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**Holistic SOUKYA
in Bengaluru
incorporates
spirituality**

+BATHROOM SPECIAL

Holistic Healthiness!

Aerial view of SOUKYA's entrance showing the Nallukettu Reception (left) and Medical Consultation Buildings (right).



Dr Suja Issac and Dr Issac Mathai are committed to offering integrative medical treatment at their peaceful centre, SOUKYA, in Bengaluru.

TEXT: AMITA SARWAL PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY SOUKYA, BENGALURU

In 1998, upon acquiring a 30-acre plot of barren land in Whitefield, Bengaluru, the owners started by converting the land into an organic farm which has been certified

annually since 2011. They planted over 3000 trees including coconut and mango trees and an abundance of fruit and flowering trees and plants. They started grow-

ing vegetables and aromatic plants only after 2002. The fruit and vegetables grown on the farm are served to guests. The ayurvedic medicinal garden provides 80 per

cent of the ingredients for the in-house production of high quality, ayurvedic oils and medicines, supervised by ayurvedic doctors.

Fed on organic fodder, the



Dr. Issac Mathai and Dr. Suja Issac.

Talented Twosome

Dr Issac Mathai, 57, Founder, Chairman, Managing & medical doctor, decided while at ANSS Homeopathic Medical College, Kottayam, Kerala, 'Why offer patients only homeopathy? Why not combine it with holistic, traditional, time tested, natural medicines that have no side effects, like Ayurveda, naturopathy – and yoga?' Believing that treatments should be individual-oriented, rather than medical system-oriented or doctor-oriented, Mathai is open to including any therapy that can complement the healing process, which has made him a global pioneer in integrative medicine.

'In 1998, we started integrating different medical systems at our Holistic Wellness Clinic in Bengaluru, which transitioned to SOUKYA, on the outskirts of Whitefield, Bengaluru. SOUKYA, offering need-based treatments, is the first and only centre in the world incorporating three – Ayurveda, homeopathy, naturopathy – systems of medicine backed by two decades' experience – and yoga along with a whole range of complementary therapies.'

Dr Issac Mathai affirms that 'Integrative medicine should be faced with Western Medicine (allopathy) for the benefit of mankind and not be used as an alternative therapy. It's the judicious combination of

different systems of medicine, without diluting the authenticity of each system nor negating the effect of the other, whereby results are more effective than the sum of each individual system of medicine. The reason to move to bring these systems together, is to provide the best treatment for the patient/person.'

At SOUKYA, holistic medicine like Ayurveda, homeopathy, yoga and naturopathy are used to treat the person as a whole, in the context of one's surroundings, taking into consideration the emotional, nutritional, environmental and lifestyle of the person.

His wife, Dr Suja Issac, 51, Co-Founder & Executive Director, and Head, Food & Nutrition, wears many hats including administrative, operational and designer of the facilities. She also designed the drop-shaped logo 'representative of the person – mind (green), body (rust) and spirit (blue) and the universe – earth (rust), vegetation (green) and water and sky (blue). Shaped like a water drop, a flame and the opening denoting air and space,' Suja details.

Perhaps Suja's choice of the name SOUKYA derived from the Sanskrit word 'Soukhyam' meaning Wellness sums up what the couple are determined to offer on their premises.



Main entrance of SOUKYA International Holistic Health Centre.

FACT FILE	
TYPOTOLOGY	Holistic Health Centre
PROJECT	SOUKYA International Holistic Health Centre
LOCATION	Bengaluru
COMPLETION	2 years and 9 months
BUILT-UP AREA	80,000 sq ft
SITE AREA	30 acres
ARCHITECTURE	Designed by Suja Issac (assisted by architects Mohan Kumar and Joseph Chandy)
LANDSCAPE	Suja Issac
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	HNR Prasad
ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR	Latif (Naseer Electricals)
PLUMBING CONTRACTOR	Radhakrishnan (R J Engineering)



HRH Camilla Duchess of Cornwall planting a Plumeria at SOUKYA's Holy Trinity Chapel during her 5th visit in 2017. Seen with her, from extreme left are Anna Issac, and the Founders of SOUKYA, Dr Suja Issac and Dr Issac Mathai.

farm cows and goats provide pure milk. Cows' urine is used as natural pesticide, while cow dung becomes part of the biogas for the SOUKYA kitchen and organic composting. Other farm animals include sheep, ducks, rabbits; the place is a haven for migratory birds.

