LIFE AND DEATH
LIFE AND DEATH

A narrative is a result of a disturbance at the psychic level. It is not the event but its effect on the mind that is important, for example if there is violence, what is important is not the description of violence but the reaction it produces on the consciousness. The two reactions could be either accepting the situation or refusing to accept it. When things are accepted, it is easy, but when there is non-acceptance, it leads to the problems which lead to complications. The things happen at a physical level but their abstractions lead to the most important notion of violation. Life and death are no doubt the most important aspects. For Maya death is an obsession and it is this perception that makes ‘Cry, the Peacock’ a meditation on the problematics of life and death.
H.S. Gill in ‘Mental Images and Pure forms’ presents this conceptualization as:

The same phenomenon is at work when we extend the semantic domains of the expressions, father or mother. We have physical father and mother. We analyse their characteristics, and, by analogy, we enter the conceptual world, and, we perceive God as father, earth as mother. Our conceptualisation is based on certain existential, cultural, economic conditions. The epithets of all powerful, omnipresent, authoritarian father emerged from a certain feudal family structure where the old man held all the reigns. God is perceived in this situation as a bigger father, the real father multiplied several times over. Abelard says that all creative activity follows the three states of sensus, imagination and intellectus. We always begin from a real sensuous experience which is reconstituted in the realm of imagination. This domain of imagination is the vast space of conceptualisation where the earlier real images are rearranged, altered, enlarged. We try to comprehend the metaphysical world of the abstract, spiritual universe in terms of real relations of father, mother and son. But while this conceptualization explains abstract relations in simple familiar terms, it poses its own problems. After all, the statement, Jesus is the Son of God, is only a conceptualized proposition. It is based only on a perceived analogy. And, when Abelard tries to explain it in terms of the process of conceptualisation, in terms of a certain unity based on the concepts of time and nature or metonymy and metaphor, he gets into trouble, and the ecclesiastic
authorities vote for his excommunication. Abelard’s commentary was very lucid and very logical. One cannot be a father without a son or a son without a father. This transformation is simultaneous. In other words, it is the birth of a son that bestows on a being, the epithet of fatherhood. One derives one’s being from the other. This interdependent conceptual opposition or relation is the cause of their unity and identity. One can posit the same relationship in the domain of the metaphysical world because this is the only way we can comprehend the mysteries of our universe. On the one hand, the proposition, God so loved the world that He gave it His only Son, brings the abstract, spiritual, metaphysical universe closer to our real physical experience, on the other, it requires a certain conceptualisation and intellection to attribute a gender and a term of family relation to an entity, a power that is supposed to create not only human beings but also mountains, oceans, stars etc.

This problem of understanding continues in all forms of conceptualisation. As the all authoritarian feudal estate family helped imagine a certain configuration of God, the nuclear European family with father, mother and children enabled Sigmund Freud to constitute a conceptual world of paternal and maternal relations and conflicts. These psychoanalytical undercurrents could not possibly be conceptualised from a joint family structure where the roles of the physical father and mother are of entirely different order. The linguistic phenomenon must be understood in its universe of signification. The words, father,
mother, refer to physical realities. To that extent they are universal. But these words also refer to their semiotic structuration where their signification will depend upon the role they play as signs. First of all, one becomes father when a child is born. This most fundamental fact implies that the child bestows on a given individual the role of “fatherhood” as the father bestows on the other the role of “sonhood”. They derive their being from each other. Each of them triggers the process of acquisition of their becoming in a progression of simultaneity. And, this becoming will be conditioned by socio-economic-cultural contours of the society. As these contours vary from one historical situation to another, these becomings will differ accordingly. There can be no universality of this conceptual constitution. (Gill, H.S. 1991, Mental Images and Pure Forms, Bahri Publications, pp. 6-8).

The process of constituting a world goes on in every individual’s mind not realizing that the world is an outcome of society and not personal thinking. The society leads to dealing with others around us leading to various relationships from where originate most of the fundamental problems of life. Maintaining the right equilibrium in the existential moments is a very subtle fact of life. Love can lead to sharing things in one situation, and at another, it can lead to the annihilation of the other. Every being is in pursuit to maintain an equilibrium but how to balance this relationship is the basic problem. Harmony is only an ideal, whatever is derived is the result of a complex relationship. Some sequences in the text
Life and Death

are deceptive, some are more comprehensive. Certain sequences give the impression, something great is happening. Some presences are understood by their absences. This is the reason that in every discourse there is a physical world at one level and the metaphysical world at another.

The world in ‘Cry, the Peacock’ revolves around Maya’s and Gautama’s concept of life and death. Life is meant to be lived fully, in case of impossibility, one yearns for life. Death is meant not to live and not living a life fully is a metaphoric death. This metaphoric death occurs when one is unable to live life the way one wants to. The shadow of death occurs when living life happily and richly is not possible. The metaphoric death that Maya experiences is different from the physical death as of Toto. Light is a metaphor of day and a continuous movement goes on slowly from light to darkness and then from darkness to light. Similarly the narrative is like a sea-saw battle, anguish persisting and life moving between life and death like light and darkness.

Maya is caught in the most disturbing conflict which continues within her leading obviously to the obsession of life and death. The conflict has its roots back in Maya’s childhood when the prediction of the astrologer penetrated deep into her psychic comportment and the normal passive arrival of death is transformed into a violent catastrophe.

‘Cry, the Peacock’ begins with Maya caught in the web of life and death, Maya’s extreme involvement as opposed to Gautama’s is clear by her reaction to the dog, Toto’s death. Maya’s concern over the dog and
rotting of the body directly corresponds to her hysterical movement. Another level of correspondence is that of non-correspondence caused by Gautama's indifferent reaction of being unable to understand Maya and her relation with him. The reason of correspondence of indifference is non-relation between Maya and Gautama. Gautama brings Maya an opal ring as a ritual, as a pure physical act without any deeper feelings which would have made him notice the skin under it. They live life at the barest physical level sharing nothing mentally. Gautama neither thinks of her nor of her body leading to non-relation with her body as well as her mind. It is this attitude that leads to their not having a child. There need not be a biological reason for impotence as the body responds or is impotent not due to physical reason but mental reasons. The body responds to the mind and having a child is to share; Maya and Gautama share nothing. One sorrow leads to another, living together physically but sharing nothing is a simultaneous existence of conflicting emotions. Living in two worlds and sharing the body is no sharing of concerns. There are two levels of mental correspondence, the first is the level of indifference, the second is the level of extreme involvement.

This indifference and extreme involvement would be understood better if one tries to probe and understand those parts of the mind that are described as unconscious. No examination of the mind would be complete unless it includes the unconscious. While carrying out his systematic method of investigation one needs to use free association of whatever comes into the head.
Life and Death

James Strachey in the introduction of “Studies of Hysteria” investigating the mind found the unconscious very important:

Here was one basis for a very fundamental piece of theory, for a hypothesis of the mind as something dynamic, as consisting in a number of mental forces, some conscious and some unconscious, operating now in harmony now in opposition with one another.

Though these phenomena eventually turned out to be of universal occurrence, they were first observed and studied in neurotic patients, and the earlier years of Freud’s work were largely concerned with discovering means by which the ‘resistance’ of these patients could be overcome and what lay behind it could be brought to light. The solution was only made possible by an extraordinary piece of self observation on Freud’s part-what we should now describe as his self-analysis. We are fortunate in having a contemporary first-hand description of this event in his letters to Fliess which have already been mentioned. This analysis enabled him to discover the nature of the unconsciousness processes at work in the mind and to understand why there is such a strong resistance to their becoming conscious; it enabled him to devise techniques for overcoming or evading the resistance in his patients; and, most important of all, it enabled him to realize the very great difference between the mode of functioning of these unconscious processes and that of our familiar conscious ones. A word may be said on each of these
Life and Death

three points, for in fact they constitute the core of Freud's contributions to our knowledge of the mind.

The unconscious contents of the mind were found to consist wholly in the activity of conative trends—desires or wishes—which derive their energy directly from the primary physical instincts. They function quite regardless of any consideration other than that of obtaining immediate satisfaction, and are thus liable to be out of step with those more conscious elements in the mind which are concerned with adaptation to reality and the avoidance of external dangers. Since, moreover, these primitive trends are to a great extent of a sexual or of a destructive nature, they are bound to come in conflict with the more social and civilized mental forces. Investigations along this path were what led Freud to his discoveries of the long-disguised secrets of the sexual life of children and of the Oedipus complex.

In the second place, his self-analysis led him to an inquiry into the nature of dreams. These turned out to be, like neurotic symptoms, the product of a conflict and a compromise between the primary unconscious impulses and the secondary conscious ones. By analysing them into their elements it was therefore possible to infer their hidden unconscious contents; and, since dreams are common phenomena of almost universal occurrence, their interpretation turned out to be one of the most useful technical contrivances for penetrating the resistances of neurotic patients.
Life and Death

Finally, the painstaking examination of dreams enabled Freud to classify the remarkable differences between what he termed the primary and secondary processes of thought, between events in the unconscious and conscious regions of the mind. In the unconscious, it was found, there is no sort of organization or coordination: each separate impulse seeks satisfaction independently of all the rest; they proceed uninfluenced by one another; contradictions are completely inoperative, and the most opposite impulses flourish side by side. So, too, in the unconscious, associations of ideas proceed along lines without any regard to logic: similarities are treated as identities, negatives are equated with positives. Again, the objects to which the conative trends are attached in the unconscious are extraordinarily changeable—one may be replaced by another along a whole chain of associations that have no rational basis. Freud perceived that the intrusion into conscious thinking of mechanisms that belong properly to the primary process accounts for the oddity not only of dreams but of many other normal and pathological mental events.

It is not much of an exaggeration to say that all the later part of Freud's work lay in an immense extension and elaboration of these early ideas. They were applied to an elucidation of the mechanisms not only of the psychoneuroses and psychoses but also of such normal processes as slips of the tongue, making jokes, artistic creation, political institutions, and religions; they played a part in throwing fresh light on many applied sciences—
archaeology, anthropology, criminology, education; they also served to account for the effectiveness of psychoanalytic therapy. Lastly, too, Freud erected on the basis of these elementary observations a theoretical superstructure, what he named a 'meta-psychology', of more general concepts. These, however, fascinating as many people will find them, he always insisted were in the nature of provisional hypotheses. Quite late in his life, indeed, influenced by the ambiguity of the term 'unconscious' and its many conflicting uses, he proposed a new structural account of the mind in which the uncoordinated instinctual trends were called the 'id', the organized realistic part the 'ego', and the critical and moralizing function the 'super-ego'-a new account which has certainly made for a clarification of many issues (Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud 1973 Penguin Books, Studies on Hysteria, Vol.3. pp. 19-21-Hereafter referred as SF-3).

