

**THE DUAL ROLE OF A WOMAN AS MOTHER AND WIFE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON JOCASTA AND SUPPADEVI**

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The woman in a family becomes oppressed in so many situations as a mother, wife, daughter and sister. Due to the hierarchical difference between man and woman, the latter is oppressed socially, culturally and politically. This factor is brought into light by the playwrights Sophocles and Sarachchandra respectively through Jocasta and Suppadevi; the leading female characters in *King Oedipus* and *Sinhabahu*. There are many criticisms against these stylistic and traditional dramas, mainly stating that they fail to address issues that are pertinent to contemporary society. However, this comparative study shows the fact that they do not act out a “mere myth”, but a slice of life. Both these characters perform the role of a mediator among the quarreling men. Jocasta was both wife and mother of Oedipus and the sister of Creon. On the other hand, Suppadevi was trapped between her children and her husband. They are not forced in any way by any person, but are pressured by the prevailing circumstances in the family to mediate the family crisis as a mother and wife. Accordingly, Sophocles and Sarachchandra seem to be approaching and presenting a real world scenario by adapting these known myths into their dramas. The striking similarities denote how even in relation to two different cultures, the depiction of a female role can be very much similar with regard to their role in a family. The different roles a woman has to play within the family makes her quite vulnerable, even in the eyes of these playwrights, and any decision a woman takes would be under the microscope of the society. It is interesting to observe the similarities and differences in the perception of women in 5th century BC in ancient Greece and contemporary Sri Lankan theatre productions that reinterpret these stories. The evidence gathered through a library research and observation of the Sri Lankan productions of these plays shows that both these characters portrayed the roles a woman had to play in contemporary society. Therefore, it is vital to note that these plays are not mere reproductions of ancient myths, but serious renderings and depictions of life struggles of men and women.