

## ■ I ADMIRE

Today, Wikipedia is a community leader which has solutions to all the problems of the world

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*WHERE knowledge is free, into that heaven of freedom, my father,  
Let my country awake...*

I remember these famous words from Rabindranath Tagore, whenever I think of Wikipedia that has connected the whole world in the form of a knowledge community. What's more, Wikipedia itself is run as a community effort. It is a community project whose end result is an encyclopedia having 7.4 million articles in 253 languages, 1.8 million of which are in the English edition. It has steadily risen in popularity since its inception and currently ranks among the top 10 most-visited websites worldwide.

The statistics is mind boggling. Everyday hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world make tens of thousands of edits and create thousands of new articles to enhance the knowledge held by the Wikipedia encyclopedia. It can be edited and read by people of all ages and cultural and social backgrounds, who have access to the internet. A large, diverse editor base also provides access and breadth on subject matter that is otherwise inaccessible or little documented. Wikipedia receives between 10,000 and 30,000 page requests per second, depending on time of day.

We are increasingly turning to Wikipedia for research and information on almost every topic from our children's school projects, to tips on parenting, technology to cross checking the medication given by our doctor to law to management strategies, why, even to spiritual gyan! Wikipedia's content is being used in academic studies, books, conferences and court cases.

What impressed me most was that Wikipedia has been conceived by the nonprofit Wikimedia Foundation, which has created an entire family of free-content projects. The functions of the Wikimedia Foundation are executed almost entirely by volunteers.

I read recently that Wikimedia Foundation has less than 10 employees! They have an International Advisory board of experts who give the Foundation meaningful help on a regular basis in many different areas.

What makes Wikipedia an amazing experience is:

Knowledge creation and sharing comes free in a world driven by the profit motive.

It took less than two million dollars of funding to create a big global impact!

What took Britannica so many years has been achieved in a unbelievably short span of time, by the power of collaboration amongst the Wiki user fraternity.

It is a great example of the strength of open sharing and yet maintaining the purity of content.

In contrast, we put in so many controls and information security policies in place in organisations and are unable to come up with a portal of the calibre of Wikipedia, despite the availability of dedicated resources, finances or people. Ten employees, two million dollars, a sea of volunteers and a world of knowledge. Hats off, Wikipedia!

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