SECTION ONE

SYNTAGMATIC ANALYSIS

UNFOLDING OF THE TEXT

BASIC THEMATIC UNITS

PARADIGMATIC CORRELATIONS
Analysis of *Cry, the Peacock* in Linear Progression

UNFOLDING OF THE TEXT

I

The narrative opens with the description of the 'body lay rotting in the sun'. The sight of the corpse and Maya's reaction introduces Maya's anguish, disturbance of the mind in which lays deep the painful thought of death. She surely is not in a stable state of mind. It is in the first chapter that we find the whole story. The description of death physically and influence on Maya's mental state, her being hysterical and Gautama's behaviour of not being emotionally bothered about the dog, his being unaware of Maya's agony.
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*Cry, the Peacock* unfolds with the body lying rotting in the sun all day. Maya's anguish on the pet's death is not only the death of Toto but is an existential problem, it is something inside her. Nobody could be so upset because of the dog only, but it is something within her that is tormenting her. On one side is the site of the body, on the other, is the unspoken wait for her husband, who, she feels, would share her sorrow, or stay close to her on account of this common grief. But Gautama's arrival has no soothing effect on her. Whereas the death is an existential problem for Maya, for Gautama, it is a part of the routine. He telephoned the Public works Department to send their scavenging truck to take the corpse away carefully. Immediately after this, Gautama feels the need of having tea, but for Maya it is different. The mere fact of her being hysterical, which a normal person would not be, presents the relation between the external and the internal world. The existential internal world and the external world upsets a human being. It is an intense situation. Maya is not yet mentally prepared to get back to the normal routine of life when Gautama asks her to pour tea for him. She finds it amazing, 'the same as on every other evening before this'. Maya turns hysterical, runs to see the bed, under the limes, finding it gone she does not know where to run next, so returns to pour tea for Gautama. But her sentiments are at stake when in spite of so much of mental depression she makes tea, which is just a symbol of compromise. A visitor is announced, an advocate, which makes Gautama rise immediately ordering for the tea to be sent to the study, forgetting her and her
back frustrated as she feels Gautama has no desire for her. It is the desire to be with someone that keeps one awake. Desire is of course something that belongs to the imaginary world. It is the manifestation of the physical but it is not physical, it is psychological. For Maya it is depressing because it is almost a routine for Gautama to sleep before she joins him. It is this physical routine which at times seems to be killing Maya's desire. Being a childless couple, there is no change in their routine, no change in physical place, mental place. Their subject of discussion at times seems to be limited, as with children one has new projects and the most important factor is togetherness.

Maya's having seen a dark women dressed up in bright crimson saree, the colour of happiness and satisfaction, which is very much like her dream. The dark saree and the smile on her face in spite of her own dark colour, being followed by a dark man giving her a warm smile is what Maya dreams of. Her extreme frustration is a contrast to this glimpse of happy and warm relationship which she always longs for. The comparison of the dark woman with her own self is the comparison between ideal and reality.

Thinking about desire, one feels that this attention has to be reciprocal. If Maya cares so much for Gautama he too needs to give at least some part of attention to her but he is busy with his own routine and never realizes what Maya is going through alone. She compares herself with the posy that like her seems to be lifeless by the end of the evening. The posy's dead look is a
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reminder which takes her back to the thought of fatality. Her decision of convincing Gautama of the perfection of her world again comes to an end and lying uneasily, restlessly she again goes back to the external flux, the external decay of a world consisting of rubies and butterflies, the long years, the embrace of love prove to be unsuccessful to free her from the trap of the albino. The years seem to have caught up now leading to the final act.

Maya can see and hear the peacocks. She can visualize their dance like Shiva, their dance is the dance of death. Maya finds the peacocks very 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". (Desai, Anita. Orient Paperbacks, 1980. Cry, the Peacock, p.95-96. Hereafter mentioned as CP).

