

# Indianism:

## The Ex-Centric And The Normative

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Indianism refers to a word or phrase which is characteristic of Indian English. Indianism sometimes creates serious issues for multinational companies, especially when they deal with international customers.

The term 'Indianism' is generally understood to mean perceived deviations from standard usages of English, both Indian and foreign. These usages occupy the margins of educated speech and writing, and have come to be regarded as 'incorrect' or 'sub-standard'. But notions of correctness have changed. It is now well enough known that there is no gold standard of correctness that can be asserted with logical or grammatical certitude. There is no word, phrase, or sentence structure that is inherently 'right'. 'Margins' in this context must then, be seen as a cultural construct in relation to some privileged 'centre' which turns out to be the position occupied by the 'ruling class' of language users.

Indianism sometimes creates serious issues for multinational companies, especially when they deal with international customers. The poor sentence structure and the inadequate grammar of the Indian employee often result in miscommunication and consequent confusion. It is a common feature of recruitments that

faultless communication in English is a prerequisite for customer service-related jobs. But once they have been recruited, many of them are identified as frequent users of Indianism. Consequently a lot of time, effort and resources have to be invested to enable them to unlearn Indianism and communicate impressively like native English speakers. At present there are scientific and automated assessments of Indianisms which can considerably lower the possibility of misfits getting selected or confirmed.

The main reasons attributed to the prevalence of Indianism among the educated Indian youth are:

- Mother tongue influence – the majority of Indians instinctively think in the mother tongue and then translate it into English. Mother tongue is their comfort zone, and they evade opportunities to speak or write English.
- Lack of exposure to English -- Most of the Indian students study English only to pass the examination at high school level.
- Diffidence – inability to speak English at length due to the fear of committing grammatical errors.

**Given below are a few situations in which Indianisms are conspicuous:**

### I. At Home: Self-introduction While Receiving a Guest

"*Myself* Rajesh Khanna. (I am Rajesh Khanna)



My parents *are no more*. (passed away/on, are dead)

Sunil, my *real brother* (brother), is a professional *cooker*. (cook)

His *better half* (wife) is a teacher. She *belongs to* Kannur. (is from)

They are *issueless*. (have no children)

*I and Tess are a newly married* couple. (Tess and I got married recently/are newlyweds)

Ours was a *love marriage*. (love match)

My sister Meera's *would be* (prospective husband) is a MP (an MP).

Their *marriage* (wedding) has been scheduled for July but it may be *pre-poned* (advanced) to May.

This is my wife's *cousin*

*sister* (cousin). She is *carrying*. (expecting /going to have a baby)

My *co-brother* (brother-in-law) is into the business of household goods like cots (beds), mixies (mixers), settees etc."

### II My Conveyance

"I go to *the* (to college) college *in car* (by car), but to church *by walk*. (on foot)

We are having (have) a new BMW which cost 1.1 crores. (11 million)

*Previous to* (prior to/ before) this we had an Audi which cost only 45 lakhs. (4.5 million)

One advantage of a big car is a spacious *dicky*. (boot/trunk)

Years ago, when I was a student, I used a *two-wheeler*. (a bike / scooter)

Once my tyre had a puncture and there was no *stepney*. (spare tyre)

The problem occurred at a busy *petrol bunk*. (service station)

*Today night* (tonight) I am off to Bengaluru for a week.

My purpose is to *discuss about* (discuss) a *tie-up* (partnership) with IBM.

I have asked my wife to *kindly adjust* (make do)."

### III At the College

"I am Kamal Raj, *applicant* (an applicant) for



B.Tech in EEE."

"You are from?"  
(Where are you from?)

"Chennai, sir."

"Which school did you pass *Plus Two* from?"  
(Class XII / Higher Secondary)

"St Joseph's, Saidapet, sir. In my class I was the *topper* (highest achiever/ top scorer)."

"I am an *alumni* (alumnus) of the school."

"Oh, great! When did you *pass out* (complete/ finish your studies/graduate) from our school, sir?"  
"In 1990."

"Sir, see the marklist. In Maths I have *cent percent* (hundred percent)."

"Good student! Incidentally, can you define a good student?"

"Sorry, sir, I am not getting you. (I don't get you/ I don't understand) Could you please *repeat* it once *again*? (repeat).... According to me (In my opinion/ I think) a good student should be systematic and target-oriented. Sir, will the professors here *cover their portions*

(cover the syllabus/ finish the portions) early enough?"

"Oh, yes. But they never encourage *mugging up* / *by hearting*. (memorizing/ learning by heart) Any more *doubts*?" (questions)

"Sir, I cannot afford the fees of Rs 75,000 a year. (a year) Should I pay the tuition in one instalment?"

"No. There is *facility* (provision) for *remitting* (payment) in bimonthly instalments."

"Thank you, sir. Please do *the needful*." (do whatever is necessary)

"Do one thing. *Fill up* (fill in) the form soon."

