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Exile and Isolation: Transformation in *Oedipus at Colonus*

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Modern Languages in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelors of Arts in English Literature

Department of English and Modern Languages

Independent University, Bangladesh

December 2025



Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing my degree at Independent University, Bangladesh.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate reference.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or institution.
4. I have acknowledged all the main sources of help.

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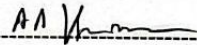
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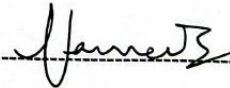
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Dedication

Before anything else, I want to acknowledge the grace of Almighty Allah, whose mercy gave me the patience and steadiness to see this work through, even on days when it felt heavier than I expected.

This work is dedicated to my mother who supported me throughout the entire journey. She showed me lights during the darkest moments. When I was on the verge of giving up, she encouraged me to do it.

I also dedicate this work to my best friend who walked beside me through both exhaustion and excitement. His conversations, encouragement, and shared laughter mattered more than he probably realized. This thesis may carry my name, but it is shaped by the care, trust, and strength I have received from others. I truly thank you.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Exile is a feeling of being far away from their own country, which makes them feel alienation, isolation, and confusion. Exile can be voluntary or involuntary, and either way, it is definitely difficult when a person is involuntarily put out of their homeland by outer consideration. For example, governmental oppression, colonial order, war and so on and this is an involuntary exile. The person is cut off from his society, culture, and way of life when they get exiled. Voluntary exile, on the other hand, is a circumstance where people are opting to leave so that they can have freedom, comfort, creativity, peace or they want to have a better life. Even involuntary exile has challenges, such as they may feel lonely, disconnected from their roots, family and background. Volunteer or involunteer exile, both can have a deep impact on the person and their personality. This makes the individual think deeply about the things they did in the past and carry who they were into a new place.

Oedipus at Colonus is one of *The Theban Plays* by Sophocles. It centers around Oedipus' exile. Oedipus was once a strong and vigorous king: however, he is now blind, banished from Thebes and cut off from the life he once had. Being exiled, physically and mentally becomes the background for his profound mental and spiritual journey. As a result of his actions, Oedipus loses his kingdom, his family and his place in society. For what he did, he has to face the results. Being exiled is very difficult and painful, but it helps him look at himself differently and grow into a transformed person. Colonus is land that Oedipus is not familiar with, so rather than feeling discomfort, he finds himself at peace at Colonus because he has accepted his fate and started learning from his suffering.

Said's view on exile gives a new perspective to understand Oedipus. In his book, *Reflections on Exile: & Other Literary & Cultural Essays*, Said explains that exile is not only being cast away from one's homeland but not being fully belonging to either one as in it means being stuck between two places. Exiles frequently find themselves uncoordinated. They no longer have the sense of belonging to their own culture. They do not even fit in their new surroundings either. A person in this situation faces mental pain because they feel entrapped to their past and present both. However, Said believes that a person can grow, see things in new ways and understand life better when he is in exile. This leads one to reflect on who they were before, who they are now, how they should live in the new world they live in. It is a process of transformation which changes their identity and sense of self. Oedipus' exile in *Oedipus at Colonus* clearly reflects the concept of transformation as Said talks about in his book. Exile gives rise to the possibility of change, even though it is very painful to experience.

This research will explore how exile in *Oedipus at Colonus* connects to Said's concept of exile. The story of Oedipus shows that exile can bring a deeper sense of loss. In the similar way, Said says that exile brings sadness which comes from emotional support, safety and the comfort of home. When Oedipus changes, it reflects the experience of many people who went through exile and shows that exile can also offer hope for transformation.

The first chapter includes the introduction, background, statement of the problem, methodology, hypothesis, research question, limitations and expected outcome. The second chapter is a literature review where I address related works on exile and Oedipus at Colonus, research gap and theoretical framework. Chapter Three focuses on the main discussion of the research, outlining how exile impacts on Oedipus and is responsible for who he becomes. Finally, the fourth chapter includes the conclusion part of the study and work cited list.

1.2 Background

In the second play of the trilogy, *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus, solves the riddle of the Sphinx, saves Thebes and becomes its king. Proud and nonchalant, he openly criticized the person who is the cause of pollution and the long aridity in Thebes. He also announces a harsh punishment by saying, “Drive him out, each of you, from every home. He is the plague, the heart of our corruption” (275), without the knowledge of him being the culprit. He also promises to bring justice to Laius’ murder, saying, “So, I will fight for him as if he were my father” (301), being unaware that Laius is his father. This highlights the tragic irony of his situation.