As the time is passing, Maya is identifying herself with the peacocks more and more. Now is the time when she can see even the open grave:

"In the shadows I saw peacocks dancing, the thousand eyes upon their shimmering feathers gazing stead fastly, 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." (CP96).
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The peacocks' words and fate become Maya's words and fate. During the day Maya forced herself to believe that all this was nothing more than a nightmare. But now she is sure that all these thoughts are not hallucinations but strong facts. Lying all by herself, gazing at the moon, her memories come to life. These memories are so vivid that she remembers even the slight details that there is no way that all this could be false. Every thought was more than real and she finds herself going insane. She wants a saviour, be it her father, brother or husband. She can never rest now, all that she can do is to wait for death.

IV

Maya analyses herself in the mirror. While observing her face in the mirror she thinks of the other's gaze. She wants to be loved and admired which is missing in her life. Mirror is the Other who can tell her what he thinks about her, no body else can. Maya observes her round, childish, pretty plump face with its smooth and silken skin, the face which would normally be appreciated and found lovable but she feels this sort of a face could not impress a man like Gautama. A pretty face like hers which could have been an asset has become a negative point in her personality. It is here we feel that Maya is going through a mirror catalysis where dialectical relation with the mirror is visible. There is a difference between the real psychology of Other's eyes which hold back the
opinion and the mirror who as a person with dialectical relation tells one back what it feels about not only the face and body but the being too.

Gazing at the image of each of her features for long arises a new emotion in Maya. She enters a new vista of knowledge where she seems to have known the reason of Gautama's hating her, and this leads her to a strong hatred for her own self. The subconscious is coming up to the reality to the extent that she seems to be able to see a mark on her forehead which the albino astrologer had seen and prophesied years back. There is a fear of Gautama being able to see it, so she tries to emphatically wipe off the blemish in her flawless skin.

The sight of the things inherited by Maya from her father, chosen by his forefather, remind her of her childhood. Gautama comments on these precious things as 'your knick-knacks' and sees no value in anything, in the ideas and theories born of human brains, that too particularly male brains. He cruelly teases "Designed to gather dandruff and defeat your feather-duster" (CP 99). Commenting on Shiva's bronze elbow, he says, "What purpose do they serve?" (CP 99) This very Shiva who still seems to be smiling reminds her of her father, of his lovely Urdu couplets, the cultured elderly aristocrats who were like her kind patrons. As opposed to her childhood, she is now caged in the room, she now hates. Everything around her seems to be stuffy, completely suffocating.
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Her face, her being which she dreams of being beautiful in her imaginaire has turned out to be matter of curse. She curses herself, her face, her being. She longs to be with Gautama in the garden where she can feel even her father's presence but it completely depresses her to find no such desire from his side:

Already we belonged to separated worlds, and his seemed the earth that I loved so, scented with jasmine, coloured with liquor, resounding with poetry and warmed by amiability. It was mine that was hell. Torture, guilt, dread, imprisonment - these were the four walls of my private hell, one that no one could survive in long. Death was certain (CP.102).

Destiny seems to have fated Gautama to live in a world that grew desirable daily whereas she was destined to die in the cruelest of hells. In this sort of a mental state she needs Gautama to pull her out of it but there is total indifference on Gautama's part. His is a world geometrically opposite to that of Maya's. They can never meet. In one sense both want to live in their own worlds and no effort is made from either side. This leads to alienation for Maya. If there is a correspondence between the two individuals, the two worlds also correspond, complement according to the instinctive interest. No doubt the two worlds are different but that cannot be the real issue because no two worlds, like two persons, can be the same. The problem between Maya and
Gautama is that both of them have closed their doors. In this case, as both have shut themselves from each other, there is no coordination. Alienation automatically arises from such indifference. Another factor that gives rise to alienation is that both of them are self-centered. Maya's sensitivity is extreme, she is living in a world where Gautama can never peep in, and day by day she is making it more and more inaccessible for Gautama. He always thinks of Maya as a light-hearted women who lives in her childish world whereas he lived in a world where Maya would never be permitted. understand, they were The more Maya longs to live with Gautama in his world, the more she fails. She calls her destiny, annihilation. She finds destruction all over. Maya finds the mark on her forehead becoming prominent day by day. She can feel the "stars now hurled themselves vengefully, and which prophesied a relentless and fatal competition between myself and Gautama... And what made gods reach out and touch it with their cold fingers, as they considered the prospect of a murder ? (CP.106).

