Indian English Dictionary and Indianisms

Here’s a handy list of Indianisms for you. Indianism is an English word or phrase used in India that is not common in other English-speaking countries. Many of these are adopted British terms, others are unique idioms.

* Adapter – power cord
* Allopathy – western medicine
* Alphabets – letters; *Can you say your alphabets?*
* Anticlockwise – counter-clockwise
* Any doubts? – “Any questions?”
* Arranged Marriage – A marriage where the parents/family members initially find suitable brides/grooms for their children
* At the rate – the @ sign; *My mail ID is Ravi at the rate big company dot com.*
* Avail – get
* Bandh – a strike or protest by workers
* Batch – a group of participants that goes through a class/training at the same time
* Batch mates – those in your batch
* Bike – nearly always a motorcycle; a bicycle is a “cycle”
* Bio data – biographical information
* Bhava – slang term for someone from the Parsi community
* Bills – “handbills”, or any small sign that can be posted; as in “stick no bills”
* Biscuit – a hard wheat cracker usually had with tea; also the term used for a *cookie*
* Bong – slang term for a Bengali
* Burger – a general term for an edible patty served between two buns; it does not usually refer to any beef
* Canteen – cafeteria
* Cent percent – 100%
* Challan – an official receipt of payment given by the government
* Chappals – sandals
* Clubbing – to join two things together; *They are clubbing their bids, let’s see how it looks*
* Co-brother/Co-sister – Only men have co-brothers.  This is your wife’s sister’s husband.  Only women have co-sisters.  This is your husband’s brother’s wife. (More South Indian)
* Come home – come over to my home
* Cot – bed frame
* Cousin-brother/Cousin-sister – a relative you consider your brother or sister because of growing up very close to them, but you don’t actually have the same mother and father (South Indian)
* Cover – (noun) envelope
* Cribbing – complaining
* Crore – 100 lakhs, or 10 million
* Cum – *restaurant cum hotel*means a restaurant and a hotel
* Curd – yogurt
* Cut the call – hang up abruptly
* Cut the queue – jump in front of you when in a line
* Dais – a raised platform, a place where distinguished guests will sit at an event
* Desi – “local” or “Indian”
* Designation – job title
* Do the needful – do whatever is necessary to complete this
* Doubt – a question to be clarified;  *I have a doubt*
* Dress – any kind of clothing, for men, women, and children; if a man says *“I got a new dress”*, he likely bought a new shirt
* Duly – “completely” or “as according to my duties”; *I have duly completed the work*
* Dustbin – trashcan or waste basket
* Eating my brain – really bothering me
* Elocutions – speech class, public speaking
* Fair – more often than not, this refers to skin colour, specifically light skin
* Flick – to steal; someone *flicked my pen*
* Fortnightly – once in two weeks
* Freshers – first timers, freshmen, rookies, etc.
* Geyser – hot water heater
* Good name – first name; *what is your good name?*
* Got fired – got yelled at; doesn’t necessarily mean someone lost his/her job
* Guju – slang term for someone from Gujarat
* Holiday – vacation
* Homely – of a person, someone who is a good homemaker/housewife; of a place, comfortable, cosy
* Intimate – (pronounced like “roommate”) inform;  *I will intimate back to you*
* Junglee – slang for someone who behaves in an “uncivilized” manner
* Kindly – please
* Lakh – 100,000
* Level Best – my best.  *I’ll do my level best*
* Love Marriage – a marriage where the boy and girl meet each other first and decide to get married
* Mail – email; I’ll *send you a mail*
* Mail ID – email address
* Mallu – slang term for someone from Kerala
* Make a move – “It’s time for me to go”. *I’ll make a move then.*
* Maths – Mathematics, or Math
* Matriculation – The completion of high school or secondary school which happens at the 10th grade/standard.  There is a huge board exam at the end of 10th.
* Mixie – blender, mixer
* Mugging up – cramming, or memorizing before an exam
* Non-veg – meat; *Do you take non-veg?*
* Nuclear Family – mother/father and children
* Out of station – out of town
* Paining – hurts; *My leg is paining = My leg hurts*
* Passed out – graduated
* Pax – an abbreviation for “number of people”
* Petrol Bunk – gas station
* Pickles – a paste made with vegetables or fruits and cooked with oil which can be preserved and used for a long time; used to enhance the flavour of a dish
* PIN code – area code, or zip code
* Plus 2 – also called “junior college”; these are grades/standards 11 and 12 which focus on a specific stream of study
* Prepone – to advance or move up the time
* Puncture – flat tire (or tyre)
* Punju – slang term for someone from Punjab
* Purse – wallet
* Query – a question
* Queue – a line of people
* Revert – get back; *kindly revert*
* Schemes – This word has no negative connotation unlike in other places.  It might also be called a ‘program’.  *What do you think about the new government scheme for helping poor children?*OR *I just saw a great new investment scheme.*
* School – education only up to Plus 2; “School” does not refer to college/university.  Do not ask someone who is in an MBA program, “How is school going?”
* Sitting on her head – forcing someone to do something
* SMS – text message; literally “short message service”
* Snap – picture; *let’s take some snaps before we leave*
* Spinster – an older woman who has never been married
* Standard – grade, as in level of schooling; *I am going into 8th standard*
* Sweet – “a sweet” is any Indian dish usually made with sugar and ghee
* System – computer; I *need a new system to complete the work*
* Take a class – often means you are teaching a class or giving a lecture
* Take leave – to ask for time off, or to leave a place; *I need to take leave on Friday OR Ok, I’ll take leave now (leaving a party)*
* Tambram – slang term for a Brahmin from Tamil Nadu
* Tariff – Charges or a rate card
* Tie-up – a partnership. *We have a tie-up with several good distributors.*
* Time waste – waste of time
* Too good – extremely good, NOT excessively good
* Topper – the highest scoring student in a class
* Tuition – a private, one-on-one class
* Vessels – Indian cookware, usually steel pots and pans
* Visiting Card – business card
* Wheatish – another skin colour term; a lighter brown