



Hindu India in Hergé: A Study of Select Albums

Champak Dyuti Majumder

Research Scholar, Bankura University, West Bengal, India

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.

Georges Remi alias Hergé, the Belgian cartoonist and comic-strip writer who created Tintin

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has, in his portrayal of India and her pagan, polytheistic inhabitants, betrayed an attitude that is patronising and stereotypical to say the least. As Ashis Nandy contends in his *The Intimate Enemy*, “If the colonial experience made the mainstream Western consciousness definitionally non-Oriental and redefined the West’s self-image as the antithesis or negation of the East, it sought to do the reverse with the self-image of the Orient and with the culture of India. Colonialism replaced the normal ethnocentric stereotype of the inscrutable Oriental by the pathological stereotype of the strange, primal but predictable Oriental – religious but superstitious, clever but devious, chaotically violent but effeminately cowardly” (2009). This paper attempts to analyse Hergé’s representation of the Hindu India in select texts. A close analysis of these texts reveals an archetypal colonial and Christian thinking working in them and, his translators in their turn both carry it to the English versions and reinforce it further. This paper seeks to analyse the dominant orientalist stereotypes that Hergé kept reinforcing underneath stories that are immensely attractive to people of all ages and peoples of all sorts in the world. This paper will discuss three albums where Hindus/Indians occupy a significant share of the story. The texts that are chosen are:

1. *Cigars of the Pharaoh* (Tintin’s first ever visit to India, through Saudi Arabia).
2. *The Valley of the Cobras* (an adventure of a French boy Jo, his sister Zette, and their pet chimp Jocko in a Himalayan Indian kingdom where their father Monsieur Legrand, a civil engineer, has been appointed by the king to set up a bridge on a gorge so that people would not need to take a much slower detour to his kingdom). And finally,
3. *Tintin in Tibet* (the boy reporter risks everything to bring back Chang Chong Chen, his friend from long ago, from Tibet where, he believes against everyone else’s opinions, the latter has survived the plane crash that had killed all his fellow passengers. His chief adversary in this adventure is the Abominable Snowman himself).

Hergé’s depiction and knowledge of, and attitude to Hindus are significant and they are illustrated most vividly in *Cigars of the Pharaoh* and *The Valley of the Cobras*.

The first opens with Tintin on holiday. He is sailing to the East and, before his vessel reaches Port Said, he is arrested with a false charge of smuggling narcotics planted in his cabin by Rastapopoulos’ men. He however is able to give the police - the Thomson twins who are introduced in the series at this point - the slip, reaches Port Said, and the adventure of high suspense begins. Tintin does not reach India before his commandeered aircraft crashes in an Indian jungle (Hergé, 1971). Here Tintin befriends an Indian elephant who takes him to the District Commissioner, obviously an Englishman. And it is from his bungalow that the sinister forces operating in the country start threatening the white Western hero. We find that even a number of white people living there are now in league with those forces. Tintin discovers the sign of Kih-Oskh, the sign that sums up the theme of this adventure and also of its sequel with unqualified success, and that which he has known from when he had explored the underground den of drug-smugglers in Egypt, on several trees on the fringe of a clearing in the Indian jungle where he had to crash land. He discovers it was Sarcophagus, now completely mad, who has painted them.

The sign of Kih-Oskh illustrates Hergé’s brilliance as a storyteller of the visual mode. His “. . . masterstroke unifying what would otherwise be too disparate an adventure with its long-distance jumps from Egypt to Arabia and then finally to India was the introduction of a leitmotiv, the sign of the comically named pharaoh, Kih-Oskh.” This memorable design would seem to have been inspired by the mystic Chinese emblem of Ying and Yang which Hergé, an avid reader of the writings of Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, may have found on the title page of one of his works. But far from denoting the harmony of Ying and Yang, Hergé’s subtle design has a sinuous line breaking the perfect circle with one dot placed inside and the other outside it, suggesting menace and disorder appropriate to a secret society trafficking in

