

DECCAN HERALD

Swimming in slam

Shaun D'Souza, a final-year student of forensic science at Jain University, had a penchant for multiple forms of expression — be it prose, poetry or performing arts — ever since he was a child. Now, he is trying to perfect slam poetry with relentless vigour.

It was after attending a few workshops organised by 'Airplane Poetry Movement' last year that he got interested in it. "Slam poetry is one which expresses a personal story or struggle in a very intense form. The idea of slam poetry is simple — have something to say, write it down and be brave enough to recite. The poem will turn out sincere and moving and the poet's writing and presentation skills improve as you go along," he says.

He has taken part in a number of slams, shared stage with many artistes and won a number of slams conducted by the 'Airplane Poetry Movement' as part of their workshops and at college fests like META in St Joseph's Pre-University College and the cultural fest at RV College of Engineering. He is also part of a project of 'Armed With The Arts' called 'Poetry Slam for Peace', which involves individuals from around the globe writing works related to peace and sharing them online.

Though slam poetry faces many challenges here as it attracts a niche audience, Shaun is trying to promote the art in a big way. "People generally come for work-



PASSIONATE Shaun D'Souza



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tre has helped him. Shaun has swum in the national meet in 2011 and has bagged many medals. He has also represented Jain University in the All India University Meet held in 2012 at Kolkata, 2013 at Amritsar and 2014 at Bengaluru.

In 2011, he was awarded four medals at the School Nationals in Kolkata. "My biggest achievement was qualifying for the 'Asian Age Group Championship', Tokyo in 2009, and also winning the 'Best Swimmer Award

shops if they are under the banner of theatre, hip hop, or stage/public talk but poetry itself is considered as boring and abstract. One has to find a way to make performance poetry fun and at the same time, not lose the essence of poetry itself." To improve on his slam poetry further, he is working with an Australian poet, Tim Lo Surdo, and is also propagating 'Open Sky Slam', a project which aims to convert dead spaces to performative spaces.

"Slam poetry is still growing in the City and it hasn't caught the attention that it deserves. I'm looking forward to be a part of a giant community of performing

artistes, who, co-dependently, encourage slam for art and peace. As this form still remains under-rated in India, Tim and I are working towards decentralising the concept of 'Open Sky Slam' so that every performing artistes throughout the world is encouraged to come and present their skill," says Shaun.

And that's not all. Shaun is a freestyle swimmer who has been making waves in the pool ever since he was five. He says that support from his parents and rigorous training at Basvanagudi Aquatic Cen-

Championship' at a National Meet."

Though Shaun quit professional swimming last year, he considers it as his first love and says that it has taught him many lessons. "Swimming is a lot like doing maths as it requires a lot of practice. In India, it is hard to get to the point of qualifying for an international meet as it requires a lot of sacrifices, which my parents chose to make without hesitance, such as procuring the finances to support swimming kits. However, swimming taught me a lot of life lessons that I would not have been able to learn," he says.

Anushka Sivakumar