



Decline of Regional Literature: In the Context of Bengali, Assamese, and Bhojpuri Languages

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ABSTRACT

Regional literature serves as a living reflection of a specific region's language, culture, lifestyle, folk beliefs, and traditions. The literary traditions of Bengali, Assamese, and Bhojpuri have long enriched the cultural diversity of the Indian subcontinent. However, in the twenty-first century, the position of these regional literatures has been gradually weakening due to globalization, urbanization, rapid technological advancement, and the growing dominance of the English language. This research paper analyzes the causes, impacts, and possible remedies for the decline of Bengali, Assamese, and Bhojpuri literature. The study reveals that the diminishing importance of regional languages in the education system has led to a decline in interest among the younger generation in mother tongue-based literary practices. At the same time, the dominance of Hindi and English in digital media and the entertainment industry has further marginalized regional languages. Bengali literature, once the epicenter of a cultural renaissance, has witnessed a relative decline in influence due to changing reading habits. Assamese literature remains confined within a limited geographical scope, restricting its reach to a wider readership. On the other hand, Bhojpuri literature, being largely dependent on oral traditions, has comparatively weaker representation in written and academic domains. The research further indicates that limitations within the publishing industry, low market demand, and insufficient governmental support



have created significant barriers to the growth of regional literature. However, the potential of digital platforms is also noteworthy, as they offer new opportunities for the presentation and dissemination of regional literary works in innovative ways.

Discussion:

The term “decline of literature” refers to the gradual diminishing of literary practice, reading habits, creativity, quality, and its overall social influence. In simple terms, it denotes a condition in which, within a particular language or society, the production of high-quality literary works decreases, readers’ interest wanes, and literature no longer exerts the profound impact it once held.

Literature, in its essence, is a mirror reflecting the thoughts, culture, and human values of a society. However, when, due to various social, economic, and cultural factors, literature begins to lose its vitality and influence, such a condition may be identified as literary decline.

The symptoms of this decline are manifold. A noticeable reduction in the number of readers, the scarcity of accomplished and thoughtful writers, and the growing dominance of light, commercially driven writings over profound and reflective compositions all signal a weakening literary culture. Furthermore, the decreasing emphasis on literature within the educational system, coupled with an excessive inclination toward digital entertainment, has intensified this process.

In earlier times, individuals would regularly immerse themselves in novels, poetry, and essays, engaging deeply with the written word. In contrast, contemporary society increasingly devotes its time to social media platforms and video-based content. As a result, both the inclination to read and the motivation to write literature have significantly diminished. This gradual erosion of engagement and depth ultimately characterizes what we understand as the decline of literature.

The decline of the Bengali language and literature is vividly reflected in various realities of contemporary society. This decline is not merely theoretical; rather, its tangible evidence can be observed in our everyday life, educational system, and cultural practices.

Firstly, the growing preference for English-medium education stands as a significant example. At present, many parents are eager to enroll their children in English-medium schools, where the importance of Bengali is comparatively diminished. As a result, from an early age, children develop a lack of interest



in reading and writing in their mother tongue. For instance, many students struggle to read or compose even a simple paragraph in Bengali, while they feel far more at ease expressing themselves in English.

Secondly, the increasing tendency of linguistic hybridity in daily conversation is a notable symptom. Particularly in urban areas, the younger generation frequently resorts to “Banglish” (a blend of Bengali and English). Expressions such as “I am busy in a meeting today” or “Have you submitted the assignment?”—interspersed within Bengali speech—gradually alter the natural structure and purity of the language.

Thirdly, the transformation of reading habits has emerged as a pressing concern. In earlier times, people regularly engaged with novels, short stories, and poetry. Today, however, many prefer spending their time on mobile screens—watching reels, YouTube videos, or browsing social media. Although book fairs continue to attract large crowds, the number of actual buyers has shown a declining trend. Among the youth, there is a growing inclination toward guidebooks or light entertainment reading rather than serious literary works.

