

Talk Session on “Assamese Language: Heritage, Problems, Solutions” held



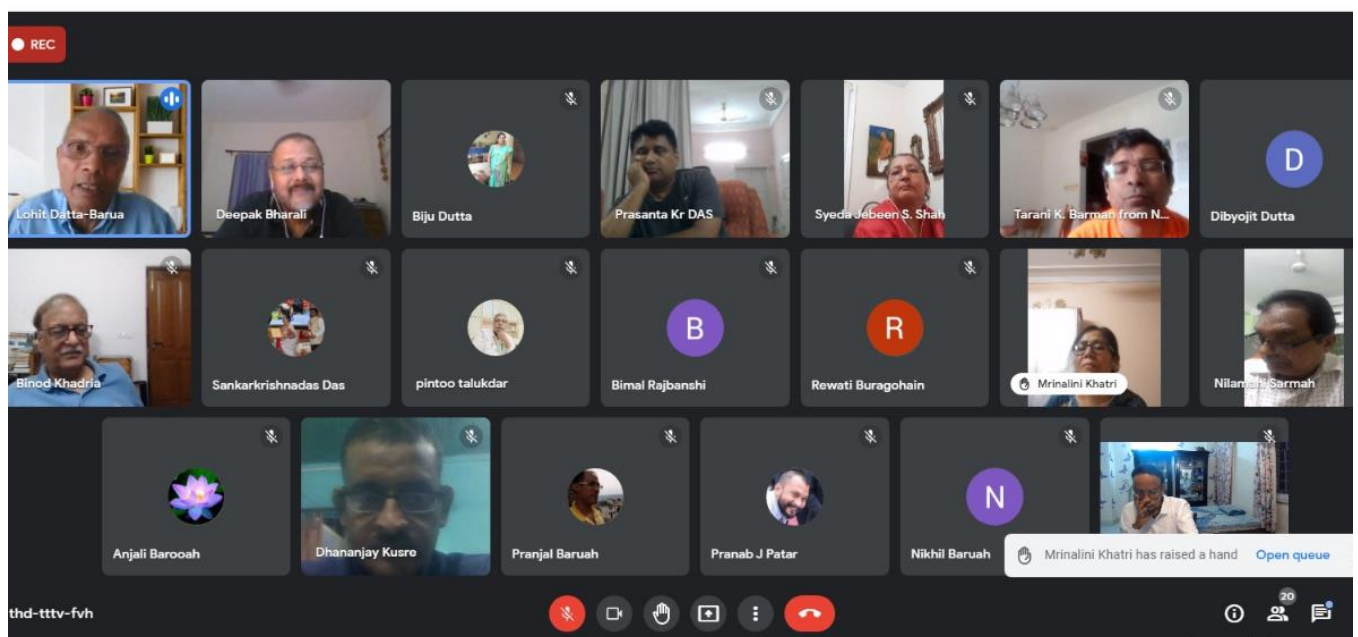
Assamese Language: Heritage, Problems, Solutions” by Dr. Lohit Datta-Barua USA

New Delhi 27th July 2021 - A talk session viz. Assamese Language: Heritage, Problems, Solutions” (অসমীয়া ভাষা: ঐতিহ্য, সমস্যা, সমাধান) was held on Sunday, 25th July 2021 through virtual meet which was attended by around 35 Nos of participants from various parts of the country including abroad (list attached) . The talk session was presented by Dr Lohit Datta-Barua, Assam Association North America, USA at 8:00 PM Indian Standard Time and organised by Assam Association Delhi under the banner of “**AAD Talk Session**”

At the outset, the theme song viz. “সন্তান” was presented by Sri Binod Bharadwaj. The lyricist is Shri Sarat Borkakaty and music composer is Sri Binod Bharadwaj . It was followed by welcomed addressed to Dr. Lohit Datta-Barua by Dr Nilamani Sarma, one of senior most Life members of Assam Association Delhi.

During the Talk Session, Dr Datta-Barua spoke about the glorious past of Assamese language - how once the mighty Assam kingdom was spreading across the present Bihar State and connected with outside world. He cited various instances where presence of vibrant Assamese language was prominent way back in 4th century, 7th Century but

unexpectedly it plunged into darkness during 1834 -1868 but managed to revived due to consistent hard work by some of our prominent personalities. But inspite of having long flourishing period, Assamese language is again plunging into crisis from various reasons i.e. political, lack of awareness, etc. It is facing great uncertainty in present digital age for various reasons viz. absence of standard keyboard, non-inclusion in Google translation, insufficient translations by Microsoft, non-recognition of Assamese language as separate identity by Unicode consortium etc. Due to insufficient entry of Assamese words in Google, the google translation for Assamese language is still not published for which minimum entry of 500,000 words are required where only a few thousands have been entered. Also he cited a few problems faced by Assamese Unicode where some of the Assamese words are not properly recognised which can aggregate further in future. He then mentioned some of the activities done by Assam Association of North America (AANA) as well by individuals capacity to make entries into Google Translate, Assamese Wikipedia, teaching Assamese online etc. As some of the efforts are to be done at Government levels, a few are at community level, a few may be in individual levels, so more holistic efforts word be required to make Assamese language great again.