Maya's ego is hurt as her being is hurt by Gautama's attitude. Life is meant to realize oneself, this realization of the being comes through circumstances but the problem arises when Maya's being is not able to realize her own self. Living life fully is the result of harmony, understanding and normal relationship. 'Cry, the Peacock' goes on with Maya's struggle to cultivate relationship in utter despair but not giving up hope as there is yearning to live life completely. Gautama's perception of business of birth and death as appearance and disappearance is opposed to Maya's who belongs to the sensitive world whereas Gautama lives in the
world of success, business and money. Gautama’s relation is at a level where sentiments have little importance:

He mused for a while, as we walked on, up the lawn, farther apart now than we had been- 'Yes', he said. 'Why do I' ? Why do I choose to think of you as one of those mysterious people who find such comfort in hocus -pocus, in the bogus ceremonies and childish trimmings with which we bury our dead? To me, it has always seemed the ultimate absurdity, appropriate only in that it brings a meaningless life to a similarly meaningless end. No doubt the greater percentage those who are buried, or cremated, surrounded by the frills and flaps of pious frivolity, enjoy the vision of it while alive. Morbidity, you might say but it is not really that. It is a belief in these frivolities. Having no greater values, they apply themselves with passion to the lesser ones- which are not values at all, of course, for values must have a standard, a criterion (CP. pp. 14-15).

Maya’s old sentimental world of relation is at a different level than that of Gautama which is indifferent to Maya’s sentiments.

Astrology plays as a point of departure for the phantasmatic world, the illusionary likeness of the fact she remembers, the hard fact of the astrologer’s meeting is an inseparable part of her thinking process and even her dreams. The constituted dreamy world built on the memory of the past now obsesses her. This obsession influences her acts, her further thinking and relationships. This phantasmic dreaming and the world
constituted by it is not shared by others and they are unaware of it and she in her exclusive world places her things which later on became a trap for her, and she becomes a prisoner of her own imagination. It has become obsessive and compulsive for her and she cannot get rid of her own creation. Once a being is a prisoner of ones imagination, it becomes more real than the real world as it cannot be ignored, as it is a part of the inner being that can not be got rid of. Distressing things are hard to forget as they keep on returning to torment the person against his will. Death as predicted is now symbolic of the death of Maya’s marriage leading to the obsession of death, break-up and disintegration of marriage that will soon come to an end. Death for Maya is nothing but disintegration of the being. She is apprehensive of the process of disintegration of relation in the preamble itself. Consciousness of approaching death and disintegration scares her to the extent that in order to save herself she pushes Gautama, whose body, she feels psychologically, followed her to the terrace.

Hypnosis is the induced state like deep sleep in which the subject acts on external suggestion, it is like an obsession which dictates actions to the being. Astrology is nothing but hypnotizing and having control on the mind. In the normal course, it is the mind that dictates the limbs but when the mind is under the control of another mind, the actions are controlled by the other. At this juncture the mind is obsessed with disintegration. Astrology has effect on the person who believes in it. It is not a cultural phenomenon but surely a psychological phenomenon. Astrologer is like a psychiatrist who works in correspondence with the person's bent of mind.
Astrological language is ambiguous because it has all positive and negative statements. A lot of option is given for interpretation, the way one wants to, and the way it coincides. The result is an effect on the building up of the world of one's fantasies and becoming prisoner of the same. Relative freedom lessens comparatively and there comes a time when it is no longer there.

The narrative is built in this conceptual framework where every action is seen in the phantasmic world, in which everything is going to be deformed. All things in the paranoiac world depend on the mood of the being and the placing vis-à-vis the series of the happening because of imagination that one constitutes. Events signify the way you perceive and the perception of this would be according to the phantasmic world. Dr. Gill in Mental Images and Pure Forms writes:

> Our intelligence not only transforms sensible perceptions into ideas, but also constitutes ideas whose object is not physically experienced, whose object does not exist, In other words, with our intelligence, we have sensible or representational idea, and ideas which are only intelligible or intellectual of things which are visible and of those which are not, of things which are individual and, of those which are universal. Thus, man is not only in communication with physical nature, but across it, it also arrives at a purely abstract, conceptual level....
Abelard says that language is a vehicle of communication which is used by two thinking beings. While our expressions belong to the common linguistic community, their specific use in the ever-changing contexts is the resultant of a certain mental activity. In this process, naturally there will be hierarchy of significations. It will all depend upon the level of the discourse. Some of the expressions will always be simple, following closely the collective norm, others, more personal, where a given individual makes an attempt at formulating a personal view of this universe, his universe, the expressions will be highly charged semiotic signals. These structures of signification are highly deceptive for their semantic contours undergo subtle changes situated with the domain of individual existential experiences. This is why we have to make clear distinction between the rules of grammatical constructs which are generally fixed within a language and the rules of semiotic constructs which have a very wide scope of internal variations due to the state of the person who perceives this object, and due to the intellection that has been applied to a given perception. And, this process is highly surrealistic.... These contours are not fixed, they are fluid to the extreme. A thinking being has the right to individualise the semiotics of a language to any degree.

Abelard insists that language is not only a vehicle of speaking, it is also, and at times primarily, a vehicle of thinking. The expressions we inherit are supposed to have a fairly well delineated configuration in both form and content but as they
cover a large number of analogous concrete as well as abstract objects or concepts, one begins to use these expressions as *pure forms* to arrive at conceptualisations at variance with the collective norms. It is an affair of finding new contexts in the domain of ideas. There is always a point of departure. The beginning is always familiar but in the process of conceptualisation, our expression acquire new contours of signification. In other words, with familiar expressions, one ends up presenting unfamiliar concepts. And, obviously we have what are generally called, the generation gaps, or more specifically, a series of "misunderstandings" followed by the emergence of new ideologies. As the ideologically charged expressions present highly complex semiotic structure, new cultural contexts are created. We move from isolated expressions to logically constituted discourses where Abelardian concepts of *time and nature* or metonymy and metaphor are exploited to the extreme. The concept of *time* refers to chronology, historical progression, linearity, proximity, where the cause and effect are immediate and transparent, identifiable within a given time and space, where there is a certain conceptual visibility. The concept of *nature* refers to the so-called analogous correlations where the deciding criterion is the *nature* of the objects perceived, a nature which is highly abstract, which is situated within the domains of *imagatintio* and *intellectus*. A dialectical interaction between these two aspects of linguistic activity leads to discourses whose semiotic density cannot be ignored. A theory of signification must take account of this highly complex phenomenon, for in this
ideological space, the simple one to one correspondence between the signifier and the signified would escape the hierarchical structuration of our languages. This is due to Abelardian affirmation that our words not only correspond to things but also to their concepts. And, while a thing is a numerical unity, a concrete totality, there can be a series of different concept, of the same thing due to different perceptions of different persons and also due to different perceptions of same person at various existential and intellective states. First of all, the intellective act reconstitutes the object of conceptualisation in the fluid space of imagination which already presents a certain differentiation between the real individual object of the nominalists and the object of study in Abelardian formulation of conceptualism. Secondly, as we always inherit ready-made conventional concepts, our intellective process necessarily creates what may be called meta-concepts whose ascending hierarchy has no definable limits. A philosopher or a mathematician deals with expressions which are already the resultants of a series of previous intellections. And obviously, each ascending conceptual order will have its own level of time and nature, of metonymic and metaphoric correlations [H.S. Gill, Mental Images and Pure Forms, pp. 19-21].

The point of departure of death as an existential situation for Maya is the prophesy of the astrologer that is always placed as a suggestion in her mind. Maya’s intellective act reconstitutes death in the space of imagination whereas Gautama’s conceptualisation of death is a clear
Life and Death

perception where fear has no room. In Gautama's domain of 'imaginatio' and 'intellectus' there is a rational way of looking at situations. The meta-concepts of Gautama make Toto's death a normal phenomenon but Maya's 'imaginatio' and 'intellectus' make her a complex being whose emotions are not regulated with rationality. The difference of conceptualisation of fact by the two is an hindrance in the development of harmonious relationship between the two. The existential world necessary for perfect relationship needs not only the correspondence to words and things put also concepts. The different concepts at the psychic level make Gautama unfaithful to Maya. Existentially, Gautama in his sleep is not aware of Maya's feelings who perceives an open door through which she can re-enter the relationship, even if it is just physical and if death comes as predicted by the astrologer, it will be defeated as it will not be death in the true sense. Maya wishes for a death like that of peacocks in love who in love, are aware of death, thus overpowering death.

When I lay in bed at last, I continued to think of them, uneasily, restlessly, connecting them with a dream I had once had as a child, with the convoluted history behind a ruby red as blood, with the brief life of a painted butterfly. Butterfly, moon-moon rising, falling, now waning now waxing. The eternal flux, the eternal decay of a world of rubies and butterflies. My inability to capture it, to hold it transfixed as an insect in amber, haunted me now, as did the image of the dark women and the white dog in the dark lane, and the swiftly travelling every mutable moon above me, and I turned upon my bed, and turned
Life and Death

again, till my fresh white night cloths were damp with perspiration, the white sheets crumpled and comfortless. Upon this bed of hot, itching sand, I summoned up again the vision of the tenebrific albino who had cast his shadow like a net across me as I had fled down the corridor of years, from the embrace of protection to embrace of love, yet catching me as surely as a gaint fisherman striding through the shallows of moonlight seas, throws his fine net with one brief, expert motion and knows, as it settles with a falling whisper upon the still water, that he will find in it a catch: I had not escaped. The years had caught up, and now the final, the decisive one held me in its perspiring clasp from which release seemed impossible. And now I recalled that oil-slick, sibilant tongue whispering poetry to me in the bat-tortured dark. Do you not hear the peacocks call in the wilds? Are they not blood-chilling, their shricks of pain? “Pia pia” they cry “Lover, lover, Mio mio-I die, I, I die”. Go out into the jungles before the monsoons come—at the time when the first clouds cross the horizon, black as the kohl in your graves eyes. How they love the rain these peacocks. They spread out their splendid tails and begin to dance, but, like Shiva’s, their dance of joy is the dance of death, and they dance, knowing that they and their lovers are all to die, perhaps even before the monsoons came to an end. It is not agony for them? How they stamp their feet, and beat their beaks against the rocks! They will even grasp the snakes that live on the sands there, and break their bodies to bits against the stones, to ease their own pain. Have you seen peacocks make love, child? Before they mate, they fight. They will rip each
other's breasts to strips and fall, bleeding, with their beaks open and panting. When they have exhausted themselves in battle, they will mate. Peacocks are wise. The hundred eyes upon their tails have seen the truth of life and death, and know them to be one. Living, they are aware of death. Dying they are in love with life. "Lover, lover", you will hear them cry in the forests when the rain-clouds come, "Lover, I die..."

And the rain-clouds, emerged again from the horizon that was eternally pregnant with promise at one end, and at its opposite pole, was an eternally hungry and open grave. In the shadows I saw peacocks dancing, the thousand eyes upon their shimmering feathers gazing steadfastly, unwinkingly upon the final truth-Death. I heard their cry and echoed it. I felt their thirst as they gazed at the rain-clouds, their passion as they hunted for their mates. With them, I trembled and panted and paced the burning rocks. Agony, agony the mortal agony of their cry for lover and for death (CP.pp. 94-96).

