

THE TIMES OF INDIA

FLYING HIGH, HEALING HOLISTICALLY

Seethalakshmi S | TNN

As a 12-year-old, Issac helped his mother Annamma Mathai put stitches on accident victims at her clinic in the deep forests of Wayanad. Three decades later, the integrated medicine exponent treats the who's who of the world's celebrities, ranging from Sarah Fergusson to Tina Turner, and has clinics in different parts of the globe.

PUBLIC SPACE

PRIVATE LIFE

DR ISSAC MATHAI,

INTEGRATED MEDICINE EXPERT AND FOUNDER, SOUKYA, INTERNATIONAL HOLISTIC HEALTH CENTRE, BANGALORE

WHAT HE DOES

Treats patients by integrating traditional healing methods with western medicine

THE EARLY YEARS

The third of the five children of Fr Mathai Nooranal, a priest who ran a cooperative bank to improve the economic status of locals in Sulthanbathery, Issac grew up in a close-knit and service-oriented family. "My parents were unconditional in their service. My mother was the only doctor in the forest-dominated Wayanad. Patients could walk into her clinic at midnight and she would treat them with a smile on her face. As children we were told, 'If your intention is right, you can never be

wrong or fail in your task'."

The family knew that the next doctor in the family after his mother was only Issac. "I did my five-and-a-half-year graduation in Homoeopathy from Kottayam Medical College. I enrolled for yoga therapy course. I saw a number of allopathy doctors learning homoeopathy. That's when I realized that medicine should be complementary and integrated for holistic treatment of patients. It made me realize that it's not important which form of medicine cures a patient, it is the treatment which is more crucial. I believe there should be no barrier between different forms of medicine as long as the patient is cured of his/her illness."

Not just in his healing thousands of patients and his global practice, Issac was different even as a student. "I enrolled for a course in transcendental meditation. I would shut myself in a room and meditate. My friends in the hostel would call me a mad guy."

TURNING POINT IN LIFE

"I heard about an international conference in France on medicine. I knew it was impossible for me to go. First, the finances and who was I anyway? What was my achievement at 25? When there were so many senior doctors, I had little chance to make it."

But the go-getter that he is, Issac wrote a paper on yogic management in homoeopathy and sent it to the conference organizers. "They accepted it and wanted me to speak at the conference. I was on top of the world. I told my mother to make 200 *neti* pots (a traditional tool to heal respiratory problems). I carried them with me to France, distributed to the foreign delegates and talked about India's rich traditional healing systems. That was the beginning. I got job



TREATING THEM WITH A SMILE

offers in London. And I grabbed the opportunity and decided to work there."

BRUSH WITH CELEBS

Everywhere he went, the Wayanad boy spoke about India's traditional medicines and how they can be integrated with Western medicine for complete cure. "Having studied in Malayalam medium, I was keen on polishing my English. There would be several prominent people who would come to the clinic where I was practising. One day, I noticed several girls lined up in front of my clinic to catch a glimpse of one of my patients — George Harrison. They asked me if I had seen Harrison and I said I treated him for his voice as he had a concert the next week. But for the girls, I wouldn't have known he was a part of the Beatles!" Ditto with Tina Turner.

Eventually the doctor became more famous than the patient. "I would fly in private jets with these celebs. I became famous without my knowledge."

THE TIMES OF INDIA

FLYING HIGH, HEALING HOLISTICALLY



BREAKING NEW GROUND: Dr Issac Mathai with wife Suja, a nutritionist, and children Anna, John and Mathew

MY FIRST BENZ

As a boy whenever a new car would come to my village in Wayanad, I would chase it till I got exhausted. I would dream of owning a Mercedes Benz. I told myself I will work towards owning one before I turn 50. In 1995, I saw a second-hand Benz in a London showroom. I loved it but knew I could not afford it. After much negotiations, the shop owner agreed to sell it to me and I could pay in instalments. And Lo! I got it! And I was just 35 then... 15 years ahead of my vow to own a Benz!

TAUGHT YOGA IN LONDON

"Every evening, I would teach yoga for two pounds per hour in London

for students. The money I earned from that would go towards my swimming classes. To save money, I would cycle everywhere."

SOUKYA WAS BORN

But after three years of globe-trotting, Issac began to feel the need to return to his roots. "I wanted to return to India and get these celebs to our country to show them what we Indians can do in healthcare. And Bangalore was the chosen destination. But I was firm on practising integrated medicine for I realized that there was so much behind the disease of the patient. And holistic treatment was the answer."

And it was not easy. Issac and

FAVE THINGS

- Authors:** Dale Carnegie, Malcom Gladwell
- Films:** Forrest Gump, Bucket List
- Food:** Appam and stew, Japanese cuisine
- Actors:** Amitabh Bachchan, Mammooty and Mohanlal

There was a restaurant on the main street in London, where I would dream of eating as a young doctor but could not afford to do so. Last year, I hosted a banquet for 20 top doctors from the UK in the same restaurant. To me that was achievement! I believe hard work never goes waste

his nutritionist wife Suja borrowed from friends, networked with experts to build the 30-acre healing centre off Whitefield.

The entire design of the centre where just about everything is natural (vegetables, spices and medicinal herbs are grown there) was done by Suja. "We wanted to make it as natural as possible yet sophisticated," says Dr Suja who has stood like a pillar behind Dr Issac to realise his 'holistic' dream.

Today, the centre is the healing point for the rich and famous. For the record, Prince Charles is expected to visit and stay at Soukya late next year. And Issac has clinics at London, New York and Washington DC.

From treating the tribals of Wayanad to villagers in Hoskote to the likes of Madonna, this holistic healer truly believes in synchronicity than destiny.