

From basketball court to a film set, he's done it all

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CHENNAI: Karaan Subramaniam's list of achievements is long. But then, the 22-year-old, who was diagnosed with Down's syndrome as a baby, has worked long and hard to reach every milestone. His efforts earned him the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Games gold medal in basketball in 2013, a meaty role in director Santosh Sivan's 'Inam' in 2014, World Down Syndrome Foundation UK award for outstanding achievement in chess in 2015, a sportsmanship award from Loyola College just two days ago, and a degree in animation from the Visual Communication Department of Loyola College this year.

In fact, Karaan's passion is so infectious, says his mother Geetha, that after he joined Loyola and excelled, the college has become much more open to admitting students with special needs. "In the last three years at Loyola, I have been treated on a par with the others," says Karaan.

"When he was born, the doctors were discouraging, but I was determined that he would lead a normal life," says Geetha, who ensured he went to mainstream schools. "He switched five schools, but never lost his will to achieve," she says, adding that Karaan is one of the few Down's syndrome chess players in the world.

Karaan competes with the state level players of his age group, even goading grandmaster Vishwanathan Anand to play with him in 2015 at a blind chess documentary screening. "His victories at inter-collegiate and state level contests have given him confidence," says Geetha.