This image of the peacocks dying reminds one of the 'Myth of Sisyphus' punishment for eternity is interpreted. The process of the gods to torture a human being and make him miserable is defeated when he does not feel tortured and miserable. The idea is to torture and break a person exactly, the same as death overpowering in a state of complete helplessness. The defied gods fail in their pursuit to punish and break him as he refused to be broken. Physical death is overcome and has no meaning if it comes in a moment of happiness.
Life and Death

Maya too feels she can defeat and overcome the stars, gods and even the prediction. Death may overpower her physically but mentally death is not possible. Harmony between Maya and Gautama can be successful in defeating the gods projected by the astrologer’s predictions according to the stars. Maya feels strongly by sharing their problems and developing a harmonious relationship death will make no difference.

The narrative runs through a certain kind of confrontation and a constant existential conflict of life and death, the two aspects of existentialism being existence and death. The disturbed personalities of Gautama and Maya bound in love can be elevated from mortality to immortality.

An existential assertion is found even in extreme destabilisation, there is a struggle between balance and imbalance. There is a series of failures in this process which make a possibility of a successful end by defeating death. Overpowering is a continuous process in the present whereas giving up means death. At the first stage, the present is static, but at the second, it is not a static entity but a movement. Maya finds all human beings living in the static present. The astrologer is the future because of whom she is unable to live in the present, as it is dynamic and full of fears. Existentially, present is a movement, life is a movement, death is a movement. The death of the dog creates movement resulting in Maya’s obsession of death, making her sad consequently.
Life and Death

Maya’s psychic being is existentially charged creating movement with fears and misery of what might happen. On the contrary, Gautama’s helplessness creates no dynamism in his inner universe as a result of which the outer universe is alienated. He too seems to be entering into the same kind of unstable universes. The destabilised world is better than the stable one as there is a possibility of stability in imbalance but not in balance. There are two movements, one is the image of the peacock in reality of life and the second is the approaching physical death. Death holds meaning if one is scared of it but it becomes meaningless, defeated and captured if one is not scared of it.

The narrative opens with the dead body of Toto lying rotting:

All day the body lay rotting in the sun. It could not be moved on to the verandah for, in that April heat, the reek of dead flesh, was overpowering and would soon have penetrated the rooms. So she moved the little string bed on which it lay under the lime trees, where there was a cool, aqueous shade, saw its eyes open and staring still, screamed and rushed to the garden tap to wash the vision from her eyes, continued to cry and ran, defeated, into the house (CP 5).

The deep imprint of death on her mind goes on to describe with great intensity the posture of death and its reaction on her.

‘Maya’, he said, patiently. ‘Do sit down. You look so hot and worn out. You need a cup of tea’.
'Yes, she said, sadly, and came back to pour out the tea. But it spilt into the sugar-pot, the tea-strainer toppled into a cup, the lemons slipped to the floor, and there was chaos. Just then the servant came in to announce a visitor — an advocate, he said, come to see the Sahib. And Gautama rose immediately, ordering tea to be sent to the study, forgetting her, forgetting her woes altogether.

'No! she cried, and fled to the bedroom to fling herself onto the bed and lie there, thinking of the small, still body stiffened into the panic-stricken posture of the moment of death, and of the small sharp yelp in the throat as it suddenly contracted. She did not know it was a scavenger's truck that had taken it away, but she sensed the sordid horror it had brought with it, and left behind, and she began again to cry (CP 7).

The horror of death was not over by the body being removed physically as the horror was left in her mental world, she screams and rushes to wash the vision from her eyes.

Toto's death is an event of great sorrow as he was her pet but something pinched her more than can be imagined and that was her hidden fear that worked strongly in her sub-conscious and was triggered by Toto's death.

There remained a certain unease, a hesitance in the air, which kept the tears swimming in my eyes, and prevented their release. I was not allowed the healing passion of a fit of crying that would
Life and Death

have been left me exhausted, sleep-washed and becalmed. Something slipped into my tear-hazed vision a shadowy something, that prodded me into admitting that it was not my pet's death alone that I mourned today, but another sorrow, unremembered, perhaps as yet not even experienced, and filled me with this despair. I could not focus my mind upon it, so swiftly and constantly did it move (CP.p. 8).

Death threatens her constantly and a strange horror of insane death pinches her in the core of her heart. There is an indefinable unease at the back of her mind, the grain of sand that irked, itched and remained meaningless, yet its presence was very real, truly a physical shadow, like the gaint shadows cast by trees. The touch of the blades of grass gives her a sensation of snakes coiling and uncoiling their moist lengths about her. In these moments of fear and threat she urgently needs Gautama's love, security and reassurance:

When he touched my hair, smoothing it down carefully as a nurse would, I was flooded with tenderness and gratitude thought of him as my guardian, my protector, the one who had seen to the burial of my pet and now came to wipe the strands of hair out of my wet eyes and speak to me softly (CP.p.11).

Gautama is doing all this mechanically for a short while thinking of her as a child. He personally thought of Toto's death as a sheer natural happening. What to say about the animal, for him even the death of humans are the ultimate absurdity. It is a meaningless end to meaningless
Life and Death

life as he feels only a few intelligent, reasonable men live a meaningful life, the rest are like a pack of sheep. The end is nothing but disappearance, a word that was felt like a pang by Maya as the solidity of real existence just for a little while and soon collapsed. Maya refuses to understand the fact why money is basic and why Gautama’s professional cases revolve around money, or property and why not around passion and revenge, murder that would be exciting. The murders that take place are again just for the sake of money or property and not of love or life or basic things like Toto’s death. Gautama feels that Maya thinks the world will die for what is known to us as reality, not for ideals. She does not seem to understand that reality and idealism are the same. Life it not a matter of distinguishing between the two, but of reconciling them. He finds Toto’s dying a matter of missing the games, Maya played with him, finding empty time thus leading to search for replacement. It is shocking to reduce one’s ideals to mundane superfluities but most shocking is to realize that these superfluities are the ideals themselves.

Analysing the impact of childhood incidents on the being, one would surely agree with Sigmund Freud’s detailed study in the Lecture, ‘The Archaic Features and Infantilism of Dreams’.

You are all familiar, of course, from your own experience, with the remarkable amnesia of childhood. I mean the fact that the earliest years of life, up to the age of five, six or eight, have not left behind them traces in our memory like later experiences. Here and there, it is true, we come upon people who
Life and Death

can boast of a continuous memory from the first beginnings to the present day; but the other alternative, of gaps in the memory, is by far the more frequent. There has not, in my opinion, been enough astonishment over this fact. By the time a child is two he can speak well, and soon shows that he is at home in complicated mental situations; and he makes remarks which, if they are reported to him many years later, he himself will have forgotten. Moreover, the memory is more efficient at an early age, since it is less overburdened than it is later. Nor is there any reason for regarding the function of memory as a particularly high or difficult mental activity; on the contrary, we can find a good memory in people of very low intellectual standing.

A second remarkable fact to which I must draw your attention, and which comes on top of the first one, is that out of the void of memories that covers the earliest years of childhood there stand out a few well-preserved recollections, mostly perceived in plastic form, which cannot justify their survival. Our memory deals with the material of the impressions which impinge on us in later life by making a selection among them. It retains what is of any importance and drops what is unimportant. But this is not true of the childhood memories that have been retained. They do not necessarily correspond to the important experiences of childhood years, nor even to those which must have seemed important from the child’s point of view. They are often so commonplace and insignificant that we can only ask ourselves in astonishment why this particular detail has escaped
Life and Death

oblivion. I attempted long ago, with the help of analysis, to attack the enigma of childhood amnesia and of the residual memories which interrupt it, and I arrived at the conclusion that even in the case of children it is true in spite of everything that only what is important remains in our memory. But through the processes, already familiar to you, of condensation and more especially of displacement, what is important is replaced in memory by something else which appears unimportant. For this reason I have called these childhood memories 'screen memories', and with a thorough analysis everything that has been forgotten can be extracted from them.

In psychoanalytic treatments we are invariably faced by the task of filling up there gaps in the memory of childhood; and in so far as the treatment is to any extent successful - that is to say, extremely frequently - we also succeed in bringing to light the content of these forgotten years of childhood. Those impressions had never been really forgotten, they were only inaccessible, latent, and had formed part of the unconscious (Freud, Sigmund, Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, vol. 1, pp. 236-7. Here after refered as SF-I).

The effect of childhood memories is what leads to the most important situation in the narrative. The astrological prediction is realised and Maya's struggle is over. Between the prediction and its realisation these are extreme facets of conflict within Maya, at the conscious as well as unconscious level. Maya makes serious efforts to realise her existence,
Life and Death

of relation, of harmony, of love and peace. Unfortunately this relation is not realised as Maya's being is unable to establish a corresponding harmonious movement with Gautama.

The narrative Cry, the Peacock revolves around life and death from beginning to end. Toto's death triggers off a fear of a persistent sense of some disaster she had known but not rediscovered. It was not merely a foreboding but a distant apprehension of a presence. The throbbing of drums, the scent of lemon blossoms carried an under-current, struggle of despair that continued beyond the sleep of death.

The dramatic encounter with the albino haunts Maya. This incident carries more weight with Toto's death firstly, and secondly the four years of Maya's marriage, the time predicted by astrology. Maya's thinking is totally obsessed with the idea of death. Stars normally remind of diamonds, are a source of joy, but for Maya, they seem to be surging towards her, their diamond weight descending upon humans. The new ones seemed to burst into birth, dying once to revive. Death lurks in the dark spaces in between the stars. Her thoughts trace the long journey of the dead from one birth to another, the brave traversing of mute darkness and the blind search for another realm, of lucidity in the midst of chaos. The possession of this negative thought is the result of what the astrologer had predicted. With the passage of time it has become as inseparable part of her thinking:
Life and Death

‘He had been—large or small? I cannot remember, but his eyes I do: they were pale, opaque and gave him an appearance of morbidity, as though he had lived, like a sluggish white worm, indoors always, in his dark room at the temple gates, where the central lingam was painted a bright, vicious red, as though plunged in sacrificial blood, and light burned in a single lamp from which oil spilled into a large, spreading pool. Just as his shadow spread and spread a stain edging towards me who stood, clutching my Ayah’s hand, in paralyzed terror and even fiercer fascination, my toes curling away from the oil, from his shadow. ‘Not only here, but is your horoscope also’, he said, tapping the long chart the ‘ayah’ had had made for me, ‘and there, on your forehead too’, he smiled, and, laying down the paper, he raised her hand, a plump, oiled hand with dyed nails, bringing it close to my face so that I felt as though a bat were caught in the same room with me, and shrank involuntarily. But he lowered it without touching me and turned to finger the horoscope instead, its minute fingers and designs. ‘Just as it is prophesied here, I see it there’, he smiled ‘Unmistakably’. He offered me lemonade, he offered the ayah tea. We refused, I froze, the ayah began to complain, suddenly as though she had developed an uncomfortable itch somewhere. He smiled at us, continuously. He came near me again, his shadow lapped me, playfully, flirtatiously ‘There, between the eyes—the exact spacing... Marvellous—who would have thought?’ he mused, and the madly blank eyes were glazed. He begged me be seated, be patient. He twitched the fold of his grimy robe between thighs that flashed
through holes and openings, here, there, obscenely. ‘No doubt
about it, and so it is my duty to warn you’. Like sweet oil, his
smiles dripped on me. ‘My child, I would not speak of it if I saw
it on your face alone. But look, look at the horoscope. Stars do
not lie. And so it is best to warn you, prepare you.’ He played on
in this manner, seemed even pleased when the ayah, grown
impatient and plaintive, interrupted with her whinings, her
protests, for this gave him time to argue with her, coyly, and
prolong the tense drama. All the while he smiled, and his eyes
now turned colourless, now flashed with light. Sometimes he
grew emphatic, and creased his brow, and raised his arms, his
voice, ‘Death,’ he finally admitted, in one such moment, ‘to one
of you when you are married - and you shall be married young.’
The light suddenly sank, and his eyeless face assumed the texture
of mask above me. ‘Death – an early one – by unnatural cause.’
he said, softly, sibilantly, and gently lowered his arms till they
dropped to his side, then became furiously mobile once more,
lasting his robes once this way, once that. He cut short the ayah’s
horrified wail. ‘Be quiet, woman, who speaks to you, you old
illiterate? You believe me any how, whether I lie or speak the
truth. But the child – the child must be persuaded, she must listen
to my warning. It is my duty to prepare her, my duty.’ He
approached me again, with dancing steps, when the weak flame
of the single lamp suddenly guttered and died....He chuckled,
gnomishly. ‘Now we can go back to our very important
conversation’, he said. ‘Of course you are still so young, so very
young – flicking the fold of his robe over his line, flicking it–
Life and Death