Towards the end of the play, Oedipus finds out that he has completed the prophecy by killing his own father and marrying his own mother. This horrible discovery of truth leads him to his self-blinding: “He rips off her brooches...he digs them down the sockets of his eyes, crying” (1403). He then begs, “Drive me out of Thebes, in exile” (1666), as he rejects his identity as king. As Anbaran writes, “He decides to leave in order that his people can live” (7). By choosing the path of exile, Oedipus sacrifices his own comfort for the well-being of the people of Thebes, marking his transformation from a proud and arrogant ruler to a humbled man. By the end, Chorus looks at his whole life and draws a lesson for everyone:

People of Thebes, my countrymen, look on Oedipus.

He solved the famous riddle with his brilliance,

he rose to power, a man beyond all power.

Who could behold his greatness without envy?

Now what a black sea of terror has overwhelmed him.

Now as we keep our watch and wait the final day,

count no man happy till he dies, free of pain at last (1678–88).

Chorus is mirroring the rise and fall that Oedipus went through, which shows how quickly the wheel of fortune turns. This is a reminder for the audience that even the greatest and most thriving people do not have the guarantee of always being happy. Life will always be uncertain, so misfortune can strike anyone and anywhere, and the status or their past achievements will not hold any value. Oedipus' life serves as an example of how sudden reversals of fortune can turn overnight even a celebrated king to a pauper.

When the play *Oedipus at Colonus* begins, Oedipus is far from Thebes, living in exile and many years have passed. He is now a blind, old and weak man, who arrives at Colonus with his daughter Antigone. He is looking for a place to rest in his final days and after his death. Oedipus' journey has moved from a great king to a life of isolation, suffering and reflection. As he was looking for a place to rest in his final days, he shows intense change in his personality and the way he sees life. He says, "My suffering, all the long years I have been living through, and my own noble origins have taught me to be content with that" (6). This line reflects Oedipus' transformation from a proud, arrogant king to a humble, self-reflective man who has learned to accept his suffering and find pleasure in the smallest things. His experience in exile has stripped him of his former proud self, and he now sees life with a deeper understanding of fate, the importance of enduring hardship with dignity and human limits.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In *Oedipus at Colonus*, exile firmly affects identity and life, however, there is little research that specifically examines the impact of exile on a character's psychological, emotional, and moral transformation. Many studies of Sophocles' work have examined fate, divine justice and guilt, but little attention has been given to exile as a force of transformation. This research intends to fill this gap by examining exile and suffering of Oedipus from different. How exile transforms Oedipus as

he suffers and becomes isolated from society is clearly shown. By understanding this process, how literature shows displacements, loss and self-discovery this paper will give deeper insight.

Being an exile always changes how a person sees themselves and others, This research is particularly insightful. Using Said's theory of exile, this is not just a punishment but how impactful it is for spiritual and self-awareness and moral clarity and a profound and irreversible change. In Oedipus' case, exile becomes the mechanism of growth rather than only as a form of punishment. So, this research portrays very important things that the reader can see in both classical and contemporary literature that deal.

1.4 Methodology

For this research, I will use a qualitative analysis method to examine how exile affects Oedipus' identity in *Oedipus at Colonus*. The primary method for this research will be a close reading of both *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. During his exile, Oedipus changes emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. Also looking at his behavior, thoughts, and what he says after leaving Thebes.

Said argues that exile is about how an exiled person learns to live without having any place to belong. Exile forces a person to look back at what they have done in the past, how they relate to the world they live in during exile and who they are now and who they used to be before exile. Oedipus' emotional and psychological growth during his exile is guided by this idea of Said. For the research of my paper, I collected academic sources from Google Scholar, JSTOR and IUB library. I selected sources that talk about exile and identity, as well as the psychological changes that result from these experiences. By using ideas from these sources with my study of the tragedies, this research will provide insight how exile plays a major role in Oedipus' transformation.

1.5 Hypothesis

This study suggests that Oedipus rethink his past, accept his fate and rebuild his identity because he goes through deep changes and the reason for that is his exile and isolation. Exile leads him to spiritual awakening and self-knowledge rather than destroying him. Using Said's idea of exile, this study argues that Oedipus gains a new way of thinking by accepting his losses. The theory implies that exile turns Oedipus into a more self-aware and a wiser person, which proves to be a creative force for him.