narcotics. It would, furthermore, be difficult to conceive of an emblem for the brand of a superior Flor Fina cigar, for the insignia of the society's purple, Massonic-like robes or for the entrance to the pharaoh's tomb. It is also eminently daubable, as demonstrated by the mentally disturbed Sarcophagus" (Farr, 2001, p.42). Moreover, as a perceptive reader is sure to notice, this sign is more than successful in painting the whole Hindu world, at least the sliver of it the story deals with, as one of constant menaces and disorders. Significantly in the India of *Cigars of Pharaoh* the chief lieutenant of Rastapopoulos, the kingpin of the band of the narco-dealers is a fakir with evil magic powers – the owner of 'the eyes' that can hypnotise one to any evil act – who is responsible for all that's wrong in the state of Gaipajama. Even the white members of the drug smuggling Ku Klux Klan seem to work under him. It is worth noting here that in *The Blue Lotus*, the sequel to the present album, there's a good fakir too who, while examining the lines on Tintin's hand in the beginning plates of the book, mentions the bad fakir whom he calls 'a disgrace to our brotherhood' (Hergé, 1983). But the Good in Hergé's India is absolutely passive – incapable of any substantial action while the Evil is all action and pervasive and cannot be outsmarted without the interventions of a white hero. One can't help being reminded of the good fakir in *Asterix and the Magic Carpet* (a caricature of Gandhi with his 'magical' power of 'Ahimsa'?) who was no match for his evil counterpart for all his magic and has to fly all the way to Gaul on his magic carpet to seek the aid of Asterix, a Western hero with a Western variety of magic power, to save Orinjade, the Indian princess, from being sacrificed to Hindu gods (Uderzo, 2002).

All Hindu superstitions in this book cease to be superstitions and are exploited brilliantly to intensify the sinisterness of the 'pagan East'. We have the dagger episode at the Commissioner's bungalow - the dagger that is said to point at the person whose life is in danger. It falls on the floor and, before touching it, points to Tintin. We have the bad fakir with his magic rope and religious fanatics ready to kill Snowy for just biting their sacred cow.

Snowy asks a cow (Madam, he calls her) very politely, remaining fully true to the Western code of decency and decorum of addressing a lady, when the last train had gone by (Hergé, 1971). But the cow replies in the rudest of manners, tells Snowy she was a sacred cow and that Snowy should not have dared talk to her himself being a common mongrel. When Snowy makes fun of her claims she, ironically, decides to give this 'vulgar little cur' a lesson in manners. But before she can do anything, Snowy bites on one of her legs and starts chasing her as she bolts. Soon after Hindus in turbans shout: "sacrilege"! "Kill it!" A few panels on, Snowy is seen tied on a raised platform and a Hindu man announces: "We will slay it on the altar of Siva!" (Hergé, 1971) But Snowy is rescued miraculously as the idol of Nat raja, the dancing Shiva, tells the man who was about to kill Snowy, "Stay your hand, servant of Siva! The god will not accept so mean a sacrifice!" (Hergé, 1971) and the man bolts in horror. In the next panel the Thomson twins are seen observing that all was clear and we understand it was one of them who was impersonating Shiva to scare Snowy's would-be killer out of the place. (It may be noted in the passing that in the adventure following the present one's sequel, *The Broken Ear* the white explorer Ridgewell who lives in the Amazonian forests with the primitive tribe called Arumbayas, uses the same trick to save himself and Tintin from being slaughtered before the idols of another primitive tribe called Rumbabas (Hergé, 1975). Ridgewell's job was more challenging though, as he had no covers like the Thomsons had in the episode described above and so had to use ventriloquism to deceive the Rumbabas. The interesting point is, more or less the same trick manages to make fools of both a primitive Amazonian tribe, and Indian Hindus whose civilisation dates back to a few thousand years. In the eyes of the coloniser or of one of their parties, the colonised (here idolaters of all sorts) often tend to be a homogeneous group.

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The episode betrays Hergé's patronising attitude to and very scant knowledge of the heathen polytheistic Hindus and their faith system. First, Snowy the white Western fox terrier is all manners and decency with the cad of an Indian animal sacred to Hindus. Her rudeness in return seems to justify the 'punishment' the Western animal metes out to her. As the White Man's 'responsibility' is to 'civilise' coloured men, the Western Animal seems to have its own 'burden' of 'responsibility' of 'civilising' its Oriental counterpart.

