plane to the lower one.)

21. Similarly various forms of Śiva taken as vehicles, sons etc. of Śiva viz., Bhairava, Veerabhadra, Basava (Nandīśvara) , Ganeśa etc., are not called Avataaras because these are not descents of Şiva. (In folk culture, there are avatāras of Shiva. We shall deal with those later.)

22. Viṣṇu too has several forms which are not his avatāras.

(I was away attending a Vedic ritual for the last two days.)

23. In a cycle of creation, manvantara, sarga = creation is effected by the Manu (Brahma) of that manvantara. Pratisarga = the devolution/dissolution is effected by Śiva. But Viṣṇu needs to keep descending down as various avatāras throughout the cycle to carry out his function of sustenance which includes destruction of the destructive.

24. When avatāra is considered descent from 'higher' to 'lower' plane, outside/beyond the creation is taken as 'higher' plane and the creation as 'lower' plane. Brahma and śiva remain in the higher plane while effecting their functions. viṣṇu can not remain at the higher plane. He has to descend into the creation. That is why he takes avatāras.

25. Now let us deal with a certain important concept of myth -narratives. Myth-theorists have already identified a category of myths called 'explanatory' myths which are myths that 'explain' (give reason for) phenomena/facts. Let me use the word 'meta-narratives'/ 'meta-myths' in the sense of narratives/myths that 'explain' or 'link' other narratives/myths or elements of other narratives/myths. Narratives/myths that do not have any other narrative/myth in their background can be called proto-myths.

26. avatāra is one kind of meta-myth. Several myths/ narratives are 'explained'/ 'linked' through the concept of avatāra. In other words, the avatāra - narratives can be expected to have their existence prior getting linked through the concept of avatāra.

27. For example, the rāmāyaṇa narrative/myth in vālmīki 's book does not have any avatāra concept linked to rāma's character. But he is a great prince and king there. A king doesn't create or destroy/devolve his kingdom, but sustains/protects it. Thus kings carry out viṣṇu's function. This is the rationale behind the adage " na aviṣṇuh pṛthivīpatiḥ ". (One who is not a viṣṇu can not be a king). The 'ideal' king of rāmāyaṇa thus could easily be linked to viṣṇu through avatāra-meta-narrative.

28. 'son' is another metamyth that connecting various myths. Pradyumna, Aniruddha are taken as names/forms of viṣṇu only. But there are narratives making Pradyumna and Aniruddha son and grandson of the avatāra of viṣṇu called kṛṣṇa.

29. 'son-metamyth' is used to connect various forms of śiva too. vīrabhadra, bhairava, kālabhairava, gaṇēśa - various forms of śiva are connected to śiva through 'son-metamyth' .

30. Now, let us move to the next level of discussion , the avatāra meta-myth as a device of folk-classical interface. This is more frequently found with śiva and dēvī .

31. There is a folk-god (studied by Gunther Sontheimer in his "Pastoral Deities of Western India") called by various names such as khaṁḍōbā , mailāra , mallanna etc. In north India at many places, he is identified with bhairava / bhairōjī . All the narratives of khaṁḍōbā , mailāra , mallanna describe him as avatāra of śiva in folk-narratives the communities among which he is worshipped. Here, the deity is already manifest in the creation . When it is connected to śiva, who is in the higher plane, the concept of avatāra suits very well.

32. But what is interesting about this folk-god considered as avatāra of śiva is that he has no features of devolution /destruction. The community for which this deity is a caste-deity is a shepherd community (called as 'Dhangar' in Maharashtra where Sontheimer researched, 'Kuruma/Kuruba' in Telangana, Southern Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka where I researched). Based on this aspect, some scholars tried to connect him to the paśupati aspect of śiva. Sontheimer tried to connect him with the Vedic god rudra , highlighting his aspect as the god of green pastures and open lands. All these are attempts to catch up with the rationale behind the choice of śiva by the folk-community for the puranic god of whom their god is considered an avatāra.

33. Another interesting aspect of this deity is his identification with bhairava/ bhairōjī. The shape of the idol of this deity is similar to that of bhairava/kālabhairava. This god moves with dogs/hounds which is considered to be part of the usual paraphernalia of a shepherd's sheep-raring expeditions. In the rituals of this deity, dog is a significant element. He is worshipped in the form of dog. Dog is part of kālabhairava's associations. Dog - worship is done as a form of kālabhairava - worship.

34. There is another god who is the caste-deity of the liquor-making community called 'Goud' in Telangana. The god is called kaṇṭamayya/ kaṇṭhamayya. He is also considered to be an avatāra of śiva. śiva's association with tamōguṇa (sleep, intoxication etc.) (which is devolution-related) is considered to be the basis of the choice of śiva here.