1.6 Brief Theoretical Intervention

Through the lens of exile as a formative human condition by using Said's exile theory, this study analyzes *Oedipus at Colonus*. Exile is an experience that disrupts a person's identity mentally and emotionally. As stated in Said's theory, exile removes a person from their place, community and structural power. This situation puts them into deep thinking of what they have done and the ways they can reconstruct themselves. This study is based on the idea that Oedipus' exile is about his moral condition, social life and emotions, not just only about place. He must face his guilt, his past and his limitations since he has lost everything he once had.

By Joudar's view of exile, this study is further supported, and he says through suffering, as a process during exile, it reshapes a person's identity. On the other hand, Barbour states, confusion during exile can open up a new sense of direction. These two views on exile show how exile can lead to personal growth, along with explaining loss that comes with exile. In Oedipus' case, exile is the experience of growth, achieving spiritual understanding from an arrogant and proud king to wise and a down to earth person.

1.7 Research Question

How does exile and isolation shape and transform the identity of Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*?

1.8 Limitations

This research is limited because it only uses Said's exile theory to interpret Oedipus' transformation. There are other important viewpoints that are not included because this research only focuses on achieving spiritual understanding from an arrogant and proud king.

Another limitation is that other important characters besides Oedipus, such as Antigone or Theseus, who also have a big influence on his transformation, are not examined in this research. This study only looks at mental and emotional effects of exile. So, other points of view could offer broader understanding of support, society and belonging during exile. Rather than focusing on wider social or cultural meanings of exile,

1.9 Expected Outcome

How exile works as a force of transformation in *Oedipus at Colonus*, shaping Oedipus' individuality on mental, emotional and oral levels is the main motive of this research. By using Said's exile theory, after he lost his life as a king and thus he became humbler and spiritually grown, this study aims to show that Oedipus thinks more deeply about himself. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, exile is the most important force that brings change in him, be it morally, emotionally or spiritually. It is clear that Oedipus transforms from being a proud and powerful king to a humble human being and it is very clear after reading the text.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter shows the studies related to exile, identity and transformation in *Oedipus at Colonus* by major scholars. Different critics have different opinions about Oedipus' exile, such as identity reconstruction, purification, spiritual growth and punishment. On the other hand, there are also scholars that acknowledge exile as a major turning point in Oedipus' life. By focusing on different aspects, thus there are different understanding of the same thing which is exile. Some critics only focus on exile as punishment and suffering, while others point out exile as a transformative force. This chapter looks at these points of view from different authors or critics and portrays the clear gap in research, and by doing so this research aims to fill that gap by using Said's theory.

2.1 Exile as Acceptance and Personal Growth

Exile is often portrayed as divine punishment for the wrongdoers in classical literature, and many scholars use this lens to study Oedipus' exile. In an article, Akhter *et al* says, "As a scapegoat is the city redeemer from pestilence and drought to blind his eyes and banish himself from Thebes to punish himself" (5), which means Oedipus' suffering saves the city because he is the ritual scapegoat. This understanding highlights exile as a form of purification, completed through suffering. Oedipus blinding himself and his exile acts as punishment for what he has done. From this perspective, exile is seen only as a form of punishment.

However, another author, Goldhill has a profound view of exile by saying that Oedipus chose exile by himself as his punishment by saying, "Oedipus freely bears the punishment" (636). Oedipus freely accepts exile as his moral duty rather than acting like a victim who is helpless. This

comment by Goldhill shows the difference between the acceptance of willingly and forced punishment, and here, Akhter *et al's* idea is challenged by Goldhill's view by showing exile is a choice made consciously and not as a symbol of punishment.

Critically, Goldhill shows that Oedipus' exile has moral choice while Akhter *et al* focuses as punishment. By seeing these two different opinions, it is clear that exile is not only a form of suffering but a moral self-knowledge. By focusing on Goldhill's statement, this study builds its argument that this acceptance of exile becomes the reason for Oedipus' identity transformation.

2.2 Redefining Identity through Exile

Some scholars argue that Oedipus' psychological and moral transformation occurs through exile. For example, Brook says, "Oedipus encounters at Colonus progressively facilitate his transformation" (31), and this means that Colonus is not just a place to find peace but it also triggers Oedipus' moral growth. The interactions with Chorus, Theseus and his daughters gives him chances for inner composure and ethical reflection.

