CHAPTER - III

The Image of India: A Study of Francis William Bain, 1863-1940

The British image of India undergoes a marked and significant evolution with Bain who departs from the traditional British view of India. With profound regard for the cultural heritage of India including Hindoo religion and Sanskrit literature Bain breaks a new ground in the sphere of British fiction dealing with India. In Bain the image of India is not what we discover in Kipling and Steel. Kipling and Bain are poles asunder, between them yawns a vast gap. To the British, pre-eminently a trading nation, India had always been a land of gold. But with a significant breakaway from the traditional British image of India, Bain makes an endeavour in his works of fiction to reveal to the West the cultural glory of the East. Bain's Indian stories are steeped in the spirit of exploration of a land of enormous cultural treasures. While other British creative writers like Steel and Myers move, more or less, along the beaten track, recapitulate early literary practices, reiterate conventional British ideas when dealing with India, Bain strikes a new note in his Indian stories. He selects the south of India as the abode of Hindoo lore, culture and religion, and deeply regrets other British writers' inability to deal with the South. Most of the creative writers of Britain on India concentrate on the depiction of the North of India, the Frontier provinces and the Himalayan Foot hills. Hardly do they look beyond the North to the South. This, therefore, restricts them to a limited vision of India. In his introduction to Bubbles of the Foam, Bain exhorts the British to have a
look at the map of India with nearly the north end at the bottom and almost the south end at the top, should they like to understand the old Hindoos. The exclusive deification of the North by most of the British writers dealing with this land poses as the chief obstacle to the understanding of ancient India. Bain, therefore, with an intimate knowledge of the South of India chose to enlighten the West about the cultural heritage of the Hindoos of old, thereby projecting a new image of India hitherto unobserved in British creative writing on this country. In order to corroborate Bain's aforesaid view of India and in order to exhibit how the creative writer uses such images as a new theme in this category of fiction each of his work of art ought to be treated separately through a study, where necessary, of plot construction, characterization, situations, prefatory notes in addition to the author's own comments, if any. Besides, a study of the aesthetic significance of such images is deemed important in order to assess the fiction-writer's attitude towards India and Indian values.

A Digit of the Moon (1899) figures first in the cycle of Bain's thirteen Indian stories. Itself a Hindoo story of love, it embodies a series of nineteen stories told on behalf of his king by Kasakosa, the court-jester of Suryakanta, a king, to Anagaraka, an exceedingly beautiful Naga-woman. Suryakanta, a remorseless misogynist, is somehow tricked into wooing Anagaraka who decides to marry the person able to outwit her with any crafty question following each story to be narrated to her daily in the
course of twenty-one days. In case the person fails to beat her, he is doomed to be her slave. Many kings tried their luck before, but failed and suffered the worst consequence as stipulated. So now is Suryakanta's turn.

A Digit of the Moon is a work of fiction dealing with love at first sight. It develops a love-story involving Suryakanta, a king, and Anangaraga, a serpent-woman. Planning and designing of the plot of the work strikes a note of novelty in the sense that the main theme of love develops not through direct actions and reactions of the hero and the heroine, but through Rasakosha who serves as a connecting link between them. Rasakosha's stories constitute the occasion of the meeting of the two, the first dawning and gradual deepening of love in Anangaraga's daily audience with the king. For while the court-jester speaks, the king and the Naga-woman remain mute struck by the arrow of love till the king confidently approaches the Princess who finally blushes, yields and accepts him as her husband. The king gives his newly-wed wife many a sweet name of which Shashilikha — fair and fragile as a digit of the moon — is one. However, the canvas becomes larger at the introduction of a few other characters, figuring in Rasakosha's stories, drawn from life. Garbed in scintillating prose this Hindoo love-story is a delicate piece of sheer aesthetic beauty. As a work of art A Digit of the Moon achieves a superb blending of romance and reality.

It is very interesting to note that Rasakosha begins with the story of Ganapati, i.e. the god of success, success in winning Anangaraga being the goal in this case. Bain is confident that
only a Hindoo can appreciate the skill with which the story is placed first, and thus the favour of Ganesha is secured. In this story a cow, a crow and Wajradhara (the wielder of the thunderbolt, or Indra) help to foil three times a charwaka’s¹ bid to marry. A study of the next story enlightens us about another image of India. In the second story of this group a dying Brahmin’s last wish is to divide his nineteen cows amongst his three sons of whom the eldest is to share a half of the cows, the second one-fourth and the youngest one-fifth and the remainder, if any, is either to be eaten or given away to the king. Primarily, it is a puzzling plan of division. For to divide fraction-wise an odd number of cows may imply cow-slaughter, a deadly sin for a Brahmin to commit. Bain refers to Manu II, 227, sqq where Brahmins are prohibited from cow-slaughter and violation of father’s order. This, therefore, puts the three sons in a quandary. How is one to solve this crux? Princess Anangaraga answers the question with an astonishing sharpness of the mind. According to her, the Brahmin’s sons are to borrow a cow first, then divide the total in deference to their father’s wish, and finally to return the cow to the person from whom it is borrowed. This points to the mathematical brain of the old Hindoos. A study of the fifth story brings us into an easy solution of a highly puzzling problem. This story deals with the jealous Brahmin husband torturing and killing his loyal wife, who out of sheer pity nursed and cured a mortally injured Kshatriya king while her husband had been away from home. The question, therefore, why fate inflicts punishment upon the

¹ F.W. Bain, *A Digt of the Moon, & A Draught of the Blue*, published together, p.21
innocent is the most baffling one that has puzzled the wise men of all ages. And it is answered with ease by Anangaraga who maintains that emancipation can be attained only by the innocent. Subarnashila's death is no punishment but liberation from the fetters of worldly life. Two things here stand out prominently for us to observe and study. First, Subarnashila is a shining specimen of a devoted Hindoo^ wife who having mildly rebuffed the amorous advances of the convalescing Kshatriya king persuades him to leave for his kingdom. Secondly, the Princess's easy, unhesitating answer to this grave question reveals a sound, exceptionally gifted, mind operating behind this solution. Such an answer is not expected from a woman, by nature not disposed to philosophising, but in Hindoo mythology Nâgas and Nâga-women are beings with extraordinary powers and gifts, and, therefore, able to provide solutions to problems that puzzle human beings. However, following the Princess's answer a bodiless voice^ fell from the sky commending her quickness of the mind. In the footnote (appended to p.34 of the book) Bain adds that the descent of a bodiless voice from the sky is an everyday phenomenon in Hindoo stories, and its presence in The Golden Ass of Apuleius places it beyond all doubt that he is indebted to India for the origin of his story. A different image of India is projected in the seventh story. The story deals with a rogue who having lost everything in gambling decides to live in the guise of an ascetic. He develops a fancy for Princess Hasamurti (laughter incarnate) from the moment he has seen her, and makes up his mind