It was Dr Suja Issac's theoretical background in floor and spatial planning, principles of art and textiles, imbibed during her undergraduate Home Science years from the Women's Christian College, Chennai, that came into practice during SOUKYA's construction phase. She hand-sketched her concepts which were transferred into technical drawings by an architect and structural, electrical and plumbing contractors.

Founded on the theory that an open-to-nature concept is



Frontage of the open reception building with the Karnataka handmade roof tiles.



The reception building's open corridor with a pot fountain has handmade rafters holding the terracotta panel roof and handmade floor tiles.

'Why offer patients only homeopathy? Why not combine it with holistic, traditional, time-tested, natural medicines that have no side effects, like Ayurveda, naturopathy – and yoga.'

essential for the healing process, it was integral to have a healing facility in a tranquil and aesthetic environment. All the buildings designed by her are based on their functional needs, practicality, natural light and ventilation and local material tiles, keeping in mind, aesthetics and budget. A large variety of handmade local tiles was ingeniously used for the flooring as well as a new concept of a natural roofing by the structural engineer. Handmade fabric has been extensively used for the interiors. Harmony was brought into the living space through wind chimes, bells and fountains.

The inspiration for the designs and structures was drawn from various elements observed in India and during world travels. The traditional rectangular homestead, 'nal-lukettu' style found in Kerala is followed in the reception and medical buildings; the hut-like Yoga Hall has mud walls and



Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu planted the now fully blooming Gulmohar on 11 Dec 2005, at the end of his first of three visits to SOUKYA. At left, on the vast lawn, is the Open Door inspired by one seen in France.



The Medical Consultation Building. Guests may watch TV here. With its central fish pond and fountain, it is a welcoming place.

Shanthi – the circular Yoga Hall, symbolises what its name suggests.
It is set amidst peaceful, verdant surroundings.



Oval granite stones leading up to the main entrance of Shanti – the Yoga Hall.



The structure holding the grass roof with the Gujarati mirror and coloured glasswork adorning the walls and Kerala black oxide floor.

a Salem grass thatched roof, while the flooring is traditional Kerala black oxide.

Dr Mathai confesses to being inspired by the Gujarati coloured glass and mirror work at Mallika Sarabhai's Darpana Academy in Ahmedabad, which Suja then replicated in the interiors of the Yoga Hall and exterior of the Therapy Centre.

During a Greek holiday, the blue and white churches of Santorini inspired Suja to design a buff coloured Byzantine-style chapel with arched roofs, windows and doors.

The open door standing in the middle of the vast lawn, symbolising openness to receive healing, was seen in France.

Beyond structural design, solar power was special to the



owners and Suja made critical inputs regarding solar water heating, telecommunication networks, electrical and rainwater harvesting projects. This organic farm has incorporated many eco-friendly practices, including the recharging of bore wells, vermi-compost and is now run totally on solar power. The Centre has the lowest carbon footprint as 97 per cent of the staff walk to work.

Flora is another passion of Suja's which led her to landscape the entire grounds. 'Our ornamental garden was designed keeping in mind low-cost maintenance and watering. For example, perennials like the white and mauve lantana flower all year round. We won the 7th consecutive Best Ornamental Garden in Bengaluru in 2017'.



The Turkish Rasul chamber (above) where one is given steam baths and showers, sometimes after a mud treatment. The Reflexology Deck (top) overlooks the Turkish Rasul and is set in an aromatic garden.



The multi-hued, eye catching Dining Building comprises the Lounge and three dining areas – Formal, Outdoor, and Grape Dining where one can pluck and eat ripe, organic grapes.



The Lounge is floored with the handmade tiles.

'An in-house aspect and training program involved designing the systems in close cooperation with our HR department, as I believe that the attitude and integrity of our staff is the key factor in a healing facility – and making our guests feel at home and comfortable,' details Suja.

Stays at SOUKYA range from a week to a month or more and people come in for de-stress, relaxation, detoxification, rejuvenation, de-addictions and many for annual, traditional month long ayurvedic anti-ageing treatment protocols and serious medical conditions. They cater to people from over 100 countries including families with children for whom cottages are equipped with kitchens.



