

## Indian-style education gets an A Emphasis on mental math, computers and English prove popular

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A growing number of Japanese children at international schools are receiving an Indian-style education emphasizing advanced mental arithmetic, computers and English. What is the attraction of such an education?

On Jan. 28, during a lesson for sixth-grade primary school students at Global Indian International School in Edogawa Ward, Tokyo, when a Japanese child solved a math problem that required finding the area of a figure with no difficulty, the student's classmates applauded.

The school teaches those from kindergarten to high school age.

In kindergarten, students learn addition and subtraction. In primary school, students' lessons include the study of mental arithmetic and two-digit multiplication, computer programming and yoga.

The lessons are conducted entirely in English. School officials said that some third-year students can solve three-digit multiplication problems.

The school opened in July 2006, targeting Indians

living in Japan. However, the number of Japanese students enrolled in the school has increased gradually and accounts for more than 20 percent of all the 224 students.

A 12-year-old girl from Kawasaki who attends the school said, "I was surprised initially by the difficulty of mathematics and the amount of homework. However, [school] is fun as I made friends with people from various countries."

Her 46-year-old mother said: "I wanted my child to learn English as early as possible. The low school fees of Indian schools were also attractive."

In recent years, India's economy has been growing at a tremendous rate. The country has a reputation for being strong in mathematics and information technology. However, it seems that there is a secret to the development of this type of education.

"We actively provide presentation time during lessons and are educating children who're able to express their own opinions," Principal Rajeswary Sambathrajan, 50, said. "We also focus on moral education," he added.

In Tokyo, there are at least three Indian-style

schools. **Among these, Little Angels Academy in Mitaka, Tokyo, which has a kindergarten and primary school, has continued to see the number of Japanese students rise since its opening in 2003. Presently, 80 percent of the students are Japanese.**

However, according to the Tokyo metropolitan government's private schools administration section, all the three schools are "unauthorized schools" which do not fall under the School Education Law.

For that reason, it is not possible to go on to universities in Japan even if one graduates from these schools. In addition, students who do not receive public education in Japan because they are attending Indian-style schools "may infringe on compulsory education," an Education, Science and Technology Ministry official said.

Most of the Japanese students who study until high school at Indian-style education schools aim to study at universities overseas.

Despite that, what could be the reasons for the gaining popularity of such schools?

Gakushin Juku, a cram school operator which runs nine schools in Kanagawa Prefecture,

introduced "Indian-style mathematics" in 2002, which includes making its students do mental arithmetic and memorizing the multiplication tables for all two-digit numbers.

Since the introduction, the students' performance on Japanese and English test has improved in a way similar to their math performance.

Toyoaki Nakamoto, the cram school's general manager said, "We assume [students'] brains will become flexible as they learn various types of calculation methods under Indian-style mathematics."

J. F. Oberlin University Prof. Mitsuo Yoshizawa, who specializes in math and math education, said, "A high level of education is carried out in India that encourages logical thinking, including descriptive style university entrance examinations."

Yoshizawa, who is also familiar with Indian-style education, added: "Many of the parents who send their children to Indian schools feel dissatisfied with Japan's compulsory education and are anxious about a decline in academic ability. This probably led to the popularity of Indian schools."