TAMIL WIKIPEDIA

A STUDY OF CHALLENGES AND POTENTIALS IN RELATION TO SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE TAMIL COMMUNITY

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Tamil Community

- Native Regions:
  - Tamil Nadu state of India
  - Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka

- Other Countries:
  - Colonial Period Migrations
    - Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa and some others
  - Recent Migration
    - UK, USA, Canada, Australia and Other European Countries

- Population:
  - approx. 70 million
Tamil Community

Language

- Belongs to Dravidian Family of Languages
- One of the Oldest Living Language of the World
- 19th Most Spoken Language in the World
- Literature and Grammatical Works spanning more than 2000+ Years
Tamil Community

Socio-Cultural Background

- Relatively Independent and Unique Early Culture
- Religious and Cultural Influence from North
- Sanskrit Domination
- Caldwell’s Contribution
- Tamil Nationalism
- Colonial Rule and English
- Rapid Development and Tamil
- Post-Independence and Globalization

Robert Caldwell, Father of Dravidian Linguistics

E. V. Ramasami, Architect of the self respect movement

Maraimalai Adigal, Father of Pure Tamil Movement
Tamil Wikipedia

Current Status

- Completed of 6 ½ years.
- More than 23,000 Articles
- 19,200 Registered Users
- 50,000 – 95,000 Views/day
- 85 Active Contributors (May 2010)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Database</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>53</td>
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<td>Rank (India)</td>
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<td>Top</td>
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<td>hi (35k)</td>
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Tamil Wikipedia

Challenges and Socio-Cultural Background

- Contributor Participation
  - Low Level of Participation
    - Required Technology not Available or not Affordable
    - Not Familiar with Relevant Tools
    - Many Don’t Know about Tamil Wikipedia
    - Socio-Cultural Reasons
  - Imbalance in Geographic Distribution
    - Low Level of Participation from Native Regions.
Challenges and Socio-Cultural Background

- Imbalance in Geographic Distribution of Contributors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Population (%)</th>
<th>Users (%)</th>
<th>Edits (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>24.1</td>
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<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Challenges and Socio-Cultural Background

- Imbalance in Geographic Distribution of Contributors

**Population**
- India: 94.3%
- Sri Lanka: 4.3%
- Others: 1.4%

**Users**
- India: 41.0%
- Sri Lanka: 43.6%
- Others: 15.4%

**User Edits**
- India: 64.7%
- Sri Lanka: 24.1%
- Others: 11.2%
Challenges and Socio-Cultural Background

- Language Issues
  - Terminology & Its Social Significance
    - Lack of Terms for New Concepts and Things
    - Tendency to Avoid Foreign Terms
    - Search for Pure Tamil Terms
    - Controversies
Challenges and Socio-Cultural Background

- Language Issues
  - Geographically Separated groups and Language
    - Tamil Nadu Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil
      - General Vocabulary Differences
      - Differences in Technical Terms
      - Differences in Transliterating English Words
Meeting the Challenges

- Handling Language Issues
- Efforts to Improve Contributor Participation
- Popularizing Tamil Wikipedia
- Responses to Government Initiatives
Meeting the Challenges

- Handling Language Issues
  - General Terminology Issues
    - Extensive Discussions
    - Terminology Help Pages
    - User Assistance
    - Developing Wiktionary
  - Issues related to Geographically Separated Groups
    - Agreement
    - Using Redirect Facility
Meeting the Challenges

- Efforts to Improve Contributor Participation
  - Popularizing Tamil Wikipedia
    - Blogs and Online Medias
    - Print Media
    - Books
    - Seminars and other Similar programs
    - Radio
  - Familiarization
    - Workshops
Meeting the Challenges

- Efforts to Improve Contributor Participation - Workshops

News about Wiki workshop in a local news paper

User Ravi explaining a point in a workshop

Workshop in Bangaluru. User Sundar with participants

User Prof. V. K. Introducing Tamil Wikipedia

User Kalaiarasi introducing Tamil Wikipedia to a group of participants in Norway
Meeting the Challenges

- Government Initiatives
  - Article Competition
    - Good Opportunity to Introduce Tamil Wikipedia to Large Number of Potential Contributors
    - Starting Point to Build Good Relationship with Government
Meeting the Challenges

Government Initiatives - Article Competition

- Effort to increase Tamil content in Wikipedia

News item in a popular news paper about article competition

- The poster published by Tamil Nadu government for announcing the article competition

Secretary to the Ministry of Information releasing the poster in a press conference

- A first prize winner receiving her prize from the deputy Chief Minister

- A second prize winner receiving his prize
Tamil Wikipedia

Meeting the Challenges

- Government Initiatives – Seminars & Workshops

A Panel discussion on Blogs and Wikipedia

User Theni M. Subramani presenting a paper on Tamil Wikipedia

Tamil Wikipedia users in the exhibition stall

Tamil Wikipedia workshop stall in the exhibition
Meeting the Challenges

- Developing Sister Wikipedia Projects
  - Wiktionary
  - Wikisource
  - Wikinews
Potentials

- **Role as Encyclopedia**
  - Producing an encyclopedia in traditional way (Print form) would be very costly and time consuming.
  - Publishing a Tamil Encyclopedia and revising it at regular interval is almost impossible.
  - Wikipedia has potential for overcoming such problems and provide an opportunity to create a comprehensive Encyclopedia.
Tamil Wikipedia

Potentials

- Role Beyond its Use as an Encyclopedia
  - Co-ordination Platform for the Use and Standardization of Terminology.
  - Facilitates Co-ordination between Various community Groups.
  - Helping to Widen Knowledge Domain.
  - Powerful Medium for Knowledge Transfer and Distribution.
Future Plans

- Continuation of the Following:
  - Increasing number of useful articles
  - Increasing Useful Content
  - Improving the quality in terms of completeness, accuracy, verifiability and Images

- Campaigns to Increase the Contributor Participation

- Bringing in Suitable Technology to Make Contribution Easy