



LANGUAGE, GENDER, AND POWER IN PEGGY MOHAN'S WORK: EXPLORING LINGUISTIC CHOICES AND LANGUAGE POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY.'

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Abstract- This Paper examines the role of linguistic choices and language policies on women's empowerment and gender equality in *Peggy Mohan's* literary and linguistic works. By analysing her essays, novels and other scholarly works, the study explores how *Peggy Mohan's* Female characters navigate through language choices and language policies to assert their identities and resist the patriarchal rules. The research explores the necessity of inclusive language policies that promote gender equality and support language diversity. Additionally, the paper critically examines the impact of language policies on marginalised women, and how they are restricted from the access of employment, social mobility and education. The research underlines the vital role of linguistic diversity in achieving gender justice.

Keywords- Peggy Mohan, linguistic Diversity, Language Policies, Gender, Power, Language, Identity, Women's Empowerment.

1. Introduction-

Language plays a significant role in shaping social power and identical dynamics. Language is a powerful tool that builds social identities, it is through the language any individual communicates their emotions, thoughts, and cultural values, at the same time it is language which continues inequalities and social hierarchies.

Peggy Mohan, a distinguished author and linguist, uses the intersection of gender, language and power as a central theme of her works. The research paper aims to analyse how Mohan addresses these themes in her works, particularly focusing on how language policies and linguistic choices impact gender equality and women's empowerment. Mohan's Novels such as "*Walk in C- Minor*," "*Jahajin*" and *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants* and her other linguistic essays provide a rich history of narratives and characters that demonstrate the complexities of multilingualism and its impact on gender dynamics. By examining her works, this research aims to shed light on how language can both marginalize and empower women at the same time, it also advocates the need for more inclusive language policies that support gender equality and supports linguistic diversity.

In her novel "*Jahajin*" Mohan talks about the story of women from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds who come together and how they develop common languages through their shared experiences. The novel clearly illustrates how language can both empower and marginalise women. Similarly, "*Walk in C-Minor*" demonstrates the life of a Women who navigates different cultural and linguistic identities, and how she uses language as a means of asserting her individuality and resisting societal norms. Mohan's work also explores the impact of language policies as a critical theme. Language choices give priority to the dominant languages, such as English in most post-colonial societies, which often marginalize speakers of other languages. This marginalization directly impacts the women of society as they may have less access to education and economic opportunities.



In *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants*, Peggy Mohan delves into critical relationship between women and language, exploring how linguistic expression can influence and reflect identity, positioning, and agency of women. The Novel uses different techniques and character development to highlight gender and language, and its correlation that deeply impact the social structure.

2. Objectives of this Research Paper

1. Analyze feminist themes in Peggy Mohan's works.
2. Exploring the role of language in challenging gender norms.
3. Examine Mohan's critique of language policies and their impact on women.

3. Methodology

This research paper endorses a qualitative approach along with textual analysis to explore themes of gender, language and power in Peggy Mohan's works. The primary sources for this research include novels by Peggy Mohan Named "Jahajin and "Walk in C-Minor", as well as her linguistic and literary essays.

The analysis focuses on recognizing how linguistic preferences and choices impact and challenge gender norms and examines the portrayal of language policies within this text. Special attention is given to the use of the diversity of language, code-switching and depiction of language policies. The approach allows for a deep examination of how language is used in Mohan's works to challenge and construct gender norms.

4. Literature Review

The relationship between gender and language has been a central point of feminist linguistic studies for a long time. Linguistic Scholars such as *Robin Lakoff*, *Deborah Cameron* and *Penelope Eckert* have constructed the foundation for understanding how language perpetuates and constructs gender identities, the studies by these scholars show that linguistic practices are often permeated with gender expectations, that can reinforce traditional roles and differences of power between women and men. Robin Lakoff's work *Language and Women's Place* (1975), discusses the idea that women's language is characterized by features such as politeness, lack of assertiveness, and hedging, these characteristics indicate women's subordinate role in society.

Deborah Cameron, in her book *Feminism and Language Theory* (1992), Explores how linguistic practice can be both oppression and resistance at the same time. It talks about how language preferences can change and understand a Women's life. Cameron argues how linguistic choice leaves negative and positive impacts on gender equality, and how language becomes a battleground where gender relations are continually negotiated.

