

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

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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<sup>th</sup> 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**

