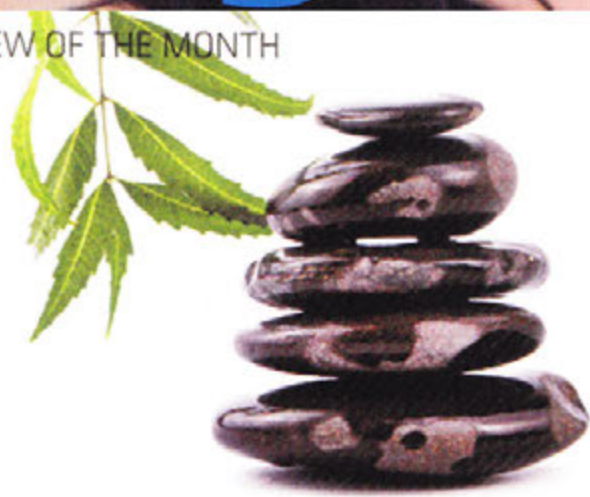


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|| jade INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH



Doctor, healer, philosopher, life coach – call him what you will, the inimitable

DR ISAAC MATHAI is definitely on the world list of faces behind places.

Smita Balram Kumar met him and came away impressed

The GOOD

birthplace: Wayanadu, Kerala. Father: Church priest and social reformer. Mother: Homeopath running a humble clinic. Siblings: Five. Education: Inability to get into MMBS due to high admission fee leading to a course in Homeopathy in Kottayam (Kerala) to eventually join mother's clinic. Could anyone imagine that a simple small town boy with a simpler background would one day call Prince Charles, Camilla Parker, George Harrison, the Ambanis, Arun

Poorie, Dalai Lama, Deep Purple and Tina Turner by their first names! Or let's put it another way, these celebrities perhaps have him on their speed dial. Now that's what we call connected. Meet Dr Issac Mathai, the man under the sparkling spotlight who has been creating waves across the globe with his unique integrated medicine model and brainchild Soukya International Holistic Health Centre in Whitefield, Bengaluru. For starters, he is blessed with the best genes from his parents. It's not exactly a rags-to-riches story. But purely an appreciation for one who did not just dare to dream, but lived his dream.

Dr Mathai is a popular name but for all those who may wish to be enlightened further, he administers integrated medicine with a holistic

approach by applying traditional time-tested Asian alternative medicine (ayurveda, naturopathy, acupuncture, acupressure, allopathy, yoga, reflexology) at his award-winning super-luxurious healing retreat, Soukya. And several patients from across the world have been flocking to him to treat medical conditions.

"While studying Homeopathy in college, I took to meditation and also enrolled in Yoga classes. I saw the benefits of Yoga with Homeopathy. The recovery rate was better. This model was working," recalls and narrates Dr Mathai who realized the future of medicine in holistic approach at an age when most of us were probably hanging out at college canteens. But then, these are what visionaries made of,

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Runway to High Life

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DOCTOR

TIPS BY DR MATHAI FOR GENERAL WELL-BEING:

- 1 Eat healthy and on time. Bad eating habits are the biggest culprit.
- 2 Exercise and meditate. The combination sharpens your mind and makes you positive.
- 3 Get your eight-hour sleep and drink lots of water daily.
- 4 Spend quality time with your family. Overtime at work only makes your company healthy and wealthy, not you.

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Q. Tell us about how you got here.

A. At 25, I was invited to France for a yoga and homeopathy conference. Soon, I got invitations for lectures on this piping new subject all over Europe. I went to London the same year for my post-graduation and began practicing later. I saw this concept in London, of course at a very small-scale clinical format. But I realized I could make it bigger in India especially when it is the largest system of medicine in our country. People need to be educated. Habits need to change. We needed a healing retreat that would even attract foreigners to India and take back the good word. And so, eight years ago, Soukya was born.

Q. What made you open Soukya in Bengaluru instead of your hometown - the hub of alternative medicine, Kerala?

A. A bit of pragmatism really. Weather was the main reason to set it up here. Airport facility makes it easier for my patients. Bengaluru has given me a lot. I want Bengaluru to become a brand in this sector globally. I actually never wanted to return to India while in London. (laughs) I had said bye-bye to Kerala. I thought I'd marry an English girl and settle down in London. But I realized that this was not my dream.

Q. Alternative medicine has begun to gain momentum only recently. But how challenging was it in the late 90s when

you began practicing and researching for your new model? How do you tackle the skeptics?

A. It was hard. People ridiculed me, well-wishers warned me of the challenges and some friends in top finance positions shot down my idea. Instead of succumbing, I decided to educate them. We have not invented but implemented time-tested methods and we do it well. I am clear about what I am doing. See the results. We read clinical reports from top hospitals and suggest integrate

is no secret and no hidden agenda. It's transparent. I could have been a guru and been more popular otherwise. It's now so well accepted that even the insurance companies are in talks to cover Soukya's alternative medicine under their wings.

