

ISSN: 2278-9529

# GALAXY

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

*May 2016 - Vol. 5, Issue- 3*

**Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite**

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## **Yaksha Woman, a Manifestation of Oedipus Complex: A Critical Reading of *Nagamandala***

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Many aspects of “Nagamandala” is widely discussed, especially the mythical elements. Mythical elements are again being discussed merely with a different aspect. As the ‘story’ in the play says this is the story of Rani and not Kurudava’s story, that might be the reason why more studies are not done with ‘Kurudava and Kappanna’. I here try to analyze the psychological relationship between Kappanna and Kurudava, tries to find the reason behind the ‘Yaksha women’ whom Kappanna occasionally sees.

In my paper I attempt to prove Kappanna have Oedipus Complex towards his mother Kurudava. For this reason he remains a bachelor. He doesn’t desire to separate with his blind mother, but every bit a man he has to satisfy his sexual desire and that desire puts him in hallucinations, now and then he catches the picture of a Yaksha woman. Granting to the Indian myth ‘Yaksha women’ is the perverted image of a woman, of mans fantasy.

### **Introduction**

Girish Raghunath Karnad was born in Maharashtra, on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1938. He is an internationally recognized playwright, actor, poet, director, critic and translator. He used his creativity extensively to criticize the evils of society, something which earned him both friends and foes. Name of Tippu Sultan will be the most appropriate epithet for the International airport of Karnataka as he was a great ruler of the land, this Twitter comment has even threaten his life. He often amalgamates history and mythology to question contemporary issues. Some of his literary outputs are Hayavadana, Naga Mandala, Hittini Hunja, Tala Danda, Agni Mattu Male. He was a visiting Professor and Fulbright Playwright at the University of Chicago during the late 1980’s. Karnad is the recipient of numerous awards and honours including Padma Shri, Padma Bushan and the prestigious Jnanpith in 1998.

The source material of the Naga-mandala comes, as Karnad informs the reader in his introduction to the “*Three Plays*”, from a folk tale that he had heard from A.K Ramanujan, who had collected many folk tales and their variants as they existed in different parts of India. The folk tale of a Prince whose extreme mistrust of women prevents him from loving any woman, and whose encounter with a woman’s desire for love, possesses, as Ramanujan writes about this tale, as many as forty variants. The central theme of all these tales is, as Ramanujan remarks, “*the narcissism*” of the “*self-involved hero*”, who undergoes a test put to him by the wife in order to survive. The psychological inadequacy that the young human

being is tripped up in preventing his self transcendence, causing acute lack of understanding and communicating between him and a woman. (Dahiya 1)

*Nagamandala* is a play which provokes the question of women's freedom, it has widely undergone a feminist interpretation. Rani presents the typical Indian women who are dependent on men for her protection in all phases of life, reminding us of the famous slogan from Manusmriti. "Pita rakshati kaumare/bharta raskshati youvana/putrah rakshati varddhakye/ na stree swatantryam arhati." Karnad points his fingers at the patriarchal society which insists on some miracle to establish the chastity of women. He had implored folklorist technique in the play. In an interview with Tutan Mukherjee, Karnad revealed:

"*Nagamandala* combines two folk-tales. The framing story describes the gathering of the flames in a dilapidated temple after the lamps in the village homes have been extinguished. The gossip of flames is overheard by the playwright who is condemned to die unless he can keep awake the whole night. The story the playwright hears is about a woman, her husband and her snake-lover. When I heard the folktale, I was captivated. I wondered if a woman in such circumstance would commit a deliberate adultery. Would she accept the secret lover? The conservative Indian attitude will neither permit nor tolerate this, of course. So how does she face the fact that the person who visits her at night, who is her tender lover, is not really her husband? What kind of truths or half truths do we tell ourselves to avoid facing a stark and unpleasant reality? That was the inception of the play in my mind." (Mukherjee 42)

### **Oedipus Complex in Kappanna**

"Nagamandala", being a multi plotted work which can be analyzed in various aspects, the critiques rejected the possibility of exploring that by only giving importance to its primary plot. The primary narrative revolves around the lives of Rani and her husband Appanna which resulted in marginalizing the subplot, Kappanna and Kurudava. Karnad can be conceived as a psychological genius who had made for an intrigue relationship [Oedipus Complex] between the mother and son, Kurudava and Kappanna, which persuades Kappanna to remain a bachelor. He doesn't desire to separate with his blind mother.