2 F.W.Bain, A Heifer of the Pawn, p.73
3 F.W.Bain, A Diight of the Moon, p.34
to obtain her by hook or crook. He goes to a large tree within the
king's palace premises and hangs himself like a bat. Hasamurti
passes by the scene on three occasions, and bursts into a peal of
laughter every time as she passes. The ascetic gets angry, approa­
ches the king to cure his daughter of this 'disease'. The king some­
how convinced consents to it, and the ascetic goes into the inner
apartment of the princess who, however, sees through the ascetic's evil
intention to defile her, and the hypocrite is castrated forthwith and
set free. But he laughs as he goes away. Why does he laugh? Prin­
cess Anangaraga answers that cowardice of soul is the cause of the
hypocrite's laughter. Two things here deserve close examination.
First, the hanging of an ascetic like a bat was not unknown in the
hoary past in India. Bain refers to M. Rousselet who travelled in
India in the sixties of the nineteenth century, mentions, in his 'L*
Inde des Raj as', a case that he came across in Rajputana a holy man
who suspended himself in a tree 'like a ham'. Secondly, Hasamurti
is almost laughter incarnate and explodes into a lusty laughter as
if inspired by Shiva as she witnesses the amusing spectacle of an
ascetic hanging. Bain adds that 'loud laughter' (Atta-hasa) is the
name of Shiva, and that Kalidasa (in his Cloud, V.62) compares the
snowy peaks of Mount Kailas to Shiva's laughter 'rolled into a ball'.
And laughter in Sanskrit poetry is always white. Yet, again, a new
category of images of India is discovered in the eighteenth story.
This is the story of Yama (god of death) and Kamadeva (god of love).
Rasakosha asks Anangaraga to choose the stronger of the two. It is,
indeed, a puzzling mug question for the princess to answer. However,
she answers it with superlative intelligence. Kamadeva (cupid) is crafty and like a dishonest gambler loaded his dice to win. For in particular cases, and limited times, he seems to be the stronger. And, therefore, it was he who challenged Yama, knowing fairly well that all instances must be restricted to a place and time. Nevertheless, Yama is the stronger of the two. For he is incalculable and immeasurable, being Time itself (Kala, another name of Yama) without beginning or end, and that power whose nature is to transcend all bounds, cannot be displayed by particular instances as the infinite void cannot be covered at a single glance. The Princess’s answer savours of a sense of science and philosophy blended together, and this endows her with a penetrating insight into the heart of things like Time and Love. Another important point that presents itself for a careful examination is that the Princess turns pale while going to answer the question. This is possibly for two reasons: She turns pale because she perhaps thinks that her love for the king may have an end, but still more probably because she is afraid of offending the god of love by not deciding in his favour. The concluding story told by Basakosha reflects a very interesting image of India. This nineteenth story in the group tells of a Brahmin named Kritakrita (done and not done) and a Vampire (Vetala in Sanskrit). The Vampire demands fresh meat of a Brahmin. Kritakrita agrees on two conditions. First, the Vampire is to give him a pair of dice that will always win, and secondly, he will have to teach him a spell to revive the dead. As per agreement Kritakrita murders his brother for the Vampire’s meat, and next, tries his newly-learnt spell over a dead Chandala (the lowest caste in India). One
half of the dead body becomes alive, as Kritakrita utters incanta-
tions, with the other half scowling. The Vampire's spirit enters
the dead half. Kritakrita runs away in fear while the body of the
Chandala follows him ceaselessly uttering, 'Underdone, overdone,
underdone!' (Upadhikritamkritam). Ultimately Kritakrita throws
himself in the street and dies. Here retribution visits sin. Why
does Kritakrita breathe his last in this way? The coward, the Prin-
cess answers, who are too weak to be either virtuous or vicious are
punished by that very weakness in the form of their consciousness
of guilt, and lose both worlds. On the twentieth day, however, no
story is told. Rasakosha's nineteen questions tagged to the corre-
spoding number of stories fail to beat the Princess. King Surya-
kanta plucks up courage and approaches directly asking her 'What should
I ask you'? The Princess replies: O clever one, thou hast guessed.
And she accepts him as her husband. Love conquers where craft fails.
The king gives his newly-wed wife many a sweet name whereof Shasili-
kha - fair and fragile as a digit of the moon - is one. Bain does
not end the story here. He adds something more to it. Shiva burns
both Suryakanta and Shasilikha with his third eye, reduces them to
ashes, but allows them to be husband and wife in another birth. Bain
seems to be possessed of the Hindoo belief of a former birth, and
hereafter. Almost in every story of the cycle Bain refers to this
idea. However, as it is not possible to narrate, even briefly, all
the nineteen stories in the single love-story, i.e. A Digit of the
Moon, only a few important and relevant stories have been referred
to here in brief. Through the stories and answers to the questions
following them Bain projects the image of the ancient Hindoos, a race with an astonishing alertness of the mind, quickness of spirit, superlative intelligence, sound logical thinking and philosophic bent of mind, and above all, with exceptional powers and gifts. The *Digit of the Moon* also deals with varied aspects of Hindoo culture and religion. It introduces us to the idolatrous passion of the Hindoos with their gods and goddesses like Shiva, Ganesha, Yama, the Hindoo Cupid with five bewildering weapons, Durga, Saraswati and others. The story offers us a glimpse into the caste-system in Hindoo society with Brahmins and Kshatriyas at the top and the Chandalas, Doms and Shabaras at the lowest rung of the ladder of caste-hierarchy. Stories within a story here point to the intellectual discipline and the inventive power with which the ancient Hindoos presented to the world almost an inexhaustible fund of stories, like *Panchatantra, Ketala-panchavimasti, Katha-sarit-sagara* by Somadeva, *Dasakumardharita, Suka-Saptati* and *Brhat-Katha-Manjari* by Ksemendra, constructed with an amazing power of ingenuous harmony.

*The Digit of the Moon* also does not fail to refer to the superb beauty and richness of Sanskrit literature with its use of expressive similes, telling metaphors, name coinages like Rasakosha, Anagaraga, and Suryakanta, capable of forked meanings, and fables intensifying human feelings and emotions. In the seventh story Bain refers to Kalidasa's *Cloud* where India's immortal poet compares the snowy peaks of Kailas to Shiva's peal of laughter. Here, again, Bain makes a copious use of fables, so frequent in
 Sanskrit literature, expressive of human feelings, emotions and passions. The crane is a by-word for villainy; the Chakravaka or the Brahmary drake, is fabled to spend the night languishing for the absence of his mate and she for him. The swan is fabled to possess the power of separating milk from water. And this fable is cleverly used by Bain in the sixth story for Kantigraha to choose the most beautiful amongst a king's three queens, equally beautiful. Bain also displays artistic ingenuity like the Sanskrit writers of old in name coinages. Rasakosha means both "a ball of mercurry" and "a repository of taste, wit, literary flavours, a sort of living encyclopaedia". The king's companion, a court-jester, is almost an indispensable figure in Hindoo drama. He is a Sancho Panza without the vulgarity and the humour. Anangaraga means the passion or the rosy-blush of love, and Suryakanta means a lover or son of the race of the sun or one whose beauty is as dazzling as the sun's. Bain is enamoured of the peculiar genius, delicate beauty, potentiality and elasticity of the Sanskrit language in its use of one and the same word expressing two different ideas at the same time. In his preface to In the Great God's Hair Bain pays a glowing tribute to the 'prismatic' beauty of this classic tongue lying in the power of dexterous ambiguity. The 'studied double, treble, manifold signification of its words lends to the classic tongue a sort of verbal sheen, a perpetual undercurrent of indirect suggestion, a by-play of allusion, a
prismatic beauty, of which no other language can convey the least idea. Again, in the first as well as in the eleventh story Bain makes a pointed reference to the Indian Yoga (intense concentration) by means of which the soul can be detached from the body. Moreover, he gathers information about the Nāgas from Katha-Sarit-Sagara I.6. Nāgas there are presented as creatures of serpent nature, but often confounded with men. Their women, like Anangarage here, are of exceptional loveliness.

Nevertheless, varying images relating to Hindoo philosophy, religion, Sanskrit literature, caste-hierarchy, kings and court-jesters have been reflected in this work of fiction. Such images are the outcome of judicative, ethical, and aesthetic assessments of various aspects of Hindoo life and culture. These images, again, constitute an absorbing and exciting theme which has been treated by the writer here with a striking power of ingenuity. The image of India in Bain's A Digit of the Moon is not what it is in either Kipling or Mrs. Steel. Bain's deeply inquisitive mind turns him away from the whirlpool of politics to an entirely different sphere where the cultural heart of ancient India beats.

The Descent of the Sun (1903) is a work of fiction dealing with a Vedic myth on the scenic grandeur of sundown. It exudes a mystical aroma: The Heavenly Lustre of the Descent (Incarnation) of Him who took three steps (rise, zenith and set of the sun) as indicated in the Rig-Veda I.22.17 (Three steps did Vishnu stride...
thrice did he set down his foot). Bain's story deals with the inverted cycle of the sun—thereby giving a different turn to the old Hindoo solar myth. Here the steps do not begin with the rise, but with the set of the sun; his Going Down, his mysterious period of darkness, his Reappearance.