I have been practicing for 25 years, and today visit 44 countries for consultation. And often times, I find that emotional upheaval is the root cause for medical condition. This is why a complex physiological and psychological



I find that emotional upheaval is the root cause for medical condition. This is why a complex physiological and psychological interview is conducted with a patient that could take even eight hours!

supportive therapies. If a therapy takes two weeks' stay, we advise the whole two weeks, or don't come at all, we say. The government and people are taking note of us. I get invitations to talk about it. Just have pure faith in God, yourself and your job. A patient in the USA once insulted me saying that if I couldn't even speak English properly how could I treat her! A year later she returned and apologized profusely. I told her that I am a doctor not an English lecturer. Today she is my most regular patient and visits Soukya often.

Q. What is alternative healing all about?

It's not magic. It's not a gimmick. There

interview is conducted with a patient that could take even eight hours! Every case has an emotional connection.

The sixth sense makes you a good doctor. He should be able to see the source of the pain. Like a woman who came to us with stomach cancer. It was tracked down to her disappointment with her daughter's unwillingness to marry. Her dreams of becoming a grandmother were shattered. She bottled it up. We gave her emotional correcting homeopathic medicines and counseling sessions. With God's grace, her cancer actually vanished.

Another time a boy was suffering

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from lethargy and depression that was wasting him away in the form of cancer. His reports showed that when his father passed away, he realized that he had not loved him enough. Depression lowers immunity and so all latent hereditary diseases begin to surface.

Q. Why all the water bodies in Soukya?

I truly believe that nature alone has healing powers and impacts one's well being. I have lotus ponds everywhere in Soukya. The simple lotus flower is the most sensitive and reacts quickly

Every good doctor is a healer. All rank holders are not necessarily the best in practice. The healing touch is important. Words can heal. Medicinal knowledge is only secondary. Doctors must melt their egos and work for the patients

to change in atmosphere. Our bodies have a similar impact, but we don't pay attention to it. The moon impacts water bodies, seen in high and low tides. Can you imagine its influence on us human beings? Some say that this doctor is crazy -- talking about philosophy. But that is my aim. To bring people close to nature and leave their artificial lives behind.

Q. What exactly is 'artificial life'?

A. Let me give you an example of a case study. A lady repeatedly came to me with constant pain in her right arm. I finally asked her if she had truly told me everything during the interview. It is then that she revealed that her husband had a flourishing business and

wanted to involve his brother in it. But this lady had a fixed idea that her rude sister-in-law would poison her husband and take over the business abandon her. Her fixed idea was corrected with homeopathy and counseling. She is perfect now.

Q. It's easy for ordinary people to bare their souls. How frank are your celebrity patients about their lives when they come to you?

A. I didn't know who George Harrison was. When I got to know I apologized for not recognizing him. But he said that he loved the way I treated him. Celebrities want to be treated like a ordinary patient. They enjoy being treated as normal human beings. And you never lie to a lawyer or a doctor. I'd like to put it on record that I have never taken an autograph, leave alone a photograph with my better known patients.

Q. Doctor or healer?

A. Every good doctor is a healer. All rank holders are not necessarily the best in practice. The healing touch is important. Words can heal. Medicinal knowledge is only secondary. Doctors must melt their egos and work for the patients. India is struggling to evolve in the health sector. We still have a laid back and sleepy attitude. Let's work together and bring about a change.

Q. Your critics say your treatment is expensive. Does that mean only rich patients can come to you?

I do not have any qualms in admitting that I am expensive. A stay at Soukya means you must be having deep pockets. But a lot of money goes into maintaining this world-class facility. It isn't called International Holistic Centre for nothing. I have a project called *Sahaya*, a wellness centre on the lines of Soukya that offers the same treatments at an affordable price, given a simpler set of rooms and basic establishment located in Jayanagar. I also have a charitable trust at Richmond Circle that gives free homeopathic medicines to the poor

Q. Do you practice what you preach?

Yes I do. I do my own cleansing rejuvenation every year. It's a three-week programme. I do yoga and meditation daily and have regular classes for my staff too. I get my cardiac checks at the best of hospitals. I cannot be foolish about these things. Then I take *brahmi* for sharp memory.

As for de-stressing while I go on holidays with my family every year, I also take time off to be with my mother in Kerala. Another must on the agenda is a spiritual journey which I undertake alone every year. It could be Rishikesh, Pondicherry, Mt Kailash or even a monastery. Re-charging your spiritual self is extremely important. In fact it is imperative to be able to help others. I have plans to do the Kumbh Mela now.

Q. Who is Dr Mathai at home?

I live here on the Soukya premises with my wife Suja and our three kids. Suja is the one behind the design of Soukya, she counsel on nutrition. Children of doctors usually get harrowed with clinical conversations. In our case though, for years, Suja and I have worked very hard together. We would talk about work all the time. We didn't go for holidays for seven years. But when we saw a behavioural change in our 19-year-old daughter Anna recently, we decided to take a conscious call. So now, we have a rule: No talks about Soukya at the dining table and family holidays every year. In fact, I am happy that all my children, my daughter and 16-year-old Mathew and 14-year-old John are studying streams to take Soukya ahead in future.

Q. Where does Soukya go from here? Are you afraid of a Soukya imitation?

A. Right now my hands are full and I am quite happy. But the Bahamas and the Middle East are on our minds. As far as imitation is concerned, I appreciate it. Go on and replicate my model. How much can I do! I hope there can a thousand Soukyas and 10,000 *Sahayas*. Please imitate me, but do so genuinely. 