

Tamil Wikipedia touches a new high



விக்கிப்பீடியா
கட்டற்ற கலைக்களஞ்சியம்

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As all might know, every developed language needs an encyclopaedia in order to sustain its existence. As far as Tamil is concerned, the 'Tamil Encyclopaedia' created under the leadership of Periyasamy Thooran and published in 1954 is its magnum opus. Though some department-specific encyclopaedias were published thereafter, they were not worth their salt. Just as technology has come to the rescue of the differently abled, creating avenues for them, who were unable to even douse their legs in the seawater lashing the seashore, so the internet technology has laid a long and lush avenue called Wikipedia.

Wikipedia has created opportunities for all languages in the world to design on their own their own encyclopaedia. Who administers it? Is it any Government? Or some private entity? Neither of them

because no government or organisation has created or creates a language.

Wikipedia is an encyclopaedia created by the people, of the people and for the people. So, its structure and content are not inclined towards any government, any party or any outfit for that matter. It is a portal to the world wherein everything is written as it is, camouflaging nothing.

Tamil and Wikipedia

Wikipedia has been created in 318 languages all over the world. In keeping with the spirit of Tamil poet Bharathi's line, "To educate a poor person is tantamount to crores of sacred activities," Wikipedia has been created in several languages on the basis of voluntary knowledge-sharing by native users of the languages. Tamil Wikipedia stands a testimony to the truth that there are constructive and positive technology-savvy users also in plenty as against the mushrooming netizens squaring off with one another on the political, film, regional, religious and communal lines.

Yes. Tamil Wikipedia has touched a new milestone, crossing the mark of 1.50 lakh Tamil articles published in the domain. The chances of compiling them into books and publishing them are, though, remote. That is the present state of the Tamil Wikipedia which, however, stands at the third slot among the Indian languages and at the 61st position among the global languages in terms of the number of articles published.

It is noteworthy that Hindi Wikipedia has 1.54 lakh articles and Tamil Wikipedia 1.50 lakh. In all, there are 4.12 crore words in the Tamil articles for which 400 serial contributors have sweated it out. Tamil Wikipedia has been updated about 36 lakh times.

Wikipedia was founded by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger in 2001. But Tamil Wikipedia was created by some unknown person on Sept. 30, 2003 and developed later by several people including

Sri Lankan Tamil E. Mayooranathan. Within two years of inception, 2000 articles were published. The number expanded to one lakh on May 8, 2017 and now Tamil Wikipedia boasts 1.5 lakh articles covering all sectors including history, art, literature, science, general knowledge and so on and so forth. Thanks to the Wikipedia training sessions conducted in several colleges across Tamil Nadu, students too have begun contributing to the subsidiary schemes of Wikipedia. Besides, countless teachers are voluntarily engaged in updating the articles in the domain. As errors are rectified instantly the moment they are pointed out, Wikipedia remains a sustainable, vibrant and dynamic domain.

Modus operandi and influence

Wikipedia has a multi-media design, search engine facility and categorization. Apart from them, its main distinguishing feature is that the portal is open to anyone who has something to contribute. The general perception that none of the writers for Wikipedia is an expert is erroneous and superficial. In fact, it has the capability of being developed by anyone and is not at all random, arbitrary and unilateral

Wikipedia being dynamic and open to corrections and changes, having its own elaborate policies and guidelines in place, every minute errors are rectified and articles not up to the mark removed. Proper dialogue and long reviews held often help in upgrading the portal's standard. There is also a global monitoring committee quite active in stalling attempts to plant slandering and smear campaign into the domain. The number of hands that catch hold of this digital encyclopaedia kept alive and kicking by a multitude of faceless netizens is certainly multiple times the number of hands reached out to by physical copies of encyclopaedia designed by hundreds of experts.

It is a victory for the volunteers engaged in development of Tamil Wikipedia that several encyclopaedias including the Tamil Wiki are using it.

The Tamil society has recognized the joint efforts that have gone into making of this Tamil Wikipedia by conducting contests on the Tamil portal at the world Tamil classical language conference in 2010. Way back in 2016, the data of certain Tamil Nadu government departments were made public and converted into articles in Tamil Wikipedia. In 2019, Tamil Wikipedia won the Vengai Project Essay Contest jointly organized by Wikimedia Foundation and Google in India.

Now after reaching the mark of 1.5 lakh articles, Tamil Wikipedia has started moving towards the next milestone of two lakh articles. This is not only victory for 20 years of labour and perseverance but also an extension of the 2000-year-long rich and glorious Tamil literary tradition.

Translated by V.Mariappan.