35. In the same community Dhangar/Kuruma/Kuruba discussed earlier, there is another deity bīrōbā /bīrappa considered to be the avatāra of vīrabhadra the 'son' of śiva . ḥe is considered to be the caste-hero of the community, the first shepherd, the primordial shepherd, the sheep-raring guru of all shepherds etc. Which features of vīrabhadra match with those of bīrōbā/ bīrappa is interpreted in several different ways. The folk narrative of bīrōbā/ bīrappa has the maternal uncle of bīrōbā/ bīrappa as the villain and bīrōbā/ bīrappa's heroic deeds against him. vīra =valorous vīra->bīra -> bīrōbā/ bīrappa is seen as the etymology of the name of this deity.

36. khaṇḍōbā / mailāra /mallanna kills an asura, which is interpreted as the shepherd community's control over the hills where the sheep graze, in the folk-narrative. Since khaṇḍōbā / mailāra /mallanna is seen as siva's avatāra , this is seen as śiva's asura-killing instance.

37. The narratives of khaṇḍōbā / mailāra /mallanna and bīrōbā /bīrappa are considered to be kulapurāṇas (caste-mythology) (caste-origin-myth) of the Dhangar/Kuruma/Kuruba community.

38. There are numerous such caste-myths of various castes all over India. Some of them have avatāras of śiva or sons of śiva as the caste-deity.

39. Another example is the caste-myth of the cloth-washing caste of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in which the first cloth-washer , the cloth-washing guru is considered to be the avatāra of vīrabhadra the son of śiva. But this is linked to the dakṣayajna narrative involving vīrabhadra .

40. The folk-deities discussed here are caste-deities. There are other male folk-deities who are not caste- deities but are general deities of the village. But these male folk-deities are very small number when compared to the enormously big number of the female folk-deities. Among the female folk-deities very few are caste-deities (e.g. īdemma of the liquor-maker caste, chouḍamma of the weaver caste etc.). All the remaining myriad female folk-deities are village-deities, deities common to all the villagers of a given village. All these deities are without exception are taken as dēvī herself, forms of dēvī , or amśas (aspects /components) of dēvī . Among the common villagers, 'dēvī herself' idea is more prevalent. Among the elite, amśas (aspects /components) of dēvī idea is more prevalent. Wherever 'dēvī herself' idea is prevalent, these village-deities are taken as avatāras of dēvī .

41. The classification of Indian village-deities into 'ugra' (often translated as malevolent) and 'prasanna' (often translated as benevolent) is well known. 'ugra' forms are usually 'eco-systems' in their 'angry' aspect/ phase/ mood manifest in the form of natural calamities, epidemic diseases etc. The 'prasanna' forms are usually 'eco-systems' in their 'fertility' aspect manifest in the form of plants, trees, crops, groves, forests , flowers, creepers, fruits etc. In the Trimurti language the Ugra ones have śiva's devolution features. The 'prasanna' ones have bramha's creation features. Usually durgā, mahākālī, chaṇḍī etc. are chosen as classical words for the ugra ones and gourī, lakśmī, sāvitrī etc. are chosen as classical words for the prasanna ones . All are considered to be avatāras of dēvī only.

42. Thus, while some male folk deities could be viewed as avatāras of Śiva, some others could be viewed as avatāras of Dēvī or Lakṣmī , none could be viewed as avatāra of Brahmā because all the folk-deities of concepts such as fertility that could get connected to Brahmā have all been viewed as female deities . This seems to be one of the important reasons for the absence/extreme rarity of temples of Brahmā . Narratives giving reasons for the 'absence' of temples of bramha are meta-myths 'explaining' that absence.

43. Rarity of temples of Sarasvatī/ Śāradā could be based on the small size of people worshipping art and academics related concepts.

44. Apart from the huge number of folk temples of female deities, there is a very big number of classical temples of female deities particularly of Dēvī and Lakṣmī. In all these temples, the male consorts of these deities are either absent or get relegated to insignificance.

45. Absence/rarity of temples of non-anthropomorphic avatāras of Viṣṇu such as matsya, kūrma, varāha can be explained on the basis of absence/rarity of related concepts at the folk level.

46. There are many Viṣṇu -form temples that have been very clearly traced to hero-stones, king-memorials etc.

47. Temples of at least one particular Viṣṇu-form, the Narasimha have all been found to be hill/cave temples traced to their pre-āgamic origin.

48. Among śiva, viṣnu and dēvī , it is śiva alone who has temples of non-anthropomorphic image śivalinga . Though there are meta-myths explaining why śiva 'does not have' an anthropomorphic image, in reality, śiva has a very big number of temples with anthropomorphic images such as naṭarāja, dakṣiṇāmūrti, sadāśiva etc. also. But the share of the temples of non-anthropomorphic śivalinga images is relatively so overwhelmingly big that it created an impression of 'no anthropomorphic images at all' and lead to the emergence of meta-myths 'explaining' the 'absence' of anthropomorphic images.

