Why Not All Wikipedias Are Equal:
My Experiences On English And Telugu Wikipedias

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Presentation at
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English and Telugu...

- **English**
  - Spoken by 500 million to 1.8 billion people
  - Ranks # 1 or 2 by total speaker population
  - Ranks # 3 by native speaker population
  - Ranks # 1 by Wikipedia Article Count

- **Telugu**
  - Spoken by 74 million native speakers
  - Ranks # 14 by speaker population
  - Ranks # 49 by Wikipedia Article Count
This discrepancy is being acknowledged...

- Sue’s talk yesterday on the goal of smaller Wikipedias reaching 1,20,000 articles
- Gerard’s talk just now on technical issues
- Arto’s panel next on minority languages
- Jimbo’s plenary session tomorrow on small Wikipedias
- So, why my talk?
  - A middle-of-the-road Wikipedia illustration
  - An Indian contributor’s perspective
My Presence on English and Telugu Wikipedias...

• English
  – Registered on 30 April 2005
  – Became a Sysop: Effective 7 December 2005
  – Have garnered ~12k edits
  – Rank ~# 3400 by edit count

• Telugu
  – First edited on 13 October 2005
  – Have garnered ~350 edits
  – Rank ~# 50 by edit count

• Relatively inactive from April 2006
Commonly cited reasons...

• ...do not seem to stand scrutiny
  – The native speaker population? Sizeable
  – Internet penetration? India is the 4\textsuperscript{th} largest
  – Literacy? Probably more Indians edit English Wikipedia than Indian language Wikipedias
  – Rendering? Is being addressed effectively, thanks to the likes of Gerard

• What else may explain this?
  – Personal viewpoints, yet, policy implications
**Awareness**

- Higher awareness of English Wikipedia
  - Thanks to Google!
- Lower awareness of Indian language Wikipedias
  - Most IT literate Indians are literate in English
    - Few Indians search Google in local languages
  - Smaller article base in Indian languages
    - Local language search does not give good results
  - Chicken-and-Egg Problem
- Yet, awareness of even English Wikipedia at a limited level
  - Most people access but do not know they can edit
  - Opportunity for Indian language Wikipedias? Challenge?
How does one build a critical mass?

• Advocacy through academies?
  – Time- and effort-intensive
  – Long gestation periods

• Contests and PR
  – Help capture mind share
  – Call for a substantial existing user base to ensure compliance with Wikipedia policies

• Wikipedia in schools/ colleges as part of curriculum
  – Hand-holding required
  – Issues with Wikipedia not being censored
Issues...

• How do you seed initial interest?
• What are the implications of hand-holding?
• The Question of Process-led Content...
  – The old debate between process and content
  – Any rules of thumb?
    • Size and Modus Operandi
• Best Practices transfer?
  – The Question of Culture
The Dangers of Institutionalization...

• A: “This is how it is done on English Wikipedia.”
B: “This is the Telugu Wikipedia.”
• Would the % support used to determine consensus in English Wikipedia RfA make sense in a Telugu Wikipedia?
• Images policy – A world of difference
• Way forward?: Beyond Chapters and towards SIGs?
Thank you