Secondly, animal sacrifices are indeed never made on alters of Shiva. They belong to the Mother Goddess worshipping *Shakta* traditions of Hinduism. Thirdly, 'Infidel' (as one Hindu calls Snowy) is an Abrahamic concept. Hinduism is not a religion in the sense an Abrahamic religion is. Finally, in the English translation, the voice of one of the detectives refers to Shiva as *the* god. Michael Turner and Lonsdale-Cooper don't bother to capitalise the 'g' in god despite Shiva's being one of the three supreme manifestations of the Divine (the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara) and *the* supreme Godhead in the Shaivite tradition of Hinduism. Both the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament and Milton's vilification of all gods other than the God of Abraham as false gods become relevant here. Hergé's translators indeed betray an archetypal pattern in their thinking (Nelson, 2014; Milton, 1970).

One may be reminded of the episode in Jules Verne's *Round the World in Eighty Days* (1998) wherein Phileas Fogg, Sir Francis Cromarty, and Passerpartout see an idol of the Goddess Kali. Sir Francis says: "It is the goddess Kali." (Verne, 1998). "The goddess of love and death". And "of death may be – but love, never!" says Passerpartout. "Ugly old hag!" (Verne, 1998) he adds. In his narration, Verne does not bother referring to the Goddess in the feminine pronoun even (she is the neuter 'it') let alone bothering about what the iconography signifies. However, Hergé's (and his translators') methods of slighting and demonising the non-Christian (here non-Abrahamic too) Other is doubtless much subtler.

A few plates later, we find Tintin in a strait jacket, hanging upside down from a tree, caught in a tiger trap (Hergé, 1971). The king of Gaipajama's (a weird name for an Indian state) mahout discovers him from the back of their elephant on which is seated the king himself as well. They rescue him and free him from the jacket. Immediately after their mutual introductions, the mahout spots a tiger on a branch of a tree (!). The king shoots at it but misses and the beast pounces in their howdah in no time. But the Belgian hero overpowers it with bare hands and puts it in the strait jacket that he himself was in a few moments earlier. The white Western hero can achieve with bare hands what natives with a gun and an elephant can't!

The Valley of the Cobras is a less known adventure of a lesser-known set of adventurers created by Hergé: Jo, Zette, and Jocko: a French boy, his sister, and their pet chimpanzee. The adventure of the story takes place entirely in the Indian mountain kingdom of Gopal. As the story opens, we find the curious Jo and Zette ski past the Maharaja of Gopal who, like them, was holidaying in Europe. The king finds it too much and swears by Kali to punish them and orders his secretary to give them "fifty strokes of cane on the soles of their feet. . . !" (Hergé, 1972) When reminded by his secretary they were outside their kingdom, he sets off for his hotel in a wild rage. Matters worsen quickly as, as the king exits from his hotel after telling the manager that he would leave his hotel if Jo and Zette did not seek his pardon within the hour, Jo's snowball misses Zette and instead hits the already furious king on his face. The two seek the king's pardon in vain and then hide behind a snow-covered tree while the livid Maharajah calls the act of throwing snow on him 'a criminal outrage' and swears to have them duly punished. He returns to his hotel in a fit of anger and breaks all vases near him and tells his secretary Badalah to fetch more vases to break. Next, he hires a detective to find out his pearl