Akhter *et al* focuses on exile as formal punishment, Goldhill as mental endurance and Brook as effect of the place; together these views show that exile has many parts, such as personal growth, suffering and moral thinking. Nonetheless, not any of these scholars mentioned above entirely explain how exile actively changes Oedipus' identity. They do not clearly show how exile breaks and reshapes him but they do acknowledge his transformation through exile, and this current study addresses this gap.

2.3 Identity Reconstruction through Exile

Looking at how Oedipus' identity is rebuilt, it is important to understand his transformation. Mastrangelo directly connects exile to identity redefinition when stating -

“Oedipus’ action constitutes a redefinition of himself” (51). This means that exile is a mental rupture which forces Oedipus to abandon his royal identity. He must rethink his position in society because his previous authority and kingship no longer define him. Giannopoulou extends this idea by comparing Oedipus’ identity in *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*:

He also insists on his inner nobility, regardless of the horrible events that took place and the resulting pollution. In OT Oedipus’ self-fashioning fails: he thinks he has evaded his fate only to realize that he has unwittingly fulfilled it; in OC he explicitly disowns his old identity and forges a new one. His new self emerges after a long period of relative isolation and self-reflection (23).

To show that changing identity is a gradual process, this comparison is very crucial. Oedipus’ failed attempt in *Oedipus the King* to shape himself leads to an intentional rebuilding of self through exile and isolation in *Oedipus at Colonus*. This view of Giannopoulou is different from Mastrangelo because he perceives self-change as a personal act and in Giannopoulou’s opinion, it is a mental struggle.

2.4 Endurance leading to Moral Heroism

From Durmuş’s point of view, Oedipus gets a new identity of hero through exile. He says that Oedipus morally and spiritually grows through suffering (81). Traditionally, heroes gain heroic titles through social position or power but here Oedipus is hero because of his morality, humility and patience. Older ideas about Oedipus being the tragic figure differs from Durmuş’s idea completely. Oedipus becomes the hero who has moral, wisdom and patience while being an exile. This idea perfectly aligns with Said’s view on exile as something that brings self-awareness but there is a feeling of loneliness that comes along. Durmuş’s main focus is mostly on moral

growth rather than the mental pain of exile while this research shows that suffering and moral growth both happen simultaneously.

2.5 Comparative Evaluation of Existing Scholarship

By examining all the studies, it is now clear that there is agreement and research gap as well. Akhter *et al* sees exile as ritual punishment, Goldhill says voluntary moral duty, Brook states transformation because the place influences him, Mastrangelo as identity change and Giannopoulou on self-reconstructing across the two plays. These different authors focus on different aspects of exile yet their opinion agrees that exile makes him transformed rather than seeing exile only as punishment.

Although, these opinions are based on classical ideas, since they do see exile as a transformative force as Edward Said explains. So, even if the scholars say that there is transformation in Oedipus during exile, they do not fully portray the ways of his transformation which creates the research gap.

2.6 The Gap in Existing Research

Exile in *Oedipus at Colonus* is only seen as a way to clear guilt or punishment. Giannopoulou, Goldhill and Mastrangelo acknowledge that Oedipus transforms, but they do not show that he entirely transforms while during exile. The authors think of exile as a way rather than an event that rebuilds Oedipus.

This research points out this limitation by using Said's theory of exile, which sees it as a state of losing old identity, spiritual growth and changing morally. It shows that exile helps him become self-aware and humble, and not just a punished person who is atoning for his past sins.

This study fills gaps that were left by the previous studies which is exile as a process of rebuilding identity.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The main theory of this study is based on Edward Said's theory of exile, from his book *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Said's theory is supported by two other interpretations from Joudar and Barbour. To understand exile is not only as displacement from their home, but a force to change their way of thinking, Said's theory is a very powerful lens. Seeing Oedipus' exile through the lens of Said's theory, makes the reader understand how he transforms morally, spiritually and identically during exile.

Said defines exile as "The unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (180), and this definition shows that exile is a deep condition filled with lasting separation, breakdowns and feeling of loss rather than only separation from homeland. Said also explains that exile "is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being" (183), in which a person is constantly stuck between what can never be fully recovered and what is already lost. So, the exiled person is constantly longing and internally struggling where he is in two different cultural and emotional worlds, and after being exiled from Thebes this idea is important to understand Oedipus' mental state. His identity used to be stable as a king but now he is only a wanderer, completely broken and confused.