The plot of this work of fiction is woven around the amorous relationship of Kamalamitra (Sun-Purusha) and Anushayani (a devoted wife—Prakriti). Both of them are of divine origin, and are doomed to mortal birth by the curse of Papanashana, a sage. This forms the 'sunset' section of the story. The 'night' section deals with the sufferings and consequent purification of Amara Singha and Shri, mortal names of heavenly Kamalamitra and Anushayani. The harrowing agonies they experience are mainly due to terrestrial illusions so cunningly artfully conjured up by the fiction-writer through the introduction of guileful Yakshas, Rakshasas, Pisachas, and Hamadryads and the mirage in the desert. However, in course of time they become aware of their former birth and are spiritually reunited, although they lose their mortal bodies through unforeseen turns and twists of events as depicted in this work of fiction. This, however, heralds the advent of 'dawn' signifying their emancipation from the fetters of mortal life. The story concludes with the 'dawn' section dealing with the restoration of their immortal natures and the subsequent soaring heavenward of their liberated souls. This work of art is characterised by the architectonic

5 F.W. Bain, The Descent of the Sun, p. 47
quality as the main theme of damnation, suffering and salvation has been treated in the work through three well-constructed sections of 'sunset', 'night', and 'dawn' with a marvellous power of striking ingenuity.

Bain cleverly uses here the Vedic origin of the myth for his own purpose, and skillfully fits his knowledge of the Sankhya Philosophy of Kapila into the texture of his story. This school of Philosophy (older than Thales) holds that it is the duty of PURUSHĀ, the arche-type of the spirit of man, the Primeval Male, to pursue PRAKRITI, the female personification of material nature, the Eternal Feminine, till he finds her: when instantly she disappears 'like an actress'. In the introduction to the story Bain refers to a Hindu commoner Viswanath's awareness of the immortality of soul (na jayate mriyate wa kadachit) as advocated in The Bhagavad Gita. 'Metempsychosis, transmigration, everlasting incarnation and re-incarnation in body after body, birth after birth - all Hindu literature is but the kaleidoscopic reiteration of this one identical idea .........', Bain maintains like one convinced of this idea, and in story after story gives vent to it. He also comes to believe that the Indian Yoga, i.e. intense concentration, enables one to grasp 'the whole truth by an intuition', and discovers in it 'a kernel of truth'. Bain employs, to a great effect, a simile drawn from astronomy of the old Hindus where Orion, the ninth sign of the Lunar zodiac, is believed to follow Rohini, the tenth of the same as

6 F.W. Bain, The Descent of the Sun, p. 15
expiation follows guilt. He does not fail to record Western debt to Hindoo stories, and asserts that the legend of St. Anthony is but a Western echo of the stories of fairies like Menaka and Tilottama, whom the jealous gods used as weapons to destroy the virtue of sages whose long penance reached enormous proportions so as to terrify the immortal gods. Bain perhaps appreciates the wisdom of the ancient Hindoos to whom this world was but an illusion. He creates illusion in this story through the use of guileful Yakshas, Pisachas, Rakshasas and Hamadrayads, who could change shapes according to their will. In projecting the image of an Indian Wairagi Bain records his debt to the third section of the Centuries of Bhartrihari wherefrom the meaning of the term can be best understood. He perhaps grows effusive, unlike the British accustomed to the elaborate toilettes of Western ladies, over 'Sari', traditionally worn by Hindoo women through the centuries till to-day. The taste, beauty, and grace of the way in which this long piece of stuff reveals without betraying the curves and contours of its wearer can hardly be surpassed by anything.

The Descent of the Sun, though designed and constructed by Bain, is imbued with the spirit of ancient India. Three broad categories of images relating to the Vedas, the Sankhya Philosophy of Kapila, and the Hindoo ideas of former birth and hereafter

7 F.W. Bain, The Descent of the Sun, p.11
8 Ibid., p.47
9 Ibid., p.84
emerge in this work of fiction. Such carefully selected images are the outcome of a deeply judicative and highly aesthetic evaluation of some aspects of the Indian cultural traditions, and these images testify to an attitude of regard and sympathy with which the creative writer responds to the Indian values. These images, again, form an absorbing and exciting theme which has been used to a great effect with marvellous artistic skill in this work of fiction.

A Heifer of the Dawn (1904) is a work of fiction dealing with an arresting story of love. 'Heifer' in the Oriental sense signifies 'a wife' or 'a queen', and the title means the ambrosia of the early morning in a feminine form, corresponding to the idea enshrined in the Rig-Veda iii.30,14 (Wisham Swadma Sambhriram Usriyayam). A Heifer of the Dawn is an artfully constructed work of fiction. Diplomatic love - by means of which a king seeks to conquer an enemy king through the marriage of his daughter with the latter - forms the main theme of the book. But the outright rejection of such a clever proposal brings into the scene a pretty 'Chedi' whose primeval feminine crafts and guiles finally succeed in overcoming that king so reluctant to marry a second time. Twelve flowers such as Mango, Patali, Jasamine, Champak, Lotus, Sripala, Shirisha, Kadamba, Amaranth, Ashoka, Palasha, and Shami symbolise varied moods of the enticed King from initial scorn to final heart-consuming love and this device has been scrupulously employed by the writer in course of the fictional art. The use of 'Shami' at the last dawn is very interesting to
note. For this yellow flower is said to be gifted with the power of emotion, and Kalidasa calls the Shami 'Abhyantaralinapawakam', a flower with fire in its heart. Its use in this work of fiction is in harmony with the heart-consuming cupidity of the primarily unwilling king. The work ends on a note of erotic success in subsequent marriage.

Bain, after the Hindoo story-writers, assigns to the 'Chedi' a role to speak, as here, on behalf of the Princes, and introduces a woman door-keeper, Pratihari, who existed in the Royal courts of ancient India to which Sanskrit writers make frequent references. Grammar, to the Hindoos of old, was a gateway to all sciences, and as such, was studied by them sometimes for years, and often all their life-long. Here the king advises his daughter to be adept in the grammar of love before choosing a husband. Batsayana's 'Kama-Sutra' survives the passage of ages as a document of absorbing sexology dealing with the essential verities and subtleties of love and sex-life. Again, in Bain very often we find depiction of the Indian natural scenery with an amount of sympathy and spirit of understanding noticed but rarely in Steel, and never in Myers. He delineates an abiding pen-picture of a weary, tiresome but hushed midday in the blazing sunshine (recalling Arnold's 'the live murmur of a summer's day' conveying a state of somnolence) with lotuses, on the lake slumbering below, shining silvery under the


11 Ibid., p.8
dazzling sun, with birds perched on trees, and bees honey-drugged in flowers, the forest quietened, and leaves having forgot to rustle. Hardly any other British writer on India before or after Bain has ever reproduced a midday scene in India with such sympathy and understanding. Kipling and Myers would note it obviously with a whimper as, to them, a mid-summer's day in India is infernally hot.

Nevertheless, four broad types of images relating to the Rig-Veda, Hindoo grammar of love, Hindoo tradition of story-writing and the Indian natural scenery have been projected in this work of fiction. Such images result from a profoundly aesthetic assessment of some aspects of life and nature in India. These images, again, constitute a stimulating and entertaining subject-matter which has been scrupulously used here with rare artistic skill.

A Draught of the Blue (1905) is a work of fiction enshrining the story of Rudralaka, a Rajput king with philandering habits, and Alichumbita, his wife. The plot of the work has been cleverly contrived by the creative artist to convey the final message of retribution visiting sin. Rudralaka belongs to a good caste and is a Rajput, and Alichumbita, too, is an exceedingly beautiful woman of noble birth. She is not independent, and relies on her father for her marriage, although destiny does it otherwise. A sense of fatalism, therefore, is sometimes at work in the fictional

12 F.W. Bain, A Heifer of the Dawn, p. 68
world of Bain, and the unwarranted marriage of a willing king and the unwilling daughter of a hermit ends here in disaster. The union of Rudralaka and Alichumbita is fleeting like a dream and Alichumbita vanishes whereon the king goes mad and looks for the dream-selling old man whose head suddenly came off his neck and hung by the beard. This anticipates by analogy Shakespeare's anthropophagi 'whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders'.

