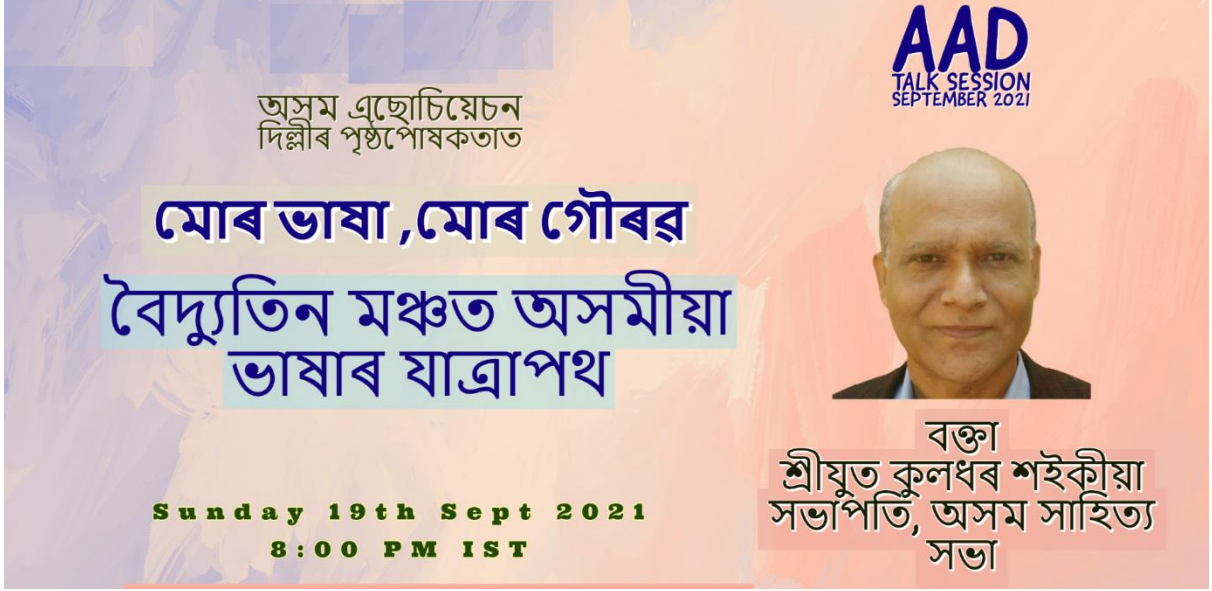


Roadmap on Assamese Language in electronic Platforms held



New Delhi – A webinar on “মোৰ ভাষা, মোৰ গৌৰৱ -বৈদ্যুতিনমঞ্চত অসমীয়া ভাষাৰ যাত্ৰাপথ (My Language, My Pride- Roadmap of Assamese language in electronic platforms) was held on 19th September 2021 Sunday from 8:00 PM IST onwards with keynote speaker Sri Kuladhar Saikia, President, Assam Sahitya Sabha. This event was organised by Assam Association Delhi and attended by around 150 enthusiast around the world. In his address, Sri Kuladhar Saikia mentioned various activities and issues related to Assamese language in electronic platforms and requested Assamese diaspora to participate for the prosperity of their own language. The entire session was recorded and made available in YouTube in the link viz. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9YJe57aVKs>



Kuladhar Saikia

At the outset, he described the significance of the tagline of Assam Sahitya Sabha i.e “মোৰ ভাষা, মোৰ গৌৰৱ” introduced one and half years back because it has been felt that if we don't feel proud with our own language 'Assamese, then the possibility for us to pursue our children to follow Assamese language is almost zero which can lead to the extinction of our language. It is found that 'absence of self respect to own language' has been the common cause for all extinct languages which were flourish once upon a time. So it is high time for us to feel proud with our Assamese language otherwise it may become extinct sooner or later.