The term Oedipus complex (or, less commonly, Oedipal complex) explains the emotions and ideas that the mind keeps in the unconscious, via dynamic repression, that concentrates upon a child's desire to have sexual relations with the parent of the opposite sex. Oedipus Complex, Freudian theory originates from a Greek play by Sophocles, Oedipus Rex. An oracle was told to Laius, the king of Thebes, he will be killed by his son Oedipus and will marry his wife. To avert the tragedy king left him to be killed. Not knowing the oracle a shepherd rescued, took him to the king of Corinth who raised him. Later on Oedipus was told by the Delphic oracle that he will kill his father and marry his mother. He fled to Thebes to avoid the fulfilling of the prophecy. On the way he met Laius, fights and killed him. At Thebes, the sphinx's questions him, as he correctly answered all its questions he married Jocasta, his real mother, with whom he bore two sons and two daughters. When the

truth was revealed, Jocasta hangs herself and Oedipus blinds himself with her golden brooch. (Wikipedia)

It is being evidently proved with several instances in the play that Kappanna had Oedipal Complex towards his mother. Though Kappanna is well aware of the fact that Kurudava have a motherly affection towards Appanna since she and his mother were like sisters when Appanna's mother was alive. Kurudava is now anxiously waiting to see his wife. Appanna was in no sense passionate towards Rani whom he locked in his house. Since she was forbidden from seeing others, Rani was scared and outraged when she met Kurudava for the first time for Kurudava was the first human she met there other than her husband. Kurudava consoled Rani telling:

“Kurudava: Don't be afraid. I am called Kurudava, because I am blind. Your mother-in-law and I were like sisters. I helped when your husband was born. Don't be frightened. Appanna is like a son to me.”(Karnad 78)

Kurudava is sad about Appanna going to his concubine wished to know about him and Rani's sexual life, also advises her how she can bring her husband under her charm. Kappanna's psychosexual infantilism makes him fear for Appanna, his competitor for his mother. He remains ambivalent about the position of Appanna in their life which indirectly directs jealousy and emotional rivalry against the latter. He shows deep hatred towards Appanna and scolds his mother for intruding into Appanna's life.

“Appanna: Mother, you can't do this! You can't start meddling into in other people's affairs the first thing in the morning. That Appanna should have been born a wild beast or a reptile. By some mistake, he got human birth. He can't stand other people. Why do you want to tangle with him?”(Karnad 75)

Kappanna informs his mother about Appanna's visit to his concubine thinking that this might detach Kurudava from Appanna. Kappanna's intentions don't work away but instead it just aided in increasing her concern for him. Kappanna dislikes his mother's interference in Appanna's life which made him scold his mother in meddling in Appanna's life. Now Kappanna deeply regrets for disclosing about Appanna's illicit affair to his mother which made her force him to take her to Appanna's house that night itself. Kappanna have a deep love towards his blind mother and always carries her on his back where ever they go. He condemns his mother for his back ache, carrying her on his back. But when Kurudava replies that she is in need of no help and could find her own way, Kappanna retorts with his great love for his mother which in turn pleased her:

“Kappanna: Do you know what I ask for when I pray to Lord Hanuman of the Gymnasium every morning? For more strength. Not to wrestle. Not to fight. Only so I can carry you around.”(Karnad 76)

Kappanna frequently says to his mother about a woman whom he sees at night, whose thoughts disturbs her. She doubts the woman to be an ogress who tries to snatch her son away from her. Her dislike to the lady whom he occasionally sees is explicitly expressed by her.

“Kurudava: Perhaps she is an ogress of demon birth. Or someone from the netherworld, perhaps. A spirit. Why don't you just say who it is—

Kappanna: You won't let me—

Kurudava: When you talk like this I feel we are falling apart. It's a fear I have never felt before.”(Karnad 98)

Both son and mother love each other. Freud believed that during the phallic stage (3-5 yrs) boy develops an unconscious sexual desire for his mother. Successful resolution of Oedipus Complex is a child's identification with the same sex, his father. We are told that Kappanna's father died of a plague very early so that he couldn't spend long with his father which resulted an Oedipal bonding with his mother.

### **Yaksha women, a manifestation of Oedipus Complex**

Kappanna frequently sees Yaksha women. Scared of seeing a cobra coming out of Appanna's bathroom drain he runs away with Kurudava. He was suddenly frozen by seeing a lady stepping out of the cemetery. He says she looked at him, smiled and waved. Kurudava scolds him saying that the lady will be of a demon birth. We can assume the lady whom he sees to be Yakshi.

