

**THEORY OF RESISTANCE & PEGGY MOHAN'S 'JAHAJIN':  
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY**

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*I can't tell what this land could mean for someone else,  
for me it is my homeland, a tiny place, up in flames,  
it's the ever-rocking cradle of childhood memories.  
I grew up out of all this, a twig out of the tree,  
and I hope it will be this soil where my body returns one day.*

*I am home here...*

*I can't tell...*

*Miklós Radnóti, January 17, 1944*

**Abstract**

*Indian Diaspora is a vibrant tapestry that reflects the diverse mosaic of India itself, encompassing a multitude of regional identities, cultural nuances, and shared values. Within this diaspora, Peggy Mohan emerges as a notable voice, hailing from Trinidad and delving deep into the cultural heritage and narratives of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean. In "Jahajin," Peggy Mohan adeptly dissects the layers of resistance within the backdrop of plantation life, exploitation, and cultural upheaval endured by laborers. Employing vivid storytelling and nuanced character portrayal, Mohan vividly portrays the challenges and tenacity of indentured workers, breathing life into their struggles and resilience as they navigate oppression and displacement. The novel portrays a spectrum of resistance, ranging from overt acts of defiance to subtle forms of cultural preservation and psychological resilience. Through their journeys, Peggy Mohan's characters embody the enduring spirit of resistance, striving to maintain their dignity, identity, and agency in the face of adversity. The present paper is an attempt to analyse the theory of resistance in Peggy Mohan's 'Jahajin'.*

*Peggy Mohan stands out as a significant figure, originating from Trinidad and immersing herself in the rich cultural heritage and narratives of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean. In her work "Jahajin," Mohan adeptly explores the complexities of resistance in the face of the challenging conditions of plantation life and exploitation.*

**Keywords: Diaspora, Migrants, Resistance, Culture.**

## THEORY OF RESISTANCE & PEGGY MOHAN'S 'JAHAJIN': AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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### Introduction

*"This is real loneliness; this is real barrenness.... Today I am three thousand mile away from throbbing bubbling figurines of my flesh .....* "

*Kelsey: I Want My Chaos Back, pg57*

Migrations have a rich history that stretches back to ancient times, encompassing biblical journeys and expeditions driven by the promise of adventure, wealth, land, or power. While migratory movements and dislocations have always existed, what distinguishes the diaspora is the absence of these traditional motivations in its early journeys—there was no singular impetus such as exile. Today, the term "diaspora" serves as an overarching descriptor that often overlooks the diverse circumstances of its constituents, which include exiles, indentured laborers, slaves, expatriates, and those affected by employment displacement. Contemporary discourse surrounding diaspora now incorporates concepts such as nationhood, citizenship, and human rights. William Arnold's novel, "Oakfield; or Fellowship in the East," penned during his time in India, offers poignant testimony to the loneliness and trauma experienced by individuals navigating diasporic existence. To add nuance to our understanding, it may be useful to distinguish between linear and non-linear trajectories within the diaspora, highlighting the varied paths and experiences of its members".

### Diaspora: The Genesis

The term "diaspora" was coined to depict the dispersal or scattering of a community from its original homeland to various global locations. It originates from the Greek term "diasporein," meaning "to scatter" or "to disperse." The Indian Diaspora refers to individuals who have migrated from areas that currently fall within the borders of the Republic of India (High Level Committee, 2001). This diaspora can be categorized into two main groups: the "Old Diaspora," which evolved from colonial migrations, and the "New Diaspora," stemming from post-colonial migrations. While the Indian government's classification consists of three main categories for the diaspora—Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), People of Indian Origin (PIOs), and Overseas Indian Citizens (OICs). The theory of resistance within the Indian diaspora intricately intertwines historical legacies, cultural dynamics, and socio-political contexts, shedding light on the diverse strategies individuals and communities employ to confront

systems of oppression, injustice, and cultural assimilation. From the colonial era to the contemporary landscape, the Indian diaspora has exemplified acts of defiance, resilience, and cultural preservation, as diasporic individuals assert their agency while navigating new and diverse environments. Rooted in the Latin language, the term "resistance" emerges from "resistere," a fusion of "re-" (signifying "back" or "against") and "sistere" (meaning "to stand"). Thus, "resistere" inherently denotes standing against or opposing forces perceived as oppressive or undesirable. Across languages and epochs, this concept endures, retaining its fundamental significance in challenging injustice and resisting oppression.