Fourthly, the limitations in both the quality and quantity of Bengali content on digital platforms offer another telling example. On platforms such as YouTube or OTT services, most popular content is dominated by Hindi or English, prompting Bengali audiences to gravitate toward these languages. Although Bengali content is being produced, it is not always sufficiently engaging or of high quality.

Fifthly, the commercialization of literary practice is also clearly discernible. Many publishers today show a preference for books that promise quick sales—such as romantic novels, thrillers, or easily consumable writing. Consequently, serious, reflective, and research-oriented literature receives comparatively less attention. For example, numerous emerging writers, despite producing high-quality work, often fail to find publishers willing to bring their writings to light.

Sixthly, the use of Bengali is gradually diminishing within family and social environments as well. In many households, parents consciously encourage their children to communicate in English in the belief that it will make them appear more “smart” or socially advanced. This tendency weakens the natural bond with the mother tongue.

Thus, the decline of the Bengali language and literature is an ongoing process, manifesting across multiple spheres of life. Yet, within this apparent downturn, certain positive developments can also be discerned. For instance, many young writers are gaining recognition through social media by composing



poetry and short stories in Bengali, while e-books and audiobooks are opening new avenues for Bengali literature to reach a wider and more diverse readership.

In the contemporary context, the Assamese language appears to be receding, and field-based observations provide crucial insight into this decline. A careful analysis of language use across educational institutions, urban spaces, rural communities, and family environments reveals a vivid and multifaceted picture of this ongoing process.

Field studies conducted within the sphere of education indicate that the use of Assamese among students in urban English-medium schools remains strikingly limited. In several private institutions in Guwahati, interactions with students reveal a marked preference for English or Hindi in everyday communication. Even those who are capable of reading and writing Assamese with ease often display a reluctance to use it in practice. This hesitation reflects a growing psychological distance from the mother tongue.

Observations drawn from marketplaces and professional environments further illustrate this shift. In urban commercial spaces, particularly in Guwahati's bustling markets, conversations between shopkeepers and customers frequently take place in Hindi, largely due to the presence of migrant laborers and traders. Consequently, Assamese, as a local language of interaction, is gradually losing its functional domain.

In contrast, field studies in rural areas present a somewhat different picture. In many villages, Assamese continues to serve as the primary medium of daily communication. However, even here, the influence of mobile technology and the internet is reshaping linguistic preferences among the younger generation. Rural youth, increasingly engaged with social media platforms, tend to consume content in Hindi or English rather than in Assamese, thereby altering their linguistic orientation.

Within the familial sphere, a similar pattern emerges. Many parents consciously encourage their children to communicate in English or Hindi, believing that such linguistic choices will better equip them for future academic and professional success. As a result, children gradually lose both the habitual use of Assamese and their emotional attachment to it.

Field observations related to literary engagement reveal another dimension of this decline. Local libraries and bookstores report a comparatively low demand for Assamese literary works. In several libraries in Guwahati, it has been observed that a significant section of readers exhibits a lack of interest in literature written in their mother tongue.



On digital platforms, too, the presence of Assamese remains limited. Although Assamese content exists on YouTube and other social media, its viewership is relatively modest. The overwhelming popularity of Hindi and English content among the youth continues to overshadow Assamese, restricting its digital growth and visibility.

Taken together, these field-based observations clearly demonstrate that the decline of the Assamese language is both real and multidimensional. It is not merely a matter of reduced usage, but is deeply intertwined with changing attitudes, social prestige, and questions of cultural identity.

Yet, despite these challenges, there remains room for optimism. Through thoughtful policy measures, improvements in the educational system, and the cultivation of social awareness, it is possible to arrest this decline and restore the dignity and vitality of the Assamese language.

The Bhojpuri language stands as one of the significant regional languages of the Indian subcontinent, predominantly spoken across Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh, and certain parts of Jharkhand. For generations, it has flourished through a rich oral tradition—embodied in folk songs, folktales, narratives, and as a vibrant carrier of regional culture. Yet, in the domains of literature and academia, Bhojpuri is gradually drifting toward a state of marginalization.

