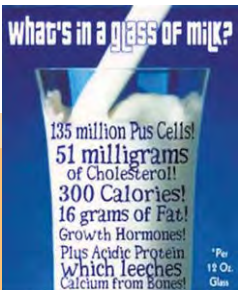


he bacteria found in cow's milk should more than sum up why it makes a bad choice 4



22 NOVEMBER 2015

# High on life

**When it comes to sheer grit, life on the street determines the total of human endeavour, says sraman banerjee**

LIFE is almost never like the movies portray it to be and yet there are offscreen heroes lost to the public glare who would give a celluloid champion reason to doubt his credentials. Mukesh Mani is one such case. From a small village in North 24-Parganas, his is a childhood shrouded in misery, symptomatic of desolation and poverty. Driven by dreams of better, he one day hopped on a train to Kolkata and began doing odd jobs in the Sealdah station vicinity. Mocked, looked down upon, he soon took to drugs to fill a void and

success whereas a pessimist has every excuse for failure, Mukesh had the heart of a lion and was determined to come good. The folk at Mukti also had faith in his abilities and slowly helped him regain self-confidence, first by instilling certain technical qualities such as driving, and finally got him enrolled in Kolkata Sanved to nurture a natural talent for dance.

He soon excelled in both – proving his mettle by becoming both a proficient driver and a trained dance therapist. Today, Mukesh is associated with the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts in Ahmedabad, where he is training in classical Bharatnatyam under the legendary Mallika Sarabhai. He has already earned a name for himself, having wooed audiences in several shows in and outside the city and is well on his way to making a mark for himself. He was recently in Kolkata to spend Diwali time with his mates at the Mukti Rehabilitation Centre. Three years “clean”, Mukesh shows



*From waif on the platforms of Sealdah station, to hoisting a phanush with a friend and becoming an accomplished Bharatnatyam dancer, Mukesh Mani has come a long way.*

his struggle for existence on the platforms continued for a few years, hunger and shelter being his biggest enemies. There were long sleepless nights without a morsel of food, with addiction driving the nail in deeper so as to tip the balance in death's favour. But somewhere along the line resolve refused to give in.

Rescued and placed in the care of Mukti Rehabilitation Centre — an NGO dedicated to rehabilitating addicts and difficult children — it was initially difficult for him to adapt to a regimented lifestyle. But like the adage about an optimist manufacturing every reason for

no signs of slowing down and Dr Krishnamoorthy Vishwanath, secretary of the institution, says, “We are very proud of him and wish him luck for all his future endeavours.”

Mukesh Mani has truly come a long way from the cursed platforms of Sealdah Station to becoming the member of one of the premier dance institutes of the country — a shining example of courage and determination, rubbishing, in the procedure, that old adage about once an addict, always an addict.

**The writer is a student of the Statesman Print Journalism School**