Smti Shakuntala Choudhury



Justice Dr. Mukunda Kam Sharma

He acknowledged that a lots of activities to prosper Assamese language in electronics platforms have been going on by individuals or community levels on in various parts of the world viz. USA, Canada, UK, Mumbai, Kolkotta, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh etc. With their resources and technical know-how, various levels of contribution have been pouring in electronic platforms. Looking as these emergent development, recently Assam Sahitya Sabha has decided to involve themselves more vigorously in internet platforms. As content building, Google translation, Microsoft translation, Unicode etc require public participation, so efforts have been made to encourage more and more individuals as well Communities to participate actively.



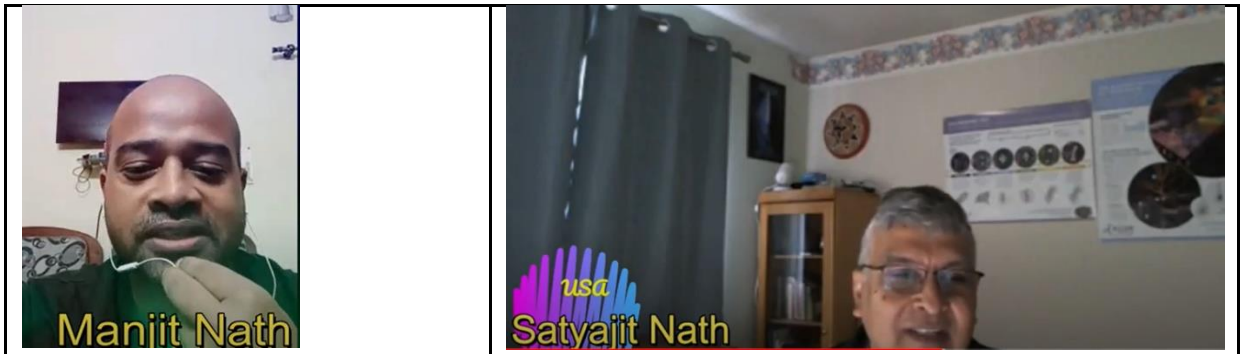
Lohit Datta Barua



Angshuman Baruah

On digitisation, several activities have been going on in various location independently which may require consolidation. Recently one MoU has been signed with AMTRON for preservation of digital content. A few colleges, university have been involved in digitisation process. One college in Jorhat has recently digitised around 300 books/journals/mazarines which is really praiseworthy.

On learning of Assamese language, more mobile apps and websites are required. In order to encourage more people to learn Assamese through online classes, recently issuing of certificates from Assam Sahitya Sabha has been introduced



On the various issues related to Assamese Unicode, it has been conveyed that as per Unicode convocation held in London on 2018 where a few issues related to Assamese language were discussed; Assam Sahitya Sabha has approached Govt of Assam as well as Govt of India to initiate necessary steps to resolve these issues as per Standard Operating Procedure. It is really things of concern that still Government of India has been portraying wrongly on Assamese Scripts and language ; till 1991, there was no mention of Assamese language as a separate language with own scripts in the records of Government of India. It is painful to see such an ancient language having credit being one of the oldest languages to translate Ramayana into own language by Madhab Kondoli several hundred years back has been struggling for recognition.

After explaining all details thread barely, Sri Saikia ended his keynote address and further requested other participants to express their view on these issues.



Deepakananda Bharali,



Ashok Sarma

Smti Shakuntala Choudhury, USA expressed that as there are few persons from USA who have been working in the field of Assamese language in electronic platform viz. Dipankar Medhi, Satyajit Nath etc, their services may be utilised for the same purposes.

Justice Dr. Mukunda Kam Sharma, Delhi conveyed that the tagline viz. ‘মোৰ ভাষা ,মোৰ গৌৰৱ’ really could touch the hearth because our pride and prestige are linked with our land & language and inseparable. It is our Assamese root for which each one of us always feel proud.

He further suggested the followings viz.

- A few interesting story books viz. “বুঢ়ী আইতাৰ সাধু (Burhi Aaitar hadhu) in Assamese language should be taught to children. Habit should be created to read in Assamese scripts.
- On digitisation, he conveyed that there are very large nos of precious Assamese old books laying in Kolkotta National Library which are slowly decaying, which need to be preserved and digitised immediately preferably involving organizations like Assam Association Kolkotta. Similarly, rare Assamese books available in National Achieves, National Museum etc to be digitised by organisation like Assam Association Delhi. There are also many manuscripts available in lower Assam which need to be persevered, digitised and published for the benefits of citizen.
- Since many of these activities are IT related, so IT specialist youths should be invited by Assam Association Delhi for a meeting, identify tasks and start completing these task.
- A few individual libraries viz. Sjt Nagen Saikia having large collection of Assamese rare books need to be digitised with support from their family members.