It is here for the first time we hear the word 'murder', earlier it was always 'death', the 'end' which she thought only for herself. The seed of murder is sown unconsciously in her mind.
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Maya's judgement about her own self is that she is moving away from sanity and wisdom:

Perhaps it is my madness that leads me to imagine that horoscope, that encounter with the albino, his predictions, my fate? Perhaps it is only a phenomenon of insanity? And insanity can be cured...
(CP108).

But who is going to cure her insanity? Gautama would just give the name of childish tantrums to her anguish and outbursts. He has never considered Maya to be having any problem; for him, she is leading a peaceful, comfortable life. On the other hand, Maya in her_loneliness, tries to analyse her own self. At one time, she finds herself insane, the very next moment to contradict this she proves she is in full possession of her senses as she can recall her past with perfect clarity, with its minute details.

The party going on in the front lawn is a contrast to her suffering and Gautama's unawareness about her condition proves to her that there is no bond of love between them. This fact is too harsh for her to reconcile. It is unbearable.

There is a kind of extreme frustration. She does not know what she is saying and doing. On the one hand, she says she is mad, on the other, she finds herself in full possession of her senses. She is struggling between sanity and
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insanity. The more she is losing him, the more she is losing her own existence. The more he is not with her, the more she longs for him. Now that she does not hold him mentally, she wants to hold him physically. This is a common human psychology that on slipping one thing one desperately wants to hold on to the other which is already moving out of hands. This is not a longing out of desire but out of frustration. It is the result of the realization of non-existence:

It was the first time that I admitted to the limitations of love, and I flushed now that I realized it, yet I was in too agitated a state of mind to reflect long upon the shamefulness of this false love that I proclaimed (CP 103).

When there is no love, no bond, no relation, she wants to hold on to him physically when everything is lost. She is just clinging to him with no desire. This feeling of no desire merges out of non-relationship. Two different worlds have no relation, but difference cannot be the cause of friction as it is complementary. Maya is deliberately exaggerating her world. In case of no relation, no love, no binding, in fact nothing is left, then why is she insisting to possess him. Unable to possess him, she feels frustrated. This frustration leads to her unhappiness. When one is happy then one gives freedom to the other person. If the relationship is based on confidence, then you have no insecurities, but if there is lack of confidence then one clings to imaginary dreams. The most important way to possess a person it to possess him mentally.
then no physical possession is required, it is automatically there. When there is no psychological harmony, just trying to hold physically is impossible as it will surely slip. Gautama does not understand what is happening to Maya.

Love, physical attachment are stages of life. What makes life are many more things including these which make life worth living together. Man and women are not animals whose relationship starts and ends with body. As the relationship increases, and higher the mental level, the physical level decreases. The ultimate objective is satisfaction, if there is mental satisfaction then physical satisfaction follows. At Maya's stage, holding Gautama is becoming artificial, it has no meaning. In normal life everything is normal, there are no excesses in anything, but if all around life is not normal, it leads to excesses. Gautama is "too fastidious to admit such matters as love, with its accompanying horror of copulation, of physical demands and even, overbearingly, spiritual demands of possession and rights won and established"... (CP113).

The goal is satisfaction. The main problem is basically looking for a good relationship. what he wants is basically good. Both Maya and Gautama are living in their own water-tight compartments. None is trying to move a little towards the other's inner core. Maya is determined not to speak to Gautama knowing he 'will think me a tiresome child for it, for showing what you once called my "third-rate poetess's mind"...(CP.113). She is
metaphorically tense like a poet as all poets in their intensity are close to madness. They constitute their independent universes. To be different is a normal human process, internally and externally individuals are different. Gautama's work can sometimes be a reason of conflict but it is not always so. If Gautama had been an artist then it would have been a different situation. The reason man and women can live together is their complementation. Man to some extent is not interfering and the same is the case with woman, she need not interfere in man's work. Similarity tends to create more problems. Their difference should have been complimenting but they continue to live in their own closed worlds. Then comes a stage where there is no question of man or woman, it becomes a clash of two persons. For both relation or non-relation, one has to take the person as a person, there is no question of difference of age, gender, which are present only at the elementary level. As a being, he or she cannot be taken for granted. The worlds of Gautama and Maya are undoubtedly different but they have to be respected by each other.

