

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS  
28<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF LINGUISTIC SOCIETY  
OF NEPAL  
NOVEMBER 26-27, 2007

Prof. Jai Raj Awasthi  
President, LSN

Honorable Chief Guest Dr Kamal K Joshi, Chairman,  
University Grants Commission

Former Presidents of LSN

Distinguished linguists, and guests from home and abroad

LSN Colleagues, media personnel, ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed a matter of great pleasure for me to speak to this august gathering of both linguists and non-linguists and would be linguists. People who have an ardent love and interest in the field of languages would never miss to mark their calendars on November 26-27 every year. We have been convening this meeting on its birth day every year since 1980. Linguists from home and abroad take this forum as a meeting of minds on linguistic matters pertinent to different languages of this region and elsewhere. All the practicing linguists who had taken this opportunity as a starting point of their linguistic journey have now excelled in their academic pursuit. It will not be an exaggeration to say that Linguistic Society of Nepal has encouraged many young academicians to explore the wide horizon of this linguistic diversity. Started by a small group of linguists 27 years ago, the Society has expanded its family now with more than 215 life members and the equal number of annual/ student members. The interest towards the society is ever growing. This has been evident from the number of aspirants to register for this conference. Many of them were kept on waiting list yesterday. On this occasion, I would like

to express my gratitude to my predecessors who had maintained the legacy of the past.

During these years the Society has unfailingly published the Linguistic Journals containing articles from very renowned linguists to the practitioners. This conference brings another memorable issue of the LSN publication as proceedings of the papers that were presented in the last year's LSN and HLS in a new name: *Recent Studies in Nepalese Linguistics (2007)*. The team of editorial board: Prof NK Rai, Prof YP Yadava, Mr BN Regmi and Mr BR Prasain deserve special thanks for their untiring and meticulous work to bring out the volume in your hand.

The theme of the 28th conference is "Endangered Languages". Thus, the conference is very unique in that it is not only dominated by the marginalized and endangered languages of this country but also by the indigenous linguists of all ages- five generations unlike in the past when we were outnumbered by the foreign presenters. The papers on languages such as Rajbanshi, Baram, Meche, Dura, Puma and Kasmiri have crossed the political and geographical boundaries. In addition, the papers cover both theoretical and applied linguistics including some on computational linguistics. The corpus and computational linguistics course inducted last year at the Central Department of Linguistics has started yielding linguistic fruits so early. In this regards, I appreciate the interest shown by the people of young generation towards linguistic studies in Nepal.

The research works carried out in the Departments of English Language Education under faculty of Education has exceeded more than 600 on both theoretical and applied linguistics. The number of students growing every year is overwhelming. Similarly, the researches carried out at the Central Department of Linguistics have unearthed many endangered languages of Nepal. Nonetheless, the effort towards addressing the

languages which are at the verge of extinction has not been put forth by any quarter. The Census report, if taken in 2011, will record the extinction of many languages in this country. However, it is a piece of happy news that I want to share with you today, which used to be one of the issues that I myself raised last year and so did my predecessors in the past, that the government of Nepal is willing to conduct a Linguistic Survey of Nepal. Our neighbors had conducted such surveys long back. The survey proposed will bring out the real status of the languages of this country. It is coincidence that Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA) is also planning to conduct the ELT Survey this year and the work has already been initiated.

It gives me pleasure to mention here that the issue of Nepali as a second language I raised last year has been taken up positively by many NRNs and initiation for the preparation of materials addressing the needs of their children to teach them Nepali embedded with Nepali culture and tradition has already been started. This effort of the NRN will bring a new impetus in the teaching of Nepali to the majority of non-native children studying this language in this country.

I recall the generous support extended to us by many institutions and organizations at this juncture to make this event successful. I, on behalf of LSN, would like to express my sincere gratitude to University Grants Commission, Central Department of Linguistics, TU, and Center for Asian Studies, TU, Little Angels' School System, and National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities, Bhrikuti Academic Publications, Central Department of English, Central Department of Education, Principal's Office, University Campus, CEDA and many more to mention here.

Since this is the second year of the present executive committee and the new committee will be formed soon, I would like to extend a deep sense of appreciation to all the

institutions and people who showed their ever helping hands to keep this Society going on. I also take this opportunity to call upon the energetic young linguists to spare some of their valuable time for this society to see its growth and development in future. We should not forget the legacy of our predecessors who have brought this society in our hands. I hope my colleagues will help it get registered before we hand it over to the new elected body.

There are a few issues that still need to be addressed in order to maintain linguistic harmony in this country.

- As I mentioned earlier, some NRNs are trying to initiate the project of Nepali as a second language for their children living in different parts of the world. However, Nepali as a second language has to be planned and developed for academic purposes. This will require expertise in the field of SLA. Similarly, other languages spoken in this country need special attention from the government for their promotion and development.
- In order to formulate plans and policies regarding the language of this country, we strongly need a Language Academy. LSN and the Central Department of Linguistics had jointly made a proposal to the concerned authority for the formation of such an Academy in the past but our voice seemed to be too low for the authority to listen to. As such, a consolidated effort to this end is the dire need of the time for the people working in the field of linguistics.
- It is essential that we maintain linguistic harmony giving due importance to all the languages spoken in this country. We have to make every one feel proud that he /she speaks a language which has local as well as national importance.

- We have to make the government realize that LSN is a forum of expertise in different languages as such they have to be invited to design courses and materials for mother tongue education as envisaged by the government.

The growing number of participants in the conference and the retiring age of the CEDA hall might have made the participants and presenters a little upset. But we can not imagine a better place within the university premises for a few more years. Therefore, we would like to apologize for the inconvenience you may have in this regard. I quote here what I said last year as the situation has not improved yet. “During these years we spent our treasury in warfare rather than caring for the educational institutions. This hall is an example of the state in which we spent last 27 years. I hope the recently signed comprehensive peace treaty will bring a ray of hope for all the Nepalese people and we would start building a new *Lok Tantra Nepal* by including all the languages, ethnic groups, disadvantaged people, and the people living in the utmost remote geographical areas of the country into the mainstream of development.”

I hope the seven parties would realize the need of the day and become responsible to bring lasting peace and harmony in the country.

I hope that everyone will have fruitful deliberations today and tomorrow.

Thank you all.