

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION, SCAPEGOATING, AND THE ILLUSION OF COMMUNITY IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S "A REAL DURWAN"

**Abdullayeva Shaxrizoda Xamrobek qizi**

O'zbekiston jahon tillari universiteti ikkinchi kurs magistranti  
[abdullayevashaxrizoda6@gmail.com](mailto:abdullayevashaxrizoda6@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** This paper examines Jhumpa Lahiri's short story \*A Real Durwan\* through the lens of social exclusion, scapegoating, and fragile communal identity. The study focuses on the character of Boori Ma as a marginalized figure whose presence in the building is tolerated only under conditional terms. Although she performs the role of caretaker, her social position remains unstable and dependent on the residents' convenience. The analysis argues that Lahiri exposes the illusion of community by demonstrating how quickly collective solidarity dissolves in moments of crisis. When a theft occurs, Boori Ma becomes the immediate target of blame despite the absence of evidence. This reaction reflects a broader social mechanism in which vulnerable individuals are sacrificed to preserve group cohesion. The paper concludes that Lahiri critiques not only social hierarchies but also the psychological need for scapegoats within communities.

**Keywords:** Social exclusion, scapegoating, marginalization, identity, community, diaspora literature.

**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматривается рассказ Джумпы Лахири «Настоящий кукольный театр» (A Real Durwan) через призму социальной изоляции, поиска козла отпущения и хрупкой общинной идентичности. Исследование фокусируется на персонаже Бури Ма как маргинализованной фигуре, чье присутствие в здании допускается только на определенных условиях. Хотя она выполняет роль смотрительницы, ее социальное положение остается нестабильным и зависит от удобства жильцов. Анализ показывает, что Лахири разоблачает иллюзию сообщества, демонстрируя, как быстро коллективная солидарность распадается в моменты кризиса. Когда происходит кража, Бури Ма становится непосредственной мишенью обвинения, несмотря на отсутствие доказательств. Эта реакция отражает более широкий социальный механизм, в котором уязвимые люди приносятся в жертву ради сохранения групповой сплоченности. В заключение статьи Лахири критикует не только социальные иерархии, но и психологическую потребность в козлах отпущения внутри сообществ.

**Ключевые слова:** Социальная изоляция, поиск козла отпущения, маргинализация, идентичность, сообщество, диаспорная литература.

In contemporary American literature, the immigrant experience often reveals complex dynamics of identity, belonging, and exclusion. Jhumpa Lahiri occupies a significant position due to her nuanced portrayal of cultural displacement and psychological fragmentation. Her short story \*A Real Durwan\* presents a sociological and psychological critique of how communities construct and dismantle belonging. Boori Ma occupies a paradoxical position within the building. She is necessary yet not accepted. Her inclusion depends entirely on her usefulness. Lahiri shows that she exists on the margins, never fully integrated into the community. After the theft of the

washbasin, Boori Ma becomes the scapegoat. The accusation is not based on evidence but on vulnerability. This reflects how societies project blame onto weaker individuals to maintain order. The unity of the residents is superficial. Their solidarity depends on excluding someone weaker. Boori Ma's expulsion restores temporary stability but exposes moral failure.

The story reveals that belonging is fragile and conditional. Lahiri critiques communities that prioritize convenience over empathy, showing how marginalized individuals are easily excluded. A Real Durwan reveals that belonging within a community is inherently fragile and conditional. Through the character of Boori Ma, Jhumpa Lahiri illustrates how marginalized individuals are accepted only as long as they remain useful and non-threatening. Once a crisis emerges, this conditional acceptance collapses, exposing the underlying instability of social structures. The act of scapegoating demonstrates how communities protect themselves by sacrificing their most vulnerable members. Moreover, the residents' behavior reflects a deeper psychological need to maintain control in uncertain situations. By blaming Boori Ma, they avoid confronting their own insecurity and responsibility. This reaction highlights how fear and self-interest often override empathy in communal settings. In addition, Lahiri suggests that exclusion is not accidental but embedded within the very structure of social relations. The illusion of unity is therefore sustained through continuous marginalization. Ultimately, the story emphasizes that true community cannot exist without accountability and compassion. Lahiri's narrative challenges readers to reconsider the ethical foundations of belonging and to recognize the human cost of exclusion.

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