Peggy Mohan's work contributes to this field by focusing on the role of language in multilingual and post-colonial societies. Through her book *Wanderers, kings, Merchants: The Story of India through its Languages* (2021), Mohan discusses the evolution of languages in India and how these languages have created our social and cultural identities. Her work highlights how language policies have structured education, and governance and challenged the stereotypes of gender choices and distribution.

Mohan's novel *Jahajin* (2007) is another significant work that is particularly relevant to the discussion of language, gender and power. The novel is based In the Caribbean and tells a story of Indian indentured labours with a keen focus on the experiences of women from different age and backgrounds. The book fairly depicts how language can be a means of power and inability at the same time. Mohan portrays beautifully how the Bhojpuri and Creole languages, spoken by the female characters in the book reflect their marginalized status, at the same time giving them a sense of agency, belongingness and identity. Mohan's work provides a valuable contribution in the area of how Linguistic Choices and Language Policies and Their Impact on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality.



5. Analysis

5.1 Linguistic Choices and Gender Norms

5.1.1 Language of Women as Reflection of Marginalization

Peggy Mohan's Jahajin discusses indentured labourers during post-colonial societies in the Caribbean. Where *Bhojpuri*, a north Indian language exists with Creole. The women characters in the novel are largely defined by their language, in *The Bhojpuri* language symbolizes both Marginalization of Women due to their language and depicting their identity through cultural heritage. The use of *the Bhojpuri language* by Women reflects their subordinate position in society and the strong roots of the patriarchal structure that governs their lives.

For Example, in *Jahajin* the character of *Sakhi* is repeatedly silenced by the male characters of the story, her language is limited to *Bhojpuri*, which allows her limited access to broader social, political and economic life in the society, it also abandons her to live within the patriarchal norms.

This instance from *Jahajin* states how women are marginalized because of their language, and it acts as a barrier in their real-life experience in post-colonial society.

5.1.2 Language as Resistance and Agency

Language serves as a barrier in women's lives, at the same it also depicts as a source of resistance. In *Jahajin* women use their linguistic skills to build cultural unanimity. *Sakhi's* communication in *Bhojpuri* with other women in society serves as an act of resistance against male male-dominated social order. Their language enables them to be united by their culture and challenge the patriarchal structure of society.

For instance, *Sakhi* and other women use *Bhojpuri* to share songs, oral traditions, stories and others, this helps them to unveil their cultural identity. The use of their cultural language allows the women to counter the male-dominant discourse.

5.1.3 Language as Code Switching to Navigate Power

In *Jahajin*, *Peggy Mohan* Explores the most unique linguistic phenomena of code-switching, where her female characters switch between *Bhojpuri* and Creole, depending upon the social context.

For Example. *Sakhi* shifts to *Creole* when interacting with colonial authorities or making figures, she adopts the language associated with authority and power. This language-switching or code-switching allows females to navigate the power structure and maintain their cultural identity through *Bhojpuri*. Code-switching becomes a tool of resistance and survival for women. In this way, Mohan highlights the potential of multilingualism as a means of empowerment of women.

5.1.4 Language as a Reflection of Women's Social Positioning

In "*Walk in C Minor*," *Peggy Mohan* discusses about how language functions as a mirror that reflects women's social position. The story "*Walk in C Minor*," is set in Trinidad and follows the lives of Indian indentured labourers. The story particularly focusses on women who are marginalized both linguistically and socially. The female characters often speak their native language or Creole, and switch to English while interacting with colonial authorities.

For example, the protagonist in "*Walk in C Minor*," a young girl who observe the world around her, and notices her mother and other women in her community speaking different languages depending on who they are addressing. When they speak to men or colonial authorities, they use a different and formal tone, and uses English language. And with women in their community, they use their native language which is unfiltered. This language shift underlines, how the language shapes social position of women.