In Indian mythology, Yakshi is a female goddess associated with the fertility of the earth, love, and beauty. Yakshis are not traced to any one major religion but recognized as rural guardian deity worship connected to nature worship. They are said to reside in a formless manner on trees, in rivers, lakes and ponds, and on highways. So, offerings were made to trees, rivers or lakes where Yakshinis were believed to reside. These objects and places later gave birth to deities connected to tree spirits. With the coming of Jainism and Buddhism, yakshis went into their fold as secondary deities in Jain and Buddhist pantheon. But research shows that Yakshis developed as a cult. Ancient bronze statues of yakshis have been found in various places in India, especially the South, to show that Yaksha and Yakshi transformed as powerful guardian of wealth. They were symbolic of sex and fertility and developed as cosmic sexual symbol. Yakshinis are generously depicted in sculptures as full-breasted and big-hipped women with wide generous mouths. Most sculptures depict them as naked or nature-clad. They are well ornamented. They are shown leaning seductively against trees. The Uddmershvara Tantra lists 36 yakshinis. Some of them are the embodiments of love and sex they are Vichitra (The Lovely One), Vibhrama (Amorous One), Janaranjika (Delighting Men), Madana (Lustful), Mekhala (Love Girdle), Pramoda (Fragrant), Anuragini (Very Passionate), Ratipriya (Fond of Love). Yakshi folklore in Kerala is interesting. Yakshi's are portrayed as being immensely beautiful creatures with vampire habits. They are usually nocturnal. They are taken to Palm trees as abodes and are said to target lonely and lost travelers at night. Solitary trees are said to have a coupling yaksha and yakshi, so they are not proximate at night to avoid their wrath. (Saraswathi)

Kappanna never wished to separate with his mother and marry someone, but every bit a man he has to satisfy his sexual desire and that desire puts him in hallucination, now and then he catches the picture of a Yaksha woman, an image of sex as per Indian mythology.

“Kappanna: ...That she floated out from the haunted well...”(Karnad 97)

Granting to the legend, the Yakshi's feet apparently do not touch the land even when they walk, they float.

Kappanna love the lady, Yakshi whom he regularly catches a glimpse of. Whenever Kurudava talks ill of her he argues for her. Once when Kurudava calls the lady a witch or a fairy he says:

“Kurudava (relieved): Oh! For a moment I was worried it was that—who is that-again?  
That witch or fairy, whatever she is—who you says follows you around.

Kappanna: Mother, she is not a witch or a fairy. When I try to explain, you won't even listen. And then, when I'm not even thinking of her, you start suspecting all kinds of—

Kurudava: Hush! Enough of her now.”(Karnad 107)

According to the Freudian Psychosexual Development, there are six stages. Oral Stage (Birth to 18 months), Anal Stage (18 months to three years), Phallic Stage (ages three to six), Latency Stage (age six to puberty) and Genital Stage (puberty onwards). The final stage of psychosexual development begins at the start of puberty when sexual urges are once again awakened. Through the lessons learned during the previous stages, adolescents direct their sexual urges onto opposite sex peers, with the primary focus of pleasure in the genitals. If too much libidinal energy is taken up in the first three stages, the individual cannot reach maturity, cannot shift the focus from their own body, their own parents and their immediate needs to larger responsibilities involving others. (Heffner)

In all stages of psychosexual development one should satisfy the pleasures of the same. As Kappanna is not attached to any other women than his mother, his sexual desires (sexual gratification of Genital stage) are not met. By the end of the play Kappanna is missing. Kurudava believes it was Yakshi women who had carried off her son. Kurudava says:

“Kurudava: I woke up. It was midnight. I heard him panting. He was not in his bed.  
He was standing up...stiff...like a wooden pillar. Suddenly I knew. There was someone else in the house. A third person.

Rani (mesmerised): Who was it?

Kurudava: ... A temptress from beyond? A *yaksha* woman? Perhaps a snake woman?  
But not a human being. No. What woman would come inside our house that hour? And how? She wasn't even breathing. I shouted; 'Who are you? What do you want from us? Go away!' Suddenly the door burst open. The rushing window shook the rafters. He slipped from my hands and was gone. Never came back.”(Karnad 107)

Yaksha woman is just a manifestation of Kappanna's Oedipus Complex. He has to satisfy his sexual desire, but cannot leave his blind mother, this ambiguity made up an image of Yakshi. We have to infer towards the end of the play Kappanna goes insane and thus he got vanished into thin air.

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