

## Dedication pays off

JHINUK MAZUMDAR

Lake Town: He would refuse to sit at one place to complete a task he did not like, could not pick up four letter words and did not have an eye contact. But that was more than 15 years ago.

Anamitro Chatterjee was diagnosed with autism when he was eight and the 18-year-old has scored 89.4 per cent in the CBSE Class XII exam declared on Thursday.

“Even for a regular student 89 per cent is a good score. But it is not only about the high marks that he has achieved, but also what he had to overcome to get there. It is this journey that is important and it also involves the school and his family,” said Anamitro’s mother and dermatologist Piyali Chatterjee.

Anamitro has scored 96 in business studies, 86 in economics, 82 in English, 86 in Bengali and 97 in physical education. “I had no expectation. But my aim was to perform better than ever,” said the student of Apeejay School, Salt Lake.

Anamitro’s teachers and parents speak highly about his “hard work and dedication” and say that he was always ready to give his 100 per cent for academics. “His teachers never gave up on him because of his dedication,” Piyali said.

When Anamitro was in kindergarten his parents noticed that he had



Anamitro with his parents Abhrajit and Piyali Chatterjee.

Picture by Gautam Bose

difficulty in learning four-letter words. He also found it difficult to socialise with other students.

“It was then that we began to assess him. If we had not done that or his teachers were not told how to handle him, he would not have reached this far. The school had helped us immensely,” the mother said.

Anamitro’s teacher said that his parents were never in denial of their son’s condition, but did everything needed to help him achieve his goals. “If parents are aware and accept the advice of teachers, then half the battle is won,” said Rita Chatterjee, principal of the school.

By class VII Anamitro was doing reasonably well and could manage all subjects except mathematics. In class IX his teachers had advised his parents

to opt for foundation of information technology instead of maths, which they agreed to.

The parents also feel that early intervention had helped their child. The intervention by Indrani Basu of the autism society helped Anamitro in his journey, Piyali said. The society had also helped them with a special educator at home.

“It (early detection and intervention) helps the family to understand that the special child might require more support than a regular kid,” said Basu, who is founder-director of Autism Society West Bengal.

Where does Anamitro want to go from here?

Anamitro, who loves to make clay models and dabble with colours since the he was three, wants to study fine arts. His study room-cum-studio is filled with pieces of artwork made since he was a child.

But even after his commendable performance, his parents are concerned about his admission in an art college.

“He will have to compete with general category students because his kind of disability has not been categorised. In CBSE there are lot of options and autism is categorised as a disability. But beyond schools such options are limited,” said Anamitro’s father and ophthalmologist Abhrajit Chatterjee.

But then for Anamitro, overcoming hurdles is par for the course.