‘there is still so much time. Or have arrangements already been made—for a marriage?’ ‘No!’ I shouted, ‘I will never marry’ and at the same time the ayah screamed, ‘Give me that horoscope you have made—lies, all lies...... ‘Four years after your marriage, so the stars prophecy, and the space between your eyes, the mark there, supports this prophesy I have warned you, performed my duty. Be wary, child, be wary and fear God. Worship. Him, make sacrifices, Pray (CP.pp. 28-31).

The external world seems to be in perfect correspondence with Maya’s internal conflict and condition right from her childhood. The external dust storm uproots everything and the one within leads her to annihilation. She finds Gautama a perfect victim, a perfect justification, for her yet undecided decision. In the true sense, it is not a decision, but a suggestive psychic compulsion that possesses Maya making her a prisoner where Gautama is nothing but the old forgotten dead pet. The pet dying emphasizes the authencity of death. If Toto had to die, it proves the deep impact of death imprinted in Maya’s mind by the albino astrologer whom she happened to meet in her childhood.

The dramatic encounter remained at the back of her mind, even when she tried to console herself, she had forgotten it. It become an inseparable part of her thinking. Until now Gautama offered her security and peace even though it was only an illusion but now the illusion is no more there, Maya has reached the dead end. Maya was always keen on establishing a relationship with him by being close to him, to bring
Life and Death

harmony in their life but now she wants no communication with him, and doubts her own existence. After all she is only Maya, a human being slowly losing her memory. She wants to escape the terrible future by going back to her old home, to her father and brother, but internally she knows she cannot alter fate or run away from it. She wants to annihilate herself, her marriage, her memory and her world with Gautama. This terrible state of affairs begins to disturb Gautama who finds her becoming mad. The very word madness drives her to violence from within and without. The time stops for her and she loses count of her physical and mental space, of what she knows and what she does not want to know. All that she can imagine now is death with all its corresponding surrealistic images of fire, of flood and of a bloody path. These horrible images are mixed with evil violence and are growing with restlessness and the torturing reminder of the albino’s prediction. There is an intense movement of the present time, of the beginning and the end, of the vision where everything ends. All human beings, according to Maya’s point of view, are living in a static present. The astrologer is the future as his memory does not let Maya live in the present, making it dynamic and full of fears.

With Maya’s internal conflict increasing and the albino over powering her wits arrives Arjuna’s letter that inserts a peculiar curiosity in Gautama’s mind. He is amazed why he was never told about Arjuna. He finds a world of difference between the brother and the sister, but a similarity between his and Arjuna’s way of thinking and looking at life. The mention of the astrologer and the horoscope in his letter makes
Gautama sure about some sort of incident in Maya’s childhood. Disturbed, he is keen to know about what was there in Maya’s household and what it signifies for him, for her and for both of them. The scared Maya is extremely frightened at the albino’s incident being revealed and dares not look at his face and directly into his eyes as this would result in peril of her life as she is scared of the terrible unknown in store for her. New dangers with no solution seem to be coming up. Arjuna’s letter reads:

'Have you changed? One must move away, quite away from one’s crib and swaddling clothes. They playpen of home… not without dangers. After all, if father did not belong to that sheep-fold of superstitious, hound Brahmins, there would never have been that absurd fuss over a horoscope that, I remember, was once cast for you… the tantrums, do you remember (CP.p. 141).

Arjuna at this juncture confirms that incident of the albino… Freud while discussing “Fixation - The unconscious” reveals that since the patient does not remember the experiences clearly making it difficult to find connection between the symptoms and the patients experiences, it can be substituted by making inquiries about these experiences from the patient’s relatives as very often they will be able to recognize the incident that lead to the traumatic effect, especially when they occurred at a very early period of life. This relieves the patient of his pathogenic ignorance. Maya remembers the albino’s incident very distinctly, but many a times to get over the fear of the prediction, she feels the whole incident to be her hallucination. But Arjuna has confirmed the Albino’s incident and now
nothing can help Maya from escaping its memory. The new dangers, with the beat of the drums of the Kathakali dances seemed never to cease, these loud drums are a symbol of passion with which these dancers dance. This passion seems to be leading to a terrible danger of death.

God! God! I cried, and sat up in terror. There was no clash and clamour after that. I was aware of a great, dead silence in which my eyes opened to a vision that appeared through the curtains of the years, one by one falling back till I saw again that shadow. A black and evil shadow. Its name was not that of a demon in a Kathakali dance drama, nor was it one of the limpid appellations of the moon. It was, I remembered it now, fate (CP.p. 28).

The moon looks to be ghost-white, and instead of being the gentle moon of love ballads, it seems to have become a demonic creature, the fierce dancer that is trying to leap over the threshold of Maya’s mind and home. The death of Toto seems to be the impact of the demon who has started showing its influence. It has taken the form of a masked mad demon of the Kathakali ballets. The black, evil shadow of fate has imprisoned Maya to think of nothing except death. She is unable to visualise life at this juncture. Till the previous spring she used to love seeing the peeping infants, twittering and muttering in their nests but the spring life had no meaning any more. The doves coo is also counted as omens of ill fortune, of separation. The coo was a tedious repetition of the fatal words, ‘Go away!’
Life and Death

The Sikh whom Maya meets at the party seems to be a magician of the underworld, the albino, his shadow. The word ‘fate’ had not come to her ears for so long as it was banned from their household by her father. Initially their family being a family of Brahmins had lived their lives for generations according to the prescribed patterns. The basics like eating, studying, travelling and marrying were initiated with the advice and suitability of the horoscope. But for Maya’s sake, her father had thrust them all into the fire, the fine Sanskrit Calligraphy, the strange hieroglyphics and the small paper in the ayah’s hand. The papers turned to carbon black bringing an end to an episode. This episode was never repeated after her marriage as Gautama’s family had pity and scorn for the people who believed in superstition. Fate for them meant nothing, all that had meaning was work. Towards the end of the evening, fate and death are haunting her. She is reminded of her fate, fatality in general when she found the posy with which she had set out for the evening. A pink carnation bound to red rose, both lifeless now buried with the deeds and dust of the evening, already belonging to yesterday. They were corpses now tainted with fatality. The rest was now impossible for Maya.

Running through the corridor of time, from the embrace of protection to the embrace of love, Maya was caught in the albino’s net from which escape was impossible. The years had caught up and now came the final clasp from which there is no possibility of release. Maya distinctly remembers that oil-slick, sibilant tongue whispering poetry in the bat tortured dark.
‘Do you not hear the peacocks call in the wilds? Are they not blood-chilling, their shrieks of pain? “Pia-pia” they cry. “Lover, lover. Mio, Mio, - I die, I die”. Go out into the jungles before the monsoons come— at the time when the first clouds cross the horizon, black as the kohl in your grave eyes. How they love the rain - these peacocks. They spread out their splendid tails, and begin to dance, but, like Shiva’s, their dance of joy is the dance of death, and they dance, knowing that they and their lovers are all to die, perhaps even before the moonsoons came to an end. It is not agony for them? How they stamp their feet, and beat their backs against the rocks! They will even grasp the snakes that live on the sands there, and break their bodies to bits against the stones, to ease their own pain. Have you seen peacocks make love, child? Before they mate, they fight. They will rip each others breasts to strips and fall, bleeding, with their beaks open and panting. When they have exhausted themselves in battle, they will mate. Peacocks are wise. The hundred eyes upon their tails have seen the truth of life and death, and know them to be one. Living they are aware of death. Dying, they are in love with life. “Lover, Lover”, you will hear them cry in the forests, when the rain—clouds come, “Lover, I die”... (CP.pp. 95-96).

“Lover, I die”, have become Maya’s words. Understanding their call Maya weeps for them and for herself. Their fate too seems to be the same. These thoughts are driving Maya insane. She knows not who can be
Life and Death

her saviour, father, brother or husband. She knows she is dying but she is in love with life. There is no peace, no rest, just the waiting for death.

We find a juxtaposition of life and death with the rain-clouds emerging from the horizon that are eternally pregnant with promise at one end and at its opposite pole there is an eternally hungry and open grave. In the shadows of the rain-clouds emerges the final truth – death. The thousand eyes upon the shimmering feathers of the peacocks gazed unwinkingly upon the final truth – Death. Maya finds no possibility of mercy, of release or of life. The entire range of memories come to life, they are all too vivid, too real and all of them lead to one destination, death.

The ‘cry’ of the peacocks is a passionate utterance and for Maya it is the continuation of the movement of passion, of fear leading to the inevitable end. This excess of passion in the peacocks ‘cry’ has an essential relation with the well determined inner mental state of Maya. The peacocks fearing themselves to bleeding shreds in the act of love and screening with agony of the death of love is a continuation of a movement of Maya’s passion. Passion always being excessive and disproportionate also suggests its intensity that cannot be calmed but satisfied to some extent.

The repeated use of ‘cry’ is an exclamation. It has no determinate meaning but is not independent of the realm of meaning. First it indicates presence and this is what Maya is always striving for, Gautama’s
realization of her presence. Second, it is for drawing attention of Gautama towards her. Third, it is a warning for Guatama to turn towards her and find a meaning of what she is experiencing.

The problem faced here is that the cry does not indicate any estimation of size. As there is no measurement available to judge the size, Gautama makes a disproportionate judgement between the outward appearance of Maya and the conflict in her mind. Gautama is not aware of the opaque, eyes of the albino, the bleached hand, dark thighs, the oil spilling, the dark, the ants, their drowning in oil and burning in flame. Maya remembers with tears in her eyes the couplet:

‘I might, after all, have achieved the
way to grace,
Had you but granted me a few years more,
O Lord
(CP.p. 177).

