

Why am I keynoting?

- I'm a **longtime Wikimedia volunteer contributor**, with experience as content contributor, tool builder, program organizer, and chapter board member.
- I've been following Wikimedia work in India since 2007.
- I've been working for the Wikimedia Foundation *since 2011*, first as grant-maker and then as capacity building program officer, always focused on **emerging communities, including India**. I've *worked extensively with Indian communities, grantees, and affiliates*.

**Am I really going to
cover 20 years of
Wikimedia work in
India in 30 minutes?**



Um, no.

I won't even try.



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But I'll offer some thoughts:

- 1. on the past**
- 2. on inspiring achievements**
- 3. on suggestions for the future**



Observations on the journey so far



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Disclaimer:

I am offering
my own observations,
not hard research.

Other people may see things differently,
and *they may be right.*



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Grassroots beginnings

- Indians have been contributing to Wikipedia since the beginning.
- When additional languages became possible, Indic language Wikipedias were quickly created. The first, I believe, were **Punjabi** and **Odia** Wikipedias (in June 2002, though they were not very active during their first decade), quickly followed by **Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit,** and **Bangla**.

Grassroots beginnings

- **Indic language Wikipedias** faced extra challenges
- A common profile of Indian Wikipedia contributors then was the **university-educated middle-class male professional contributing in English.**
- The **Foundation** was nothing like what you know today.
- Wikimedia Commons gave birth to the **primarily-Commons contributor.**
- **WikiConference India 2011** in Mumbai



Then it got complicated

- Formalized incorporation (**Wikimedia India** chapter)
- Strategy process, **India Catalyst Program**
- Poor timing, bad luck, overambitious plans, *catastrophic* mistake by WMF
- Alienation, resentment, envy, and worse
- Chapter struggles, some mismanagement, eventual shutdown.
- (there is a lot of complex history, and I am happy to talk about it openly and answer questions, elsewhere. Feel free to contact me.)



Decentralization!

- India may be *too large, diverse, and complex* for a single Wikimedia entity.
- **Decentralization** (thank to the **user group** model) clearly works and is superior for smaller communities. (Even with large projects, e.g. WikiConference India 2016 in Chandigarh)
- There is still a need for **national-level coordination and programming**
 - CIS-A2K is one tool, but there is probably room for another!



The communities

- Passionate
- Generous
- Innovative
- Flexible
- Proud
- Hospitable
- ...
- but I also saw:

I miss India so very much!

The communities

- India Time ;)
- In-fighting, pettiness
- Envy of colleagues
- Lack of initiative (*alongside* initiative in other things)
- Bigotry towards fellow volunteers
 - Gender
 - Caste (this even bleeds onto the on-wiki content sometime)
 - Religion
 - Wiki-age!

"the wounds from a friend can be trusted."
--The Hebrew Bible, Proverbs 27:6



Inspiring, Innovative India



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Inspiration from India

- Wikipedia and Wikisource **CD/DVDs**
- **Language** selectors and input methods
- **Wikisource** gadgets, OCR tools, Internet Archive Tool
- Fantastic comprehensive **Tamil state government** partnerships
- **Odia state government** social media content release
- [India TechCom](#) and [Mediawiki UG](#)
- [Wiki Loves Food](#) (*have I mentioned I miss India?*)
- [Wiki Loves Butterfly](#)

I have offered these examples to many other communities around the world!



Inspiration from India

I have offered these examples to many other communities around the world!

