

“ The purpose of art is washing the
dust of daily life off our souls ”
— Pablo Picasso



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By Reena Singh

Spiritual guru and Ayurveda pioneer, Mother Maya is currently on a ‘living ahimsa’ world tour to convert people to a non-violent way of life. She talks to Reena Singh on inner medicine

It’s not every day that you meet a best-selling author of Ayurveda books, an ex-sanyasini who routinely shares the dias with spiritual leaders like the Dalai Lama. Born Maya Tiwari, but better known as Mother Maya, her Mother Om Missions (MOM) spread the message of the Vedas, of ahimsa, peace, and ancient Ayurveda wisdom on food and spirituality. Currently on a four-year ‘Living Ahimsa’ world tour to reach out to a billion people and gently persuade them to adopt an ahimsa way of life, her aim is to empower and teach people key techniques of self-healing.

Mother Maya is of Indian origin, born in former British Guyana (now Guyana). She recounts her amazing story: She was “given a death sentence at 21 when she was diagnosed with cancer.” She went through chemotherapy and 12 major operations after which doctors told her she had only a few months to live. She decided to spend the rest of her days at a log-cabin in the midst of winter in Vermont, USA. She sought refuge in Devi and had an inner calling to meet her own Ishwara and Bhagawan. She stopped taking medication and retreated to the secluded cabin with a “clean body free of toxic medicines”. “I performed semi-fasting on brown rice, meditation, mantra, and additional austerities for six months and came back alive. That was 32 years ago,” she tells you.

Once back, she returned to her work in New York as a fashion designer and continued to work in the fashion industry selling to top retailers and catering to the rich and famous including Jackie Onassis. She ran a chain of successful “Maya” boutiques and her work was described by the late Sally Kirkland, chief editor of Life magazine as “the first of American high fashion.”

But she did not forget her time in seclusion and how her devotion to Devi and her austerities had cured her. She started her work to educate people in Ayurveda concepts of wholesome vegetarian food, and practice of pranayama and meditation. She established the Wise Earth Ayurveda School — the first in North America in 1981 — and hasn’t looked back since then on what she calls a “long journey”. She also joined Swami Dayananda Saraswati’s ashram.

“We are spiritual beings, and we offer our work to people from all spiritual backgrounds,” she says in her characteristic soft voice — a voice that rings in your ears weeks after you first heard

it.

“We have the power to heal ourselves. So, my work is to teach people to do yoga, pranayama, and even tell them about their individual and community metabolic types,” she says. “My mission is now to help people understand their own spiritual nature so as to raise their self-esteem to heal themselves” she adds.

“I call this kind of work, inner medicine. We should be able to understand our life force, our prana; this is not religion-based, and we must all recognise ourselves as spiritual people,” she says. She adds that her endeavour is to give practical and spiritual tips to people. She has done so for the “few hundred thousand women” that she has met in the course of her work in rural Guyana and the US.

After her own fight with cancer, she figured that the body heals, but not necessarily through medicine. “We have to take charge of this process of healing and heal ourselves,” she explains. “This is something most people don’t know. Along with the clinical model, people can take up other sadhanas and practices that they can do themselves,” she adds.

Adopt ahimsa and live a life of peace. Turn vegetarian, although she doesn’t dictate it. She suggests: “A medical prescription is not sufficient, so we teach people therapies they can do at home to take charge of their inner self-education and do their own self-healing with yoga, meditation and with the use of inexpensive herbs that are readily available.”

Mother Maya will soon set up her mission work in Tamil Nadu, the state her mother is from.

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