The repeated and highlighted frenzied cries of peacocks, and a parreallism between love and death in case of the peacocks, actually are nothing but Maya’s own self. It is the thought of death and sex at the same time that seems to be driving Maya towards anxiety and hysteria. The loud cries and tearing of bodies can be analysed with Freud’s analysis:

We might extend our thesis and say that symptoms aim either at a sexual satisfaction or at fending it off, and that on the whole the
Life and Death

positive, wish-fulfilling character prevails in hysteria and the
negative, ascetic one in obsessional neurosis (SF-I.p. 342).

In Maya’s case the symptoms serve the purpose of both, sexual satisfaction
and of its opposite. There is an excellent basis for this double-sidedness,
the products of compromise arising from mutual interference between life
and death, love and sex - the two opposing currents.

Maya identifies her condition with the condition of the monkies in
cages. There seem to be a dialectical relation between the two. Maya has
no relief, the monkies have no water to give them some respite. Both are at
a stage of torture and waiting for death.

Cage upon cage of them. Long furred bodies swarming upon
each other, till limbs and tails were twisted together, the elegant
lines of their muscles contorted nightmarishly— the work of some
fiendish maniac. And one that I saw was perfectly still and quiet,
backed into a corner by the frantic bodies of its companions, and
gazed out with eyes that had melted into liquid drops about to
slide down its pinched, indrawn cheeks. Its brow was lined with
foreboding and the suffering of a tragic calamity, and its hands,
folded across its thin belly waited to accept it (CP.p. 154).

Gautama’s irrational act of leading Maya into one of cages and
Maya’s sitting back behind the bolted door amongst the monkies is a proof
of his disabled mind. No correspondence is possible under such
circumstances. The relationship between the two can be judged by this
Life and Death

inhuman act. Gautama is oblivious of Maya’s problem, of the fear of death that is getting complex.

The arrival of the train announces the coming of Gautama’s mother who came pouring out, a healthy, energetic women with purposeful arms. She is quick, and sharp, and contrary to Gautama, instantly saw Maya’s tears, realized their cause and rushed to order for water for the helpless creatures. Later on she tries to create positive interests through positive activity as staying ideal and indoor is the best way to fall sick. Maya loves and appreciates her and finds her to be “a pillar of life and living, an anchor much more so than her son, and the only one I had now. Oh to live in her world, to be of her kind! What safety, what peace” (CP.p. 161).

Gautama could never stand upto this position. The non-relation with Gautama, its resultant insecurity is driving Maya towards insanity. Maya who does not remember her own words pleads for Gautama’s mother’s security, longs for her arms and hates her detachment:

I insisted on drawing her into the conversation away from her letters, and Gautama too, thinking that if I could but tie them all into one burning knot of contact and relationship with me, nothing, not even the fiercest fingers would be able to extricate and banish me – or Gautama. Suddenly, I came upon that panikey afterthought, for the first time (CP.p. 164).

Maya’s love for life and the prophesy being no hallucination, Maya wonders why she never thought of threat to Gautama’s life, why she
Life and Death

always thought of her own death. Arjuna had emphasized on the great turn that fate would take, making Maya see one half of the dancer’s shadow, the shadow of death, shifting upon Gautama’s head. She is amazed how at no time, she felt the fear of death for him or how she never sensed danger for him. Interpreting her own self she feels:

I would have, if my love had been beyond the imaginary and transitory. I glanced at him now, slyly, for sly I had grown with such a load of secrets that had to be hidden from him, such evil and awful secrets (CP.p. 165).

Justifying her negative thoughts, her new idea of tragedy shifts on to Gautama, who is so engrossed in his work, even death would not disturb him. Maya’s imaginaire is now exceeding the confused sense of imagination and the meaning of reality. Observing him closely, she finds no mask of death upon Gautama’s thinking and frowning face. Maya finds her face a pert, pampered, ready to smile and laugh, not a face made for tragedy:

His face and mine – both displayed deep absorption in our lives: they were the faces of those who lived, not of those who died, or murdered (CP.p. 166).

Unconsciously she uses the word ‘murdered’ instead of died or suicide. The imaginary comes into existence at a precise moment in the individual’s life. The word ‘murdered’ is the event that can be defined in psychoanalytic scheme. Her desperate love for her own self, her dire need
Life and Death

to live makes her shift the death, which she is sure to occur, to Gautama. She herself tries to analyse, her usage of the word ‘murder’ and feels tortured. Murder haunted her:

Words tortured me now, as memories did, and Murder, that, too, followed me, relentless as well-aimed arrow, as I passed through avenues of thought, recollection, doubt and horror. And sometimes I paused to feel the arrow of that word, Murder, sink into my flesh, and to cry, ‘Is this what I have come to?’ (CP.p. 166).

Maya’s progression towards death is becoming speedy as Maya’s imagination is going wild. Nothing except death and its symbols have place in her imagination. In order to understand Maya’s psychology let us see Lacan’s point of view:

For Lacan, the imaginary, the symbolic and the real constitute the structure of the subject. They have two formulations, both represented by what Lacan calls the ‘L’ schema. This schema stretches the subject (s) towards the four points which are characterized by the determination of the following instances: O = the other; o or I, Ego; and o, another figure of the other, but under the irreducible form of the partial object of desire (object o). The following is the simplified schema. (In The preliminary question on all possible treatments in psychoanalysis, Laca: Ecrits, 1966):
Life and Death

É

$ \rightarrow O \text{ (Mother)}$

$ O \rightarrow O \text{ (Father)}$

Ego (infant)

The ego when hurt, leads to frustration. The more Maya thinks, the more inner conflict between life and death continues. The more she thinks of death, the more she loves life. Maya wants to live as richly as possible and, even more important, as consciously as possible. Thinking of death gives intensity to the moments of life and she begins to live a very conscious life—both physically and mentally.

Maya struggles to achieve a harmony between the outer manifest world where she sees the statue of the dancing Shiva and through the window she hears Gautama laughing. She wants to achieve harmony between her head and her heart. The more she seems to be losing Gautama the more she longs to live with him, thereby transforming the destructive aspect of death which is also represented by the destructive aspect of Shiva’s cosmic dance with the creative impulses of life and love.
Maya looking at herself in the mirror tries to achieve a sort of correspondence between her body and what goes on in the innermost layers of her mind. Her obsession leads her to analyse her face which is turning into a mask, a mask that is either of a murderer or of a murdered. The idea of murder frightens her. She is not sure whether she is alive or dead. Time and again her going back to the mirror reminds us of the mirror stage and what an important role it is playing in Maya’s life:

The mirror stage, the event of birth of the subject as such, is beyond repetition. Between 6 and 18 months, the child who still does not speak, looks in the mirror, only to be struck by his own identity as subject. At this age, the infant does not have even the skillfulness of a chimpanzee; but nevertheless, the moment of recognition manifests the aptitude for symbolization, as well as the genesis of an individual Ego. Either when held out by somebody, or when he begins to walk in a hesitant and handicapped manner, one day the child recognizes himself in the mirror, and this recognition is accompanied by multiple signs of animation and jubilation, that Lacan refers to as "jubilant assumption". We notice two things here: the speculary identification and the locating of non-existence. Specular identification, constituting the image of the Ego, serves as regulative norm in the conduct of one’s life, but at the same time, it can exist only as the absence of the image behind the mirror; the unity of the Ego is correlated with death as absence.
Life and Death

It is a very specific absence serving as support to the experience occurring at the mirror stage. The general function of the imago—the image of body as individuated totality, is according to Lacan, to "establish a relation between the organism and its reality" (between innerwelt and unwelt). Now, the reality of the infant is obliterated by a characteristic non-completion—marked above all by an anatomic incompleteness of the nervous system. This specific prematuration of birth seems to precipitate the individual reckoning by projection into the future, of what the child will be when he is grown up. Lacan summarizes this operation: "This development is lived as a temporal dialectic which decisively projects, into history the formation of the individual: the mirror stage is a drama wherein the internal push is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation—and which for the subject, becomes the lure of spatial identification, fixing the fantasms which follow from a multilated image of the body to a form that we shall refer to as orthopedic, owing to its wholeness, and to the armour endowed with an alienating identity which indicates its rigid structure along its mental development"... We notice here three main points: the marked opposition between the alienating identity and the multilated images of the body; the lure of spatial identification; and the temporal dialectic" [Catherine Clément. Imaginary, Symbolic and Real, pp. 8-9].

In Maya’s case it has become an existential situation of misunderstanding correspondence, which was never attempted at, of harmony which was not even dreamt of by both of them, in some state of
Life and Death

togetherness, physical or mental. In spite of Maya’s best efforts to bring some balance in the highly imbalanced state, Gautama’s gestures contribute to the reverse movement. He is not aware of all that is going on within Maya’s inner layers of the unconscious. His rationality, his common sense, even his superficial humanity cannot achieve anything. Though living in two different universes there is not a complete indifferenee. Maya had to establish relationship even if it meant the death of the other. Maya remained in a highly destabilised, inbalanced state of mind, as long as the other existed. There are two possibilities, either extreme harmony or extreme disharmony. Ultimately the intensity of disharmony and destruction overcame all possibilities of harmony.

Killing Gautama is the result of a deep rooted psychic reason. It is the result of fight in their relationship, a fight is induction of intimacy of realtion. It is not a murder or revenge but is just an act and an act can have hundred significances. Maya for sure did not want to kill him but her active self dominated her. She was obsessed with the idea of wanting to have him. When this obsession was not established then came the opposite, death. There can be life in death, death is overcome by love. Her last desperate act in pursuit to overcome death results in death. Maya and Gautama go to the roof of their house, they stroll up and down and between them there is the moon with its pure, absolute white surface. The moon's white reflection captures Maya, possesses Maya completely and could have saved her and Gautama from the catastrophy, but its possession pushes her to the threshold of death. The sudden realisation that Gautama
Life and Death

is coming inbetween her and the moon leads to destruction. Maya had no intention of murdering him, she pushed him in a strong pang of anger and he really dies. It was in the process of overdoing, she went beyond her limits and before she or Gautama realised, he had crossed the threshold:

The ego, freed from all ethical bonds, also finds itself at one with all the demands of sexual desire, even those which have long been condemned by our aesthetic upbringing and those which contradict all the requirements of moral restraint. The desire for pleasure – the ‘libido’, as we call it - chooses its objects without inhibition, and by preference, indeed, the forbidden ones: not only other men’s wives, but above all incestuous objects, objects sanctified by the common agreement of mankind, a man’s mother and sister, a women’s father and brother...Lusts which we think of as remote from human nature show themselves strong enough to provoke dreams. Hatred, too, rages without restraint. Wishes for revenge and death directed against those who are nearest and dearest in waking life, against the dreamer’s parents, brother and sisters, husband or wife, and his own children are nothing unusual. These censored wishes appear to rise up out of a positive Hell; after they have been interpreted when we are awake no censorship of them seems to us too severe (SFI, p.175).

Anger without hatred is more of a sign of love than love itself. Anger is mostly more natural outburst than affection. Anger is a more appropriate sign of affection than affection itself. Keeping this idea in mind we can compare Maya to a child playing with a toy. When the child
Life and Death

breaks the toy in anger, the idea is not to break it but in a fit of anger, he becomes helpless and breaks it. The issue in the case of Maya is that she wanted to have a perfect relation with Gautama, but when she found it impossible, she was motivated to break him, not that she wanted to kill him.