The creative writer keeps close to the Hindoo tradition of story-writing in many respects. Like the Hindoo writers of old he deals almost exclusively with Kings and Queens of high descent, and makes no room in his works of fiction for the people of India to step in and breathe freely. The Indian people drop out of his literary canvas. He is fond of dealing with the people of high life, but the common people do not find a proper place in Bain's scheme of things. He makes only casual references to the Indian people as in the introduction to _A Mine of Faults_ as 'dusky millions.' But Bain is fond, like most other British writers dealing with India, of the _kamzi_ heroic and fair-looking Rajputs. In almost every story, as here, he deals with a Rajput or a Rajputani. Bain is also fond of the moon in the Indian sky. This 'cold-rayed' orb has been described in the story as the landing place of Shiva and Uma. For he holds that the moon, according to some philosophers, is the abode of those pure spirits, who have purified themselves in former births sufficiently to claim a certain grade of beatitude or bliss.¹³

¹³ F.W. Bain, _A Draught of the Blue_, p. 95
ever, as Alichumbita and the King sit together, evening gradually settles down upon the scene which is beautifully depicted in this work of fiction. As the spirit of evening glides down upon earth the tranquil crystalline water of the river mirrors beneath reflections of the cranes, a pair of swans upon the brink, and the peacock on the temple wall glittering in the fading light at sunset. It is, indeed, a loving picture of a calm evening drawn with sympathy, and would linger long in the mind.

Nevertheless, three broad types of images corresponding to Hindoo philosophy, Hindoo tradition of narrative art, and the quiet aspect of the natural scenery have been projected in this work of fiction. It is of absorbing interest to note that these images representing some specific aspects of the cultural traditions of the Hindoos of old have been scrupulously used by the creative writer as an exciting subject-matter in this work of art. Such wisely chosen images, again, are the offspring of an aesthetic assessment of Indian values. It is, therefore, obvious that they reveal an attitude of genuine understanding with which the fiction-writer responds to the cultural heritage of India.

Beauty persecuted by snake forms the theme of An Essence of the Dusk (1905). It is a work of fiction embodying a story of love between Aja and Jashowati, born on earth for some faults in the former birth, living through harrowing suffering and excruciating agony till finally liberated from the trammels of mortal life by the biting of the snake-woman. The work achieves
a fine blending of reality and romance. It is a story of love impeded and harassed by illusions, and guiles of Wetals, Rakshasas, Vultures, and Gridnis. In his treatment of Vultures and Gridnis Bain perhaps comes under the influence of Metalapanchevinsati. In the preface to the story Bain projects the image of India as a land of the moon, and the lotus, and the snake, former births and second sights, and in the course of the fictional art he depicts the magic power of the Naga of blearing the eye which appealed powerfully to Spenser and Sir Walter Scott. It is interesting to note here that Bain whose primary concern is to reflect the image of ancient India in the context of fictional art makes us aware for the first time here of one aspect of medieval India where the Thugs murdered everyone but a beautiful woman. Philip Meadows Taylor in Confessions of a Thug mirrors the faithful picture of India during the period from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the plot of the work has been cleverly constructed in tune with the Rahu legend of the old Hindoo. Rahu, the demon, in the guise of a god, mingled with the gods assembled on the occasion of the churning up of the nectar to share. The Sun and the Moon detected it. Vishnu cut his body from his head with his discus. So "no body and all head" is a by-word for Rahu. That is why Rahu takes revenge by eclipsing the Sun and the Moon. The snake-woman who had been the frustrated lady-love of Aja in the former birth retaliates now by destroying both Aja and Yashowati physically, thereby

14 F.W. Bain, An Essence of the Dusk, p.23

15 Ibid., p.39
making a tragic end of their profound love. In fact, as a work of art the book succeeds in harmonising breathing reality and mythology into a unified experience.

However, two categories of images relating to the Rahu legend and jealousy of women have been artfully interwoven into a close-knit plot-structure of this work. It is, therefore, crystal clear that such images form a new theme in this species of fiction and help to bring in new features in the mainstream of British fiction. Exploration of novel themes picked up from an exotic environment of human activity is a new phenomenon in the fictional world, and Bain exploits such subject-matters to a striking effect in his works of fiction dealing with India. The employment of such wisely chosen images certainly points to a judicative assessment of the aesthetic aspect of Indian life and culture. They also do not fail to reveal an attitude of sympathetic understanding with which the creative writer responds to Hindoo culture in this work of fiction.

An Incarnation of the Snow (1908) is half a work of fiction and half a tale. In it a Swan tells the story of its former birth, when as the son of a king he married the daughter of a Yogi, but because of another yogi's curse he murdered his wife, and mourns now the disaster of which he himself is the cause. Maheswara tells Gouri that man resents his evil actions later. Hereditary transmission of good or evil as advocated in the old Indian theory of metapsychosis forms the main theme of this work.
The story incorporates the creative writer's warmth of feeling with which he responds, like most British writers on India to Buddhism. A portrait is drawn here of a Buddhist mendicant who tells the king of hereditary transmission of good or evil. It is also maintained in the course of the story that Schopenhauer must have been a Hindoo sage in a former birth because it was he who admired so much the striking coincidence of the old Indian theory of metapsychosis and modern scientific ideas. Through this is projected the image of the wise men of India gifted with mystic vision of the past and the future. It is not fatalism so much as it is determinism, for a person has to bear the consequences of his deeds in the former birth, because actions in the previous birth determine the shape of things in the present. So the queen's son described in this narrative inherits the evil of blood-thirst and slaughters his wife. For his mother on the eve of giving birth to him desired to bathe in human blood, and she is modelled on such a woman found in Kathasaritsagar. It is interesting to note how artfully the creative writer interweaves this idea derived from a Hindoo story and the old Indian theory of metapsychosis into a harmonious plot-fabric.

Bain reflects the image of a pre-eminent ancient India. Even though he writes in the twentieth century, he chooses to explore the forgotten riches of a land with a glorious past. His imagination like that of a romanticist revels in the distant enchantment of the past, and he skips over the centuries to recapture in his

16 F.W. Bain, An Incarnation of the Snow, pp. 20-21
17 Ibid., p. 18
In his preface to the story Bain refers to the antiquity of Hinduism. Incarnation is originally a Hindoo idea known to India better with a marked degree of assurance than to Egypt, long before Christianity came into existence. To Bain the Protestant missionary in pure impertinence, the Thames is less holy than the Ganges, and Benares alone with calm-eyed, cool-faced sages with faith in monotheism, though called by many a name, is more religious than all the London Churches put together. Bain holds that Christian melancholy theism is but a segment of the joyous Hindoo mystical polytheism. He feels the sublime spirit of holiness and beatitude of Hindoo religion. A study of the prefatory note also makes it evident that Bain, a lover of calm and quiet, keeps aloof from dabbling politics. So when the Prince of Wales pays a historic visit to India in 1905, and when almost the entire country goes restive with brisk activity, he steals away on to the top of the Marhatta Fort where he seems to be endowed like an old 'yogi' with the sixth sense, and listens to the music of the spheres to which Patanjali refers. And as Bain proceeds towards the Fort he notices the tranquil, soothing, and pleasing scenic beauty of nature and experiences a plethora of joy. On his way he comes across a little babbling brook, with swarms of tiny minnows seen clearly through the crystal water, flocks of parrots screaming about the trees, and 'a cool delicious forest path, like the very road to the bower of a sleeping beauty'. Bain is a profound

18 F.W. Bain, *An Incarnation of the Snow*, Preface
lover of the Moon in India. In the preface to this story he maintains that all old Hindoo literature is a long hymn to the Moon. The Moon creates a dreamy atmosphere, a strange holy twilight, and every common mortal is entranced by that power. In the preface, he gives the Moon many a sweet name like 'The Star of the Eve', 'the Diadem of the Deity', 'Planet of the Dusk', 'Mistress of Herbs', 'Medicine of the Soul' and a 'Midnight Madona'.