49. Most of the śivalinga temples can be traced to their non-anthropomorphic images of folk-religion and tribal-religion. The shepherd community dhangar/kuruma/kuruba mentioned earlier in this thread as the community that worships mallanna/mailāra/malhāri considering that deity as an avatāra of śiva, worship the deity in the form of an oval shaped piece of rock gathered from the hill on which their sheep graze. One of the essential elements of a village-goddess temple (at least in South India) is a stone posted into the earth, that is called by a name that could be translated as 'navel-stone'.(Viewed probably as the 'navel' meaning vital centre of the ecosystem of the village). This element is invariably referred to as a male deity with an unalienable relationship with the village-goddess. This stone image is in the same shape as that of a smoothly carved śivalinga. Another essential element of a village goddess temple is another oval stone not posted into the earth, always placed beside the image of the goddess called by names such as pōtrāj/ potarāju. śivalinga can be traced to such non-anthropomorphic images of male deities of village and forest communities.

50. Though each of the folk community mentioned here has the deity mentioned here as the folk -level origin of śiva or viṣṇu as its main deity contributing to its identity, the community does not distance itself from the deities worshipped by other communities. The community worshipping the 'śiva-avatāra' folk-deity as its main deity includes the dēvī form, viṣṇu-form and any other such folk or āgamic deity in its repertoire of worshipped deities. Similarly the community worshipping the 'viṣṇu-form' / 'viṣṇu-avatāra' deity as its main deity includes the śiva-avatāra deities, dēvī-form deities and any other folk or āgamic deities in its repertoire of worshipped deities. The community worshipping the 'śiva-avatāra' folk-deity as its main deity is identified as śaivite community and the one worshipping the 'viṣṇu-form' / 'viṣṇu-avatāra' deity as its main deity as vaiṣṇavite community. Neither of these communities may usually consider itself to be what it is identified as by others. One good example is the dhangar/kuruma/kuruba community (mentioned earlier in this thread) itself. The community as a 'veerashaiva' community by others whereas the community itself is ambivalent in accepting such identity. Shaivism and VaishNavism seem to be attempts to organize the communities worshipping śiva and viṣṇu forms respectively and provide

'tāttvic' articulation for the approach of each of them towards śiva and viṣṇu vis-à-vis other gods.

51. śaivite and vaiṣṇavite traditions are chronologically later to the identification of various folk and tribal deities as the forms/avatāras of śiva and viṣṇu. But it can not be said that the only source/ basis of śaivite and vaiṣṇavite traditions is the folk and tribal deities identified as viṣṇu and śiva forms/avatāras. purāṇic and āgamic ideas which have contributions from vēdic and tāntric side too apart from the folk and tribal side are at the root of vaiṣṇavism and some major strands of śaivism .

52. The point is that the perception if any of the folk and tribal traditions with śaivite and vaiṣṇavite identities as 'converts' into śaivism and vaiṣṇavism would be wrong.

53. A tribal community called cheñchu has the chiefmost shrine of the vīraśaivites called śrīśailam and one of the chief vaiṣṇavite shrines called ahōbilam (with narasimha as the chief deity) as the two different places of its inhabitation. At both the places the tribal side legend about the shrine has the female deity, the consort of the male deity as the daughter of the chief of the tribe (and thus as the 'daughter of all the tribal house-holds). It has the male consorts of these female deities, śiva (mallikārjuna) at śrīśailam and viṣṇu (narasimha) at ahōbilam as 'strangers' falling in love with the 'household-daughter' of the community. In both the legends the male deities are accepted into the community only after the males prove their adeptness in various tribal skills of hunting and gathering. cheñchus look at themselves as the hosts and all the visitors to the shrines as guests. The visitors took the help of the cheñchus during pre-modern times in trekking the thick jungles. Both vīraśiva and vaiṣṇava communities treated them as their associates at both the śrines.

54. There is no evidence that supports any idea of a fight between autochthonous folk traditions whose deities were identified as forms or avatāras of śiva and viṣṇu. śivapāramya (supremacy of śiva among all the deities) or viṣṇupāramya (supremacy of viṣṇu among all the deities) as two rival ideas are not found among these people worshipping deities which were later identified as śiva or viṣṇu.

55. Viewing all śaivisms as anti-viṣṇu is also not justified. Kashmir śaivism for example is not an anti-vaiṣṇava tradition. vīraśaivism too was more anti-jain and in one of its significant strands, anti-brahmanical but not anti-vaiṣṇava.