necklace that he thinks is stolen. The detective, trailing a series of footsteps, finds Jo and company and starts questioning them and very quickly is convinced that they indeed were the thieves. Their father, civil engineer Monsieur Legrand enters the scene in the next page and, as he is trying to learn from the detective why he was questioning his children, the latter meets with a comic accident that takes him on a skate to the king's suite through the window. By now the king has found his necklace and accuses the detective of deceiving him as the necklace was never stolen in the first place. However, he is happy at least to know from the failed sleuth the whereabouts of 'two children and one monkey' and sets on his mission to teach them a lesson in company of his secretary, and Magadir, a bearded Indian 'pehelwan' wielding a sturdy cane. The children with their chimp initially feel like bolting but Jo suddenly gathers up courage to face the king as he had really committed no crime. Just as Magadir is about to 'administer the punishment', the children's father snatches the cane from him and, introducing himself, wants to know it all. Legrand, after knowing everything, suggests caning would be illogical as it should be 'a snowball for a snowball' and 'an overtaking for an overtaking'. The king finds the argument fair enough and accordingly Jo, Zette and Jocko are stood against a wall to face the king's snowball. The king however, does not succeed in his quest for revenge as all his snowballs miss their targets. The dispirited king, who has caught a cold as well from all this ice throwing, decides to be merciful to the trio and doesn't bother attempting to overtake them on ski. After this he visits Legrand's place and learning Legrand is a civil engineer, readily orders him to be in his service at £ 10000 per month and to pack up for India within a week but does not think it important to tell him what he wanted him to do. Legrand tells him straight that no one dictated what he did. The king is mad with anger as no one has dared to defy him on his face before and he returns to his hotel in order to break vases again. Very soon the nagging king meets Legrand and his children again and offers £ 60,000 in advance and reminds him he had only one week to leave for Gopal (Hergé, 1986). The pissed off Legrand repeats what he had said earlier and leaves the place bidding good morning to the king. After some comic accidents that befall the arrogant king during his chase of Legrand on skis, he does catch up with him and the fed-up French engineer decides to teach him a lesson in manners and gives him a sound beating before leaving the place. This incident changes the king beyond recognition. Soon he is seen playing with Jo, Zette, and Jocko with a toy train at the latter's place, that he has bought for them. Very soon Legrand agrees to go to Gopal when the king politely tells him what he wanted from him and the ultimate plate of the page introduces Ramayuni, the scheming Prime Minister of Gopal who exclaims: "Bad news! A French engineer has agreed to build the bridge" (Hergé, 1986, p.18). This is where the second of the only two sides of Hergé's India – gullibility/foolishness, and wickedness – enters the plot. The similarity of the evil Prime Minister's name with that of the epic *Ramayana*, sacred to most Hindus, can hardly be overlooked. And from page 20 onwards the reader is taken to the heart of Eastern 'darkness'. In this book, as in *Cigars of the Pharaoh*, the scenes in India that are painted in dark, gloomy flat colours seem to contribute brilliantly to the perniciousness of the prevailing atmosphere in India: something outlandishly negative that the white hero must encounter and finally conquer. As the king talks with Legrand over a cuppa inside their train, we find the plotting Prime Minister soliloquising in Gopal: "So they are on their way . . . soon I'll have to take orders again from that fool and put up with his tantrums . . . ! I've had a taste of power while he's been away . . . and who's to stop me keeping it?" He continues: "I've already exploited the unrest caused by new taxes . . . I explained they were to pay for the Maharajah's gallivanting . . . The people grumble. Put against the Maharajahah!" "And now this plan for the bridge . . . Haha! I must see Rabindah tonight." And he gallops to the bad fakir's cave. (Hergé, 1986)

Interestingly, the only extraordinary thing about the fakir of this story is that he too sits on a cushion of nails like the good fakir of *The Blue Lotus*. He does not possess any magical

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powers unlike the good fakir in *The Blue Lotus*, and the bad fakir in *Cigars* who could charm a rope and cast a strong hypnotic spell on anyone with his notorious 'eyes'. Rabindah's 'powers' are sheer deceptions, using a little knowledge of engineering to scare backward Indians to subjection.

After reaching Rabindah's cave, Ramayuni tells his accomplice that "the Maharajah has decided to build a bridge across the valley of the Cobras. It will save the caravans several days. At present they have to follow the gorge and cross the river by means of the ford." We learn that when the caravans come Rabindah demands money and tells them it is to secure the blessing of the gods for a safe crossing across the valley infested with cobras (that are actually fed by Rabindah). Ramayuni and Rabindah agree that the only way to keep things as they were was to stop the bridge from being built and the Prime Minister gives the fakir some money and leaves him with the promise to reward him richly in proper time. As the Prime Minister leaves, he betrays to the reader his plans to get rid of the fakir later and the fakir utters similar oaths about the Prime Minister while putting the new coins in his already rich coffer.

