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## **Hindu India in Hergé: A Study of Select Albums**

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### **Abstract**

Hergé in his portrayal of Hindus betrays a patronising and stereotypical attitude. Analyses of three of his texts, namely *Cigars of the Pharaoh*, *The Valley of the Cobras*, and *Tintin in Tibet* reveal an archetypal Christian colonial thinking that Hergé's English translators carry to the English versions and reinforce further. Hergé vilifies the polytheistic Hindu faith system. "The white man's burden" theme operates even in the representation of bestiary. Hergé portrays Hindu deities as false gods and also betrays his miserable knowledge of Hindu texts and iconography. In *Cigars of the Pharaoh*, he exploits local superstitions brilliantly to intensify the sinisterness of the 'pagan East'. In the texts Hindus are either laid back and foolish or fiendishly evil. In *The valley of the Cobras* a European carries out his 'duty' of teaching an oriental king a lesson in manners. There is a Christian archetypal design in Hergé's representation of the cobras that symbolise the Devil. Hergé's thinking is totally in line with the *Bible* and with several quasi-religious texts where the Serpent is the archetypal villain whereas in Hinduism snakes are often sacred and are part of Hindu iconography. *Tintin in Tibet* illustrates that for the colonialist, the colonised are a homogeneous group. According to Scott McCloud flat colours objectify their subjects and that Hergé created with them "a completely objective world". The select books vindicate his contention. We find in *Orientalism* that "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made and like the West "the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West." Hergé contributes significantly to the corporate institution/discourse, called Orientalism that creates the Orient for white Christian Europeans.

**Keywords:** Hindu India, Vilification of Polytheism, Paganism, Christian Archetypes, Colonialism, Orientalism.