

Interpretation of The Oedipus Complex in *KGF*: A Psychoanalytic Perspective

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Abstract:

This research paper explores the reveal of the Oedipus complex in Bollywood film *K.G.F* through the aspect of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Freud's psychoanalytic theory mainly delves deeper into the unconscious mind, identifying the hidden desires, emotions and conflicts caused because of the psychological aspects, which is considered to be the core element in shaping a child's behaviour. The Oedipus complex and Electra complex are considered to be the two sides of the psychoanalysis. The Oedipus complex is core to the theory of Sigmund Freud which describes a child's unconscious attraction towards the parent with the opposite sex and rivalry with the same sex parent at the same time. Electra complex was introduced by Carl Jung which describes a girl's obsession and attraction towards her father figure and rivalry towards her mother. This research identifies how Indian cinema portrays the psychological complexities of character aligned in family, a psychoanalytic lens specifically on the Oedipus complex. By examining *K.G.F* through the psychoanalytic perspective, the study aims to explore how these psychoanalytic themes affect the development of the characters, narrative structure and the film's extensive psychological contrast.

Keywords — Oedipus complex, Psychoanalytic theory, Electra complex, psychological complexities, Authoritative power structures, Character psychology in cinema

INTRODUCTION

Film works as a medium which reflects the intricacy of human emotions, desires, conflicts between human psychological behaviour. Film has a special ability to convey these human complexities. Psychoanalytic theory, coined by Sigmund Freud describes a psychological approach which explains human behaviour and mental processes to explore the unconscious thoughts, feelings and desires. "A boy's first erotic object is his mother. This choice is destined to lead to conflict, owing to the simultaneous presence of affectionate and hostile feelings toward the father" (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900/1955, p. 362). Oedipus Complex is one of the most significant concepts of Freud, which describes the child's sexual desire for the parent of opposite sex and having rivalry with the parent of same sex. These concepts and theories play an important role in the character formation in cinemas/movies. Cinema/movie has a great role in implementing these concepts and became

successful in projecting these aspects to the audience. This concept was widely used in cinemas, literature and theatre. The *K.G.F* film series (*K.G.F* chapter 1 (2018) and *K.G.F* chapter 2 (2021)), directed and written by Prashant Neel is considered to be one of the most valuable contributions to contemporary Indian Cinema. The movie talks about the man raised from poverty to become an inevitable king of Kolar Gold Fields (*K.G.F*). The Oedipus complex can be used as an important tool in the film studies to dwell into psychological conflicts, desire of the characters and their motivations which shapes the cinema. Apart from these psychological conflicts, desire, motivation, psychoanalytic theory shapes the audience and engages emotionally with the film. Film have a great role in shaping one's emotional stability. Film balances the mental and emotional stability of the viewers. Through Oedipus complex and psychoanalytic theory, the cinema/movie shapes

not only the characters but it has a great influence on the viewers also.

INTERPRETATION OF THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX IN *K.G.F*: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

The Indian film *K.G.F* : Chapter 1 (2018) and *K.G.F* : Chapter 2 (2022) directed by Prasant Neel, explores the concept of Oedipus complex by Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud within the relationships between the characters and its narrative. We can analyse the Oedipal trajectory of the protagonist Rocky (Raja Krishnappa Bairy) through his unwavering attachment for his mother and how he confronts the symbolic father figure. Oedipus complex shapes Rocky's life motivations and his mother's fixation. At the time of phallic stage of psychosexual development (ages 3-6) it is evident that they might develop an unconscious attraction towards their own mother and consider father as a rival figure. This struggle is solved when the child comes to align with the same sex parent and this leads to the formation and development of superego. In *K.G.F* the relationship between Rocky and his mother has an important role in shaping Rocky's character and his decisions. For Rocky his mother is not just a parental figure but a godly figure that charges his whole life's purpose. When we explore through the lens of psychoanalytic perspective, we can see Rocky's fixation on his mother and the way she is becoming the utmost reason for motivation. The motive of his life was aligned with his mother's words "You should be the richest and most powerful man". This sets the way for the Oedipal desires to keep the needs of his mother, which stands as the centre for Freud's theory.

"The absence of a strong father figure or the presence of an overpowering mother creates the perfect setting for Oedipal conflicts to unfold in cinematic storytelling". In the classical Oedipal outcomes, we can see the unconscious desire of the boy to become the figure that his mother relies on, by replacing the father figure. But in the film *K.G.F* , there is no visible father figure, so it reinforces an unchallenged attachment to his mother. Even though the character of Rocky was described as having a ruthless nature and violent rise to power, his emotional moments throughout

