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Mala News

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Greetings!

Higher education for Mala students



As 2019 is the second year we have had children passing out of class 12 capable of going on to IIT (India Institutes of Technology) courses, we have had to study the system in India. Below Anne Gilmour, one of our Trustee Education Advisers, sets the scene by describing some of the main differences between the western and India higher education.

In the UK we have UCAS, a centralised system for university admissions based on performance at A level, with specialised exams held only for highly competitive courses like medicine, so generally school leavers can be certain of their further education direction as soon as they receive their A level results.

In India, immediately after students complete their intermediate exams (A level equivalent) and graduate from class 12, there is often a period of one or two years before they can be certain what direction they will take. While many universities have their own entrance exams, entrance to some of the most prestigious colleges and institutions is conducted through very competitive exams assessed either state wide or India wide and it is only after these results are given that students know at what level they will be able to study. This is perhaps a little more like the American system of SATs; though in the US these results are balanced with school exam results, a personal statement and thorough references from the school and there is nothing as yet in place in India as sophisticated as the College Board administered central admissions system.

Here, the toughest and most competitive entrance exams are those for IIT and medical school. Most Indian youngsters aiming for these institutions spend two or more years in intensive coaching classes which can cost a lot of money, so our best students prepare for these exams on their own. There are only 23 IIT institutions across the whole of India, and our pupils are competing with the brightest students, most of whom have come from top public schools and who have had the specialist coaching necessary for success.

There are other IIIT and NIT colleges which offer similar courses, which they can join instead. This year the first pupil from Project Mala school (Niraj) got a place in IIIT, having been ranked in the top 5th percentile in the national exam. He took the IIT main entrance exam immediately after he completed class twelve, and he won a place to study BTech in Hyderabad.



Also, this year one of our top students, Monu, was ranked 435 out of about



600,000 students in Uttar Pradesh for entrance to polytechnic. He is now studying in Lucknow, the top polytechnic in the state. One of his classmates, Harishankar, did almost as well: ranked 700 in UP and also qualified for a top rated polytechnic. Harishankar is from a particularly poor family and once he graduates he will transform his family's prospects.

Once a bright pupil gains entrance to a good government institution, fees are very low and hostel accommodation is also provided, so even the poorest families are not barred from entry. However, competition is fierce and it is only the brightest and best prepared students who can succeed, so the quality of the education they receive at school is paramount. We are, therefore, very encouraged to notice how some of our students are now gaining entrance to the very best colleges, the equivalent of Ivy League universities in the US or the Russell Group in the UK.

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If you know anyone who you think might be interested in this newsletter, please forward it on.

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