When it is done, I will give you a *chit* (a note) to the *HoD of the Dept.*" (Head of the Dept/ HoD)

#### IV At the Office

"I am Mr *Madhu Sharma* (Madhu Sharma) from *Bikaner branch* (the Bikaner branch). Could you put me through to the MD?"

"Sorry, *office* (the office) is closed today, and the MD is out of station (out of town). He may come by 4.30 or 5.00. If you enter through the backside (back – backside means buttocks) you can meet him first."

"I am the MLA's second cousin. Hope there will be special consideration for the MLA's *people*?" (friends and relatives).

"Not sure. The MD is very strict even in *small small* (minor) matters. He knows the details of all employees, even their *biodata* (C.V./resumé). If any staffer wants to *avail of* (avail himself of) *five leaves* (leave for five days) he has to apply 2 (two)



weeks in advance. When we go to his cabin, we have to leave the *foot-wears* (footwear) outside. He will *fire us* (get angry/be furious) if we use *chappals* (sandals) during office hours. He takes *feedbacks* (feedback) about us in *every month* (every month). But there has been no problem for me *till date* (to date). As you know, the company is struggling hard to *pull on.*" (pull through).

## V At the Public Park

"Good afternoon, sir. You *are looking* (look) very cheerful today. The *nature* (nature) also looks quite pleasant here. But it is *very very* (extremely/very) hot outside."

"May I know *who are you?*" (who you are)

"Sir, you *must be knowing* (must know) me. I was your busmate five years ago."

"What is *your good name?*" (your name)

"I am Deepak Banerji of Navodaya School, Howrah, being transferred to Behala."

"When are you *shifting?*" (moving)

"Probably *on the next*



*Friday.*" (next Friday).

"I *am hearing* (hear) that there will be a hartal on Friday."

"*Every other days* (every other day) there is a hartal or a bandh. May I use your mobile to call the 'S.I.?'"

"Certainly. *Here is it.*" (Here you are)

"Sorry, the line *is engaged.*" (is busy)

## VI At the Restaurant

"Hotel South Park is my favourite eatery; even their *cool drinks* (cold drinks) are really delicious.

If you *order for* (order) a cutlet, you get it in no time.

Even *pukka non vegs* (genuine non-vegetarians) like the flavour of their chilli gobi.

During the Onam sea-

son they serve rice on a *dining-leaf*. (banana leaf)

We eat *slowly slowly* discussing *this thing and that thing* (all sort of things).

They do not permit *wet parties*. (Liquor is prohibited there.)

And *desert* (dessert, dɪ'zɜ:t, pron: dɪ'zert) is another forte of South Park."

"*By the bye* (By the by) is it a hotel providing bed and board, or just a restaurant?"

"Sorry, it is a restaurant. *Today morning* (This morning) I didn't have even my *bed coffee* (morning coffee). Now I have ordered a '*without coffee.*' (diet coffee)

"*What about* (How about) a high tea tomorrow?"

"Certainly."

## The Term "T-shirt"

"T-shirt" got its name from its shape resembling the letter "T". F. Scott Fitzgerald was reportedly the first person to use the term "T-shirt" in print in 1920, when the main character in his novel *This Side of Paradise* brings a T-shirt with him to college.



VII Pronunciation

• Doubling of consonants			
Word	Phonetic Transcription	Native English	Pronunciation Indian
butter water summary winnow	`b^tə `wɔ:tə `s^məri `wlnəʊ	bu'te wotr sumari winoe	butterr watter sammarry `winno
• Weak vowels pronounced like full vowels:			
cushion women photocopy alumni	kʊʃn `wɪmɪn 'fəʊtəʊkəpi ə'lʌmnəɪ	kushen wimin 'fowtowkopi alumnai	kushian wem'en phottocopy aloomini
• The letter 'r' is markedly pronounced:			
chart certain hourly	tʃɑ:t `sɜ:tn/'sɜ:rtɪn 'aʊəli	kshaat setten/sernten ouvely	chaart sertten averly
• Little difference between 'v' and 'w':			
van verge wish wine	væn vɜ:d: wɪʃ wain	vaan v'eg wish wain	vaan verge vish vine
• Confusion regarding the letter 'g'			
target pedagogy	'tɑ:ɡɪt 'pedəɡɒdʒi	taagit pedegoji	tarjet pedagogi
• Words ending in 'cious'			
auspicious gracious malicious prestigious	ɔ:'spɪʃəs 'ɡreɪʃəs mə'liʃəs pre'stɪdʒəs	auspishes graishes melishes prestijes	ospeeshious greyshious maleeshious presteegious
• Diversified			
special college divorce flower vase project suite food	'speʃl 'kɒlɪdʒ dɪ'vɔ:s vɑ:z 'prɒdʒekt swi:t fu:d	speshel kollij divoce vaaz prauject sweet fo'od	speshial kollaige daivors /daivers vace prejekt soot/ suit fud

**VIII Grammar**

"I want to see "Three Idiots" once again. I *have seen* (saw) that cinema (movie/film) first in 2015."

