

YOU look at her, in a lovely printed crepe sari, three steps behind the stage, holding up a crumpled piece of paper. She's about to introduce the day's event to a crowd of spiritual leaders and followers in Bangalore. Meet the vibrant Suja John Mathai, wife of director of Soukya, Dr Issac Mathai, as she soundlessly comes on stage, to announce the morning's speaker — new age guru, Dr Deepak Chopra.

Eating Right

Suja was a young 23-year-old when she married Dr Mathai. With an M Phil in Foods and Nutrition under her belt, the union with a reputed homeopath (Sarah Fergusson, Tina Turner, George Harrison, Madonna, Mallika Sarabhai and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar are a few of his clients) couldn't have been better.

Dr Mathai who worked in one of the largest clinics in Europe, and having studied Chinese medicine and acupuncture, believed that non-formal methods of healing offer better results, than the ravages caused by potent allopathic drugs.

Together with the help of Suja, and her inherent and learned knowledge in the field of nutrition and good health, they established Soukya, an International Holistic Health Centre, situated in the heart of Whitefield in Bangalore. And what do you get here? It's probably the only fitness or holistic center which combines ayurveda, homeopathy, yoga

and naturopathy under one roof, in the midst of 30 acres of sprawling lawns, a herb garden with rosemary, thyme, aloe vera, basil and citronella, plus ayurvedic plants like brahmi, and castor and also a flourishing fruit, vegetable and flowering garden, a visual treat for sore eyes!

Suja says she loves working here as she gets involved with the health routines of most of Dr Mathai's clients. "With so much emphasis on good eating habits, in an attempt to keep obesity and illnesses associated with it at bay, it's a challenge to come up with novel diets, that are not boring, for instance, bananas topped with a twist of caramel or an occasional chocolate thrown in."

Not many know that Suja was cultural secretary of the Women's Christian College in Chennai — now we know why she wasn't really scared of going on stage — and she was good at table tennis. She also has an innate aesthetic eye for design and colour. You can see evidence of her talent in the way the Kerala style cottages are built using stone facades and earthy Athangudi tiles from Chettinad, a huge meditation hall built with a thatch-roof dome and of course, the elegantly designed custom-fitted colonial furniture. She says modestly, "You just need to put down exactly what you want, and how you want the space to function, the colours you like, and then everything else falls into place." Today, visiting Soukya is like taking a trip down heaven's path, and coming back feeling rejuvenated, whole and young at heart.

WITH ADDITIONAL INPUTS BY MADHURI VELEGAR K

Suja Issac Mathai, holistic nutritionist, is both — the woman behind a man's success and a success story herself. Sabita Radhakrishnan met her



Photograph: Anantika J Hari Singh

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