56. Even vaiṣṇavisms were not anti-śiva. śrīvaiṣṇavism of rāmānuja was more focussed on the anti-advaita polemics at polemical level, on bhakti and karma in opposition to the jnāna of the advaitins rather than on any anti-śiva fight. Similar was the approach of vaiṣṇavism of dvaita Vedanta.

Ganesan's respone to 56:
Though ' not strictly anti-Siva in its early phases' with Ramanuja, Srivaishnavism is definitely anti-Siva in its developed stage, for which Ramanuja is definitely the beginner. If one reads his Vedarthasamgraha it becomes very clear how he interprets the Svetasvataropanishad, Atharvasiras, Atharvasikha, etc. which Upanishads are absolutely Saiva in their content by

any means and which proclaim Siva as the supreme Brahma, to suit his Vaishnava doctrine. This Ramanuja achieves by text-torturing and other wrong interpretations for which his commentator SudarsanasUri lends full support by further misinterpretations. One has to read the Sivatattvaviveka, BharatatAtparyasaMgraha, SivakarNAmRta, etc., of AppayadIkshita where he analyses threadbare the interpretations of both Ramanuja and SudarsanasUri in the VedArthasaMgraha and brings out their fallacies and wrong interpretations by scrutinising deeply on strict pUrvamImAMsA principles.

Also the traditional life history of Ramamnuja claims that he had converted some of his close relatives who were staunch Sivabhakta-s into Vaishnavism, as well as converting some old Siva-temples in north Andhra such as he Srikurmam into Vishnu temples.
So the anti-Siva character of Srivaishnavism started with its founder Ramanuja and was carried forward with vehemence by their followers during later period of Vijayanagara empire and the Nayak period for which there are indelible evidences and marks even now, especially in Tamilnadu.

Installation of the image of dakshiNAmUrti on the southern side of the vimAna in the VishNu temples is prescribed according to Vaikhanasa Agama-s which rite is the same as prescribed in the Saiva Agama-s. The Tirumala Balaji temple, which follows the Vaikhanasa Agama, had the image of DakshiNAmUrti till about 1930 or so which was noticed by none other than the well known Paramacharya of the Kanchi KamakoTi maTha; but when he asked one of his close devotees who has travelled extensively in all towns and villages in the southern states and who had written a few books giving graphic details of various temples--both big and small--probably in 1975 or so, whether he saw the dakShiNAmUrti image on the Balaji temple vimAna, that gentle man told the Paramacharya that they had removed the image and instead covered the entire vimAna with gold so that dakShiNAmUrti is not visible !!!
Such is the anti-Siva character of the VaishNava-s, of all brands--SrivaishNava or the Dvaita MAdhva-s. All of them are the same towards Siva !!!

Ganesan

Let me improve #56 as follows:

56. Even in the case of vaiṣṇavisms, the main focus was not to oppose śiva. śrīvaiṣṇavism of rāmānuja was more focussed on the anti-advaita polemics at a scholarly level and on reviving and invigorating the previously existing viṣṇu-centred bhakti traditions at a general level. Even vaiṣṇavism of mādhva tradition /dvaita tradition was more focussed on anti-advaita polemics at a scholarly level and on invigorating viṣṇu-centred bhakti traditions.

57. It is wrong to consider that all the 'Hindus' fall under one of the 'pāramya' (supremacy of one of the deities) theories. In fact, a vast majority of the 'Hindus' worship various 'Hindu' deities without any 'pāramya' (supremacy of one of the deities) idea. This non-pāramya approach could be called 'uncritical' and 'non-scholarly' (non-polemical). But that is the reality at the ground level.

58. Even among the 'pāramya' (supremacy of one of the deities) -based
    traditions /institutions the intensity of the 'anti' approaches indicated by the historical
    evidences has reduced to a very high degree reaching the level of absence at may places.

59. There is a huge amount of traditional popular lyrical literature still vibrantly in currency in
    the singing traditions of the common people which expresses opposition to 'pāramya'
    (supremacy of one of the deities) theories/approaches. Some of these are yoga-centred.

60. I wanted to share my understandings including my non-textualist ones based on my
    fieldwork and ground-level understandings.

Concluded.

Thank you all for your patience.

Nagaraj

Dear Dr. Ganesan,

I understand your abhinivēśa for śaivism. I can also understand that it pains to read
    /comprehend certain historical information from such a perspective. Such a pain is possible
    for any person having abhinivēśa for any of the traditions long history particularly when the
    historical information as understood at that time of historical research indicates a past harm
    to that person's favourite tradition.

I apologise to you and any other such person with abhinivēśa for a particular tradition if I
    inadvertently offended you.

Throughout the thread, I sincerely tried not to misrepresent any tradition. I am open to correct
    my understanding.

Thanks for your understanding.