

`Many-armed,' `angry', `demons' and `monsters' in colonial writings

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The two religious systems, Brahmanism and Buddhism, had a powerful influence on the whole of south Asia and south East Asia. Colonial scholarship was foundational in enabling the later day Indian historians to interpret the evolution of religious art in the country. The above discussion has shown that in the early phase of European understanding of Indian religious art was marked by deep rooted prejudices. This was partly due to the influence of Jesuit reports and the travellers' accounts. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, some serious efforts were made to grasp the religious systems generated by the people of India at various stages. These writings shaped the historical understanding of the people in the country. Today, no historian would accept the idea of divinities in Hinduism and Buddhism as monsters, demons or devils.

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