

*In what ways does a comparative study of A Doll's House and A Separation emphasise the complexity of the motivations for acts of sacrifice? Your response must make detailed reference to A Separation's opening scene.*

A comparative study of Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* and Asghar Farhadi's film *A Separation* highlights the intricacy of reasons for sacrifices made in families, by drawing empathy for various character perspectives. Disparities in values and contexts, with the play set in Norway, and film created in light of the Iranian Green Revolution, reinforce alike ideas developed within similar patriarchal social structures. Notably the repercussions of sacrifices on relationships and the hardships of the individual's self-sacrificial behaviour against societal roles, complicate one's motivations by sparking conflict.

Societal roles and conflicting motives cause struggles in personally sacrificing for others. A *Separation's* opening scene, Simin and Nadar's court case is shown from the judge's perspective, as Simin argues against the sacrifice of their daughter's future overseas to support Nadar's father in Iran. A sustained mid-shot of the couple develops tension between the curt tone of the judge, and the couple's increasingly urgent actions. The cultural framework established communicates the severity of the Iranian legal system, through the legal complexities for divorce required only of women. Simin's struggle as a woman is presented symbolically as Nadar approaches the judge and occupies most of the frame, while she is reduced to the foreground, peering over him to voice her views. However, she maintains eye contact with the camera as a bold figure, who sacrifices family unity to enforce her daughter Termeh's need for better opportunities. Simin's separation from the family resounds with Nora's sacrifice at the end of the play. Although Nora also leaves her family find identity from her own independence, both characters face disillusionment with society's expectations for their sacrifices. Thus an examination of all character perspectives in this scene establishes complex reasons for sacrifices that face pressure from social expectations.

Individuals' self-sacrifices and their motives face difficulty from rigid patriarchal societies. Ibsen questions the self-sacrifices of women compared to Torvald's lack of sacrifice, fueling a sense of impending conflict and dramatic irony that set his audiences in uproar. In *A Doll's House* Torvald's commanding tone and use of rhetorical questions, is similar to Nadar instructing Simin, 'you are not allowed to interfere anymore. Do you understand?' Nadar and Torvald's assertion of their opinions indicate their refusal to depend on women. Torvald's repetition of possessive language in 'has my little songbird been spending all my money again?' illustrates the sacrifice expected from women in allowing male entitlement to dominate financial control. By the end of the play, Nora rejects essentialisation of gender inequality, creating a shift in the power dynamic, with her assertive tone of 'sit here... We have to come to terms.' Nora's stillness and calm conviction, juxtaposed with Torvald's movement is an inversion of their behaviour at the start of the play. Torvald's furiously hysterical actions and words contrasts the idea of 'female hysteria' perpetuated in their society and raised by Krogstad in Act 3. Realism employed in both texts, displays insight into various characters, without an obvious antagonist, as they have all been shaped by society and circumstances. Hence, both texts use dominating patriarchal settings to explore motives for females' sacrificial nature.

Sacrifice within families have unexpected consequences on relationships, revealing the complex motives of characters. As a modernist film, *A Separation's* opening shows Nadar and Simin's perspectives equally through the objective centred camera. A close up of Nadar's father's shaking hand holding on to Simin and refusing to let her leave shows the impacts of the separation on the family, especially those who are most vulnerable. He, as well as the play's infirmed Dr. Rank, the product of a licentious father, appeals to the audience's pathos, as their suffering is due to other characters' sacrifices of their family. Even Razieh's young daughter Somayeh, shows understanding of necessary divisions in her family, sacrificing her moral integrity with the promise 'I won't tell dad.'

Context Towards the end of the film, Somayah glares at Termeh, juxtaposing earlier scenes of them playing together, as she too, will now face living with a broken family. Therefore, motives for different character sacrifices that fracture family relationships, with extensive repercussions are portrayed as intricate.

Sacrifices that result in protecting family relationships reveal characters' intrinsic motivations. Nora's use of metaphor, declaring that Torvald's knowledge of her sacrifice of legal integrity 'would break us apart. Our lovely home, our happiness.' The anaphora conveys the materialism and idealistic nature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century middle class, social values that conflicted with individuality. Male authority has caused an imbalance of power between Torvald and Nora, who sacrifices working covertly to protect Torvald's pride. Likewise, Razieh also fears that her husband would disallow her from helping to clear debts, and working independently. Nora's sacrifices in denying her individualism hindered her from seeking true relationships with others. Her rhetorical question, 'Torvald and Daddy...Don't you see?' suggest how both family members figures have objectified her, and her preoccupation with sacrifices as a mother and wife hampered her freedom from social conditioning. As a character foil to Helmer, Dr. Rank's sacrifice of his happiness to preserve Nora's marriage, strengthens his connection with her. This is depicted as his imminent death mirrors the end of Nora's marriage, and through the Torvald's simile 'he was like the sky, and our happiness the Sun.' Thus, the way relationships are conducted, influencing stability within a family, connote the different impetuses for characters' acts of sacrifice.

*A Doll's House* and *A Separation* thus present their often coinciding views, which are emphasised with the portrayal of opposing character perspectives. A comparative study, communicates influences of context on the value and cause for sacrifices, and the effects of relationships and societal restraints on uncovering manifold aspects of individual motivations.

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