Relationship has to be maintained. Any relation can be kept normal if there is mutual respect. If the attitude is normal and there is ultimate respect, then everybody is ready to give in. Leaving aside respect, Gautama is always behaving in an unconcerned manner. Knowing about Maya's mental disorder and fear of few words, instead of giving her security, support and reassurance, he quotes her from the Gita: "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.112].

Maya is sure to make him listen what she has to say "You never will let me tell you this. Why? Are you afraid? Because you cannot meet it? You feel out of your element? You can't bear to be not alone?... 'Is there nothing in you that would be touched ever so slightly, if I told you I live my life for you?'" (CP. 113-114). Observing Gautama she realizes the futility of all her efforts: "He was not on my side at all, but across a river, across a mountain, and would always remain so.... You shall never help me. It is all true. One of us will win, the other must lose" [CP.114].

Gautama in return calls her mad, 'Neurotic'. Now he jumps to her childhood piling the blame on her father.

A spoilt baby, so spoilt she can't bear one adverse word... He is the one responsible for this - for making you believe that all that is important in the world is to possess, possess—riches, comforts, posies, dollies, loyal retainers - all the luxuries of the fairy tales... What have you learnt of realities? The realities of common human existence, not love and romance, but living and dying and working, all that constitutes life for the ordinary man [CP.115].
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Finding Maya upset about his comments, Gautama tries to soothe Maya, he quotes time and again from the 'Gita'. He wants her to understand their meaning as it was necessary for Maya so that her life does not remain empty by filling it up with every desirable thing which would be unable to give meaning to her existence. "He who, controlling the senses of the mind, follows without attachment the path of action with his organs of action, he is esteemed" [CP.116].

Slightly overlooking the bitterness with which Maya talks about his family and a little appreciation for Maya 'You are right. You are, in a fashion, less of an egoist than I' (CP 118). He mellows down the storm in Maya throughout the evening. Just a small soft gesture by Gautama, of plucking a flower and handing it over to her makes her happy and content to the extent that she says:

I shouldn't mind dying now, after all. At this very moment. Then it would remain like this, for me. We should never walk a step farther, or say a single other word. It would all come to a stop here, and rest. Gautama, don't you wish it? [CP.121].

Gautama sums up Maya's thinking as 'Occidental view of the theory of re-incarnation'. There is a problem of non-relation that makes them suffer. If present is good then there are no obsessions for the past. There is a dialectical relation. It is for the other person to maintain equality. Dialectical relation
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needs to be negotiated by both sides. The being who participates and needs to be reciprocated is in question, both are equal, no one is higher or lower, so each needs to be respected. This leads to union and communion.

The mirror stands a witness to her very dark black brows and makes her conscious of her own self. The mirror shows you what you are, how you look inside and outside. The mirror tells you if there is a correspondence of the inner self and the outer self or not. It is the situation that makes an individual ugly, as it is not the person who is ugly but the situation itself is ugly. A beautiful situation turns a person beautiful.

VI

Maya is hot with fever and finds it dangerous to sleep as there is a series of images of rats, monkies, snakes and lizards that haunt her. These images are not physical images but gusty images that have sound and expression of words they are sort of epithets. They leave traces on the subconscious.

There are series of images in a certain dynamic, constant movement. In the beginning they seem to be obscure. Physical images slowly go from one abstraction to other. Each image is separate yet they enter into a series of combinations and permutations.
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The image and what it signifies cannot be separated. Maya comes in contact with all these fantasmatic images. All leave traces on her subconscious.