After the keynote speech, a few honourable participants provided their invaluable feedback viz.

- a. **Sri Deepak Bharali** , President Assam Association Kolkotta & President, Asom Sahitya Sabha Kolkotta -
 - a. He informed that the demand to learn Assamese language has been there for long and cited an instance in the year 1908 , when Late Debananda Bharali who happened to be his paternal grand parent published a book viz. “A Manual of Assamese Grammar in English for Foreign Students” for the larger benefits of outside world who wanted to learn Assamese that included British themselves
 - b. Though Unicode was launched long back and intense acivities by various Indian Language were going on in India during 2000, but Assam Sahitya Sabha was not participating for Assamese language mostly due to lack of awareness . In the year 2012, the report published by Dr Satyakam Dutta on Unicode was bright to the notice of Assam Sahitya Sabha in the year 2012 vy Sri Bharali himself and then some activities started. But as it was already late, other Indian Language including Bengali scripts made lots of progress and enlisted themselves prominently in Unicode. Due to late entry, Assamese scripts was denied primary identity instead added as supplement with Bengali scripts. At that time, it was suggested to include Assamese scripts under the banner of AMBM viz. Assamese Manipuri Bengali and Maithali due to similarity with their scripts but it was not entertained.
 - c. Assamese language has been facing other issues i.e. language translation, lack of content in Wikipedia etc. These are mostly due to absence of technology driven initiatives in Assamese language .
 - d. It was suggested that 100+ Asom Sahitya Sabha units spread around the world must spend some time in each day/ week and contribute to build content in Google translation, Wikipedia etc. Google translate page require minimum repository of 5 Lakh words to include Assamese in Google translation which need to be accomplished at the earliest.
- b. **Sri Sankar Krishna Das** - various communication channels i.e. web Radio channels etc to be used to spread these message to reach to the last mile to common citizen. Since culture, music, language, literature etc are interwoven so everything would be extinct if existence of language is threated. He agreed to spread these message through their Lokoratnagarbhaa Radio channels.
- c. **Mrinalini Khatri** অধিবক্তা দিল্লী উচ্চতম ন্যায়ালয়,লগতে ভাৰতীয় ভাষা আন্দোলনৰ ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় মন্ত্ৰী।

- i. She lamented that presently books are only available in a few pockets on Guwahati. There is acute shortage of good books in Assamese language.
 - ii. After Indian got Independence in 1947, it was decided that English language will be replaced by local Language in States within 15 years, but these are not happening even after 70 years.
 - iii. There is no provision for higher studies for Assamese medium students. If someone wants, Assamese medium students need to master in English language (in later Stage) and pursue. But in most of the cases, it is found that they couldn't able to perform well inspite of having competencies.
 - iv. Though Hon'ble Supreme Court is publishing Judgement copies in 7(Seven) Indian languages where Assamese is one of them, but the recording statement during cross examination / witness are not recorded in Assamese language for which sometime recorded statement are found to be deviated what it was actually intended for .
- d. **Lohit Datta-Barua** - The non-availability of good books in Assamese language is true for not only for higher level but also for kids also. Children usually love story books with colourful pictures which is insufficient in Assamese language. In order to increase reading habit, there should be several small libraries in various locations instead of having one large library in city area . Mobile book Library van to be increased.
- e. **Binod Khadaria** Retd Professor JNU - Good teachers are extremely necessary. Mobile Reading Van required. As children can't be forced, it is more important to make reading attractive . More innovation required to attract children to local languages.
- f. **Biju Dutta Baruah** . Professor Assamese Dept, Dhemaji -
- a. More study should be done on spoken languages/ dialects .
 - b. Most of the students who opt for Assamese major / Master degree are found to be from interior village areas; very few are from town area.
 - c. There is a feeling of looked down upon on Assamese languages by a section of the society .
 - d. Study on Assamese language must get due respect.

Dr Nilamani Sarma - Family is the foundation to learn mother tongue. He cited one instance when one single family in the entire Town in Austria managed to maintain Assamese language due to family effort whereas the same is found to be missing sometime in places like Delhi. So more efforts at family level are required.

The meeting was concluded by Moderator Dibyojit Dutta viz.

