

Hear Sanskrit, Speak Sanskrit and Blog Sanskrit

Ever wondered what would a bunch of students of Indian origin from various US Universities like to do when they come together on an online forum? "Bring out an online Sanskrit magazine" would have been the least of your guesses!

But that is precisely what an online network of students, faculty and alumni from various Universities have done. Under the banner of "Campus Samskritam Network", members from MIT, UMD, CMU, UPitt, PSU, UPenn, Caltech, Purdue and so on, are bringing out an online Sanskrit magazine. Hosted on the "www.speaksanskrit.org" website, the "webzine" - as they call it- is aptly named "Vishvavani" (the voice or the language of the world) fitting well into the motto of the group "rachayema samskrutabhuvanam". At first glance, the motto translates to "We shall create a Sanskrit world." However, since the word 'samskrita' means refined, this phrase can also mean "We shall create a refined world" !

Last week, the third issue of Vishvavani was released, and it features a wide range of topics. From an article on ancient Indian mathematics by Prabha Mandyam ,(Ph.D. student at Caltech) , to another on Swami Vivekananda by Harichandan Mantripragada, (Ph.D. student at Carnegie Mellon University), and onto a travelogue by Dr. Jyotsna Kalavar (Associate Professor at Penn State University). Beyond the articles, this webzine is enriched by a subhashitam (wise saying) and even a Sanskrit crossword puzzle. Sowmya Joisa and Avinash Varna, editors of the magazine say that even though it is not the first online Sanskrit magazine, it is currently the only active one available online. The group has been inspired by the first online Sanskrit magazine "apoorvavani" which is not active anymore, and by a monthly print magazine " sambhashana sandesha" - both brought out by Samskrita Bharati . In addition to a document format uploaded on the web, the contents of the magazine are also published on a blog to make it easier for readers to comment on and give feedback

In the past two years, blogging in Sanskrit has emerged as a popular online activity contributing to and providing growing evidence of the popularity of the language. While some like "kalidasa"- maintained by Ajit Krishnan, a software engineer at Microsoft Seattle- cover a wide variety of topics, some like "learnsanskrit" maintained by Himanshu Pota from Australia focus on specific topics such as teaching Sanskrit, Sanskrit songs, grammar, words, wise sayings and so on. "Even though the Sanskrit blogging community is not as big as for other languages, we try to be in touch with each other, encourage each other and hope to grow as a group" says Ajit Krishnan whose blog has seen more than 200 posts and 3000 hits so far. Ajit also hopes that in future his blog will attract more youth and plans to add more multi-media resources, movie reviews, and feature other contemporary topics.

The common link for many bloggers and students at CSN appears to be Samskrita-Bharati (SB) , a non-profit organization spearheading the speak-Sanskrit movement in India, USA and elsewhere. Even though the web-based Sanskrit activities in USA have increased a lot in the past two or three years, SB USA itself has been active for almost ten years. The organization is all set to hold its fifth Annual Meeting for Volunteers in Maryland during the March 22-23 weekend, where over 30 volunteers from about 15 cities across the US are expected to participate. The meeting will be attended by Sri Krishna Shastry, one of the founders of SB , who will also be giving a talk at the University of Pennsylvania on March 26th, and will subsequently be attending some Sanskrit related events in New Jersey and New York.

For those unfamiliar with the rising "Speak Sanskrit" movement, it may sound a bit quaint. However, ask a Sanskrit aficionado, and the future of spoken Sanskrit appears extremely promising. When asked why blog in Sanskrit when it is not his mother tongue, Ajit replied, once again in Sanskrit - "It is fast becoming my mother tongue"

For More Info:

Vishvavani home page : www.speaksanskrit.org/vishvavani

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Partial List of Sanskrit Blogs: <http://www.speaksanskrit.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=388>

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