Said says that exile is a painful and inescapable experience and the reason is that the person is familiar with the idea that he lost something important and that he can never gain back (180). So a deep sense of loss is always in that person. He also says that a person is cut off from their home, comfort, safety and emotional so exile is an unbearable and painful experience, since they will never get back their previous comfort (185). This idea is very similar to Oedipus' situation as

an exile. Oedipus' exile is a lifelong condition that comes with emotional loss, discomfort and unsafety.

Said also notes that stronger awareness is created during exile because that person sees the world as an insider and an outsider as well. This helps the person understand that belonging, power or social status is never a permanent thing. As Said says, a new and original way of thinking comes from seeing the world as a foreign place (191). During exile, people gain deep understanding, even though it is painful. So this mixture of pain and deep understanding is the main reason for Oedipus' transformation in *Oedipus at Colonus*, where pain from exile gives him knowledge and moral wisdom.

Said explains more that exile is a feeling of unease and anxiety. He says - "Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience" (190), which means exile becomes a space for ethical and intellectual transformation. He also says that "exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal" (192). Oedipus' life clearly shows this because he lives a life without any social security or any social position. His homelessness and blindness mirrors his slow inner and moral awakening.

Barbour supports Said's idea of exile by saying it can be a state of both "orientation and disorientation" (293). Because of the familiarity the exile used to feel is gone and that makes the exile feel lost. This feeling of loss can make the person move closer to self-understanding. Another author agrees with Said by saying exile breaks a person's old sense of self but creates a new one through suffering and endurance (Joudar 5598). These two supported ideas fit Oedipus because earlier he is the king of Thebes and after knowing the truth it falls apart and he becomes a humble and wise person.

Said says that the idea of stability is destroyed by exile. An exiled person understands that the idea of identity, home and power are uncertain things because during exile, they lost everything that they had. The true meaning of home can be understood by staying away from home. When an individual is away from home, it changes their view and they begin to realize the real value of home (Said 191). Tragedy brings down the epic heroes who think they are above gods seem very proud. Because of exile, Oedipus gains moral power even though he loses his position as a king.

Said also argues that losing is a part of both home and exile (191), and this explains why Oedipus suffers so much. Exile makes loss not accidental but certain. By losing everything during exile, Oedipus gains humility, understanding and spiritual clarity.

Exile is shown as both punishment and redemption in *Oedipus at Colonus* and using Said's theory of exile, this paper argues that exile of Oedipus is more than just suffering but a process to rebuild his identity. Exile takes away his social power but makes him a completely new person from inside. He finds himself at peace even in distress, after exile has reshaped his morals. This proves that exile is not just a state of suffering but a process that transforms identity using Said's theory.

According to Said, exile is always an unfinished state and in Oedipus' case, it is before he reaches Colonus. The main idea is from Edward Said, who suggests that exile always has the characteristic of loss, separation, pain and rebuilding of identity. Joudar and Barbour's idea supports Said's theory and is used in this paper to explore Oedipus' exile and its effects that transform him.

Chapter 3

Discussion

3.1 Loss of Royal Identity and Social Status

The first and foremost thing that Oedipus loses is his title and his power that comes with the title. He was once the most powerful person and his words were absolute, but in *Oedipus at Colonus*, he becomes a vulnerable blind person who does not have any place to live. He even calls himself a “poor wanderer” (59) and this shows that his royalty is gone forever. He no longer has the title nor the power. All he is left with is loss and powerlessness.

Said says that exile violently forces out people from “their land, their roots, and their past” (184), which makes it impossible for the exiles to keep their old identity. Oedipus’ as a king only mattered because it was tied to Thebes, so being exiled means he lost all the meaning of being a king. This destroys not only his external power but his inner sense of self as well. He is now defined by dependence, weakness and displacement rather than authority or rule. Oedipus losing his identity as king, is psychological and existential - not just political. Without his throne, state or his crown, he must live like an ordinary poor person. So, the first transformation of Oedipus is the collapse of his reign and losing political power.