Meanwhile Mrs. Legrand, after hearing from her husband that he would be with them very soon decides to celebrate the good news with her children by watching a show of 'the famous fakir Mahra Bay - the man who feels no pain' (a pun on Meera Bai?). As the three wait for the show on their seats, the fakir 'who feels no pain' is, after a struggle with a tiny wasp to get it out of his dressing room, is stung by it on his nose and has to get his show cancelled with a bandage on his hurt organ.

The Legrands reach Bombay in due time (Hergé, 1986). As they are on their way to Gopal by the car sent by the king, Hergé's favourite sacred cow-gag finds its way to this album. Their car stops owing to a hold up and the Legrands discover two cows are seated in a leisurely manner on the road. As the European engineer proposes someone move them along, he is told by the driver that the two are sacred cows and that one must be patient until they move in their own good time. This gives Ramayuni's men the opportunity to leave a note pinned with a knife to the car's seat that reads: "Stranger, go home to your country! . . ., or the anger of the gods will smite you." Can it be read as a non-Christian/pagan resistance to a cultural invasion of the monotheistic West? Is it not the same message that the English explorers to the Maravar Caves in Forster's *A Passage to India* receive inside the dark primordial caves? That the reluctant East was not yet ready to accept the West? (Forster, 2006).

Legrand the Christian European is expectedly too brave to be afraid at this and, as they progress towards Gopal in a caravan, their chimp Jocko spots an Indian up on a ledge trying to push a rock on the caravan. Jocko reaches the man in no time through a series of leaps and violently thrashes him away. The man rides to his master the fakir Rabindah, and tells him about his failure. Rabindah tells him what was to be done next at this turn of events and instructs him not to do anything unless the former raises his arms while talking to Legrand and company. Soon after, the caravan is in the vicinity and Monsieur Legrand meets the fakir who forbids them to cross the river that day or the gods would be displeased. The engineer refuses to accept the suggestion politely and, as he leads the caravan through the ford despite the fakir's angry admonitions, the latter raises his arms after saying: "By the tail of the Hanuman! . . . On his head be it! He asked for it!" and feigns like really invoking his 'mighty gods' to punish those who defy their agent. The man thrashed by Jocko a few plates earlier winch a sluice that causes a flash flood in the river. Legrand manages to survive the flood and is successful in rescuing Jocko but Jo, unconscious, is washed to a distant bank of the river and is about to be bitten to death by the fakir's cobras. But fortunately for him, a group of monkeys that Jocko has befriended bombard them with stones to death. Jocko, realising the connection between the

flood and the fakir, beats him up mercilessly and Legrand directly charges the fakir for fixing the flood and promises him he would pay for what he has done. After this all cross the ford reassured by Legrand, and the fakir keeps shouting himself hoarse and performing ridiculous acrobatics only to fall after trading on a banana kept before his seat.

Very soon, the man who had earlier caused flood becomes Legrand's guide as the latter starts ascending the mountain (Hergé, 1986). Ironically, he asks the 'guide' whether the latter had heard about a dam nearby. As they come near a ravine, the 'guide' proposes to jump across it first and then help Legrand in doing so. But as the unsuspecting engineer jumps, the traitor pushes him into the ravine and rides to the palace to inform that Legrand had slipped into a ravine. But in the next page, Legrand is seen staggering towards them and faints as soon as he is near his children and their monkey. The 'guide' seeing Legrand readily flees but Jocko is in hot pursuit. Trailing Jocko, Jo and Zette find themselves at the mouth of a cave which they enter and discover the underground reservoir that the fakir and his henchman the 'guide' used to cause sudden floods in the river. But the 'guide' finds them and closes the cave mouth imprisoning them inside. However, Jocko manages to free them from the cave and their father blows up the reservoir the next morning.

Several months pass at the 'gutter' between page 42 and 43 and the construction of the bridge is well advanced under the supervision of Monsieur Legrand (McCloud, 1994). The fakir however, is far from accepting his defeat and one evening sends out his venomous cobras to the Legrands' camp (Hergé, 1986). However, the cobras, attracted by the aroma of alcohol, crawl fast to the canteen and get too drunk to cause any damage to them. Legrand finds the guard, a laid-back Indian, fast asleep forgetting all his duties. When woken up by Legrand, he starts behaving in the most ridiculous manner and Legrand calls him a nitwit.

