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When Isaac Mathai joined the homoeopathy college in Kottayam, Kerala, his only ambition was to go back to Wayanadu and be his mother's assistant. Little did he know then that he would soon become a jet-setting holistic healer for the who's who of the world. Duchess of York Sara Ferguson, rock stars Tina Turner and George Harrison, the famous Sting, the band Deep Purple and closer home, Pandit Ravi Shankar. The list of his star patients is endless.

Today, the 41-year-old holistic healer is on first name terms with most of them. But when he started his practice of transcendental medicine and yoga in London in the late '80s, the small-town-boy from Kerala had not even heard of most of them. "How would I have heard of Tina Turner or George Harrison in Wayanadu those days," he asks.

Mathai's brush with celebrity patients began while setting up practice in London. Holistic medicine was a rage in the West and the rich and famous flocked to him. "I am not fascinated by stars. But they make me realise the value of my work because they can afford the best in the world and they still come to me," says the healer.

Mathai was still studying homeopathy, when he realised that the future of medicine was in the holistic approach. He soon started practising transcendental medicine and yoga. But those days, for a qualified doctor to dabble in such 'inanities' was considered unusual. But he persevered, as he believed that "Indian systems of medicine are also very advanced" and he wanted to bring them forward.

Soon Mathai was invited to France for a conference on 'yogic managers in homeopathy treatment' and that is where he made

his mark. "I was just 25 and soon after the conference I received invitations for lectures all over Europe," he recalls.

That was also the year when he went to London for his post-graduation. And two years later he started practising. But in 1992 he returned to India. "There is more potential for my work in India. And foreigners have the impression that people come to India and fall sick. I want patients from the world over to come to me in Bangalore and go back well," he says.

Mathai gets a lot of patients suffering from chronic or fatal illnesses, many of whom have explored all possibilities before consulting him. "Many cancer patients come to me. But I tell them beforehand that I have no miracle powers in my hands. I may not be able to save them but I can definitely make their remaining days better," he explains.

According to him, alternative medicine cannot replace modern medicine for diagnosis, investigation and emergency care. But he is confident that for chronic illnesses, alternative medicine could well be able to provide permanent answers.

This explains his global appeal. He is a consultant at the Hale Clinic in London, Weybridge Clinic in Manhattan and Holistic Health Centre in Washington, which he visits every three months.

But his heart lies here, in India. Mathai is presently busy setting up a holistic centre of "international standard" in Whitefield, which is on the outskirts of Bangalore.

## An alternative to medicine

Holistic healer Isaac Mathai is on first name terms with many celebrity patients the world over. He tells Panchalee Thakur that alternative medicine cannot replace modern medicine for diagnosis, but it could be the answer for chronic illnesses



Yousuf Hussain