Oedipus’ identity weakens along with the collapse of his political power as Mehra points out “Oedipus still continues to be a compromised refugee because of the past actions he committed” (18) - this means that even if he is at Colonus, he must face the consequences of his past doings. This puts a barrier between his leaving behind old self and gaining a stable role. Being an exile, turns the person’s identity into full of guilt, memory and rejection by society, not just a wanderer. Said supports this idea by saying exile forces people into “a new set of affiliations”

while also causing a “loss of critical perspective” (192). This clearly matches with Oedipus’ broken situation. This sense of divided identity becomes the first step of Oedipus’ transformation.

3.2 The Psychological Journey from Resistance to Moral and Emotional Growth

Exile makes a very big change in Oedipus’ personality because he used to be very arrogant, but exile made him very thoughtful and humble. In *Oedipus the King* he believes that he defies fate and changes destiny by human intelligence, but this completely changes in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Being an exile for almost around twenty years, he understands that some things are beyond human control and this proves when he says, “a path of pious righteousness, not waging war against necessity” (208). This transformation not only shows the end of arrogance but also the rise of inner wisdom (Said 189). Living as an exile, Oedipus understands that only with human knowledge, no one can control divine order. As Said explains that exile creates new senses and breaks the old, arrogant self. For Oedipus, his arrogant self disappears and gets replaced by acceptance, endurance and patience.

Oedipus also develops a stronger moral awareness along with acceptance. Exile is the force that makes him look back at his part and understand it clearly. When he says he did not “freely choose” (983) his incest, it shows that he has morally transformed. Said observes that exiles cannot depend on dogma (191) reflects Oedipus’ new way of seeing his past which is with honesty. Here, suffering becomes a form of learning process in which his sense of seeing what is right and what is wrong gets clearer and he gains moral wisdom.

Oedipus becomes emotionally softer than he used to be, because before he never thought about others. But being an exile made him feel more about what others want and others feel. He learns to listen and build real human connections rather than just making people listen to his orders only. He now understands that relationships matter more than authority, and this supports his

gradual moral maturity. As he has acceptance of others' emotions, Said says this is a tendency in many displaced peoples so that they can fit into the new place they are living now (188). He is not the defensive king he used to be. He is now a whole new person who is humble and tries to understand other people as well.

Durmuş talks about this transformation by saying that Oedipus is physically fragile but he gains “a new dimension of spiritual strength” which allows him to think “justly and exactly” (86). The play itself shows his transformation when he firmly but humbly rejects an unfair accusation by saying “But because you are not a righteous man, you think you can say anything at all...” (999). He now has the ability to be humble and truthful at the same time, without being unemotional.

All these changes of Oedipus, shows that exile becomes the point of Oedipus' life where he is open to learn new things rather than arrogantly only believing in his morals. At the end, Oedipus becomes a new person who now has moral insight, emotionally open and calmness.

3.3 Development of Humility and Dependence

During exile, Oedipus changes profoundly because he becomes dependent on others and learns humility. His sense of self has transformed by these changes in him. He now asks for help and shows gratitude towards them, but before he only gave orders. This is not his weakness but his moral growth. Said explains that exile shows how human pride is fragile and people are bound to depend on others (189). Exile destroys his arrogance from the past and brings out humility in him. He wants to coexist with others rather than controlling them.

Oedipus was a king who wanted loyalty from people but now he wants kindness and protection. Oedipus shows gratitude by saying - “Bless you, Theseus, for your noble heart and for your righteous care on my behalf!” (1042). One of the strongest moral changes shows here in

Oedipus because he only used to give command but now he does not stop himself from showing how moved he feels from inside.

Oedipus' humility is shown vividly when he asks for help from Theseus by saying "My dearest friends, give me your help..." (526). He shows a big shift in him by asking help like this from someone else. Through exile, Oedipus learns to rely on others and understands that mutual dependence is important as well.

3.4 Acceptance of Fate and Death

Acceptance of death is the final stage of Oedipus' transformation. He has already accepted his fate by being an exile and now he also accepts dying. His inner calmness shows when he walks on his own to his death place. This calmness Oedipus gained through many years of exile and suffering. For Oedipus, death becomes a natural end to life and accepts it and not like a punishment. Exile prepares Oedipus to face death without any fear because he no longer has any worldly attachment towards anything. Said explains this state is "decentered self" (193), when people in exile feel nothing towards social status or power. Oedipus is now defining by inner peace and dignity not by kingship.