- e. More collaborative efforts with various organization/ institution viz. Assam Association North America, Assam Association Kolkotta, Asom Sahitya Sabha, Assam Association Delhi , Central Government, State Government, Google, Microsoft, Unicode consortium etc would be required to revive Assamese language
- f. Contact with be made to Google India on Google translation
- g. Contact to be made with Microsoft India on Assamese translation
- h. Contact to be made to Unicode Consortium for separate identity of Assamese Language
- i. Community engagement to be increased to improve the contribution in Google translation, Wikipedia , cyberspace etc
- j. More similar event to be organised time to time

The Video recorded session is available at <https://youtu.be/nDXeRGYqYOA> 1:57:58 (unabridged version is <https://youtu.be/uv6kYMHvaxw> 2:15:40)

News compiled & published by

Dibyojit Dutta

Dated 29th July 2021

Comments of participants

Bimal Rajbanshi: welcome to everyone from Bimal Rajbanshi

Syeda Jebeen S. Shah: নমস্কাৰ সকলোলৈকে। নিউয়ৰ্ক মহানগৰৰ পৰা।
চৈয়দা জেবীন চাবীৰা শ্বাহ, অসম সাহিত্য সভা উত্তৰ আমেৰিকা শাখাৰ।

Pranab J Patar: Namaskar, My best wishes to everyone. Looking forward to listening to Dr. Datta-Barua da. Thank you - Dr Pranab J Patar | Noida

Deepak Bharali: Good evening all. I am Deepakananda Bharali from Kolkata. Currently President of Kolkata Assamese Cultural Association and President , Asom Xahitya Xobha, Kolkata.

Mrinalini Khatri: নমস্কাৰ জনাওঁ। মৃগালিনী ,অধিবক্তা দিল্লী উচ্চতম ন্যায়ালয়,লগতে ভাৰতীয় ভাষা আন্দোলনৰ ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় মন্ত্ৰী।

Biju Dutta: দত্তদেৱৰ বক্তব্যত আক্লত হ'লো।

Dipak Nath: আজি দত্তদেৱৰ এক সুন্দৰ বাৰ্তাত সচাকৈ কেইটামান নাজানা কথা জানিলো দত্ত চাৰৰ সু-স্বাস্থ্য আৰু দীৰ্ঘায়ু কামনা কৰিলোঁ।

Pranjal Baruah: Pls share the recording .

Rewati Buragohain: যথেষ্ট উপকৃত হ'লো।

Deepak Bharali: Excellent focus on the issues by Dr Lohit Datta barua. Thank you.

Nikhil Baruah: দত্ত বৰুৱা মামাক বহুবছৰৰ মুৰত দেখি আনন্দিত হ'লো আৰু তেখেতৰ বক্তব্য শুনি আক্লত হ'লো ,বহুত নাজানা কথা জানিলো। তেখেতৰ সুস্বাস্থ্যৰ লগতে দীৰ্ঘায়ু কামনা কৰিলো। ধন্যবাদ অসম এছোছিয়েশ্যন দিল্লী অংশ

Bimal Rajbanshi: Binod Khadria made some important points to be noted

Dhananjay Kusre: Dr Dhananjay Kusre from Nagaon Assam. very good discussion. Thanks for getting opportunity.

Nikhil Baruah: আটাইলৈ নমস্কাৰ জনাই বিদায় লৈছো বিশেষ কাৰনত। শুভৰাত্রি

Pranab J Patar: bhal lagil.. absolutely relevant perspective. Thank you dada. Appreciate AAD for hosting this session. I will now take your leave. Apologies.

Syeda Jebeen S. Shah: ইয়াত আলোচিত কথাবোৰ অনুগ্রহ কৰি ইমেইল কৰি দিবচোন ৰেকৰ্ড কৰা লিংকটোৰ সৈতে। ধন্যবাদ।

Participant List

1. Parag Agrawal, Guwahati
2. Bhuban Barah, Delhi
3. Anjali Barooah, Delhi
4. AP Baruah
5. Nikhil Baruah, Nagaon
6. Pranjal Baruah, Delhi
7. Ramesh Baruah, Delhi
8. Deepak Bharali, Kolkotta
9. Ranjita bunwaree, Quatre Bornes, Mouritus
10. Rewati Buragohain
11. Sankar Krishna Das,
12. Lohit Datta-Barua, USA
13. Jayantimala Devi, Delhi
14. Hironlal dutta, Delhi
15. Biju Dutta Bora , Dhemaji Assam
16. Dibyojit Dutta, Delhi
17. Romen Dutta, Gurugram

18. PranabJ Patar, NOIDA
19. Binod Khadria, Delhi
20. Mrinalini Khatri, Delhi
21. MalayaKhaund, Delhi
22. Dr Dhananjay Kusre , Nagaon
23. Amrit Mahanta, Delhi
24. Suhas Mahanta
25. Dipak Nath, North Lakhimpur
26. Pranab phukan, Delhi
27. Dikshit Phukan,
28. Bimal Rajbanshi
29. Dr Nilamani Sarmah, Delhi
30. Syeda Jebeen S. Shah, New York, USA
31. Sarfaraz Taher
32. Pintoo Talukdar, Delhi
33. Prasanta Kr DaS , Tezpur
34. Tarani K. Barman, New York, USA
