Speaker 1: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap: Growing up in Bangladesh, Sujash Purna was inspired by British literature, reading works by J.K. Rowling, Jane Austen and George Orwell. A love of language drew him to creative writing and brought him to America to further his studies. After completing his undergraduate literature degree at Truman State University, Purna came to Missouri State University to pursue his master's degree in English. He graduated in May, and this fall he'll start the graduate certificate in technical and professional writing. I'm Emily Yeap.

One genre Purna enjoys writing is poetry. His new book of poetry, “Epidemic of Nostalgia,” will be published this month. Purna joins me today to talk about his literary work, including the new book.

Sujash Purna: I was interested in creative writing a long time ago. I went to a school where we studied everything in Bengali and I wanted to study in English, and there were not that many resources available back in Bangladesh. And I was inspired by writers like George Orwell and Aldous Huxley. I started with J.K. Rowling when I was little. The language really gave me tons of doors to explore my emotions and expressing the world as I see it.

Emily Yeap: To hone his love for writing, Purna got a scholarship to study literature at Truman State in Kirksville.

Sujash Purna: I started submitting my poems to journals when I took a class in my senior year called Creative Writing Workshop. Poetry for me is more of a platform to express myself. I got published in different journals, that kind of boosted my ego to keep continuing writing.

Emily Yeap: What does he like about writing poetry?

Sujash Purna: For writing poetry, I like how it's very rich. There are so many poets in this category of creative writing. I've been inspired by immigrant writers like Ocean Vuong or Kaveh Akbar, lot of multinational, international background people writing in the genre of poetry. Also, I like how much you can experiment with the form and play with the words. I tend to write in alliteration. I used to write poems in alliterations, but then I decided to have more inter play in the words and kind of express very complex emotions in a very short frame really quickly. So, that's what I really like about poetry.

Emily Yeap: Purna explains how “Epidemic of Nostalgia” came about.

Sujash Purna: So “Epidemic of Nostalgia” has been a collection I think I had in different names previously, and the Finishing Line Press, they have rejected my work in the past. And this “Epidemic of Nostalgia” has been rejected probably five or six places already. So, I submitted a bigger collection to the Finishing Line Press last year.

It was my third submission and then they rejected it. But then they told me we really like your work, but we cannot publish this one, can you send us something smaller in length? So I send to them, it took them a month. They got back to me saying they would like to publish. So, I was very excited and humble that they said, yes, finally.

The poems are from my undergrad experience, going through the process of homesickness and cultural assimilation, like the cultural shock that I have to overcome; just looking back, being nostalgic about my home and the people in my undergrad school that I went to that small town campus and the people there. They're not as advanced or stronger work, the ones that I'm currently working on. But seeing your older works being recognized is a really good experience.

Emily Yeap: What does Purna want readers to take away from his poetry collection?

Sujash Purna: I really hope that readers get to see that it's not just my experience. It's also the experience of a collective conscience of different people, looking at their own past lives and finding out the smaller things that really impacted their lives or how that influenced them to get where they are right now. So, in this 25 to 26 pages long work of poems, I hope they get to experience that this is not just my experience, but overall immigrant students’ experience in America.

Emily Yeap: Purna highlights what he’s currently working on.

Sujash Purna: I am currently working on three different collections. Each of them have different focuses, poems that have more kind of a conversation with the current news that's going on, like climate change, the race problem in this country. A lot of the poems are very blunt and I tend to take the perspective of the person who's creating the problems and try to see it from their point of view.

Emily Yeap: “Epidemic of Nostalgia” is available for preorder through finishinglinepress.com. It ships July 9th, I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Speaker 1: For more information, Contact the office of university communications at 417-836-6397. The Missouri state journal is available online at ksmu.org.