Tassadaque Hussain



Dibyojit Dutta

Lohit Datta Barua , USA suggested that due to paucity of time, concentration should be made to identify the task and how to accomplish these task. He further suggested a few impending task as follows viz.

Unicode – As Government of India is still not recognising Assamese Scripts as separate scripts, bringing it's recognition is of paramount importance now. Since present Chief Minister of Assam Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma and Prime Minister of India, Sjt. Narendra Modij are known to be hard task masters, it should be taken as golden opportunity to convince Governments to resolve these long standing aspirations. On Unicode, he conveyed that due to putting Assamese scripts within Bengali scripts, transliteration of Assamese language may not yield desired results.



Mrinalini Khatri



Prof Binod Khadria

- For the prosperity of Assamese language, more Assamese books to be translated into other international languages to reach global platform. He highlighted that if Ravidranath Tagore didn't translate his poetry book into English, he would not been received Nobel prize. The Assamese books translation into other languages will help to spread the richness of the language, literature and would attract onlookers to learn Assamese.

- He also lamented that that still there are many people who are communicating SMS, email, Facebook in Assamese but using Latin scripts. Instead they should use Assamese scripts.
- There are still few glitch in Google translation, Microsoft translation in Assamese viz. the non availability of 4th option data feeding in Google translation of Assamese beta version has been obstructing data correction. Such glitches should be reported to these tech giants viz. Google, Microsoft etc.
- The entry of Assamese content in Wikipedia, social networking sites, websites etc to be increased. He continued that whereas many smaller languages could succeed to enter millions of content in their native language each month, this numbers is hardly few thousands in Assamese language. He suggested that with presence of 15 million Assamese strong community, even if each member submits one word per day in internet platform, it can become 1.5 crore contributions per day which can do wonder for Assamese language.
- He finally reiterated that separate identity for Assamese language in Unicode is very important to gain respect globally for which Govt of India must recognise it at the earliest.

Angshuman Baruah, Delhi

He conveyed that presently there is no such issue in typing of Assamese script in Unicode. Till 2002, the Assamese script 'ৰ' was not available in keyboards and had to adjust with Bengali 'ৱ'. But this issue was resolved around 2007. Now all Assamese scripts can be written in computer. The keyboards are important requirement to enter Assamese scripts. Microsoft has enabled Assamese script and even other technical agencies like Abode have made provision to feed Assamese Unicode characters in their applications.

Manjit Nath , Delhi

- The separate code chart / codes for Assamese scripts is not advisable as it may lead to loss the existing content. As in European countries , multiple languages are using same code for their scripts, similarly all languages similar to Assamese, Bengali need to be put into one Code chart and share codes themselves.
- Few recognition/ incentive from Assam Sahitya Sabha to be introduced to major contributors to Wikipedia, Google language translator etc to encourage more participation from citizen.

Deepakanada Bharali, Kolikotta

Presently there may not be any issue to write Assamese language in Unicode. The issue is not that whether Assamese language could be written in Unicode or not; the real issue is recognition of Assamese Language which is not happening . In many Government of India's

record, Assamese is still shown as a language with Bengali scripts. So the receiving of recognition of Assamese language from our own country viz. India is the REAL burning issue.

He further conveyed that as per availability Government of India's record, there are only 9(nine) Indian scripts in India where Assamese is not among them. As Unicode consortium is an international body who has little knowledge on ground reality, they have been doing as per recommendations received from Indian Government. So Unicode can't be blamed for any lapse. So the first and foremost task would be to correct these historical blunder and recognise Assamese language as a separate language having own scripts. After that, any further correction, if any, to be done from international agencies like Unicode etc.