Besides, Bain is fond of Indian dawn, dusk, lotus, lake, swans, snow and snow-capped mountains. The old philosophical idea of the Hindoos that this world is all illusion is echoed here, too. The motley spectacles of the world are but shapes, images, phantoms and appearances of one true reality. Bain draws in the story an abiding pen-picture of an ideal hermitage in India, 'And there I found myself in a glade, studded with colossal trees, banyans and sacred pippals, whose ascending and descending roots and branches wound and twisted about with affection, like limbs of human bodies. And all round them in their shade, were browsing innumerable deer which raised their heads to look at me, unstirred, since every form of fear was banished from the secluded place. And I saw, in the distance, the thin blue lines of sacrificial smoke rising from their fires, like prayers visible to the eye, straight up into the air as though to say, from this exact spot is the shortest way to heaven. And near me was a smooth black pool, strewn with great white lotus flowers, besides which, on the edge, great cranes were sitting motionless in rows, like meditating.

19 F.W. Bain, An Incarnation of the Snow, pp. 80-81
'munis', and a little way behind them there were other rows of jars, left there beyond a doubt by the daughters of the hermits after watering their flowers, not more motionless than the birds.  

A study of this story confirms the impression that Bain writes like one with a firm conviction about the meaningfulness of Hindoo religion, philosophy and literature.

Nevertheless, two broad images relating to Hindoo philosophy and literature are reflected in this work of art, and they constitute an exciting and entertaining theme which has been exploited by the creative writer to a good effect here. Such images are central to the plot-construction in the fictional world of Bain, and are the outcome of a profoundly judicative assessment of the aesthetic aspects of Hindoo culture. The use of such well-chosen images certainly represents an attitude of keen interest and deep regard with which the fiction-writer reacts to Indian values.

* A Mine of Faults (1909) is a mature work of fiction in which diplomacy and love have been skillfully interwoven into a harmonious fabric of plot-structure. The creative artist has taken a meticulous care in the novel to depict the superiority of erotic diplomacy to political diplomacy. Mitra of the race of the Sun, and Chand of the Moon, kings of two contiguous states are sworn enemies. In order to maintain the Kingdoms in tact in peace and to forge a cordial tie between the two kings Yogeswara, Prime Minister of Mitra, devises a policy to marry Mitra's daughter

20 F.W. Bain, An Incarnation of the Snow, p.27
to dead Chand's young son - also named Chand. But young Chand, a misogynist, refuses to fall into the trap. So the Princess uses her tramp card - feminine crafts and charms. This is how she overcomes Chand. Her diplomacy succeeds while Yogeswara's diplomacy fails. The novel ends on a note of happiness with Chand, initially averse to marriage, finallycourtingmatrimony under the overwhelming power of love. As a work of art the novel reaches a high water-mark of perfection as the creative writer has deftly depicted here the correlation of diplomacy and love in scintillating prose. It is of absorbing interest to note how Bain exploits his knowledge of the Panchatantra and Kalidasa's Kumara-Sambhava21 in the well-planned construction of the plot of this work.

This artful plot-construction confirms the inference that Bain's stories are not translations from the Sanskrit original, but they are shaped by Bain with outlines and fragments collected from varied spheres of Hindu lore. The overt purpose of the creative artist in this story is to exhibit to the West a specimen of an ancient Hindu love-affair where love and craft have been skillfully harmonised into an organic whole. This sort of love-affair provides an exciting experience to the present generation of men and women. Even Yogeswara, the astute Prime Minister of Mitra, to whom 'the best way to hear is to overhear, and to see is to hear'22 admits that he is but a baby in matters of diplomacy in comparison with this exceptional woman23. In his introduction to this work of fiction

21 F.W.Bain, A Mine of Faults, p.11, p.13
22 Ibid., p.36
23 Ibid., p.70
Bain refers to the traditional British image of the old Hindoos deemed deficient in the art of politics. But he maintains that the Greeks, believed to have invented politics, invented policy only. He claims that the author of the Panchatantra had in him as much policy as Thucydides. The Hindoo term 'niti', means, not so much policy, as diplomacy, and their 'niti-shastra', or doctrine of policy, refers rather to the clear conduct of affairs in negotiations than to anything else. The Hindoos of old include under politics love-affairs, in which, as in the present story, the special quality required, according to Bhartrihari, is craft. However, after consumation of this love-affair into marriage, old Yogeswara retires to Benares. Bain thereby reflects here the image of the ancient Hindoos retiring in old age to a holy place to spend the rest of their life in peace with the divine spirit. This practice persists even to-day.

Nevertheless, two broad types of images representing Hindoo love-affairs and 'niti-shastra' have been projected here in the context of the fictional art. Such images form a stimulating and entertaining theme which has been treated by the creative writer with a meticulous care in this work of fiction. The clever use of the knowledge of the Panchatantra and Kumara-Sambhava in the plot-structure of the work puts the reader into a new and exciting experience. Such images, again, result from a sympathetic assessment of the aesthetic significance of Indian cultures. They also serve as an adequate clue to the understanding of the attitude with which

24 F.W. Bain, A Mine of Faults, p. 103
the British creative writer interprets Indian values. In this case, of course, these images reveal the fiction-writer's appreciative approach to Indian cultural traditions.

**Bubbles of the Foam (1912)** is Bain's next work of fiction which deals with a short love-story. Its title bears a forked meaning, by reason of the ambiguity of the last word, suggesting Love and the Moon. Love or the Moon is as fragile as a bubble. For the Moon, like the goddess of love, rose originally from the sea. The plot of the work develops through the portrayal of the central character of Atirupa, a sensual, jilting philanderer who coaxes and seduces beautiful young women like Aranyani into submission. The creative artist depicts here the gradual moral degeneration of the licentious Rajput Prince till he is killed and his spirit enters into another mortal body. This is how retribution visits sin. The Hindoo idea of the transmigration of souls as analogous to that of Pythagoras is skillfully exploited in this story to a great effect. Babhru, the woodman, loves Aranyani who is beguiled into loving Atirupa who, of course, does not reciprocate her love. And this makes Aranyani raise a vital question of profound erotic significance, 'Can it be .......... that of every pair of lovers, one only loves'? The creative writer notes with care in the introduction to this work of fiction that four things, viz. the Forest, the River, the Hills and the Desert almost always appear in Hindoo literature. His concern in this story is mainly with the desert (Marusthal), and as such the work incorporates **

25 F.W. Bain, *Bubbles of the Foam*, p.76
two interesting sections entitled 'The Thirst of the Antelope' and 'The Desert and the Night'. The first section mentioned above depicts the unquenchable carnality of Atirupa while the last one conjures up illusion which hurls morally degraded Atirupa into the abyss of infernal suffering and blinding darkness. In another section captioned 'A Dappled Dawn' the writer depicts a forest. But desert illusion plays a vital part in the plot-structure of this story as it often does in Sanskrit literature. Deer-water or 'thirst of the antelope' (mrigatrisnika) is as early as Patanjali's Mahabhasya. In this work of art the South-West of India is used as a background against which events and situations develop in the story. In the introduction to the story Bain makes a veiled reference to the mistakes of the British writers, like E.M. Forster, who fail to see things with the eyes of the old Hindoos as some of them begin with Ceylon and the adjacent coasts of Coromandel and Malabar. He regrets the British apotheosis of the North, and maintains that this is due to the almost proverbial ignorance of the British of the South of India, the storehouse of Hindu cultural heritage. This work of fiction embodies the creative writer's knowledge of Kalidasa's Abhigramasakuntala which is fully exploited in the story. The proposal of Babhru, a woodman, to marry Princess Aranyani meets with a sharp retort from her that a king's son may marry her, 'Did not Dushwanta discover Sakuntala ..............'? The characters like Bimba, Jaya, and Atirupa drawn in this work are all Rajputs who capture the imagination of the British, even captivate them, with their heroic physique and spirit. It is interesting to note here that through the depiction of the forest in the section
christened 'A Dappled Dawn' the creative writer transfers Jaya, the usurped king, with Aranyani, his daughter, from the vitiated atmosphere of court life to a genial climate in the bosom of nature. In the introduction to this story Bain maintains that the remedy for the matter-sick West lies in the imperturbable calm of India. He seems to be sceptical of the Liberty of the West, and doubts if Liberty, Science, Literature, and Sex are taking her to some cherished goal. He, therefore, suggest emancipation of Europe on ancient Indian lines, at least from vulgarity, and asks the West to find out in the ashes of the ancient Oriental creeds, a spark to rekindle the expiring candle of her own. Bain appears here to rail at the Western way of life and believes that the fretful hurry and worry of the West would vanish in the cozy, quiet bosom of Indian nature. This comparison between the East and the West may sound bizarre to other British writers like F.A. Steel, for the balance of such a comparison weighs heavily against the British, while Steel's balance of comparison tilts always in favour of the British.

