

Introduction the
suffering. plague is a
natural disease



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Introduction

' Oedipus the King' is a play written by Sophocles in Ancient Greek at around 430 B.

C. set in a fabulous past of the ancient Greek. Throughout the play, the king is determined to understand several issues about the community and himself. As a result, he seeks help from the Theban chorus; Tiresias, the blind prophet; Creon, his brother in-law; Jocasta, the Oedipus wife and the shepherd. Throughout the play, conflict stands out as the main theme as explicated by exploring the three elements of conflict from the play viz. man versus man, man versus himself and man versus nature.

Man versus man conflict

A conflict exists between the king and the prophet Tiresias.

The play begins by investigation into the cause of death of Laius, the former Theban king. When the Oedipus King seeks advice from the prophet Tiresias, to his surprise, the prophet tells him that Oedipus was responsible for the murderer of Laius. In disbelief, the King becomes annoyed with Tiresias and they end up into a heated argument. The king blames the prophet for accusing him for the murder (Sophocles 306).

While the King maintains his innocence, Tiresias holds that the murderer of Laius is a Theban citizen whom they have a blood relationship. The manner in which Tiresias leaves the palace evidences unhidden conflict between him and the Oedipus King. In addition, the king is in conflict with his brother in-law, Creon.

When the prophet accuses Oedipus for the murder, the king blames Creon for masterminding the accusations. The king believes that Creon is determined to undermine him. As a result, the king calls for Creon's execution.

Another conflict exists between Jocasta and the prophets. Jocasta believes that prophets are liars and the king should take none of their advice. "Listen and I'll convince thee that no truth in these prophets" (Sophocles 316). This quote reveals that Jocasta does not believe in prophets any more. There is also conflict between the king and the shepherd. When the shepherd refuses to give information on murder, the king threatens to execute him.

Man versus nature

Theban community is in conflict with nature.

Oedipus king is determined to fight the plague, which has affected the community. As Sophocles indicates in the Creon's conversation with the king, the leadership of Theban community is investigating the cause of the plague: "Let me report then all what god declared. King Phoebus bids us straightly extirpate Fell pollution that infests the land, and no more harbor an inveterate sore" (Sophocles 315). From this quotation, it is clear that the people of Theban are determined to fight to the end the plague that runs through the community. As illustrated on the first scene, the priest and the Theban choir have also visited the palace to seek aid for the plague. The king gives them hope by noting that "but I grieve at once both for the general, myself and you" (Sophocles 267). To grieve in ancient Greek meant

cooperation with the suffering. Plague is a natural disease and therefore fighting it evidences this kind of conflict.

Man versus himself

The king is in conflict with himself. The community expects exemplary behavior from their king, especially in such ancient setting. As the play illustrates, the king killed his father and slept with his mother. The king's behavior is in conflict with the character of Oedipus king. It is therefore vivid that the king is in conflict with himself. The shepherd is also in conflict with himself.

Once requested to come and testify on the murder of Laius, he agrees and in fact provides some information to the king; however, after sometime, he begs to leave without further questions (Sophocles 300). This illustrates the shepherd's conflict with himself.

Conclusion

The major conflict arises when the prophet accuses the Oedipus for the murder of the former king. Since the entire play revolves about the murder, it is therefore justifiable that conflict is the major theme in the play ' Oedipus the King'. King's conflict with the prophet and Creon illustrates man versus man conflict while the community's battle with the plague evidences the man versus nature conflict. The king's behavior is in conflict with what is expected of him thus underscoring the man versus man conflict.

Works Cited

Sophocles. " Oedipus the King.

” The Collection. Trans. Francis Storr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912.