Satyajit Nath, USA

- Training is important component to onboard more people into electronic platforms. Though there are several Unicode enabled keyboard available in the Net but many people are not doing because of lack of knowledge. So few video clips to be developed and made available in YouTube on 'how to install Unicode Assamese keyboard' etc which should help public to operate Assamese Unicode keyboard.
- In Assamese language, there are very few SW tools viz. spell checkers, grammar checkers etc. so people are finding very difficult to compose correct sentences in Assamese. So more tools to be developed. Though a few useful mobile Apps viz. Sabha, Litikai etc are available in NET, but these are yet to be integrated in many text editors for which people are not able to leverage these facilities. So contact should be made with these Text Editor developer companies to integrate Assamese typing tools with their Text editor.
- As Assamese languages has been allotted 'as' metatag, so the practice of inserting this metatag i.e. lang='as' should be continued to help Search engine, crawlers to recognise Assamese content as Assamese correctly. This would help to prevent Assamese content wrongly recognise as Bengali content. Such small but best practices should greatly improve the nos. of Assamese content in internet.
- Assamese Fonts - Though there are several assamese fonts available nowadays, but a few fonts are found to be not giving correct results. So development of more fonts required.

Kula Saikia , Guwahati

A few small sized groups with 4/5 persons needed to prepare training content for YouTube , develop Assamese font etc.

Ashok Sarma , Guwahati

He enquired that if Assamese languages are allotted fresh code by Unicode in different slot, whether there would be possibility to loss existing content .

Satyajit Nath

There is no possibility to allot separate slot/ codes for Assamese language in future by Unicode Consortium as this is an one time work. so changing of code will never be happened. He cited that in Europe, around 70 nos of languages are using the same code chart i.e. Roman. Later they changed it's chart name to 'Latin' for more inclusiveness. Though the script of these languages looks similar to English scripts , but Unicode avoided to award this Code chart as 'English' which most likely to be not acceptable to other languages viz French. But these languages accepted their Unicode code chart 'Latin' whole heatedly. So he suggested that similar approach may be taken while awarding the Code chart for languages with Assamese, Bengali etc. i.e. Instead of naming it as 'Bengali', they should explore a more acceptable name for all other languages. He further said that Unicode has now exploring to rename this Code chart.

Kuladhar Saikia

A few small groups may be constitute to resolve the issue of recognition of Assamese language by Government of India and Unicode Consortium

Madan Prasad Bezbaruah , Delhi

Active participation from individuals/ communities are most required to resolve these issues.

Tassadaque Hussain, Delhi

There are many precious manuscripts available in National Archive, New Delhi which can be collected by Assam Sahitya Sabha through applications. He further informed that though he tried unsuccessfully to collect the **Treaty of Yandabo** of 1826, but could locate it's subsequent Treaty which was around 15 ft length written in English and other Native languages. It contains many important messages which need to be digitised and made available to public. He also conveyed that National Archive has already digitised several assamese rare books a few of which are more than 300 years old. Govt of India is also offering Grants for digitisation of historical documents to registered NGO/ Societies. The funding amount is upto Rs 10 Lakh per project which interested Society can avail. Assam Prakashan Parishad also has large collections of ancient books which to be digitised. The Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies near Cotton college also has large collections of rare books.

Dr Bipul Kuma Baruah

There are several very important manuscripts in National Archive with historical significance viz. Gomdhat Knowar which were not allowed to be read by British. But he could somehow

be able accessed a few documents on Gomdhar Knowar and later composed a book viz. আকাশ, সাগৰ , গোমধৰ . These manuscript of historical significance need to be digitised and made available to public.

Dibyojit Dutta , Delhi

We may segregate the future activities in following categories viz.

- a. Recognition of Assamese language by Central Government,
- b. Technical issues viz. Unicode, Fonts, Keyboard, Google search engine, Microsoft translation, internet tools, etc.
- c. Crowd sourcing, community participation on entry of Assamese words, training materials etc

For recognition of Assamese language by Govt of India, the services of organization like Assam Association Delhi may be involved by Assam Sahitya Sabha which should not be a difficult task for AAD.