Maya is a possessed being with the mind in a state of possession where she is not sure whether she is living or dying. The intensity of her being possessed pushes sanity beyond limit leading to insanity. Maya is unable to tolerate his indifference. Gautama’s presence is accepted but when his presence is weighed on her, she feels it, especially when Gautama tries to explain the facts of life:

"Thinking of sense objects, man becomes attached thereto. From attachment arises longing and from longing anger is born. From anger arises delusion, from delusion, loss of memory is caused. From loss of memory the discriminative faculty is ruined and from the ruin of discrimination, he perishes"(CP.p. 112).

Maya listened to the end but the last word remains in her mind.

'How it suits you to quote these lines of a dry stick – an inhuman dry stick. Oh, you know nothing, understand nothing'........and of how I can love. How I want to love. How it is important to me. But you,' and I looked at him straight, and with hate, 'You’ve never loved. And you don’t love me....(CP.p. 112).
By killing Gautama, Maya has actually killed herself, she killed the possibility of the relation she was always striving for. Gautama dies physically, she dies existentially. Maya's effort throughout was to establish relationship which is not possible now, as the other is annihilated. The possibility of establishing any relationship is given up for ever. Maya without expectation is a Maya who is dead. Until now it was a struggle, a conflict which had movement, dynamcity, but with Gautama's death there is no conflict, no dynamcity left. With Gautama finished, Maya is a living dead, death in life.

Extreme introspection shows Maya probably wanted to be violent because of the upheaval in her. She was unaware of the consequences of anger. Passionate crimes always take place in seconds. Depression that is internal leads to suicide whereas anger that is external leads to murder. The intensity and duration of depression or anger determine the type of crime committed. Analysing suicides or killing is difficult as they occur on the spur of the moment. Given time to think and analyse, these sort of incidents would not occur.

Gautama is leading a normal life in his own separate world whereas Maya is living in her private hell with walls of torture, guilt, dread, imprisonment, with the word 'annihilation' repeating itself to make Maya tremble. Finding it difficult to survive, she suddenly seems to love his world, scented with jasmine, coloured with liquor, resounding with poetry, and warmed up by amiability. A gentle voice ringing with sympathy
drifted towards her like a fellow inmate in a nightmare asylum, as if to console her saying:

'Lord, thou hast dealt me so many sorrows,

To bear them, couldst thou not also have lent

me another heart? (CP. p. 103).

Maya misunderstood this couplet as an indication of welcome, an opening of doors that Maya rushed out breathlessly in midst of the gentlemen who were comfortably laughing, talking, drinking in their securely male delight. She was greeted well- mannered by them but the one for whom she had expectations from, reacted in the most offensive manner. He turned his back towards Maya with a glass in his hand and speaking in a raised voice to enable her hear him he said:

'Blissful, yes, because it is unrelated to our day, unclouded by the vulgarity of ill-educated men or of overbearing women'...CP.p. 109).

This incident is a turning point in Maya's thinking. Seeking security and help she had hysterically burged in the men folk but Gautama's inhuman behaviour is not what Maya deserved. This unbearable insult gives rise to a new emotion, hate. Once again Maya is left alone to observe herself in the mirror. She clearly sees the black mark on the forehead, the base of the prophesy and the fatal and relentless competition going on between the two:
Life and Death

Hate was a new emotion to me, and, in trespassing upon it, I entered a new vista of knowledge. I forced myself into believing that I could see now what must be the reason for my hating it so, for Gautama’s spurning it — visible to our subconscious only. It must be a mark upon my forehead, which had been clear to the opaque eye of the albino who had detected it, upon which the stars now hurled themselves vengefully, and which prophesied a relentless and fatal competition between myself and Gautama. I tried to define this mark, give it name, a locality. Was it an arrow? A coffin? A cross? A star? Was it between the eyes? At the temple? Was it dark? Was it pale? And what made gods reach out and touch it with their cold fingers, as they considered the prospect of a murder? (CP.p. 106).

Trying to run away from this sight, Maya’s eyes catch the glimpse of another death, the death of the white jasmine buds that now lay in a heap. They were plucked by the gardener in the morning for her to thread into garlands and wear in her hair but as fate had destined for them she forgot them and now they lay palpitating with living breath, open, white, virginal. Even in their death was a feeling of purity and chastity. Maya cries over them as one cries on the death, of a loved one. In their death, Maya imagines the dreams they conjured, what sort of passions and love they had and the ultimate scene of farewell. She finds the fate of these passionate flowers as the fate of the passionate Maya who is striving for love. The moment she finds this similarity between herself and the dead
flowers she flung them away as she tries desperately to run away from the obsession of death.

Maya, a weak personality, frustrated in love and understanding, looks for an anchor that could save her. Maya seems to hate Gautama in his absence but in his presence shuns hatred and loves his touch. Gautama shuns her emotions and never takes her seriously, contributing them to unbalanced and shadowed childhood. She strives for Gautama’s company and wants him to pull her out of her world, full of fear of death, destiny. Maya needs someone like Gautama’s mother who can force her to think positive, imagine positive and live positively, but he with his occupation thinks of her as a little girl caught in the web of her own silly thoughts. We can use Freud’s term ‘traumatic effect’ caused by the ‘impressions of childhood’ as ‘the work of regression’ and between them every degree of co-operation between the two factors. There are two factors that effect neurotic illness, the sexual constitution and experience or fixation of the libido and frustration that are represented in such as manner that if there is more of the one there is less of the other.

Gautama is unaware of Maya’s mental state. When trying to be friendly and helpful to her he ends up in disturbing her. The slight calm and peace that prevailed with his company fades away making her violent when he again calls her a spoilt baby and goes on to condemn the way of life her father taught her. Gautama wants her to rise above trivial things to a higher level by quoting the ‘Gita’ profusely. Gautama thinks life means
action and work through vocation and rising up from happiness leads one to peace and serenity. He fears Maya’s confusion between love and attachment. The passion of wonders and excitement leads to the passion of unhappiness, its loss undoubtedly leads to depression and disillusionment. What makes the yogi’s and sanyasi serene is nothing but their rising above the level of passions, “their eyes closed to death, misery, pleasure, the temptation of helping, the temptation of saving, the temptation of attaining success” (CP 118). Their being free from disillusionment releases them from any danger of perishing Maya’s herself believes she is a neurotic. She is never able to share her fears with her companions so they effect her nervous system. Maya’s insane passions, weaknesses and lack of self control would lead her to perish if not consoled, but Gautama on the contrary:

He followed me, grasped me, and shook me roughly. ‘Neurotic’, he said, ‘Neurotic’ that’s what you are. A spoilt baby, so spoilt she can’t bear one adverse word (CP.p. 115).

Maya cannot bear being called a neurotic and a spoilt child. With her agony and fears overpowering her, she seems to be becoming a neurotic. His repeating Maya’s being a neurotic makes Maya also believe she is a neurotic:

Obsessional neurosis is shown in the patient’s being occupied with thoughts in which he is in fact not interested, in his being aware of impulses in himself which appear very strange to him.
and in his being led to actions the performance of which give him no enjoyment, but which it is quite impossible for him to omit. The thoughts (obsessions) may be senseless in themselves, or merely a matter of indifference to the subject; often they are completely silly, and invariably they are the starting point of a strenuous mental activity, which exhausts the patient and to which he only surrenders himself most unwillingly. He is obliged against his will to brood and speculate as though it were a question of this most important vital problems. The impulsions which the patient is aware of in himself may also make a childish and senseless impression; but as a rule they have a content of the most frightful kind, tempting him, for instance, to commit serious crimes, so that he not merely disavows them as alien to himself, but flies from them in horror and protects himself from carrying them out by prohibitions, renunciations and restrictions upon his freedom. At the same time, these impulses never – literally never – force their way through to performance; the outcome lies always in victory for the flight and the precautions. What the patient actually carries out–his so-called obsessional actions–are very harmless and certainly trivial things, for the most part repetitions or ceremonial elaborations of the activities of ordinary life. But these necessary activities (such as going to bed, washing, dressing on going for a walk) become extremely tedious and almost insoluble tasks. In different forms and cases of obsessional neurosis the pathological ideas, impulsions and actions are not combined in equal proportions; it is the rule, rather, that one or other of these factors dominates the picture and
Life and Death

gives its name to the illness, but the common element in all these forms is sufficiently unmistakable (SF-I, pp. 297-98).

These childish and senseless pangs are not relished by Maya and it is in the pursuit of avoiding them that she tries to divert her attention, towards Gautama, towards nature. Although the obsession cannot be removed, it can be displaced. Maya's life sways between life and death. Gautama when trying to give this winsome child some happiness plucks a flower out of a bush and gives to Maya, who cups her hands over the flower with lot a effort, giving pain and stress to her fingers, making sure no harm is done to the flower. She is aware of her foolish thoughts and knows her beholding her flower is symbolic of beholding her life with freshness. Maya has attained extra-ordinary intellectual gifts above average that in this exalted height of fear of death she wants to die at this very moment to make life immortal. She seems to have attained the highest level. She finds herself with a very energetic disposition which is beyond Gautama's imagination. Maya is just exchanging and displacing ideas but the concept of death fixed in her mind is unchanged. Happiness also leads to the idea of end, ending it, there she wants to overpower it, does not want to linger as she is sure it will not last for long. Truly, this is what happens once again. Maya derives satisfaction by highlighting the power of love and puts it on a pedestal where even the exalted fear of death can be overpowered but Gautama attributes no importance to love. For him, it means:
Life and Death

'The tragedy of love is not what so many imagine it to be – the impossibility of maintaining it at its first, exalted level. It is, as you have just indicated, the impossibility of remaining there briefly enough – so briefly enough that death cuts short, with one quick blow, this fated love, before the cancer has a chance to set in. But then, would one be strong enough to bear a life consisting of one splendid nova after the other, exploding magnificently and dazzlingly all the time? I think not. One is too week (CP.p. 121).

A person who is very weak Gautama tries to emphasise the weakness and helplessness of human beings. He calls her an 'Occidental' whose conception of life is one brief episode including experience, success, virtue. Maya's family of God-fearing Brahmins conceived life not as a spark that once lit and extinguished in purgatorial ashes but of 'life as a constant glow, an aura that passes through a continual cycle, passing from day to night, from the Manifest to the Unmanifest, and from the Unmanifest into the Manifest again (CP.p.122). Truly enough, for Gautama, this human life is too short, trivial and insignificant in the huge cycle of immortality where living and dying goes on continuously for ever.

