

The Death of Regional Literature

Informational life form - Regional Literature

As a child, I spent my summers with my grandparents in Southern India. Every night, as I slept, my grandparents would fill my head with Tamil stories; they would breathe life into devotional accounts, the great epics, mythological narratives, and regional Tamil literature. The gods, goddesses, kings, queens, court jesters, ministers, sadhus and gurus would come alive, perform their histories, tell their stories, and edify their teachings as religion and moral knowledge that I carried with me.



As I grew, the once tangible threads of information and knowledge from Tamil stories and regional literature became more and more abstract and disconnected as a life form. The beginning of the digital age of information led me even further away from my roots in the Tamil language. The internet as a platform that monopolizes the English language for congregation, self-expression, interaction, and archival, threatened the distribution of linguistic diversity in the Indian subcontinent that exists in the form of regional literature, novels, poetry, short stories, folk tales, mythic tales, and great epics.

For younger generations in India, digital spaces create a singular space for skewed attraction for English language e-book publications. How can we imagine an intervention to minimize the condition of the threat of losing readership of regional literature? Mass availability of regional literature through digital open access publications, the ease of purchase, download, and distribution, the digitization of regional content, the archival and preservation of rich literature, and finally the translation and transliteration of local publications can perform several functions including bringing youth closer to their mother tongues, ensure greater visibility for regional content, generate readership interest from around the world in Indian culture and literature, its values, and people.

How can I ensure that I engage in the politics of survival of my own mother tongue, Tamil? I can create a blog for archival purposes where I store and distribute copies of novels, poetry, short stories, folk tales, mythic tales, and great epics in Tamil both within my community and outside, and I can translate regional content for wider readership. To bring back the tangibility of regional literature; to bring back the corporeality of regional knowledge and informational structures, and to bring back my grandfather's stories, the politics of survival must involve prioritizing regional narratives and marginal realities of Tamil, and resisting the coloniality of the English language on digital platforms.