

Oedipus as *xenos* in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*

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In a period of Athens' history when outsiders, *xenia*, mattered greatly to its success, the idea of strangers in a *polis* was often the subject matter of Greek tragedy. The theme of *xenos*, the outsider, was dealt with by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Some consideration has been given in scholarship to the significance of Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* being *xenos*, the outsider. This subject has been studied at some length in comparison with the character of Dionysus in Euripides' *The Bacchae*. Although a few studies have considered the significance of Oedipus being a *xenos* in Thebes at the opening of the play and linked it with the irony of the drama, scholars and commentators have failed to see the drama as Oedipus' search for himself. The play also opens with the need to search for the killer of Thebes' former ruler, King Laius. In the course of the play, the search for the killer of Laius changes into a search for the parents of Oedipus. The results of the search helps the outsider to recognise himself to be the outsider-insider of Thebes who, at the very moment of that discovery also realises that he has to re-discover himself to be the insider-outsider on the edict of the gods and as a result of his own verdict as the king of Thebes, declared upon the killer of Laius. The irony of this particular drama is bound up with the discoveries of the self-identities of Oedipus. Oedipus' search for who he is in the larger scale of life is the subject matter of this Sophoclean tragedy. This brings the greatest relevance of a Greek drama of 5th century B.C.E. to the modern world especially in a South Asian context in the global village where migration is common and people keep searching for identities between countries and cultures.