the film directly relies on the memory of his mother. The mother fixation plays a crucial role throughout the film. According to Freud the main thing that leads towards the castration anxiety is the father who represents the authority that stands between the child and their mother. Here the literal father figure manifests in the powerful male antagonists he confronts, since Rocky does not have a literal father figure. The main antagonists in the film such as Suryavardhan, Garuda and Adheera who play such authority figures and also act as the most powerful paternal figures who symbolises and hold control over wealth, power and territory. Each of these authority figures plays a different facet of patriarchal authority. Suryavardhan was represented as a high authority figure, ultimate ruler of the Kolar fields who was considered to be the distant father figure. When we dwell more into the character Garuda and Adheera, we can see the rivalry towards the figures. When it comes to Garuda, we can see Rocky's ascension which shapes the Freudian concept of the child's hostility towards father. Adheera returning in chapter 2, shows the theme of the constant struggle against paternal authority. For achieving the ultimate dominance over these father figures, where he must symbolically overthrow them. These are considered to be the Oedipal struggles that Rocky has been facing throughout his journey. These violations towards the father figures shows the Freudian patricide fantasy where a child unconsciously tries to get over the father to possess the mother. Overthrow of these figures works as the fulfilment of the Oedipal resolution in the absence of a direct father figure.

When we dwell more into Rocky's childhood, it is revolved by harsh realities of poverty and social neglect. Watching the struggles of his mother to provide was surrounded by the challenges which leaves an unforgettable mark on his psyche. The main force that leads and shapes Rocky's character was his mother's resilience and unwavering hope which stood as a great determination to transcend their circumstances. Here the death of Rocky's mother plays an important role in shaping Rocky into a world where he is both emotionally scarred and resolutely driven to the reality of the future that she envisioned. There creates a tension between

losing his mother at a tender age and a profound sense of isolation.

The Legacy of Mother: Rocky's Psychological Crisis, Relationships with Women, and the Ambition to Honour Her Memory

"The mother figure in Oedipal narratives often becomes a source of motivation, guilt, and internalized conflict, influencing the protagonist's actions and relationships" (Winkler 57). The character's journey is deeply rooted with the trauma of losing his mother in his childhood. This plays an important role in shaping his identity, actions, and emotional responses throughout the film. This trauma of losing his mother shapes his influence in relationships with other women and also leads to psychological crisis. To honour his mother's memory, Rocky set his ambitions accordingly which resulted as his ambition to rise his power, to dominate the KFG and to become the wealthiest man in the world. The death of his mother is considered as the central reason for trauma in his life, which advocates him emotionally and psychologically. Losing his both parental figures at such an early age makes a deep sense of abandonment and helplessness in him. These feelings are formed by his status as an orphan with no father figure to provide him the basic needs such as guidance and security. So his mother's death was not only a psychical loss but it serves as an emotional breakdown that affects throughout his existence. "There is no support for love... as I have told you: to give one's love, is very precisely and essentially to give as such nothing of what one has, because it is precisely so far as one does not have it that there is a question of love." (Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book V: The Formations of the Unconscious*, Seminar of May 7, 1958). As per psychological aspects, the death of a primary caregiver at a tender age can affect emotional development and it might lead to psychological scars. The main reason for Rocky's emotional crisis was the inability to mourn fully or reconcile with this loss. The main force which drives him was the words which he gave to his mother that he would change their fate and he would die as the world's richest man. However, the gap left by her death can never be filled and material success and power which intensifies his psychological conflict was his attempt to

compensate for this loss. The trauma was also interpreted by Lacan's theory of the "Real". The Real represents that which cannot be symbolised or integrated into a proper reality. In Rocky's case the Real is considered as Rocky's mother's death and the trauma that he has been through cannot be understood or fully processed. The actions which show his affection towards his power and dominance can be considered as the central attempts to fill these gaps and make sense of this void. The whole Rocky's psychological crisis is deeply intervened with the loss of his mother and his inability to get out from the early trauma. Their tasks, both violent and ambitious, attempt to claim control of a world that feels fundamentally unbearable. Every victory was an attempt to gain a glimpse of stability and meaning in a life dominated by the absence of his mother.

Seeking Maternal Qualities in Women: Rocky's Relationships as a Reflection of Unresolved Attachment

If we dwell more into the character, there are profound psychological impacts of losing his mother, where the relationships with women throughout the *K.G.F* series shows his urge for having maternal qualities. Because the absence of the maternal figure in Rocky's life creates a space that Rocky unknowingly seeks to fill through his interactions with women. He relates his mother throughout his relationships and they are influenced by his fixation on the qualities like nurturing, compassionate and protective qualities that he finds within his mother. The Oedipus complex represents not only the child's desire for the mother but also the fear of paternal retribution, which manifests in various symbolic ways across literature and cinema" (VanderMerwe 45). Freud states that a child's attachment to the mother shapes their relationship in his psychoanalytic theory. Rocky's attachment towards his mother in tender age sets a model of standards for what he seeks in the women he encounters as an adult. We can see how Rocky serves women throughout the movie. In *K.G.F* : Chapter 1 we can see how Rocky helps the mother by mentioning, "The greatest warrior is a mother". It shows the great respect and reverence for maternal strength and the mother figure also serves as a symbolic representation of the nurturing qualities he was