To associate with various technical activities vis. Unicode, font development, keyboard, google translate, Microsoft translate, Grammar Assistant, Word assistant etc, further technical guidance would be helpful . It would be good if a team of around 20 IT experts may be constituted with proper training. In this context, one webinar with Sri Satyajit Nath, USA is expected in the next month of October. Those interested youths are requested to express their willingness to Assam Association Delhi through email / WhatsApp at the earliest.

To improve the crowd sourcing, community contribution etc, few incentive need to be devised to encourage more people to participate. Acknowledgement, recognition to major contributors from Assam Sahitya Sabha can be a game changer.

Also in order to attract new generation to Assamese language, holistic development on art, culture, music also required to attract more people. High end products can able to attract new generation and stress should be given to produce high quality.

Kula Saikia , Guwahati

The recognition /certification have already been introduced by Assam Sahitya Sabha. Already necessary acknowledgement have been conferred to a few colleges contributed building of digital content . Similarly Assam Association Mumbai has been recognised for their online Assamese language course and certificates have been issued to successful students. As part of outreach, recently 90 Nos of songs of Bhupen Hazarika have been translated into Manipuri languages. Similarly several books of Lakhinath Bezbaruah have been translated into other

languages. Already contact has been established with Government of India for recognition of Assamese language.

Mrinalini Khatri , Delhi

The story reading by children should be encouraged and Assamese story books should be made available in schools

As few neighbouring States viz. Tripura, Manipur have been struggling to streamline their native language , they should be supported by Assamese people. Native Tripuris are still using Bengali scripts due to absence of alternative. Though Manipuri scripts has been introduced in the year 2011, but still they have to continue with Bengali scripts due to lack of preparedness. These neighbours should also be assisted to reach their goal.

More new words to be added in Assamese language .

Prof. Binod Khadaria (Vote of Thanks)

Vote of thanks was offered to Sri Kula Saikia for spending his precious time in the long session and sharing many useful thoughts to participants

It was good to see that all participant express their views in positive and constructive ways forgetting previous contention , rather thinking for betterment in future.

The constitution of core team / sub team for various task is most welcome; should be constituted and started activities without delay. He expressed his sincere thanks to all other speakers, participants specially President Assam Association Delhi and the organiser of the event.

The other suggestion received through chatbox are as follows viz

Jyotishman Das: I would like to share with you all that the Department of Assamese (Centre for Assamese Studies), TEZPUR UNIVERSITY has digitized 4000 old Assamese manuscripts, books and rare historical documents under the leadership of Professor Ranjit Kumar Dev Goswami. The complete works of Sankardeva and Madhavadeva is available with us in digital format. Link of the digital archive : <http://www.tezu.ernet.in/casms/archive.php>

Pranami Saikia: মই কব বিচাৰো যে অসমীয়া ভাষাৰ উন্নতিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সংস্কৃতিৰ অৱদান আছে। গতিকে বৰগীত ক বিশ্বদৰবাৰত প্ৰতিষ্ঠিত কৰিব পাৰিলে অসমীয়া ভাষা আৰু ভালদৰে প্ৰতিস্থাপিত হব ।

চৈয়দা জেবীন চাবীৰা শ্বাহ। সভানেত্রী, অসম সাহিত্য সভা উত্তৰ আমেৰিকা শাখা। সকলোলৈ
নমস্কাৰ নিউয়ৰ্কৰ পৰা।

Dr. Shakuntala (Lata) Choudhury from New Jersey. I am a Sr. Director - Data Science for
Healthcare Analytics and was President of Assam Sahitya Sabha North America (2019-2021)

Deepak Bharali: কলিকতাৰ পৰা সকলোলৈ নমস্কাৰ জনাইছোঁ । মই দীপকানন্দ ভৰালি,
"কলকাতা সাহিত্য সভা আৰু কলকাতা অসমীয়া সাংস্কৃতিক সন্থা" ৰ সভাপতি।

Sanjib Bordoloi: Namaskar. I am AVM Sanjib Bordoloi, retired Air Force officer, now settled in
Guwahati

Sankarkrishnadas Das: webradio lokoratnagarbhaa can give platform if anyone wish to go for
traditional storey audio progam

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