Nevertheless, four broad types of images relating to morality, transmigration of souls, Sanskrit Literature and the healing influence of nature are reflected in this work of fiction. The awareness of poetic justice so evident in retribution is visiting sin inevitably leads to a judicative and philosophical assessment of an ethical question which forms the main theme of this work. It is also interesting to note how artfully the creative artist fits his knowledge of a Sanskrit drama into the texture of the plot of the work. Again, the natural scenery with its beneficent
influence on troubled humanity receives here a sympathetic treatment. All these images are characterised by an aesthetic significance, and are representative of a genuine understanding of India and Indian values.

Bain's next work of fiction is *In the Great God's Hair* (1912). The Hindoo idea that husband is a good wife's god forms the main theme of the work. It depicts in a gripping manner the profound love and enduring marriage of Ranga, a young handsome Rajput Prince, and Wenawallari (forest-creaper), the daughter of a Rajput King. The type and model of all devoted wives, the Sati, is Parwati, the wife of Hara (Shiva). They two constitute the symbol of wedded harmony, and are regarded as having but a single body which they share: he is the god, whose other, or left half, is his wife, and Sanskrit poets compare their relation to that obtaining between a word and its meaning. Ranga was ousted from the throne by his maternal uncle at the age of eighteen, and wandered from place to place in disguise having discarded all gods and goddesses except Lakshmi. But Lakshmi's blessings and Wenawallari's virtues as a good wife bring about Ranga's redemption and subsequent restoration to the throne. The title of the work signifies either the hair-jewel of the moon-crested god, or the universal pre-eminence of world-wildering Aphrodite, perhaps the Western counterpart of Shree, Hindoo Goddess of Beauty and Fortune, who reduces the pride of god, demons, and all the rest of creation. It is interesting to note how the creative artist succeeds here in interweaving the Ardhanariswer concept of wedded harmony, the dexterous ambiguity in one and the same
Sanskrit word, and the overwhelming power of Lakshmi into a concordant fabric.

Nevertheless, two types of images relating to Hindu philosophy and the Sanskrit language are projected in the work of fiction. The scrupulous use of these images in the context of the fictional art here testifies to a judicative assessment of the cultural heritage of the ancient Hindoos, and lends an aesthetic verve to this literary creation. These images are also important in so far as they constitute a new and stimulating theme in this category of British fiction. They also indicate a sympathetic attitude with which the creative artist seeks here to interpret Indian values.

The Ashes of a God (1913) is another work of fiction by Bain. It deals with the resurrection of dead love. Love's ashes may be called a phoenix, already ready to spring back into life. In the language of the old Hindoos - youth is a blunder: manhood a struggle: old age a regret. And regret is nothing but the ashes of dead love, not utterly extinct, therefore, since all love is more or less divine, 'the ashes of a god'. The main plot - fabric of the work is woven around the portrayal of the character of Trisodadhi (an ocean of thirst) who for the supposed unchastity of Watsataari, his wife, went in sheer frustration to the Windhya Hills having thereby left her to the unsafe custody of Ruru, a voluptuous king. There he spent a pretty long time in meditation and became a mountain of merit which threatened the
immortal denizens of heaven. However, situations have been cleverly devised in the course of the development of the plot to allure Tri-
sodadhi, now an ascetic by compulsion, into a fresh love-life, and ultimately they bring about the restoration of suspended love. But Tri-
sodadhi's love for his wife and the gods was not pure and genu-
ing, and as a result he has to suffer by way of several lower re-
births as indicated in Indra's anathema uttered against this boasting Brahmin, '........................ regret for the things of sense was not extinct in thee, and the sparks of vanity and egoism
and delusion, in the form of women lay lurking in the ashes of thy soul ........ And thou hast been guilty of sinister designs
against heaven, springing not from the seed of true and single-
hearted resignation, but selfishness and wounded vanity and malice.
Be a dog without a tail, an ape, a worm, a Rakshasa, and a jackal,
and a domba, and a leather-worker, and a chandala, and a woman.
For this action of thine has dyed thy soul with so indelible a
stain, that the ocean could more easily divest at itself of colour
and brine, than thy soul will find it to regain its crystal purity,
by cleansing its essence of such an inky blot26. Almost in every
Indian story of Bain, as here also, people suffer terrible conse-
quences of sins committed in a former birth. This has been made
amply evident through the portrayal of the character of Ruru who
admits the ruling power of destiny and fate in human life, 'I am
the plaything of a destiny that I fastened on myself by sins committed
in a former birth'27. On another occasion Ruru maintains, 'Ha !

26 F.W. Bain, The Ashes of a God, p. 112
27 Ibid., p. 82
very wonderful is the terrible mystery of the consequence of works, bound in whose adamantime chain we move, and blunder, not seeing where we go, not knowing what we do, bringing about with open eyes the very opposite of the end at which we aim. It is important to note that determinism is at work in the fictional world of Bain while fatalism dominates in Hardy's novelistic scheme of things.

A study of the preface to this work of fiction is also important in so far as it enables a rediscovery of Indian mythology, religion, and literature. Here Bain deprecates Europe's lack of sufficient appreciation of the ethical value of India's beautiful mythology. He points out that the arrogance of ignorance is the cause of misunderstanding India as an antique land of polytheism. He finds 'in the ruin of all their ancient glories, the one thing that remains to them is the thesaurus of religion and mythology preserved, like palaeozoic flies in amber, in the crystal of their ancient tongue, whose presiding genius is the moon'. Bain notes with care that religion and literature in India are blended into a harmonious whole while they are just two distinct entities to the West, though sometimes a Dante or a Milton welds them together, producing something analogous to Indian poetry.

In the preface, again, Bain claims that ignorance of Sanskrit is the cause of not understanding ancient India properly. For Sanskrit is the key to India, and from it all modern local idioms, be they Aryan or not, borrow almost everything literary, religious or

philosophical that they savour of. None can alter the religion of the Hindoos without obliterating first their languages, ancient and modern, like Sanskrit and Pali, their vernaculars, 'with Tulsi Das and Tukaram, and a score of other Bibles of Hindoo peoples, besides the legion of their legends, stories, proverbs, festivals, and songs'. Bain adds that fed upon these the ancient Hindoo ascetic with an austere living cannot be reconciled with the ease-loving, horse-riding, well-housed and wife-embracing Christian missionaries. He also frankly admits that the Christian missionaries were interested more in converting to Christianity people of other faiths than in spiritual pursuit. They were holding a brief for a religion which, according to Bain, was discarded by the intelligentsia of Europe. In the preface, again, Bain pays a high tribute to Buddha, 'the missionary par excellence', who, although a born aristocrat, renounced the world, and after years of meditation, cut off from a life of passions and desires, comforts and pleasures, attained Nirvana. Bain is sympathetically disposed towards both Hinduism and Buddhism. Hinduism, as Bain understands, means devotion of a wife to her husband, of a man to his duty, his 'dharma', his predecessors, his family, and his mother-tongue. A Hindoo of a respectable family abhors to be a renegade, to forsake his ancestors, to be cut off from his family, to eat beef, and drink alcohol, and seek divorces. Bain goes so far as to say that he finds the same phenomenon in the India of to-day. He insists that a high-born Hindoo is the custodian of Indian culture, while people of low birth defect to other faiths, to Christianity in particular
which, according to him, is 'an asylum for the outcaste, and the criminal and the parish, a refuge for the destitute, like Romulean Rome in Livy's legend'.

Nevertheless, three broad types of images representing the deterministic philosophy, false love and fake asceticism inevitably followed by perilous consequences, and the idea of re-birth have been reflected in this work of fiction. They have been artfully integrated into the plot-structure of the work, and signify the creative artist's judicative evaluation of the aesthetic aspect of the cultural traditions of the Hindoos of old. The employment of such images emphasises a favourable disposition with which the creative writer reacts to Indian values. It is also obvious that such images form a new theme which has been used to a great effect in Bain's works of fiction. Exploration of fresh grounds and unknown territories by way of thematic novelty here certainly enriches the main tradition of British fiction.