looking for. This shows the importance of the maternal figures in his life, and it reflects his desire to take care of the women figures and protect them as a way of compensating for the way his mother had suffered. This is considered as a maternal fixation and this maternal fixation might lead to complex dynamics in Rocky's relationships. The Oedipal complex towards the mother sets a measure and his partners are often measured against the idealised image of his mother. This may result in unrealistic expectations of the women in his life, expecting them to attain the same limits and nurturing qualities that his mother had. This mother fixation can lead to frustrations and imbalance in relationships and also creates problems when women are forced to attain these expectations that are not necessarily authentic to them. Rocky's protective behaviour towards women works as a stem from an unresolved sense of guilt, particularly the women who are vulnerable or in distress. There creates a subconscious need to protect women and shield them from discriminations, sufferings and exploitations that his mother had gone through. So here his maternal instinct not only works as an expression of love but also works as a psychological mechanism to stay with the trauma of losing his mother figure. His works are aligned with his past and his actions reflect his attempts to restructure the past and to protect others from the fate that his mother went through throughout her life. The role as saviour throughout his life shows the emotional compensation for the helplessness that he felt as a child, the way through which he suffered as an orphan, unable to save his mother from the hardships and death. This creates a tension between Rocky and his mother and here the whole life of Rocky is revolved around his mother and his past and we can interpret this as an obsession towards his mother.

Ambition, Power, and Fear of Failure: The Legacy of Shanti's Aspirations

"Every desire in its pure state is something that, uprooted from the soil of needs, assumes the form of an absolute condition in relation to the Other. It's the margin or result of the subtraction, as it were, of the requirements of need from the demand for love. Conversely, desire presents

itself as what, in the demand for love, rebels against being reduced to a need, because in reality it satisfies nothing other than itself, that is, desire as an absolute condition." (Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book V: The Formations of the Unconscious*, p. 362). Ambition, power and Fear of failure are considered as the core themes of the film *K.G.F*. Apart from Rocky's ambition to dominate the *K.G.F* and achieve great power, his mother's memory and aspirations are equally a reason. The great hope and resilience by his mother even in poverty and societal neglect drives Rocky's character throughout the story. Her dreams are a crucial part of the story whereby her dreams for a better future live on. It also plays an important role in his rise to power to fulfil his dreams of his mother. Each and every victory and conquest that won was considered as a way of honouring his mother's memory and living through the future she envisioned for him. The drive for power is actually originated by a fear of failure, the fear that haunts him. Rocky's psychological background is clearly based on the fears that he will not be able to achieve the life according to his mother and the fear that he will not live up to the promise he made to his mother that he will become the wealthiest man in the world will never escape the poverty that made his mother to death. This fear of failure in psychoanalysis leads to utmost guilt and a reason to prove himself. Rocky's deep power is a response to the fear of failure in front of his mother apart from his personal ambitions. Superego also plays an important role in Freud's psychoanalysis which represents another view of this fear. According to Freud, the development of the superego which was the resolution of the Oedipus complex embodies internalized moral norms and societal norms. We can see Rocky's superego works with this mother's vision and it does not align with conventional morality. Superego also represents the inner moral standards and societal expectations that control behaviour. The main reason behind the success of Rocky's life was his mother's expectation that moulded as a kind of superego. We can consider the demands of the internalised moral code as the reason for fear of failure. This superego was the main reason which pushes him to achieve more, to climb more here and never stop until he has

fulfilled her dreams to become one of the wealthiest men on the earth.

The Interconnection of Trauma, Relationships, and Ambition

Rocky's character is intertwined between his unresolved trauma, his unresolved relationships and his unfinished ambitions. These factors have their own importance in his character and life where these three were not separate elements but are deeply interconnected with each other. The trauma of losing peace creates a psychological wound that shapes their interaction with others, especially women, and it fuels their drives to power. Their relationships are not only about emotional relations, but about the search for maternal qualities that he lost with his mother's death. His ambition is not only a discovery for success, but a desperate attempt to honour his mother's memory and fulfil the dreams organized for his future.

Each step in Rocky's life is inspired by the internal requirement to solve its trauma. Their rise in power is a way of creating meaning in a world that feels largely devoid of it, and her relationship with women is affected by maternal ideals that she cannot let go of. Fear of failure is a continuous presence, reminding him that any failure to live up to his mother's aspirations will be betrayed with his memory. This makes his ambition a two-edged sword-this is his greatest strength and the most important source of psychological upheaval. Finally, the psychological complexity of Rocky's character in *K.G.F* can be understood through ambitions inspired by the lens of maternal trauma, discovery of maternal qualities in relationships, and desire to fulfil his mother's legacy. The disadvantage of peace is an event defined in their lives, and it shapes their relationships, functions and motivations. Rocky's journey is not only about power or revenge, but about struggling with

a deep emotional wound that he cannot heal. The fear of their failure, their drive for dominance, and their protective tendency towards women all stems from unresolved trauma of losing their mother. Through this lens, *K.G.F* offers a powerful exploration of the permanent effect of maternal love towards her son.

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