### **Research Methodology & Objectives**

In this research paper, analytical method has been used to assess a few selected papers of previous years and a review of book has been conducted. The core objective of this paper explores and examining the colonial legacy that underpins much of the Indian diasporic experience, highlighting how historical processes of migration, indenture, and colonial exploitation have laid the groundwork for various forms of resistance in Peggy Mohan's "Jahajin".

### **Review of Literature**

The literature on resistance within the Indian diaspora, particularly with reference to Peggy Mohan's "Jahajin," offers valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of resistance and its significance in diasporic literature. Several scholars have explored the themes of resistance, identity, and cultural preservation depicted in Mohan's novel

Resistance Literature, explored the potential of literary criticism in discussing various forms of resistance, challenging established codes and canons of literature and criticism. She highlights the emergence of 'Palestinian Literature' and the definition of 'resistance' as articulated by Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani. **(Harlow, 1987, p. 118)**. The loss of Arab identity due to Western colonization, urging Arabian writers to confront colonialism's impact on identity. Palestinian resistance against colonization, with Kanafani focusing on children's experiences in refugee camps **(Kanafani, 2013)**.

In **(Nair, 2020, p. 2804)**: analysed that, Mohan's portrayal of resistance in 'Jahajin' challenges conventional narratives of diasporic experiences, shedding light on the enduring legacy of resistance among marginalized communities and the resilience of the human spirit.

In **(Kumar, 2019, p. 310)**: the paper delves into the ways in which the paper delves into the ways in which characters in "Jahajin" navigate the complexities of cultural assimilation and resistance against colonial oppression. It investigates how the experiences of relocation and displacement shape the identities and agency of diasporic individuals, highlighting the resilience and adaptability inherent in their journey.

### **Voicing of Resistance through Characters in Peggy Mohan's 'Jahajin'**

Peggy Mohan's 'Jahajin', the character of Deeda emerges as a poignant symbol of resilience and resistance against the harsh realities of indentured life. Deeda's

narrative reflects the struggles faced by many single women who migrated to plantations under oppressive conditions. Despite facing discrimination and hardship, Deeda's journey embodies a sense of empowerment and self-discovery. One instance of Deeda's character resistance can be seen when she confronts the discrimination and hardship she faces as a single woman in the plantation. Despite the challenges she encounters, Deeda refuses to be defined by her circumstances and strives to assert her agency and independence. This is evident in her inner resilience and determination to forge her own path despite the odds stacked against her.

*"In the history books it was the men who were the main actors. But there was also this unwritten history of the birth of a new community in Trinidad. And it was women who were at the centre of the story ....."* ('Jahajin', pg.169)

It can be analysed from the text where Mukoon Singh came and told that his family now were going to be Christians. Deeda show the resistance and triumph amid adversity in these lines:

*"I didn't want want to go with them. I didn't see the reason to change myself. I never went and met these missionaries. I was not a part of the restlessness that had taken hold of Mukul Singh, Beharry and Janaki-didi's son. I was happy with my life, as happy as I could be, seeing as I was still bound to an estate ....."* And when I left the estate, I would be free and happier" ('Jahajin', pg.118)

In this passage from "Jahajin," Deeda's steadfastness and resilience shine through as she confronts oppressive circumstances without succumbing to them. Mohan, through Deeda's narrative, captures the unyielding determination of individuals like her within the Indian diaspora, who refuse to be silenced or subdued despite facing adversity. Deeda embodies the enduring spirit of resistance and resilience, standing firm against forces that seek to diminish her spirit. In one incident, Deeda was taken aback by this offer since she was unprepared for it. So, she took her time and considered the concept of:

*"Repatriation to India. The same long boat journey. The same between-decks, the coolie quarters. The same waves, the same storms"* ('Jahajin', pg.180)