The next morning Jo and Zette climb up a mountain to photograph the near complete bridge and, by sheer chance overhear a conversation going on inside a cave (Hergé, 1986). A chieftain of a warrior mountain tribe, Hoonda, is convinced by the Prime Minister that 'the bridge built by the European' threatens all in Gopal. The following dawn Hoonda with his tribesmen come to attack Legrand's camp wielding swords but are stopped outside it by a ring of adhesive on the ground that doesn't allow them to budge. Legrand gets Hoonda released and invites him to his tent where, through a dialogue, he is successful in making the native warrior see the reality and winning his friendship forever. But very soon when Legrand tells the Maharajah about the real face of his Prime Minister, he is furious and accuses Legrand of slandering! However, a few plates further on, he gets proof of Ramayuni's villainy and starts crying in the arms of Legrand: "Boo . . . hoo . . . My own Prime Minister! . . . Betraying me! . . ." (30-32). Before the bridge is inaugurated in the final page, and the king himself is seen collecting toll charges from commuters and thus and enjoying the beautiful taste of Western civility, Ramayuni and Rabindah make one last attempt to destroy the bridge and get dynamite planted against its anchor block. Jo however, is able to stop it from blowing up as the 'guide', dying from the sting of one of their own cobras, is repentant and divulges the secret to him. Jo is in time and he extinguishes the dynamite while the ex-Prime Minister of Gopal and the fakir blow themselves up in the latter's cave by the few dynamite sticks set alight by the former's smouldering cigarette butt.

As is seen above, in this adventure too, pagan Indians in Hergé's world are either laid back/impulsive/childish gullible fools without manners and common sense, or fiendishly evil. Legrand comes to know of the notorious Valley of the Cobras as he gets the details of the proposal of a bridge across it from the Maharajah or his men. The mysterious fakir, his exploitation of simple Indian commuters, all! But neither the king nor any of his men has been

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able to bring this fraud of a fakir to book all these years. Neither has anyone been able to unmask the two-faced Prime Minister of the state! They had to wait for a European to do it!

The childish cad of a king, our Maharajah, is presented as a perfect foil to the suave European engineer. The Maharajah tends to forget he is king only in Gopal and behaves with everyone in the rudest possible manner wherever he is. In contrast, Monsieur Legrand is all decency and does not lose his natural politeness even in refusals. ‘Naturally’, this composed European has his burden of responsibility to teach the oriental king a lesson in manners – one that changes the king beyond recognition.

It doesn't seem farfetched to think of the existence of a Christian archetypal design in Hergé's representation of the cobras in this album. They seem to symbolise Evil itself and not only its agents. In this Hergé the Christian's thinking is perfectly in line with the *Book of Genesis* of the *Bible* as well as several quasi-religious texts by Christian authors, like *Paradise Lost*. The serpent is the archetypal villain:

[3:1] Now the serpent was craftier than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made.

[3:14] The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

[3:15] I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head and you will strike his heel. (Chapter 3, *Book of Genesis*)

It is none other than Lucifer, later called Satan, the arch enemy of God and His favourite creation Man. (Revelation 12:9 says that Satan is called “that serpent of old”, that he was cast out and that he presently deceives the whole world. Revelation 20:2-3 also calls Satan a serpent and speaks of his punishment again.) In Hinduism on the other hand, Cobras in particular and snakes in general are often sacred and are part of Hindu iconography. Lord Vishnu, the second person in the Hindu Trinity, rests on the coils of *Sheshanaga* (*Anantasajya*) and the same *Shesha* entwines the neck of Lord Shiva, the destroyer and conqueror of Death. When Lord Krishna was being taken to Gokool by his father *Vasudev*, *Vasuki*, the King of snakes (often identified with *Shesha*) protected the father and his divine child from the torrential rain with his hood over them and *Vasuki* also served as the ‘*manthanrajju*’ when the *Devas* and *Asuras* churned the ocean together to derive ‘*Amrita*’ – the nectar of immortality. Many Hindus arrange a ‘*sradh*’ if they are forced to kill a cobra to this day. Moreover, there is a deity who is in charge of the well beings of snakes: *Manasha*.