Gautama calls love fated, he varies about the strength and longivity of love. He feels that when one feels the inadequacy, the self feels wearied and sick, so chooses a simpler and easier path. The strength being limited, one feels suffocated and finds a dire need to breathe normally. Maya on the other hand, still protecting the flower, exerting her fingers to curve across, is now turning cold, the coldness referring to the coldness of
Life and Death

approaching death. The flower can be thought to be a symbol of children or a female. Maya insists on the fact how a being can accept or even bear seeing things changing and dying. It is a terrific loss to think that things would never be the same again. Gautama finds the argument baseless and illogical as usual. Gautama’s disheartening attitude forces Maya to think of her past, her father. Maya’s attitude changes when it comes to her father. Maya remembers the spring in Lucknow and gets relief and is soothed. As opposed to the thoughts of death, Maya remembers her childhood where the world was like a toy especially for her, painted in her favourite colours, moving to her favourite tunes. The atmosphere was full of life where Maya would roll over on her stomach, kick her legs and enjoy the lush green grass. The father’s warm heartedness, his tenderness always gave Maya the warmth of his open love for her though people thought he spoilt her. Only Maya knew how life was pumped in her when he fondled her cheek or held her hand, the way she could cry jubilantly while taking to him. While Maya’s father’s reaction to what she said was always positive, Gautama’s was mostly negative leaving her dejected and frustrated and forcing her to think of her father. Freud’s analysis of father daughter relation is presented in Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis as:

What I have in mind is rivalry in love, with a clear emphasis on the subject’s sex. While he is still a small child, a son will already begin to develop a special affection for his mother, whom he regards as belonging to him; he begins to feel his father as a rival who disputes his sole possession. And in the same way a
Life and Death

little girl looks on her mother as a person who interferes with her affectionate relation to her father and who occupies a position which she herself could very well fill. Observation shows us to what early years these attitudes go back. We refer to them as the ‘Oedipus Complex’, because the legend of Oedipus realizes, with only a slight softening, the two extreme wishes that arise from the son’s situation – to kill his father and take his mother to wife. I do not wish to assert that the Oedipus complex exhausts the relation of children to their parents: it can easily be far more complicated. The Oedipus complex can, moreover be developed to a greater or less strength, it can even be reversed; but it is a regular, and very important factor in a child’s mental life, and there is more danger of our under-estimating rather than over-estimating its influence and that of the developments which proceed from it. Incidentally, children often react in their Oedipus attitude to a stimulus coming from their parents who are frequently led in their preferences by difference of sex, so that the father will choose his daughter and the mother her son as a favourite, or, in case of a cooling – off in the marriage, as a substitute for a love –object that has lost its value (SF-I, pp.243-44).

The clinical fact which comes in the form of the Oedipus complex as it is established by analysis is of the highest practical significance. At puberty, the sexual instinct first makes it demand in full strength, the old familiar incestuous objects are taken up and freshly charged with libido. At this point, very intense emotional processes come into play either
following the direction of the Oedipus complex or reacting against it. From this time onwards, the human individual has to get into the task of detaching himself from his parents, and until this task is not achieved, one cannot cease to be a child and become a member of the social community. Maya, it seems, has not been able to detach herself from her father. Arjuna has freed himself from his father’s pressure, fully detaching himself, leaving the father for good. This solution is not arrived at by Maya, making her a neurotic all her life, she is unable to transfer her libido to an outside sexual object.

Maya is a true example of Freud’s concept where murder and incest are two criminal wishes of the Oedipus complex that are recognized as the true representatives of the uninhibited life of the instincts. Maya kills Gautama and goes back to her father’s house, fruitless. The Oedipus of the being not being realized, when there is an obstacle And you want to be on your own, you find sexual objects where they should not be. Maya’s father always dominated her thoughts. Wishes that construct dreams are often of a perverse or incestuous nature or reveal an unsuspected hostility to those who are the nearest. Gautama had no idea of Maya’s evil impulses. They were allocations of the libido and charged with psychological energy which dates from early infancy and had long since been abandoned as far as conscious life was concerned, but still present in Maya’s psyche, especially at night and were capable of functioning in a certain sense:
And then Gautama made a mistake—his last, decisive one. In talking, gesturing, he moved in front of me, thus coming between me and the worshipped moon, his figure an ugly, crooked grey shadow that transgressed its sorrowing chastity. 'Gautama!' I screamed in fury, and thrust out my arms towards him, out at him, into him and past him, saw him fall then, pass through an immensity of air, down to the very bottom (CP, p. 208).

Maya exhibits the perversions of the Oedipus complex that neurotics exhibit in a magnified and coarsened form:

In obsessional neurosis, .... it is the regression of the libido to the preliminary stage of the sadistic-anal organization that is the most striking fact and the one which is decisive for what is manifested in symptoms. The love-impulsion is obliged, when this has happened, to disguise itself as a sadistic impulsion. This obsessional idea 'I should like to kill you', when it has been freed from certain additions which are not a matter of chance but are indispensable, means at bottom nothing other than 'I should like to enjoy you in love'. If you consider further that there has been a simultaneous regression in regard to the object, so that these impulsions apply only to those who are nearest and dearest to the patient, you can form some idea of the horror which these obsessions arouse in him and at the same time of the alien appearance which they present to his conscious perception. But repression, too, plays a great part in the mechanism of these neuroses, though in a cursory introduction like ours this is not
Life and Death

easily demonstrated. A regression of the libido without repression would never produce a neurosis but would lead to a perversion. From this you can see that repression is the process which is most peculiar to neuroses and is most characteristic of them (SF-I, p.388).

Late in the evening Maya turns on Gautama’s bath, the running water, though not of a spring or a meandering river, but water all the same moving and flowing, Maya’s buoyancy rises rapidly with the level of the clear water. Maya’s hands dripping and Gautama’s pulling his tie off are all symbols of wanting to satisfy oneself but immediately follows Gautama’s grimace in the mirror:

'The sight of the helpless male, I presume. A gibbon would be defter, I admit (CP.p. 199).

The sight of the helpless male causes frustration to the extent that after a short while he is killed. If the realization of the self is not fruitful, the ego of the being is hurt to the extent of the self not being the true self. The crime committed out of frustration is attributed to fate for justification.

The contours of political discourse can be discussed in the context of Sophocles. Oedipus the King ends with the following utterance of the Chorus:

People of Thebes, my countrymen, look on Oedipus. He solved the famous riddle with his brilliance, he rose to power, a man beyond all power. Who could behold his
Life and Death

greatness without envy? Now what a black sea of terror has overwhelmed him. Now as we keep our watch and wait the final day, count no man happy till he dies, free of pain at last. (from Penguin edition 1982. Translated by Robert Fagles)

The most significant proposition here is: count no man happy till he dies. And, we will see in the following play of Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, how Oedipus dies. Before his death, Oedipus confronts his old adversary, Creon, and makes a clean breast of his entire past, his past as was conceived by Creon, and in modern times, by Sigmund Freud. He peeps into the vast domain of his unconscious and with a conscious, archaeological effort, reconstitutes the basic network of cosmological relationship to construct a discourse that is diametrically opposed to what he had himself accepted in a rush of anger, in a metonymic, emotional sequence of events. Let us hear Oedipus himself:

Unctuous, shameless—where do you think your insults do more damage, my old age on yours? Bloodshed, incest, misery, all your mouth lets fly at me, I’ve suffered it all, and all against my will! Such was the pleasure of the gods, raging, perhaps, against our race from ages past. But as for me alone - say my unwilling crimes against myself and against my own were payments from the gods for something criminal deep inside me…. No look hard, you will find no guilt to accuse me of - I am innocent!
Come, tell me: if, by oracle of the gods, some doom were hanging over my father's head that he should die at the hands of his own son, how, with any justice, could you blame me? I wasn't born yet, no father implanted me, no mother carried me in her womb — I didn't even exist, not then! And if, once I'd come to the world of pain, as come I did, I fell to blows with my father, cut him down in blood — blind to what I was doing, blind to whom I killed — how could you condemn that involuntary act with any sense of justice?

And my mother......

Wretched man, have you no shame? Your own sister! Her marriage — forcing me to talk of that marriage! Oh I'll tell it all, I won't be silent, not now, you and your blasphemous month have gone so far. She was my mother, yes, she bore me — Oh the horror — I knew nothing, she knew nothing! — and once she'd borne me then she bore me children, her disgrace. But at least I know one thing: You slander her and me of your free will, but I made her my bride against my will, I repeat this to the world against my will. No, I'll not be branded guilty, not in that marriage, not in the murder of my father, all those crimes you heap on me relentlessly, harrowing my heart (1095 — 1140).

In a metonymic psychic sequence of the order of stimulus/response, Oedipus lapsed into absolute guilt and pierced his eyes
Life and Death

to avoid a glance at the manifest structure of the universe around him. In metaphoric, Abelardian reconstitution of the *imaginatio*, he dwells in the transparency of historical divine scheme of things and situates himself vis-à-vis the entire suffocating weight of diachrony and makes an effort at redrawing the contours of his conscious acts, with the declaration: I am innocent. There is absolutely no question of any guilt on “something criminal deep inside” him. In his conscious, archaeological search of his unconscious, he found no guilt to accuse him of. It is simply a question of divine or historical contingence at the time of one’s birth. The tremendous power of this contingence cannot be ruled out. One cannot easily deny or brush aside all that one inherits in terms of one’s religion, culture, language, history. The initial period is always the period of submission to do what is ordained, to act the way the collective contingent socio-economic cultural contours force you to. This is the lot of all human beings, but the son of man is also a conscious being. He reflects upon his contingence and with a tremendous individual, conscious effort throws away this yoke of divine history, and one day, not only absolves himself of all that was not his doing, but also begins to generate his own universe of signification. Abelard had repeated in several of his treatises that the guilt cannot be established on the basis of the sinful act, it is only the intention that matters. Hence, Oedipus is NOT guilty. Nothing is then considered arbitrary. Signification is a generative process. It is a human institution, depending entirely in human will: *positio hominum*, *voluntas hominum*. And, once that is achieved Oedipus dies as a
Life and Death

happy man, and, the same gods who had condemned him to such misery welcome him to heaven. Once Oedipus has overpowered his unconscious, once he has rectified the TRUTH, the truth of who he is, and, who the gods wanted him to be, he acquire the powers of prophesy and his blind eyes foresee the most transparent vision of state and society that now frightens the darkness within Creon. In this absolute condensation of synchronic, historical and mythical times, in this crossing of the threshold from the unconscious to the conscious, the ideological field is crystallized in most human act of father Oedipus towards his beloved daughter, Antigone" [Gill H.S. 1991, Mental Images and Pure Forms, pp.63-6].

Maya kills Gautama and goes back to her father's house. She is so excited to be back there that like a little girl she jumps around in her room. We cannot rule out the fact that she never wanted to be away from her father. Gautama in a way had carried her away from him and now with Gautama killed she has a clear way to go back to her father. Whenever Gautama frustrated her, she longed to be with her father who would have been able to calm her and tell her as usual. It is best to accept. He was the one who could understand Maya’s plight, sorrows and fears. His attitude was to accept reality for it surely must be for the best. The wisest course is to accept what cannot be undone. Her father, a person of quite words, never did anything to allay her fear or dispel her conviction, but merely underlined their power by asking her to accept. If he could foresee disaster, he saw it as being, inevitable, and if he could foresee rebellion, he saw it as
Life and Death

being hopeless. But at this stage, Maya is doubtful if it would have been possible for him to bring her out of the fear of death. He could quell her fears of the dark, of bogey men, of unsympathetic school teachers but now Maya is caught in a great new danger probably even he would have known no way of alleviating or dismissing it. Maya feels that her father who was a born fatalist might be unwilling to do so as she recollects in his eyes the ‘vision of life’ that he had accepted.

