

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

41ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF LINGUISTIC SOCIETY OF NEPAL (LSN)

Krishna Prasad Chalise

Chief guest, honorable Shree Ganga Prasad Upreti, Chancellor, Nepal Academy; special guest, Dr. Lava Deo Awasthi, Chairman, Language Commission, Nepal; keynote speaker, Prof. Dr. Scott DeLancey, University of Oregon, US; Dr. Balam Prasad, Head, Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University; former presidents of Linguistic Society of Nepal; distinguished dignitaries and scholars from home and abroad; the valued presenters and participants; media persons; ladies and gentleman.

I feel honored to be here as the President of Linguistic Society of Nepal (LSN). I would like to extend my sincere greetings to you on this promising occasion of 41st Annual Conference of Linguistic Society of Nepal. I feel myself honored to be on the path led by my predecessors.

Since its establishment in 1979, LSN has justified itself to be a successful forum for the advancement of linguistic knowledge in Nepal and promotion of the languages of Nepal. LSN has always raised the language related issues in Nepal to draw the attention of the concerned bodies and played an important role to address the issues. It has also played an important role to shape the language policy of the country.

I think this is the right time to remind the concerned authorities for some linguistic issues most of which have already been raised time and again.

Three decades ago, we had a strong belief that the restoration of democracy in Nepal would bring remarkable changes in the situation of the languages of Nepal. Now, three decades later, we are not at the position to claim that the situation of the minority languages has been substantially changed. The trend of language endangerment does not seem to decrease and several languages are still on the verge of extinction. It is the time to evaluate whether our efforts have been sufficient and we are on the right track.

There are enough instances to prove that language issues are not so much important to the Nepali politics but indeed they should have been. Present linguistic scenario of Nepal demands strong political attention towards the linguistic issues.

The province as the unit of official use of languages is likely to include negligible languages into the official use. If the local levels are regarded as the unit of official use of languages, a larger number of languages could be used for the official purposes.

The promotion of linguistic and cultural harmony is a must because languages are ultimately powerful instruments for nurturing and strengthening social harmony as well. Our constitution has accepted the plurality in language policy that we had been fighting for a long run in the history. Now, we should realize that plurality is our linguistic identity so we have to think 'about my languages, not only about my language'. The statement by Nelson Mandela 'If you talk to a man in the language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.' justifies how it is important to say 'my languages'.

The issue of establishing a Language Academy has not been obsolete. It is important for long term language development and language planning. The role of digital world is amazingly important in shaping the different aspects of globalization. The access of our languages into the digital world is urgent because we are lagging far behind in the race that will affect both the national development and national identity.

We are going to conduct the 12th National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) in 2021 which we expect to bring out some aspects of linguistic situation of Nepal. It is important because its findings will be the most authentic information for the coming 10 years. If there are any distortions in the data, that will mislead us for coming 10 years and more. So, we should be much

conscious about both intentional and unintentional distortion of the data. I realize that the language questions in the questionnaire are slightly vague and confusing and likely to cause unintentional distortions in the census data.

I am thankful to the chief guest, the special guest, the keynote speaker, the former presidents, the life members, the presenters, participants, media persons and well-wishers.

On this occasion, I would like to thank Dr. Balaram Prasain, the Head, faculty members and staff of Central Department of Linguistics for collaboration. Similarly, I would like to thank the executive members of LSN, especially Dr. Karnakhar Khatiwada, the general secretary for constant effort for the preparation of this mega event.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Mr. Bed Prasad Dhakal Mr. Ojesh Rimal, and Mr. Indresh Thakur, who have devoted much of their time to all technical management.

I wish you all a happy and fruitful time in Kathmandu.

Thank you very much.

This Presidential Address was delivered at Inaugural Ceremony of the 41st Annual Conference of the Linguistic Society of Nepal (LSN) at CEDA Hall, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu on 26 November 2020.