

Press Release

JMI's Department of English organizes a lecture on "The South Asia Story: from Early Migrants to Indian English" by Dr. Peggy Mohan

New Delhi, November 11, 2025

The Subject Association of the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) organized a lecture with Dr. Peggy Mohan as the guest speaker. The title of the lecture was 'The South Asia Story: from Early Migrants to Indian English'.

Dr. Peggy Mohan was born in Trinidad, West Indies. She completed her PhD in linguistics from the University of Michigan in 1978. Her PhD dissertation was 'Trinidad Bhojpuri: A Morphological Study'. Further, her research relates to Trinidad Bhojpuri as a National Science Foundation project to investigate the process of language death. A highly experienced and accomplished scholar, she has taught linguistics at Howard University, Washington D.C., Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Ashoka University, and Mass Communications at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She is the author of three novels, *Jahajin*, *The Youngest Suspect*, and *Walk in C- Minor*. Her non fiction books are *Wanderers*, *Kings*, *Merchants* (Penguin Random House 2021) which won the Mathrubhumi Book of the Year Award, and *Father Tongue*, *Motherland* (Penguin Book of the Random House 2025).

The program began with Dr. Roomy Naqvy introducing the speaker Dr. Peggy Mohan to the audience, this was followed by Prof. Mukesh Ranjan the Head, Dept. Of English, who welcomed the guest with a sapling as a token of gratitude and appreciation. Later, Dr. Saba Bashir spoke about the importance and significance of having Dr. Peggy Mohan amidst us. In the lecture, Dr. Peggy Mohan spoke about the waves of migration of people and also spoke about the similarities between Sanskrit and Old Avestan. She also said that the Indus Valley was always inhabited with people. Thus, India was always the cradle of civilization ever since in history. She traced the history of the last seventy thousand years. She also added that interconnections between Indian languages are much deeper than what we can perceive. She went on to explain how Indian English is actually a kind of Prakrit. She further highlighted how "Indian English uses nouns whereas International English uses verbs."

Through her books she sheds light on the importance of inclusion of policies which are linguistically diverse. Her works are women centric and they show the how the social and economic development of marginalized women gets adversely impacted from the existing postcolonial language policies. In the lecture she talked about diglossia in India and how it is a "slow variant of language death", how we are losing our translation capacity.

The lecture aligned with the goals and objectives of the N.E.P. 2020 as her talk was interdisciplinary in nature and imparted profound knowledge to the attendees. The lecture also disseminated knowledge about the marginalization of women which also meets one of the core principles of the N.E.P. i.e. sensitization about gender. This scintillating lecture led to a rejuvenation of national pride in the students.

The lecture was well attended by students and faculty from other departments of Jamia. It was followed by a riveting discussion where the attendees asked questions from Dr. Mohan. During this discussion Dr. Mohan talked about how in India we use different scripts yet every Indian language lines up in the same structure and pattern, even Urdu is an "identical twin" of Hindi and all the grammatical features are the same. Thus, she said that while we Indians think we are diverse by language but actually, we are not. She also highlighted "the love of nouns" in the Indian languages and how it shows in the writings of Indian writers. In answer to a question about the historical migrations to India she stated a very crucial point that we never hear about the migrations in which the Indians triumphed over the migrants. We might have a genetic record of them but not about their influence on the language.

The ELA (English Literary Association) Advisor, Dr. Roomy Naqvy thanked the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Prof Mazhar Asif for his exemplary leadership, the respected Registrar for his constant support, Jamia Administration and the Head of Dept, Prof. Mukesh Ranjan for his guidance. He also thanked Dr. Saba Bashir for inviting the speaker and, Dr. Peggy Mohan, our esteemed guest for her scholarly and engaging talk.

Prof. Saima Saeed

Chief Public Relations Officer

Department of English
Jamia Millia Islamia



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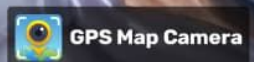
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The Subject Association, Dept of English organises

THE SOUTH ASIA STORY: from Early Migrants to Indian English

November 7, 2025 at 3 pm



Peggy Mohan was born in Trinidad, West Indies. She studied linguistics at the University of the West Indies, and completed her PhD in linguistics from the University of Michigan in 1978. She has taught linguistics at Howard University, Washington D.C., Jawaharlal Nehru University and Ashoka University, and Mass Communications at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She is the author of three novels, *Jahajin*, *The Youngest Suspect* and *Walk in C Minor*, and the non-fiction books *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants*, (Penguin Random House 2021) which won the Mathrubhumi Book of the Year Award, and *Father Tongue, Motherland* (Penguin Random House 2025). She lives in New Delhi.

Venue: Seminar Hall, Dept of English

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