After much thought about returning to India, she offers many reasons for declining the offer. As Deeda reflects, *"I may be alone, but I am not powerless. My strength comes from within, from the fire that burns in my soul" .....* she wanted through her story, to pass on the news that she was still live, but in a different universe....('Jahajin', pg. 168)

The storyline of "Jahajin" unfolds as a narrative of resistance, with characters navigating the challenges of plantation life and seeking liberation from oppressive forces. The quest for freedom and autonomy drives the plot forward, as characters like Deeda and others strive to overcome the obstacles imposed by colonial exploitation and cultural displacement. We can see symbolic resistance by the Symbols such as the sea voyage itself serve as allegorical representations

of resistance and resilience. The journey across the ocean becomes a metaphor for the endurance and perseverance of the diasporic community in the face of adversity. As Deeda reflects on her transformative experience at sea, she realizes, "It was during her sea voyage that Deeda felt she had acquired a different sense of self" (Mohan, "Jahajin"). Peggy Mohan's employs innovative narrative techniques to disrupt traditional storytelling conventions and give voice to marginalized perspectives. Through fragmented storytelling and alternating viewpoints, Mohan offers a multifaceted portrayal of resistance against colonial domination and cultural assimilation. One line from the text that exemplifies this is:

*"As the ship rocked on the tumultuous waves, Deeda's thoughts drifted back to her homeland, her memories weaving a tapestry of longing and loss."*

This quote showcases Mohan's use of fragmented storytelling, as the narrative shifts between present events and past memories, offering readers glimpses into Deeda's inner world and the complexities of her diasporic experience.

Mohan's language and stylistic devices convey themes of resistance through subtle nuances and powerful imagery. The use of vivid descriptions and evocative language captures the resilience and determination of characters like Deeda, inspiring readers to question authority and challenge injustice. Overall, "Jahajin" by Peggy Mohan serves as a poignant exploration of resistance in literature, inviting readers to empathize with the struggles of diasporic communities and to envision alternative possibilities for individual and collective agency in the face of oppression.

### **Concluding Remark**

'Theory of Resistance within the Indian Diaspora', shedding light on the complex interplay of historical, cultural, and socio-political factors that shape the experiences of Indians living outside of India. In "Jahaji" by Peggy Mohan, this study provides a thorough exploration of resistance as both a theoretical construct and tangible expression within the novel's context. By closely examining the characters and narrative intricacies, it sheds light on the diverse manifestations of resistance depicted in the book. Utilizing theoretical perspectives from resistance studies, postcolonial theory, and cultural studies, the research delves into the nuanced nature of resistance as experienced by indentured laborers in the Caribbean. By closely examining the actions, motivations, and agency of characters within the novel, the study identifies and categorizes different types of resistance. These may include overt acts of defiance against colonial oppression, subtle forms of cultural preservation and identity assertion, and psychological resilience in the face of adversity.

Moreover, the study explores how these forms of resistance intersect and interact within the socio-political and cultural context of the Caribbean plantation society.

In light of the aforementioned considerations, this paper has endeavored to delve into the history of women's resistance within the context of indentured labor migration. Through a comprehensive examination, it has sought to unravel the intricate dynamics of resistance as manifested by women across generations.

By exploring the shifting negotiations of identity over time, the paper has shed light on the evolving experiences and expressions of resistance among women within the indentured labor system. This analysis enhances our comprehension of the intricate dynamics involving gender, migration, and resistance. It provides valuable insights into how women demonstrate resilience and agency as they navigate oppressive systems and forge their identities amid adversity.

### **Future Scope for Research**

Future research on Peggy Mohan's 'Jahajin' and her other works in the context of the theory of resistance holds immense potential for expanding our understanding of diasporic literature and cultural dynamics. Comparative studies with other works of Indo-Caribbean literature or literary traditions could provide valuable insights into the unique experiences and expressions of resistance within different cultural contexts. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches that integrate fields such as history, sociology, anthropology, and postcolonial studies could offer nuanced perspectives on the socio-cultural complexities depicted in the novel. Exploring themes of resistance through these interdisciplinary lenses could shed light on broader socio-political movements and historical contexts, enriching our appreciation of Peggy Mohan's narrative and its significance within the larger discourse of resistance literature.

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