Tintin in Tibet is another album where Tintin spends some time in India and interacts with Hindus. As mentioned earlier, in the eyes of the coloniser or someone belonging to their party, the colonised are a homogeneous group. And so, in Hergé almost every Indian wear a turban.

As soon as Tintin and Captain Archibald Haddock reach New Delhi Hergé's favourite ‘sacred cow’-gag starts (Hergé, 1962). A cow is seen seated completely blocking the roadway and the Captain asks a turbaned Indian: “Can't someone move the old girl along? We're in rather a hurry . . .” And the Indian replies: “Sacred cow, Sahib . . .Do not disturb . . .you wait till she move.” (7). The exasperated Captain whose flight is due in twenty-five minutes, decides to step over the obstinate ‘sacred’ animal who is angry as can be seen from her eyes, and she stands up with the Captain on her back and runs through the next few plates causing a panic on the street and finally drops the ‘infidel’ and terrified Englishman into a taxi.

After reaching Kathmandu they go to the airport manager (a rare Indian in Hergé in that he does not wear a turban). As he talks with Tintin, he fiddles with a rubber band and it gets on the Captain's nerves. Suddenly the band is torn from constant pulling and it hits the airport manager's unusually sharp, pointed nose. The Captain is unable to suppress his laughter at this and the man is angry. The Captain apologises but the man picks up another rubber band and starts repeating what he did with the last one. Thus, in this adventure too, Indians are mostly incorrigible cads who never learn. In the next page the Captain finally meets his match in an Indian porter (another Indian without a turban) who shouts back to him for not looking where he was going. This is the only occasion in the whole series when someone is successful in outshouting the retired British Admiral. His cursed luck ever since he has arrived in the subcontinent does not seem to leave him as very soon, he comes across some 'fruit' spread out to dry in the Sun and he finds the aroma irresistible. Three Nepali boys, convince him it is indeed yummy and the Captain rushes to a well yelling "Fire" after eating one of them. He observes it was like swallowing a volcano in full blast. Tintin tells him it was a red pimento, a sort of pepper. The unfriendly East seems to repulse the westerners' attempts at friendship with the former in innumerable ways.

As mentioned earlier, as soon as *Cigars of the Pharaoh* enters India, flat colours start building up the gloomy backdrop. Scott McCloud (1994) points out in *Understanding Comics* that flat colours objectify their subjects. That "We become more aware of the *physical form* of objects than in *black and white*." (189). They, says McCloud, do it by their tendency to emphasise the *shape* of objects, both animate and inanimate. And Hergé, he contends, captured the magic of flat colours with unprecedented subtlety. That he created with them "a completely objective world." And he indeed does it brilliantly in *Cigars of the Pharaoh*, its sequel *The Blue Lotus*, and *The Valley of the Cobras*. The creation and objectification of Hergé's version of India (and of China in *The Blue Lotus*) and its intensification would hardly have been possible without his mastery over flat colours. The bad fakir in *Cigars* charming his rope, blowing a dart soaked with the drug of madness at the king's dummy in the dark, Tintin's discovery of the underground den of the drug trafficking Ku Klux Klan through the hollow tree, the conspiring Prime Minister's ride to the bad fakir in *The Valley*, all are able to present an environment of suspense and threat so effectively thanks mainly to the proper application of flat colours.

Finally, as Edward Said notes Vico's observation in his introduction to *Orientalism* that "men make their own history; that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural entities- to say nothing of historical entities - such locales, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made. Therefore, as much as the West itself, 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 through his comics indeed contributes significantly to the corporate institution, the discourse, called Orientalism that creates the Orient for white Christian Europeans.

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Bio-note

Champak Dyuti Majumder is a research scholar and is currently pursuing his PhD from Bankura University. He had taught English in private engineering and management colleges as a Lecturer, Senior Lecturer as an Assistant Professor for more than twenty years in Siliguri, Durgapur and Kolkata respectively since 2002. He has presented papers in various seminars and conferences.

Email id - majumderchampakdyuti@gmail.com / champak_dyuti@rediffmail.com