Restlessness, dreams, surrealistic images of animals, hellish visions which are torturing Maya do not let her sleep. Powerful images, the animal world, the dream world, the rats, monkies, gods, flowers, all go on as a surrealistic scene of a horror film. There are sexual images, snakes coiling, obsession. She wants and does not want to sleep and all of a sudden sleeps. Surrealistic images of desires are horrifying at the same time. Maya has a relation of desire with Gautama and Gautama in a way horrifies her like a snake, she finds him to be a dream and a snake. Everything seems to be terrible for Maya. The desire like suckling is a kind of physical closeness that she desires, but only if this desire would not turn into horrifying images of snakes. Everything is in extremes, extreme desire, extreme frustration, life and death. On one side is energy, flowers, virginity, and at the same time there is danger. These are all in a way images of Gautama who appears to her in these forms. The images of sexual relations are transformed into a nightmare. The closeness to body suddenly becomes repulsive. The dream of love transforms into a horrifying rape. The queen of the night brings both pleasure and horror. There is virginity, innocence on the one side, and on the other, there are snakes, violence, and rape.
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VII

Maya wants to shut all doors to her past, her childhood. She is too engrossed in her own self-constituted world of imaginaire that she seems to have forgotten even her brother and father. Maya closed up in the four walls of her room is shocked to receive a letter from Arjuna, her brother. This letter takes back Maya to the memories how he would escape like a bird. Arjuna's world had never been their world, he had merely been a visitor who had finally taken leave. He had always been uncomfortable in that world and had always like a resigned bird gazed with passion through the bars of the cage that held him.

Arjuna's and Maya's point of departure were the same but reactions and attitudes different:

If I was a partridge, plump, content, he was a wild bird, a young hawk that could not be tamed, that fought for liberty (CP.134).

Thoughts of Arjuna bring the thought of Maya's dead mother to her. Maya's mother has been thought of only once in the text, that thought also not being so bright, it is portrayed as dull and grey.

Recalling back the memories of Arjuna she is herself surprised why inspite of being a good brother her memories about him were only those of the
distance between them. One reason could be that she is too engrossed in her own little knitted world to think of others, but this does not carry much weight as Arjuna is not 'other', he is her own blood, her real brother with whom she spent her childhood. Maya is trying to run away from harsh realities. She wants to live in a world of imaginaire where the practical world like Arjuna's has no reality. She could never do what he could do. We find two different personalities in the same house, brought up in the same environment:

Mine were awkward kites that never lost their earth-bound inclination. Arjuna's were birds - hawks, eagles, swallows - in the wind. Arjuna would effortlessly manoeuvre his, which sailed high, high, together with kites and eagles (CP.135).

Kites here signify strength and determination. Being aware of the difference, Maya does not want to follow her brother. This weakness could be the reason why she tried to forget him easily.

Maya's father is the person who is always at the back of her mind - he is the person in her imaginaire. But he had been different in every way. The sentimental urge of the bourgeois to sit down and write.

Strange words, as though they came from Gautama's cynical tongue, not from my father's sons (CP.137).
Maya finds a dialectical relation between Arjuna and Gautama, they seem so alike. They seem to be far away from the soft world of flowers and poetry. Arjuna has nothing but denunciation of the sweet, prosperous, joyous life in which he was born, having left all when he sailed into a canning factory. Here we find a coordination of Maya's world with her father's, who is unable to understand his son's behaviour in spite of all his efforts. Maya unlike her brother, living in Gautama's world, time and again goes back to her father's world, remembers her childhood, and cherishes its memories like her valuable possessions.

Maya's father relates Maya's reaction to the astrologer's prophecy. He banned even the words connected with it in the house as he wanted to keep Maya away from what had been her nightmare. On the other hand, Arjuna takes it as a casual fact of life and he mentions it in his very first letter to her. He has no other feelings for his father except blaming him. Even for Maya's reaction, he blames him:

After all, if father did not belong to that sheep-fold of superstitious, hide-bound Brahmins, there would never been that absurd fuss over a horoscope that, I remember, was once cast for you... the tantrums... (CP.141).