A Syrup of the Bees (1914) is partly a work of fiction and partly a myth. It narrates in scintillating prose the story of a Widyadhari, Makarandika by name, who marries, beneath her caste, a mortal named Arunodaya, and thereby incurs the wrath of Smaradasa, a Widyadhara, who loves Makarandhika. Therefore, she deserves to be punished. No death penalty is meted out to her, but a plot is craftily contrived in which the husband, after deserting her, would marry another woman. 'For as a rule a rival is like
a 'Kalakuta' to every woman. The Widyadharas, therefore, lure the soul out of Arunodaya's body by means of a magic drug. And Arunodaya in dream cries out, 'Sarojini, Sarojini', which excites Makarandika's jealousy. Subsequently, Arunodaya breathes his last. This is how Makarandika is revenged upon for having married beneath her caste. The plot-structure in the story is Bain's own. In it he emphasises the ancient Hindoo idea of not marrying beneath one's own caste, the charm and power of the Widyadharas in creating illusions, and jealousy of women. In matter it is ancient, but in treatment, arrangement of ideas, and plot-construction the story is Bain's own. With an awareness of the affinities and distinctions between the fairy tales of India and those of Europe the creative artist here constructs an interesting plot. In the preface to the story Bain refers to the fairy tales of India differing from those of England. The faires of Europe are kiddies and the fairy stories are addressed to children. But the Indian fairy stories are addressed to the grown-up, and the fairies are grown-up, half-way between the mortals and the gods. Three characteristics of an Indian fairy strike Bain viz. first, possessor of sciences or magic for which they bear the name 'Widyadhara' equivalent to English wizard; secondly, they are shape-changers at will (Kam-rupa), and finally, their element is air; they live in the air, and are denominated 'sky-goers', 'sky-roamers', 'air-wanderers'. European wizards behave unlike Indian fairies, and are extraordinarily touchy and violently resentful of scorn or

29 F.W. Bain, A Syrup of the Bees, p. 81
slight. Wizards are not Christians, and generally take dire revenge. Wizards sometimes look hideously ugly, sometimes inconceivably beautiful. Bain also discovers a concord between Indian and European fairy tales. The stories of wizards embody a moral entirely in harmony with all Indian ideas: it is a mistake not to stick to one's own caste. When two belonging to different castes are put together, the trouble inevitably begins. Therefore, the owl is to go together with the owl, the crow to the crow: Otherwise, Nemesis and Catastrophe. 'A Syrup of the Bees' deals with such a story.

Nevertheless, two broad categories of images relating to the old Hindoo idea of not marrying beneath one's own caste and the power of the Widyadharas in creating illusions form an interesting theme which has been fully exploited by the creative writer here to a great effect. Such images are artfully integrated into the well-designed construction of plot of the work and are the outcome of a profoundly judicative assessment of the aesthetic aspects of Hindoo philosophy and mythology. They, again, represent a sympathetic attitude with which the creative writer reacts to Indian values in this work of fiction.

'The Livery of Eve' (1917) is partly a work of fiction and partly a fairy tale. It skilfully combines reality and myth, a human being and an elemental fairy in the framework of fiction. The plot of the work has been ingeniously constructed through the depiction of the idea of marrying beyond one's own caste, and the
magic arts and primeval frivolity of the fairy to prove the transitoriness of such a socially unwarranted marriage. It deals with the story of Aparajita, a water-nymph, who marries Kesava, a handsome teen-aged king, beyond her caste. But she resorts to crafts and manoeuvring to marry the misogynist king with a handsome appearance. Through the use of magic arts and spells she transfers the good soul of Kamarupa, an ugly barber who loves her, into the attractive body of woman-hating Kesava whom she loves, and vice versa. Can any union be permanent between ill-assorted castes? She lives only one year with him and leaves behind a daughter. The creative writer seeks to bring home to us the proverbial fickleness of an elemental sprite like Aparajita, neither goddess nor mortal, but something intermediate, and always wayward and capricious like the whole race of heavenly nymphs such as Menaka and Urwasi, and Apsarasas, Widyadharis, and Nagis and the rest. In this title the author deals with red. Red is the livery of Eve. The word, Eve, contains exactly the same play as a digit of the Moon. Red is the gloaming, 'soft hour' of the poet, the sunset in which the new moon loves to hang, and a synonym in every Hindoo dialect, with love. However, this work of fiction incorporates a reference to the Tantras and the Mantras, the practice of which endows a man with extraordinary power. This exceptional power enables Aparajita to achieve the rare feat of an interchange.

30 F.W. Bain, The Livery of Eve, p.45
31 Ibid., pp.103-104
32 Ibid., pp.70-71
of body and soul by means of which she overcomes Kesava.

Repetition of almost the same theme already used in A Syrup of the Beea emphasises the creative writer's profound understanding of Hindoo religion, philosophy and mythology. In the introduction to the story Bain maintains that Europe is imperfect in understanding incarnation, a theological idea exotic in the West, an idea imported from its native root, soil, and atmosphere in India. India is a holy land of innumerable incarnations. A single incarnation, Bain thinks, is absurd. For God comes down as often as a real need, a pressing necessity arises on earth. This recalls the idea contained in the Bhagavad-Gita ((Yada yada hi dharmasya glanirbhavati Bharata/Abhyutthanamadharma-sya tadatmanam srijahyaham/Paritrayamya sadhunam winasaya cha dushkritam/Dharma-santhapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge). Bain challenges the validity of the Western idea of a single incarnation. He discovers difference in meanings of religion in the West and in India. To him Pliny is a 'wise old pagan' defining religion as man helping man. Religion surrounds Europeans mingling in different degrees with common life. 'But the wooden stupidity of civilized barbarism shuts it in a dead archaeological museum of antiquities, makes it a piece of old furniture, puts it into Sundays, and divorces life from that which is either its very essence, or nothing at all. Not so in India, a classic land, where everything is permeated with religion even fairy stories: a thing unintelligible in the West, whose peoples take their Grimm with religion. Lay and Clerical do not mix, in Europe: a gulf yawns
The Deity does not require any special garb; he comes to us in any garb, says Tulsi Das: anyhow and anywhere.

Through a comparative study of the meanings of religion in the West and in India, Bain prefers the free spirit of holiness enshrined in Hinduism to the institutional authority of the church claiming itself to be the only connecting link between heaven and earth.

E.M. Forster maintains that an Englishman's attitude to his religion is practical; religion helps him to be a better man in daily life. However, Forster admits it is only half the religious idea. Religion is more than an ethical code with a divine sanction. It is also a means through which man may get into direct connection with the divine, and, judging by history, few Englishmen have succeeded in doing so. We have produced no series of prophets, as has Judaism or Islam. Forster does not mention Hinduism. Guy Wint observes that India's principal achievement has been in the sphere of religion and philosophy, and the most striking quality of Hindu religion, at its highest level, is mysticism. Somerset Maugham deals with Hindu asceticism, and Larry narrates a mystical experience, and on the eve of his departure from India bows low to a yogi who impressed him with his saintliness and gave him peace. However, Bain regrets matter-sickness of the British people. He ends the introduction to the story on a note of polished severity with which he interprets the martial

34 E.M. Forster, Abinger Harvest, p. 9
35 Guy Wint, The British in Asia, pp. 30-31
36 S. Maugham, The Razor's Edge, p. 139, p. 236, p. 249, p. 252
pride of Great Britain. There was a time when the British were preoccupied with military questions at the expense of other issues of life, when the British people's idol was the soldier. Here Bain perhaps makes a veiled reference to Kipling who in his works on India deals frequently with sabeltums and barrack-room people, having thereby ignored broader and deeper issues of Indian life.