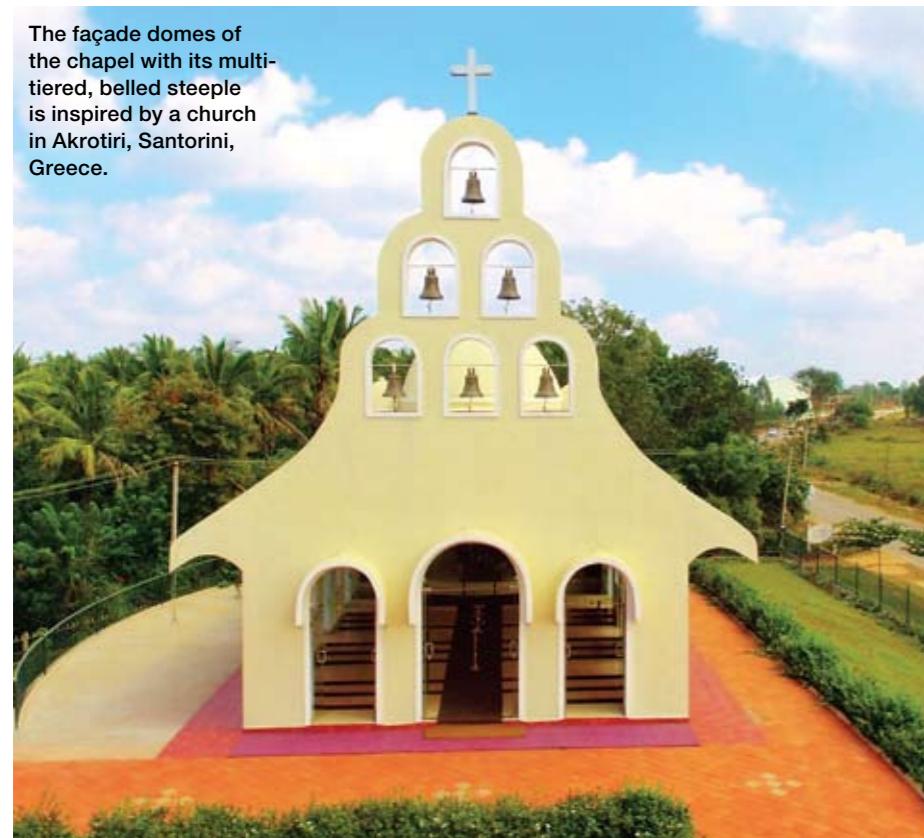
The Library, which was inaugurated by HRH Camilla Duchess of Cornwall in 2013, on one of her visits to SOUKYA.



A guest room flanked on three sides by a garden.



The minimalist,
understated interior
of the chapel.



The façade domes of
the chapel with its multi-
tiered, belled steeple
is inspired by a church
in Akrotiri, Santorini,
Greece.



Standing elegantly tall against
the skyline on a man-made
hillock, the holy trinity SOUKYA
chapel was inspired by the
Greek Orthodox churches in
Santorini.

SOUKYA has a total of 25 rooms in varying categories, designed in such a manner that four suites can double up as two-bedroom cottages and a single three-bedroom cottage. Other facilities are the Therapy Centre with 50

treatment rooms, Yoga Hall – Shanti, an 84-seater dining area comprising formal, an outdoor and an adjacent 'grape' dining area where grapevines form the ceiling, and guests can pluck and eat ripe organic grapes, library,

health resort



A guest suite with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the greenery outside.



and outdoor and indoor recreational facilities like walking track, swimming pool, badminton and board games.

SOUKYA Foundation, (1996) has been offering free integrative medicine to the underprivileged and subsi-

dised treatment to the urban populace and from 2013 to the rural masses in Jadigenahalli Panchayath, Hoskote Taluk and Bengaluru Rural, which comprises of seven villages with over 1000 families. Presently, the Rural Centre

has had patients from over 60 villages, additionally funded by SOUKYA profits.

SOUKYA's sister concern, SAHAYA, Bengaluru, which opened in 2009, offers the same high-quality treatment to the masses. ■

An antique four-poster bed in a suite.