The image of Maya's father for her is always impressive. If one is tortured, the surrealistic images torture even more. She is so troubled that her
life seems to be a story of dream transformed into a nightmare. We find manifestations of nightmare, there is extreme physical, mental and psychological frustration. Maya is always tired, depressed, tortured and the whole life is nothing but a nightmare for her. Everything has become scaring, everything is working against her. There is not much difference when she is sleeping or awake, it is just that the images are slightly different. There is a strange mixture of love and sex, of purity of love, sincerity, faithfulness, honestly, absolute corresponding harmony. Now there is no more virginity, but there is extreme purity. The other extreme is repulsion which in the true sense is not a desire. There is no satisfaction in the dream of purity. Maya is not living at the physical level. There is no more expectation.

Maya lives in a world of fantasy and wants Gautama to meet her there. He is living in a world of material transactions, he is not looking for a normal relation. This frustration leads to repulsion and is horrifying even in dreams. Maya is living in a fantasy that is not normal, so she feels terrible.

The father obsession for Maya is visible at different levels. He is a man at a distance, a symbol of being a pure man. Relation of fantasy does not fail as it has no realization. Desire is supplemented by culture. The relationship can never be spoilt as the threshold is not to be crossed. It is a perfect non-relation. Though one does not know the reason, it will always remain a non-relation. The father is a figure of the fantasy world. He is an image, a metaphor and a
metaphor by definition is perfect. Even while living together they live separately, there are few occasions of conflict. Father is only a memory whereas Gautama is a reality whose most ordinary actions and behaviour become a problem.

VIII

Maya's relationship with her father is an overflow of her non-relation with Gautama. The non-relation between Gautama and Maya effects all that is related to Maya. As he is not happy with her, he is not happy with anything related to her. The indifference is slowly being transformed into hatred. Hatred is the evolution of non-relation and is its climax. This is the stage where there is no scope for compromise.

Maya in her loneliness has created her father like an imaginary figure, a fantasy, a phastmatic imaginary being to fill her void. Gautama initially liked her father and was his friend but now the gap between him and Maya reflect his attitude towards her father. His friendship was a reality, now that friendship is no longer there. For Maya too he has become a sign, a symbol of satisfaction and it is this mental image which Gautama cannot tolerate. The reality is very harsh so she seeks relief in non-reality, in illusion, in the world created by fantasies. She now longs for a dream father to escape from reality while living physically in Gautama's physical world. If Gautama does not make any attempt
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to come close to her, she does not try to come out of her shell to enter his world.

Maya is not at home, in her environment. Although there is no physical disorder, yet mental order and satisfaction is missing. Tension is a part of life but the question is tension to what extent. She is not involved in the household. Maya and Gautama refuse complementation in each other's world. They accuse each other mentally but no effort is made by either of them to resolve their personal problems.

They reach a stage where they do not even fight as their relation is not a dialectical relation. At the early stage of difference, there is give and take, but when hatred takes over, there is no solution:

'Why, about this priceless letter from the non-conformist son who shocked his family by his non-Brahminical, even anti-Brahminical beliefs, one might say. It seems to me a most amusing topic for conversation. As far as I can see, you, with your profound, interest in human beings and their variant natures ought to be amused too' (CP.144).

Maya when upset to the extreme goes to her dressing table to look at herself in the mirror, her only friend. When unable to ask anybody else about herself and especially at times when Gautama passes nasty comments, she tries
herself in the mirror to see the amount of truth in his comments. She
seems to be distorted into an elongated one with ghostly eyes. When
she touches her face, Maya does not feel him touching her, for her, the
reflection in the mirror reflects the image of an upset that of Maya that Gautama is touching but the image of an upset
which she can visualize in the mirror. The reflection in the mirror reflects
through the mirror she sees Gautama moving into the smoke of his
into the dimness: 'This is an unnatural state of human affairs'
(CP.145).

This part of the narrative seems to be one of the most important
which constitutes the conceptual framework. Henceforth everything
seen from this phantastmatic world. Each and every interpretation, be it
or deformed, will be visualized through this frame. It is through this
that the moon, a demonic creature, reminds of Kathakali ballets, the
deformity of fate. It is this strong feeling that makes her sure at night that the
the silence, the past memories were vivid and convince her that it was
real. This connection between her past and the present makes one sure
imprint on her mind and the sensitivity with which she is reacting to it.