

## ORIGIN OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA; DESPITE THE PRESENCE, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE VERNACULAR LANGUAGES

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### ABSTRACT:

*The current research is about the origin of English language in India. As the title suggests, it deals with a period that existed in India about four hundred to five hundred years ago. So research on this topic involves unearthing lot of data related to the past, its analysis and reaching conclusions thereon. According to historians this country is almost five thousand years old. In this journey of five thousand years there were many languages that originated and flourished in India. Languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Kannada, Punjabi, Oriya and Assamese are some of the most popular vernacular languages of India. These languages are widely spoken. They originated and have survived century after century. Local people in various parts of India communicate in some of these languages. Despite the presence and periodical development of these popular vernacular languages in this country, English not only originated, became popular, survived and is till now flourishing. All these factors combined together and individually have provided enough scope for research about the origin of English as a language in India.*

**KEY WORDS:** Origin of English, India, Vernacular Language.

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**INTRODUCTION**

India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. It is a country that is almost five thousand years old. In this journey of five thousand years, India has experienced the growth of many vernacular languages in different parts of the country. Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil, Kannada, Telegu are some of the most important ones. And above all, “the mother of all languages” (as it is known), Sanskrit also originated in this country. It is interesting to note in this context that India never had a common language that was spoken or written throughout the country. The geography of this nation was to a huge extent responsible for that. It promoted strong regionalism and sometimes it was seen that some parts of the country were cut off from each other for centuries. The presence of the Vindhya ranges in central India segregated the country into north and south. The presence of the mighty Himalayan ranges in the north separated India from China, which also happens to be one of the oldest civilizations in the world. The Thar Desert in the west separated Balochistan and Sindh (today in Pakistan) from the rest of the country.

This regionalism and separation made the process of entry of the European traders in India a very easy task. The English East India Company came from England and with the weakening of the Mughal rulers occupied almost the whole of India. The problem that the English rulers had was that they were unable to communicate with the natives. Moreover, at one point of time they converted India into a raw material producing country for their industries which grew strongly as a result of Industrial Revolution. Thus, trade and commerce flourished in India. So they needed some people who would be able to speak, read and write basic communicative English. This is how; English got an opportunity to intrude in India.

**Current Status:**

In India, English was initially spoken by the Englishmen. They were the rulers of India. So English was the language of the ruling class. There was a time when general people of the country were literally afraid of people who were speaking in English. Any English speaker was taken to be a part of the ruling community. Till now English as a language has been able to maintain that status. At present it is not the language of the ruling class because there is no ruling class as such. It is now the language of the upper/ elite classes of the society, in other words the language of the educated and rich sections of the society. The strong, the successful, the powerful, the decision makers, the so called movers and shakers of the Indian society prefer to speak in English. English is a fashionable language in India. It is fashionable to such an extent that all cinematic superstars, sports personalities, ministers, industrialists and other successful people from India prefer to speak in English, at least when they are in public. English as a language is believed to be an image builder.

It is interesting to note in this context that despite this, English as a language is far from becoming an Indian language. It was and is still now a foreign language. Sociologists state that probably the roots of the Indian civilization are responsible for this. The roots have not enabled the masses to accept this language as one of their own. So English is the language in which all official documents are written and official work is done in this country. It is the language of the ‘office’. It is still far away from the ‘home’. But interestingly, its importance, its significance and its imitability cannot be denied in India.

**Research Problem:**

English was introduced in India by the English rulers. If we study the point of origin of English language in India we will see that at that time there were many European powers in India. The Dutch, the French, the Danish, the Portuguese, the Spanish, they all were here. For varied interests they were all here. But surprisingly, their language did not gain much importance in India except in some pockets and that also for briefs chunks of time. It was English that gained importance and popularity in this country. The British went ahead to occupy and rule entire India. They ruled India for almost two hundred and fifty years. In these two hundred and fifty years, English became a part of Indian life. The ruling class, the rich and educated class started to interact in English.

Since its time of origin English gained so much importance and popularity as a language that even in and after 1947 (when India attained independence), English continued to be the language in which all official works were done here. India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. According to historians this country is almost five thousand years old. In this journey of five thousand years there were many languages that originated and flourished in India. Languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Kannada, Punjabi, Oriya and Assamese are some of the most popular vernacular languages of India. These languages are widely spoken. They originated and have survived century after century. Local people in various parts of India communicate in some of these languages.

Despite the presence and periodical development of these popular vernacular languages in this country, English not only originated, became popular, survived and is till now flourishing.

**Type of Research Methodology Adopted in this Study:**

The current study aims to refine the reasons contributing towards the origin of English as a language in India. It aims to study the period i.e. the socio – economic – political landscape which saw the origin of English in India. There have been many similar studies about the history of English language and literature in this nation. Hence, this study aims to refine the knowledge level regarding the topic of research. Thus, it can be said that this study is expected to take an applied or refining approach of research.

This data is expected to help the reach conclusions about the origin of the English language in India and the factors that catalyzed the growth of this language in this country despite the presence of rich local languages. This comparison of origin and growth is expected to help reach the conclusion.

The topic of this research is a period in history that existed about three hundred to three hundred and fifty years ago. So, the process of collection of data for this research is quite complex. To a huge extent the scholar has to depend on secondary data i.e. the data collected from books, research articles, features, opinions expressed by eminent scholars, historians and thinkers on the topic or related topics.

**Conclusions and Recommendations:**

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data acquired from secondary sources, some conclusions have been reached. India was never in a shortage of languages. But still, India accepted English as a language and allowed her to flourish here. After almost four hundred years of its origin, English to a huge extent can be treated as an Indian language. So it is time for the government of this country to recognize English officially as an Indian language. There may be arguments against it that only a small percentage of people in India speak in this language. But that cannot be the only yardstick to understand the importance of English in India. The contributions of the Indians to English, the contributions of the Indian writers in English literature and the development of Indian English are yardsticks enough to judge the importance of English in this country and the close relation of India with English as a language. Therefore, English has become an Indian language and it is time to recognize it that way. It should not be treated as merely a state language used for official purposes.

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