Nevertheless, two broad types of images relating to casteism in Hindoo society and the Indian fairies are presented in the context of the fictional art. The Hindoo-taboo of not marrying beyond one's own caste strikes the keynote of the story. And the elemental fickleness of the fairy has been cleverly depicted here to emphasise the inadvisability of such a marriage. As a conscious creative artist Bain collects materials from varied spheres of Hindoo wisdom and blends them into a harmonious whole in the form of fiction. Such images provide, beyond doubt, to the earnest reader exciting subject-matters which have received a masterly treatment in Bain's works of fiction. The projection of such images here represents an endeavour on the part of the creative writer to understand Indian values with a dispassionate judgment. The careful avoidance of a marriage between a man and a woman of unequal castes distinctly points to the writer's reluctance to get involved in an issue to which the Hindoos of old were very sensitive, and to which he is perhaps disposed to react liberally as a humanist. Therefore, he resorts to the strategy of bringing together in this work of fiction a mortal being and a fairy, and thereby depicts the transience of such a union in conformity with the Hindoo tradition.
The Substance of a Dream (1919), the last in the cycle of Bain's Indian stories, is a work of fiction. The course of true love, never smooth, is the epitome of this story. The vain pursuit of Shatrunjaya, a lute-playing Rajput Prince, to win the love of Tarawali, the Queen of Kamalapura, forms the main theme of the work. Tarawali, a woman of extraordinary beauty and inexhaustible charms, enthralls almost all who happen to see her. Shatrunjaya's persistent efforts fail to conquer her heart, and it is interesting to note how ably she plays the coquette with him. 'And as I watched thy clumsy effort, sitting as it did so ill on one so simple and direct as thou art, I could not prevent my compassion from mixing with a very little laughter, remembering the ass in the Panchatantra, who clothed him in a lion's skin, forgetting that his ears betrayed him, to say nothing of his voice.\(^{37}\)

Most of the meetings of Shatrunjay and Tarawali are arranged in a garden at Sunset. This particular hour is suggestive signifying either the end of hope on earth or liberation from the drudgery of day-long toil, from the fetters of mortal life. The plot becomes complicated and the canvas of the literary creation becomes larger at the introduction of Narasimha who steals the heart of Tarawali, and thereby incurs the wrath of Shatrunjaya. The plot ends on a tragic note with the death of this woman at the hands of the frustrated lover whom she had saved from the terrible grip of Narasimha, his rival. However, she remains as ever 'The Substance of a Dream'. But at the end of the story Nakeswara appears in the role of the Supreme Judge exonerating Tarawali from the

\(^{37}\) F.W. Bain, The Substance of a Dream, p.135
sins she is supposed to have committed on earth. In reply to Uma's question why she had so many lovers Maheswara says, "Thou art like Shatrunjaya himself biased against her by the insinuations of Haridas, and the discreditable behaviour of that little liar Chaturika, who betrayed her as well as others, and by the idle talk of the people which she rightly compared herself to the croaking of so many frogs. For low people always put the very worst interpretation upon the actions of kings, and especially of queens, of whom all the time they know less than nothing, exactly as she said. And Shatrunjaya's opinion of her wavered, in spite of all his worship, being coloured by the scandal that he heard, so that he saw her through its mist, as strangers always do. And if she had too many lovers, it was all the fault of Creator for feminine charm combined with kindness of heart; since she blamed herself for their misery, and could not bear to send them away without making them as it were some reparation for her crime of being beautiful beyond all resistance. And this was her only fault". Thus the riddle involved in the mortal existence is solved, and 'A calm of mind, all passions spent' is attained, and the reader is transported to a bower of blissful knowledge.

Bain ends his cycle of stories on a note of ecstatic bliss which liberation ('Moksha') can endow a person with. It is a fitting end to his story-writing on India. He begins the cycle with Ganesha, and ends with 'Moksha'. A study of his works of fiction dealing with India gives one the impression that Bain behaves like a Hindoo that he was not. Bain's knowledge of India
and Indian values so far limited to the physical world assumes a new dimension as it is transmuted to a deep feeling of the spirit, manifest in his reference to a child absorbed in the sunset glory, who does not respond to the author's call, "This, this is the wisdom of the sages, the secret of Plotinus and the Buddhists: This is Nirvana, Moksha, Yoga, the unattainable ecstasy of bliss..."

The image of India, as reflected in Bain's works of fiction, is that of an ancient land with a bright past, with a rich cultural heritage. But because of repeated foreign invasions on this country, cultivation of it was hampered. For foreign rulers' primary concern was to achieve their own end, to amass as much gold as possible. The present generation of India is unfortunate in that it is torn off from the heart of ancient India by a gap of several centuries of foreign rule. To a few Indian scholars the image of the old Hindus is clear, to most others the vision of ancient India is hazy, and to the younger generation perhaps no such India ever existed. Bain does a yeoman's service in his creative writings on India by projecting with sympathy and understanding the image of a land with a proud past. He is perhaps the most outstanding phenomenon in the sphere of British creative writing on India to reflect such an image. For the British interested in building up an Empire abroad and busy with varied problems at home never bothered about Indian values. This is in no way to skip over the six vigorous efforts with which famous Indologists, beyond the sphere of creative writing, such as Charles Wilkins, Gerasim
Lebedeff, Sir William Jones, Max Mueller, Albrecht Weber, and Wilson present the true image of India to the West.

India after nineteen hundred and forty-seven is the country of a new people fed on Western ideas. Sanskrit is a dull language to the present generation of Indians. So the whole gamut of creative, thoughtful, philosophical, and mythological writings in Sanskrit is languishing in their torn and tattered state, ignored by the newly emerging forces to-day. Ancient India is delinked from the India of to-day as she had to woo but reluctantly lovers of foreign descent till she finds herself awake one day to see, to her disillusionment, those philanderers gone, yielding place to her consanguineous native beloved estranged from her during the long intervening period of subjugation. No power on earth can entirely change the national character of a people. From history numerous instances can be cited of a mighty nation trying to coerce a weak nation, to destroy its nationality, but in no cases, on ultimate analysis, the distinct identity of a nation has ever been stamped out. For blood-legacy persists, and no transplanted foreign culture, even though attractive, can eliminate an indigenous culture, although lack-lustre. Ethnic character, lineage, climate, environment, language, literature, religion, and, even superstitions of a country, bring up a people unable to breathe out of them. Extraneous light may be allowed to peep into a room up to a tolerable vision, but not to gush in with oppressive vigour so as to overwhelm eyesight. So the door of a nation may be kept open to progressive ideas from other nations only up to certain necessity.
However, the image of India in Bain is independent of the conventional British image of India, and opens up a new horizon to the British vision. Ancient India with a rich cultural heritage provides Bain with a large variety of images as projected in his works of fiction. These varying images relating to Hindoo religion, philosophy, ethics, caste-hierarchy, Sanskrit literature, and Buddhism represent almost an infinite variety of themes which have been exploited with a marvellous power of ingenuity by the creative artist to a great effect in his fictional creations. The employment of such wisely chosen images in his works testifies to a profoundly judicative assessment of the aesthetic aspects of the cultural traditions of the Hindoos in their broader and deeper perspectives. British fiction certainly breathes new life and vigour at the introduction of new patterns of plots and events based on materials collected from an alien sphere of cultural activities. Thematic innovation and novelty in plot-construction also characterise the novels of Steel, but her novels have a slight edge over Bain’s works of fiction as they develop a larger canvas than that in Bain accommodating two distinct spheres of life and culture and the common people of India. The Indian populace almost entirely drop out of Bain’s literary canvas. While Bain is mainly interested in an aesthetic evaluation of Indian cultures in the form of fiction, Steel seeks a judicative assessment of them by presenting a kaleidoscopic view of the multi-coloured spectacles of Indian life and culture in her novels. The carefully selected images in Bain’s works of fiction represent an attitude of profound understanding.
and regard with which he responds to some specific aspects of Indian life while we discover an infinite variety of images widespread in Steel's works and they represent the attitude of a curious but critical observer who seeks a sympathetic understanding of an exotic environment of human activity. But, as a matter of fact, both the creative writers do an immense service to British fiction by way of exploring novel themes and contriving new patterns of plots and events. L.H. Myers's works of fiction also have such significance and deserve a critical study which has been made in the chapter that immediately follows.