Field-based observations reveal a striking paradox: while Bhojpuri continues to be actively used in everyday life, its presence in written literary practice remains exceedingly limited. Conversations with people in the rural regions of Bihar indicate that although Bhojpuri thrives within domestic and informal settings, formal domains such as education, administration, and official communication are overwhelmingly dominated by Hindi or English. Consequently, Bhojpuri is deprived of institutional recognition and a sustained written tradition.

Studies conducted within the educational sphere further underscore this concern. In most schools and colleges, Bhojpuri is absent from the curriculum. Students, despite having Bhojpuri as their mother tongue, are compelled to rely on Hindi or English for academic purposes. Observations across several institutions reveal that while students are comfortable speaking in Bhojpuri, they are neither accustomed to reading nor writing in the language. This disconnect significantly impedes the literary growth and development of Bhojpuri.

The situation becomes even more pronounced in urban contexts. Migration from villages to cities in search of employment often results in a gradual decline in the use of Bhojpuri. In metropolitan centers such as Delhi or Mumbai, Bhojpuri-speaking families frequently witness a generational shift, where the



younger members show little inclination to learn or use the language. This trend weakens the intergenerational transmission that is vital for the survival of any linguistic tradition.

In the realm of literary engagement, Bhojpuri remains at a disadvantage. Field observations indicate that readers exhibit limited interest in Bhojpuri literature, with a clear preference for Hindi or English texts. As a result, many writers feel discouraged from composing in Bhojpuri, leading to a further decline in its literary output.

On digital platforms, Bhojpuri does maintain a visible presence, but it is largely confined to entertainment—particularly songs and films. While Bhojpuri music enjoys considerable popularity on platforms like YouTube, literary and educational content in the language remains scarce. For instance, the availability of Bhojpuri stories, essays, or research-oriented material is minimal, thereby constraining the language's intellectual and literary expansion.

Within the family, too, patterns of language use are undergoing transformation. Many parents consciously encourage their children to communicate in Hindi or English, believing it to be advantageous for their future. In doing so, however, the natural affinity and emotional connection of children with the Bhojpuri language gradually weaken.

Thus, despite its deep cultural roots and vibrant oral heritage, Bhojpuri today faces significant challenges in sustaining itself as a language of literature and intellectual discourse.

Yet, it may be asserted with clarity and conviction that such ancient languages and their literary traditions cannot simply fade into oblivion. In recent times, several constructive initiatives have emerged, offering renewed hope for the preservation and revitalization of regional languages. India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020), for instance, places significant emphasis on imparting education through the mother tongue. Increasingly, students are being given the opportunity to appear for examinations in their respective regional languages, while numerous technical and higher education texts are being translated accordingly. These measures have contributed to a gradual expansion in the academic use of languages such as Bengali and Assamese.

The Government of India has further recognized Bengali and Assamese as Classical Languages, thereby affirming their historical and cultural significance. This recognition has led to the establishment of research centers, academic chairs in universities, and the institution of various awards dedicated to their study and promotion.



The Government of Assam has also undertaken notable steps in this regard. The use of Assamese has been made mandatory in official work, notices, and legal documentation. Additionally, government employees are required to acquire proficiency in the regional language. Such measures have significantly strengthened the presence of Assamese at the administrative level.

At the national level, several initiatives have been introduced to promote linguistic diversity and knowledge dissemination. The National Translation Mission seeks to translate knowledge-based texts into multiple Indian languages, while the Bharatavani Project endeavors to create a vast repository of digital content across languages. These initiatives collectively contribute to making knowledge more accessible in regional linguistic forms.

In the case of Bhojpuri, governmental efforts remain comparatively limited, yet certain encouraging developments can be observed. Some universities have begun to offer courses in Bhojpuri language and literature, thereby providing a modest academic platform for its study. Moreover, Bhojpuri cinema and music continue to sustain the language's popularity among the masses. The presence of Bhojpuri content on digital platforms is also gradually increasing. However, despite these positive trends, Bhojpuri still awaits broader academic recognition and stronger institutional support.

Thus, while the challenges are undeniable, these emerging efforts suggest that the story of regional languages is not solely one of decline, but also of resilience, adaptation, and the enduring possibility of renewal.

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