Life is creation, and Maya and Gautama are supposed to create life together but life is not being created. Gautama does not respond to her desire. It was normal and obvious to have children in their three years of married life but as it has not happened, the sight of others being in a pregnant state drives her to depression. The only solution can be by having one but Gautama does not understand her feelings. It is her fear that does not let her face reality. The idea of not having a child frightens her. To avoid this fear she chooses not to think of the idea of possible birth. Even if she does not think but her being childless is nothing but non-relation with her husband. Internally she wants to be with him, share everything with him but most of the time he is far away from her. The intense way she asks Gautama: 'You were bored? Bored? Didn’t you feel anything more? Can’t you feel anything except boredom? You weren’t stifled in that house? You did not want to weep when you saw that pregnant woman? You were just bored?' (CP 65). Her deep rooted urge is triggered off at the sight of a pregnant woman where as Gautama is not at all affected with it. He on the contrary tries to combat her indiscipline with his sense of the
Life and Death

practical. For Gautama facts are made to be accepted, to be studied and lived with and not to be wept over. He finds nothing constructive in Maya’s misery, it is her over-sensitiveness that depresses her. Gautama at times makes her realize, the catalysis is extreme is involvement, the cause of her unrest. His pragmatic approach surprises him at Maya’s reactions: 'Frankly, he said, if a man where to react to the sight of pregnancy by bursting into tears, Maya, no court of law would consider him sane or sober' (CP 65). Gautama finds nothing serious about Maya’s reaction without realizing how important it is for a women to be a mother. If Maya had a child, it would have diverted her attention and given her something to look forward to in the future. The priorities being shifted to the child probably Maya would have forgotten the astrologer and his prediction. The idleness in Maya’s life gives her the time to think negatively. The child forces the parents to think of the future but Maya’s life is just her past, her fears and now her waiting of death.

Maya liked her friend Pom for the reason she never spoke of fate. She was a person full of life, pink, plump, pretty, who had never been ill, or overworked. Her lust for newness, for brightness, colour, gaiety made her life full of zeal. Pom never referred to superstition, the bright enamelled horizon of her painted world had no scope of bore shadows. Maya never imagined Pom going to the Birla Mandir but the pleasant hope of a new life coming in the world makes her go there and pray. She carries flowers so that her wish of having a baby boy is fulfilled. Maya visited
Life and Death

Porn to get some reassurance, some help to be pulled out of her miserable world of fears but her being pregnant depresses Maya:

‘But...’, I said, and ‘Porn...’ and now felt something that had always been strong in me, weaken suddenly and shiver at the memory.

She patted my knee, smiling a suddenly matronly, faraway smile of condescension that pregnant women sometimes have for those not in the same condition. ‘I thought you had guessed’, she said ‘or that she had told you (CP.p. 63).

Life is in the making in Porn’s case, but on the contrary, death is approaching Leila’s life. Thinking of Lila, Maya recollects:

The only work I ever saw her do that was in keeping with her personality was her ministration to her husband who lay, dying of tuberculosis, upon his still bed in one corner of their single room. He had been dying of tuberculosis when she fell in love with him, and she had married the fatality of his disease as much as the charm of his childish personality or the elegance of his dark hair falling across his white brow. When I saw her hand him a glass of medicine, or lift his body into comfortable positions, I saw in her movements an aching tenderness subdued, by a long sadness, into great beauty and great bitterness.

…..Sometimes I thought of him as an animal, a ferocious and wild beast that had allowed itself to become a house pet for its
Life and Death

own reasons, and he accepted the food and drink she earned for him, as his due, even teasing her about her parents who had not seen her, written to her, or in any way communicated with her, since the day of her elopement. But when I saw her tend him, and the loveliness that entered her closed face as she did so, I could not grudge her what had become the meaning of her life. Leila was one of those who require a cross, cannot walk without one (CP.pp. 57-58).

Maya wants to tune herself to Liela's special wave-length of wisdom combined with calm. Maya remembers Liela not as a bitter personality but a resigned personality. If she had raged, revolted, Maya would have rushed to her. She was a resigned person who lifted her fingers to her forehead saying it was all fate and was written on her forehead. There was no possibility of her being able to help Maya as she herself was in the same state of mind though not without reason, a reason much more acute than Maya.

Death seems to be shadowing life. Childhood, the beginning of life, seems to be dark by the shadow of death. An indescribable air of futility entered the Lal's party when their son got up from his sleep and walked in. Maya felt as if she was existing on an island, a city of dead, where everybody was gripped by a fatal disease and would slowly perish. The youngest generation instead of being bright and fresh was touched by the disease and there was no scope of survival. Maya refers to their daughters as 'bodies of the four sleeping girls'. They tossed restlessly, sighed and
groaned in their sleep. The fan too seemed to be evil and threatening. This is the result of uselessness of life. In this depressing atmosphere, Maya discovers another creation of life on its way. The already created ones are crawling towards death, Maya feels the futility of their bringing another such life in this world, meaningless. Maya cries in her sleep 'But to perish? Who? Tell me who?' (CP.p. 125).

Dreaming of perishing now leads to the question of whose perishing. Maya seems to be coming in contact with death. The earth that was sprinkled with water had dried, as dry as death. Maya’s tongue was thick and dry confirming death inevitable. The thought of death and the probability of death seemed terrible and the unbearable for her. Death is shifted to life by the sound of fresh and gurgling water. The smell of the wet earth and its coolness as moss indicates life. Gautama gives her water to drink and wipes her face with a wet handkerchief is like reviving her from death to life. The very next moment she feels the dampness pricked across her skin like the bubbles rising to the surface and bursting reminding her of a parasite life, creeping across her and refusing to accept it, she wipes herself dry on her pillow.

Maya is scared to sleep, in fact she finds it dangerous to sleep. She grips and pleads Gautama to help her to keep awake. Sleep is heading towards her, from behind, trying to put her off to sleep permanently. She fears death in her sleep as a person with a snake bite. Maya is trying to avoid the sleep as she fears sleep is going to be extending to death.
Every object of nature seems to be carrier of death, be it the rats who suckle their young most tenderly but spread plague or the big flabby monkey or the snakes who coil around the chaste sweet white flowers and sweet – smelling sandalwood trees are nothing but carriers of death. The flowers, a thing of beauty, scare Maya. The risk involved while bending on the flower and looking into the yellow pollen upon a fragile stamen becomes the long, pointed tooth of a venomous snake and strikes its sting deeply and fatally right between the eyes on the forehead, exactly the same place, the astrologer had pointed out a scar.

At this stage it would be important to have an understanding of what importance the concepts of images have on one’s childhood. Not only the physical image but the phonetic image also leaves an imprint on the child’s mind becoming a sort of an epitaph. There are two types of impacts, one is the experience of the object as such that leaves a certain impression or trace on the mind, second is the gusty image used to express the word, it is the trace of expression on one level and resonance of the same word at the other level. The word and its meaning acquire a certain association with the child giving a linguistic expression to the word. What is left after the passage of time is not substance but form. Word is impirical but what is important is what is left on the sub-conscious and what the sub conscious wants to take. One remembers what one wants to remember, it is not exact and not identical though it is the impression of the same thing. The importance attached is not identical to the imperical reality. The
reaction to a word is a psychic affair, not physical or linguistic. It is a sound but of the physic order, visible in Maya’s thinking:

Of the lizards, the lizards that come upon you, stalking you silently, upon clawed toes, slipping their clublike tongues in and out, in and out with an audible hiss and a death’s rattle, slowly moving up, closing in on you, taking their time, knowing they have hypnotized you with their circular eyes, the centers of black glittering within circles of white, that they have struck you to a pillar of salt which, when it is motionless they will mount and lash with their slime-dripping tongues, lash and lash again, as they grip you with curled claws, rubbing their cold bellies upon yours, rubbing and grinding, rubbing and grinding... (CP. p. 127).

The gusty image is inseparable as it is the relationship between the signifier and signified. The signifier and signified are two separate entities and emerge from the union of the field of the signifier and the field of the signified. They are all associated, what the image presents and what it signifies cannot be separated. While reading a narrative the series of images leave some impression on the reader and this goes on and these images lead to the level of impressions which surely correspond to the image but are not identical:

Mental processes in sleep have a quite different character from those of waking life. We experience every sort of thing in dreams and believe in it, whereas nevertheless we experience nothing, except, perhaps, the single disturbing stimulus. We experience it
predominantly in visual images; feelings may be present too, and thoughts interwoven in it as well; the other senses may also experience something, but nonetheless it is predominantly a question of images. Part of the difficulty of giving an account of dreams is due to our having to translate these images into words (SF-I, p.118).

While reading the text one tries to understand the images. While analyzing the text, the impression of these images help us to understand the crisscrossing of relationship and characters. The desert, the sand, arid sand, peace, speckless skies, pure and clear do not help Maya to forget: "But what of the dangers? Ah, they'll not tell you of them. Of the lizards, the lizards that came upon you... (CP.p.127). The series of these images of lizards correspond directly to death. They remind her of the:

Albinos. Bleached into albinos by the desert sun, these lizards. But the rat, too, is an albino, from having lived always in the dark, from never having seen the sun at all. And moonlight?

Ah, dangerous, if you do not know. Be careful, best be careful. Who knows which one is to perish. Perish one must. The desert is waiting, the rats and the lizards. They'll claim the flesh, the winds will carry the bones away. Mind the wind. Shut the windows Hide, hide. Ah, here it comes, the lizard. Here it comes to mount you, saliva falling in lines of white from the its month, its belly dragging on the ground, then dragging on you. Here it is (CP.p. 128).
Life and Death

The lizard mounting her, the belly dragging on her emphasize the approach of death, it seems to be a phonetic message making death inevitable.

The lizards, the reptiles, their dragging bellies remind us of Freud's symbolism where the reptiles are male sex symbols:

Among the less easily understandable male sexual symbols are certain reptiles and fishes and above all the famous symbol of the snake. It is certainly not easy to guess why hats and overcoats or cloaks are employed in the same way but their symbolic significance is quite unquestionable. And finally we can ask ourselves whether the replacement of the male limb by another limb, the foot of the hand, should be described as symbolic. We are, I think, compelled to do so by the context and by counterparts in the case of women (SF-I, p. 189).

Maya dreams about images of approaching death and now she dreams of her mother, about the photograph on her father's desk. The photograph, very bright in reality, looks grey in her dreams probably due to the atmosphere being grey, dull, moving towards death. The brightness of life when the photograph was clicked is now moving towards the darkness of death, a thought of going to her by joining her in death.

Maya's thinking process is now going towards the way death would engulf either of the two be it the form of fire or flood, on of the lizards coming upon them. The mode of death will make them screem or
Life and Death

there will be blood. Death engulfs Gautama leaving Maya to experience death in life. Though behaving insane, actually she is aware of her dreams, her feelings being dead. She lives a meaningless life where realization of the self is not possible.

The imaginary comes into existence in the strict sense of the term, at a precise moment in the individual's life. It is perhaps the only event that can be defined as such in the psycho-analytic scheme. In fact, all other events of one's life refer, or by the play a repetition, to the primitive event, which is itself ungraspable of an original trauma; what happens in a temporal unfolding, if not this perceptual repetition of a forgotten souvenir.