5.2 Language Policies and Women's Empowerment

5.2.1 Language Policies in Post-Colonial Societies



In her books and other academic works, *Peggy Mohan* critiques the language policies that were implemented in Postcolonial colonies such as India, where the dominance of languages like English and Hindi in governance and education has marginalized women who speak minority and regional languages. In *Peggy Mohan's* Book *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants*, she argues that such language policies have reinforced gender inequalities by keeping women away from Economic, Political and Educational opportunities.

For example, many women in rural India speak regional languages such as *Maithili* or *Bhojpuri*, but these languages are not recognised in formal Education or Politics. This marginalization restricts women from accessing education, participating in the political process and also securing employment. Mohan critiques in her book the need for an inclusive approach to language to promote gender equality.

5.2.2 The Role of Multilingual Education in Empowering Women

Mohan exponent of multilingual education policies that support and promote the use of minor and regional languages in Schools, Universities and Other Educational Institutions. In her Novel *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants* she highlights examples from different countries where multilingual education has been successfully implemented, which ensures social inclusion and gender inclusion. For Example, In Nepal, multilingual education policies as been implemented to ensure access to education for women in rural areas, many women speak indigenous languages. By providing education in their mother tongue, these policies help to empower women to participate fully in Political activities, and economic and educational opportunities. Mohan argues that such policies could be implemented in post-colonial societies like India to ensure women's empowerment and promote gender equality.

5.2.3 The Role of Language in Cultural Identity and Resistance

Mohan's work also talks about the role of language in shaping cultural identity and resistance specifically in the context of post-colonial societies. In *Jahajin*, she discusses how language serves as a key marker of indentured labourers, who use Bhojpuri and Creole as a means of holding their cultural identity and resisting the assimilation forces by colonial authorities. Linguistic resistance has been an important theme of Mohan's work, highlighting the power of language to serve as a tool for keeping cultural identity and resisting the patriarchal structure of society.

Mohan's analysis of language and cultural identity states that language policies should not only promote gender equality but serve as a mean to value and preserve cultural inclusion of multilingual society.

5.3 The Intersection of Language, Gender, and Power in Post-Colonial Context

5.3.1 Language Hierarchies and Colonial Languages

Mohan's work is rooted in the context of Postcolonial societies, where linguistic hierarchies continue to shape power dynamics and gender norms. In her Novel *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants*, she explores how colonial language policies prioritized European languages such as English.

For Example, In India English language is the Colonial dominated language used for formal Education, Political activities and all other formal Institutions. The use English language marginalized other regional and minority languages, which are mostly spoken by females and other marginalised groups in the society.

Mohan argues that these language policies by colonial authorities should be modified in terms to promote more inclusion and diversity to ensure there is gender equality, equal opportunities and value and respect for every language.

6. Discussion

Peggy Mohan's works offer a lucid analysis of the complex relationship between gender, power and language. Her exploration of Language policies and linguistic choices highlights different ways in



which language can both challenge and reinforce gendered power structures. Through Mohan's academic and literary contributions, this paper demonstrates the significance of considering gender in terms of language and power.

Peggy Mohan's work underlines the potential of language to serve as both a means of resistance and oppression. Her portrayal of Female characters in her book *Jahajin* shows how language can marginalize women and help to survive the challenges against Male male-dominated society. Similarly, her analysis in her Novel *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants*, she explores how language policies and linguistic skills can marginalize or empower women depending upon the situation.

The analysis of language policies and linguistic skills in Mohan's academic and literary works the significance of inclusive language policies to promote gender equality. By valuing and recognizing the linguistic diversity of women, specifically marginalized groups, inclusive language policies can help empower women and challenge the patriarchal structures that are developed due to linguistic practices.

7. Conclusion

Peggy Mohan's work dispenses valuable insight into different ways through which language can both oppress and empower women. Her research on language policies and linguistic choices highlights the tough relationship between gender, language and power. Her works give multiple evidences of the importance of gender in discussion of power and language.

By analysing Mohan's academic and literary works, this paper has illustrated the potential of language to serve as a tool for both means of resistance and oppression. Her work identifies the importance of inclusive and diverse language policy to promote gender equality and extend equal opportunities. To ensure meaningful progress toward gender equality, it is important to develop fair language policies that empower women and let them challenge the dominant patriarchal structure of society.

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