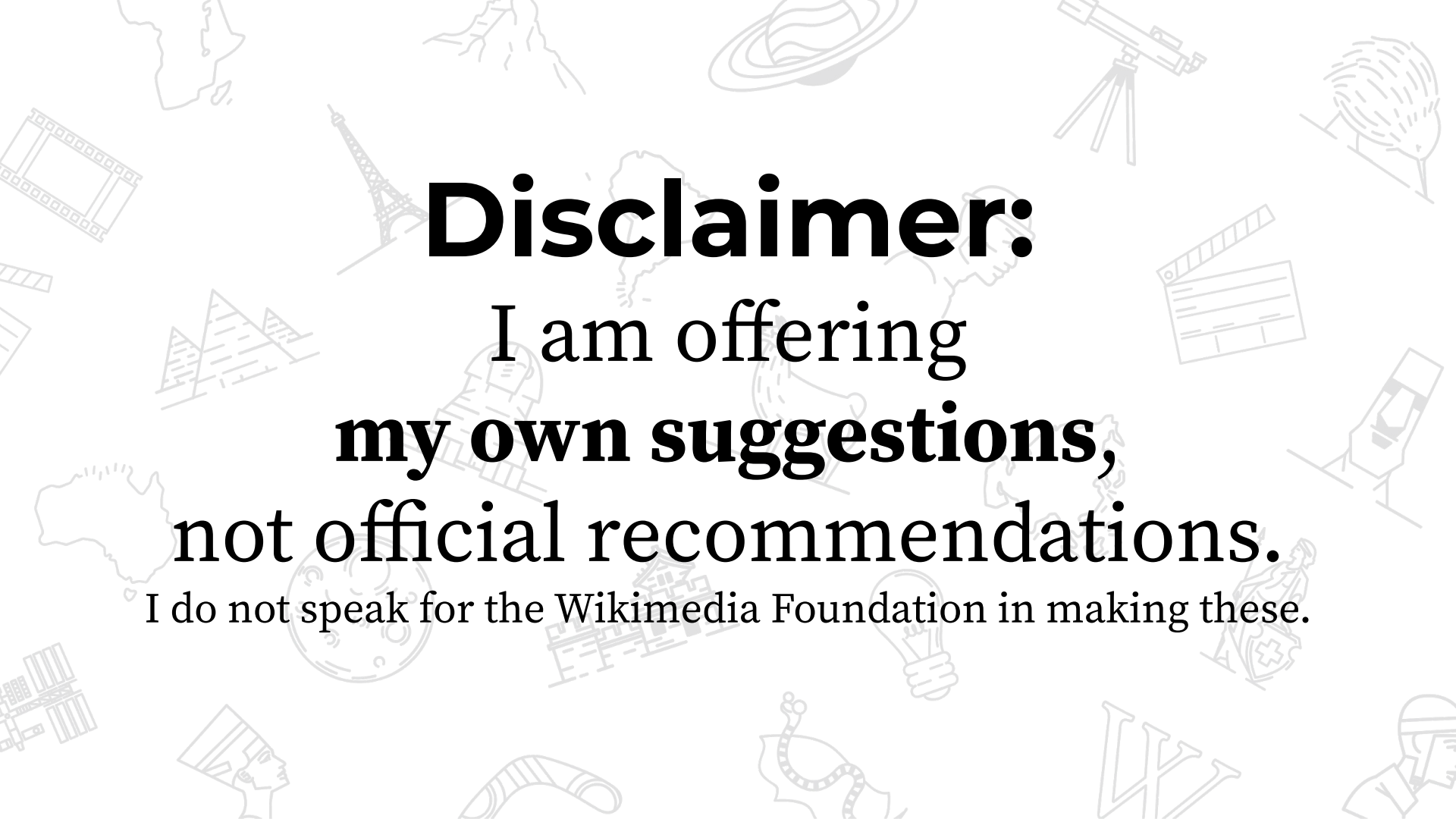
- **Wikidata** *applications* ([Wikidata Skill-share](#); [One Million Labels](#); mass ingestions, [WikiProject India](#); [WikiProject Kerala](#), [West Bengal](#); [WikiProject India COVID-19 task force](#))
- **Lexeme**, pronunciations (Bangla!), the **bodh** tool
 - Together, Wikidata + Lexeme work has *tremendous potential* for **Abstract Wikipedia** and even an eventual **Spoken Abstract Wikipedia!**



Suggestions for the future



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Disclaimer:
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not official recommendations.

I do not speak for the Wikimedia Foundation in making these.

Asaf's suggestions

Platforms and programs

- Continue being a **voice for projects important in India** and (rightly or wrongly) deemed less important in much of the rest of the movement (e.g. Wikisource)
- **Get** (your peers) **into Lexeme** -- *it's what Wiktionary always should have been. It's ready for innovation and volunteer development.*
- **Get into Abstract Wikipedia** *as soon as is practical (today for programmers, in a couple of years for non-programmers, who can focus on contribute to Lexeme for now, which will serve AW as well.*

Asaf's suggestions

Humans and Norms

- Invest in **capacity building** (and beat the *language* barrier)
- Be as **generous** *across communities* as you are *within your community*
- Consider creating a cross-community *informal* **deliberative or planning body** that *could* steer national-level activity.
- **Transcend the meaner norms surrounding you:** sexism, casteism, religious bigotry, even wiki-"seniority".

In conclusion...



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The road goes ever on

- On balance, despite the setbacks, the story of Wikimedia in India is a *tremendously inspiring* narrative of *overcoming obstacles* and *sharing free knowledge* with passion and dedication.
- The future is **bright**: infrastructure, connectivity, Internet literacy are all improving, and we are **only beginning** to fulfill the **vast potential** of the Wikimedia Mission in India!

Questions?

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THANK YOU

Keep in touch!

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