Exile rebuilds the meaning of life and this is clear in Oedipus' acceptance of death. Said states "Much of the exile's life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule" (187), this means after losing the old world, exiles try to create a new world in which they can live comfortably. This new world for Oedipus exists within him. His acceptance of death proves to be spiritual understanding through exile. Oedipus no longer urges to control the things beyond his reach, thus his attitude is calm towards death. Said also explains that exile leads to a detachment from worldly connections, noting, "a practice that distances him or her from all connections and commitments. To live as if everything around you were temporary and perhaps

trivial is to fall prey to petulant cynicism as well as to querulous lovelessness” (189). This reflects on Oedipus’ situation because he no longer has a single shred of attachment to the worldly things. Oedipus expresses emotion of peace and acceptance by saying - “I am now holding those I love the most. If I should die with you two beside me, I could not be entirely unhappy” (1110). This is very different from the Oedipus when he was a king. Earlier, he was eagerly searching for truth and ignored Jocasta’s constant warnings. Now he calmly accepts even death, if he gets to be with his two daughters.

This transformation is very important for Oedipus because he no longer wants to control nor seeks power. He is now able to face death peacefully and shows acceptance of his life through suffering. Death for Oedipus is not a punishment but the final sign of his growth.

3.5 Exile as a Renewal and Purifying Force

At the beginning of exile, Oedipus is broken and alone, but later on it becomes the force that transforms him. Exile takes away his identity as a king but gives him meaning of life and enlightens him spiritually. As Said explains exile is painful but gives inner enlightenment. Said also explains exile as a rift between a person and their home and it can never fully heal (180). Between his old self and new self, exile becomes the painful rift for Oedipus. Because of this rift, he understands how fragile identity can be and he transforms into a whole new person.

When Oedipus says:

But what am I saying? A wretch like me,
 how could I want you to touch a man
 in whom every form of defiling stain
 has found a home? No, I will not touch
 you.

That is an action I cannot permit,
not even if you yourself were willing (1133-38).

He is reflecting on his past and acknowledges the wrongdoings he did earlier. This moment shows that he now feels very low and unworthy of himself. He does not want to be treated with honor and this shows his transformation from a proud king to a humble and ordinary person he thinks of himself now.

Oedipus suffers through exile and this suffering makes a path for him to be spiritually awake and morally renewed. Exile destroys his old self and the way he used to live in comfort, but allows him to grow into a human being worthy to be called ordinary, just like everyone else. Said says that exile makes an individual suffer but also enlighten them and this is vividly shown in Oedipus' journey. Exile is the reason that Oedipus loses everything, from being a king he becomes a homeless person who does not have any glory, any strength, any kingship nor even sight. But this vulnerability makes him see things more clearly. He suffers a lot and because of this he transforms and now for him, spiritual clarity is more important to him than the former political power he had.

By the end of *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus does not get back his kingship but gains the highest morality. Oedipus shows that exile can be painful but at the same time it can be rewarding as well because through exile he is now walking towards death without having any fear, he now understands emotion, he now has the morality he did not have before. So exile does not destroy him but transforms him completely. His renewal is more clear when he says, "However, your speech has won me over" (1211), this shows that he can now take opinion from others and rethink and he did not have this quality before when he used to be the king of Thebes. He is now emotionally soft and open to others. So, exile is not only punishment but also a process which

makes Oedipus transform into a person who has wisdom, ethical enlightenment and spiritual insight.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

This research explores exile in *Oedipus at Colonus* as a transformative force on the character of Oedipus using Edward Said's theory of exile. Thai research shows that exile is more than just punishment for Oedipus. Exile helps him grow emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Oedipus completely changes through suffering during exile. He was once a proud king but at the end of the play, he has a new identity of being humble and he does not try to defy fate anymore. He accepts what comes before him.

This research paper highlights that exile is a process of reflection and growth and not just an event that took place in Oedipus' life. By losing his kingship, he deeply thinks about his past and his limitations. Exile becomes the ultimate force that leads to his spiritual and moral growth. Using Said's theory, this paper aims to show that exile has the power to bring redemption which makes an individual's transformation and not just only suffering. Said explains that being separated from home affects mind and identity and this makes them rethink their past and then they try to rebuild themselves.

All in all, this study helps to see exile more profoundly than just seeing it as mere punishment. It gives a deeper understanding of exile's role as a force of shaping Oedipus's identity and spiritual growth in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Said's point of view shows that exile hurts at first but gradually affects Oedipus' mind too and by this he is obligated to be a transformed figure who now has self-awareness and understanding of the new world.

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