"What time/When *you are leaving?* (are you leaving?) I *am having* (have) a problem, otherwise I would have given you a *company* (joined you). My left leg is *paining.*" (is aching)

"*You people* have to be more careful." (You)

"What is that?"

"A novel *too* interesting. (very/ really) Incidentally, *few* (a few) *faculties* (faculty members) of your college are yet to return the library books."

" My son Raj started a book stall *in the last month.* (last month) He finds it quite hard to make *his ends meet.*"(make ends meet/ both ends meet).

"He once gave me *one* (a) kerchief as a *momento.* (memento) Where is he *put up?*" (where does he stay)

"Raj *is staying* (has been staying ) at Sarjapur *for an year.*" (a year)

"But now Raj is leaving, *no?* (isn't he?) His wife doesn't like the flat, *isn't it?* (does she?)

"There is another reason. An accident occurred there *two three* ( a couple of) weeks ago, when Raj

was rushing to the *departmental store.*" (department store)

**IX Usage - An Advertisement**

A smart, god-fearing, *foreign-returned,* affluent widower, *35 years of age* (aged 35) 170 cm *high* (tall), *wheatish* (light brown) *clean habits,* *no encumbrance,* is on the lookout for a suitable match. *English-knowing* ladies of *white colour* ( fair complexion) may *reply back* (reply) in a week. Brokers are *kindly* requested *not to interfere.* (Brokers excuse ).

**X Miscellaneous**

<b>Indianism</b>	<b>British English</b>	<b>Indianism</b>	<b>British English</b>
<i>alphabets</i> (of a language)	<i>letters</i> (of the alphabet)	<i>put up a file</i>	<i>present / submit</i>
<i>allopathy medicine</i> <i>cover(n)</i>	western medicine envelope	<i>return back</i> <i>redressal</i>	return redress
<i>cooling glass</i>	dark glasses	<i>sit-out</i> (n)	front parlour
<i>cut-piece</i>	bit	<i>a snap</i>	a photograph
<i>cut the queue</i>	jump the queue	<i>Standard IV</i>	Class / Grade IV
<i>every nook and corner</i>	every nook	<i>systems</i>	computers/terminals
<i>gem of a person</i>	a real gem	<i>take leave</i>	take time-off
<i>level best</i>	very best	<i>thrice</i>	three times
<i>mail ID</i>	e-mail address	<i>tiffin box</i>	lunch box
<i>more perfect</i>	perfect	<i>a time pass</i>	a kill time
<i>now itself</i>	right now	<i>today itself</i>	just today
<i>PIN code</i>	PIN/area code	<i>very less</i>	very little
<i>pin-drop silence</i>	perfect silence	<i>very unique</i>	unique
<i>program schedule</i>	programme/ schedule	<i>vessels</i>	cookware / plates and pans

The above examples – though not all of them – can be classified as instances of normal Indianism. Others are a bit ex-centric or off the centre in that they are instances of unacceptable expressions

in grammar or usage.

Whether Indianism is a boon or a bane is a moot point. Purists view it as a debasement of English, robbing it of its pristine purity and charm. But times have changed. And with

the emergence of Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence where India occupies a preeminent position, the English language has no option but to accept the subtle yet inescapable influence of Indianism. ■

## Gender

<b>Masculine</b>	<b>Feminine</b>
bachelor	maid, spinster
beau	belle
billy-goat	nanny-goat
boar	sow
buck	doe
buck-rabbit	doe-rabbit
cob	pen
colt	filly
drone	bee
earl	countess
friar	nun
gaffer	gammer
gander	goose
hart	roe
heir	heiress
horse	mare
jack-ass	jenny-ass
margrave	margravine
marquis	marchioness
milter	spawner
ram	ewe
sire	dam
stallion	mare
steer	heifer
swain	nymph
tom-cat	tabby-cat
tutor	governess
viceroy	vicereine
viscount	viscountess
votary	votress
wether	ewe
wizard	witch

## Strange Studies

<b>Name of study</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Aphnology	Wealth
Biometrology	The effect of weather on people
Cereology	Crop circles
Cryology	Snow, ice and frozen ground
Cryptology	Codes and ciphers
Draconology	Dragons
Eremology	Deserts
Fromology	Cheese
Garbology	Rubbish
Gelotology	Laughter
Googology	Large numbers
Hypnology	Sleep
Kalogy	Beauty
Limacology	Slugs
Loimology	Plagues
Momilogy	Mummies
Nephology	Clouds
Osmology	Smells
Pharology	Lighthouses
Polemology	Wars
Pomology	Fruit-growing
Rhinology	Noses
Siphonapterology	Fleas
Teratology	Monsters
Tsiology	Tea
Vermeology	Worms
Xylogy	Wood