



DHIHYA DHYANA

BEAUTY AND BRAINS

Dhihya Dhyana plays many roles; a doctor and Miss Universe Malaysia 2016 first runner up. She is also an enthusiastic volunteer. We sit down with this beauty queen and explore her zest for life (and food).

BY HIRANMAYI AWLI MOHANAN

Photo by: Borathan Amuthan

Tell us about yourself.

My name is Dhivya Dhyana means divine meditation in Sanskrit. I was born in New Zealand and raised in Malaysia. I did my schooling in Methodist Primary School, and SMK Desa Perdana. Attended college in HELP University College and completed my MBBS degree at the International Medical University. Growing up, I was always wearing many hats. I had a passion to learn new things, so I tried almost everything I had an interest in. I took up Indian classical singing and dance (bharathanatyam) for six years, I went for swimming lessons, I learnt to play the piano, I took up Hip-Hop and Latin dance classes later on, went for Art classes, studied a third language formally (Hindi), etc. For a normal person this would be too much on one's plate. But for some reason, I have always enjoyed my time being fully taken up. If I liked something or had an interest in it, I HAD to learn it. Just part of enriching my soul.

What triggered your passion for medicine?

I have always had a heart to serve from a very young age. I have been part of an interfaith organization called Sathya Sai International Organisation since I was a kid, where community service plays a huge role. The passion to serve was also instilled by my mother, who is a past president of the Rotary Club. Being involved in so many charitable programmes, choosing medicine as a career just seemed the most natural thing for me. There was no other profession I could see myself doing.

What inspired you to take part in the Miss Malaysia World and Miss Universe Malaysia pageants?

When I was four years old, I met Sushmita Sen (Miss Universe 1994) during one of her visits to Malaysia. During that visit, I had the privilege of talking to Sushmita who told me that one day I would become just like her. I assumed she was just being nice to all the children there. But my father who remembers the event so vividly had always told me about it, reminding me that I had to give it a shot. He would sit and watch the Miss World and Miss Universe grand finals on TV with me, and he would point out how I should prepare myself for the journey. I knew I always wanted to join the Miss Universe Malaysia pageant. But before I was ready for that, I joined the Miss World Malaysia contest first. I was placed in both pageants, which I consider a huge achievement.

How do you juggle between medicine and fulfilling your duties as a public figure?

This is a question I keep getting asked. Being involved in two completely different fields is definitely not easy. It takes a lot of mental strength, perseverance, hard work and discipline. The year I participated in the Miss Universe Malaysia pageant, was also my final year in med school. The day before the grand finale was my final posting examination. It was definitely one of the toughest phases of my life. But it was in those moments that I realised I was able to achieve anything if I only set my heart, mind and soul to it. There is absolutely nothing that one cannot do if you work hard enough for it.

You are very active in volunteering. Could you share with us the programmes you are passionate about?

As mentioned previously, I have been involved with the Sathya Sai Interfaith Organisation from a very young age. Through it, I learnt the value of service to others. I have been involved in various activities such as Free Medical Camps (national and international), blood donation drives, education of human values, drug prevention and other social issues. Apart from that, I am also a council member of MMICare Association, a women-run NGO which focuses on the empowerment of women and children. Here, we work closely with young girls from various backgrounds, educating them on reproductive health, cyber security, self-esteem, grooming, positive thinking and substance addiction. We run camps throughout the country and we have a peer-mentoring system to handhold the girls until they are independent and self-reliant. During my time in IMU, I was also part of the community service programme where we ran free medical camps at Orang Asli villages. I was also one of the very few students to fly to Nepal for Medical Relief Aid after the recent earthquake. In my final year of medical school, I was selected as the top three students for the IMU Humanitarian Award. I was the only student in the entire medical programme to have been selected. I play my part in community service on a personal basis as well. Two years ago, I formed a group called Stop The Hunger with a group of friends, where we provided free meals to the homeless around Kuala Lumpur on a monthly basis. Recently I have found a new passion for educating children who cannot afford it. God willing, I have been able to assist in the education of a couple of students. In the future, I would want to be

able to help more children with education, to make sure they have the privilege of knowledge that I was blessed enough to have.

What is your biggest goal in life?

My biggest goal in life is to always stay happy and be a constant source of inspiration to others.

How would you define beauty?

In my opinion, beauty is beyond physical appearance or temporary glamour. It is a combination of the ability to be comfortable in your own skin, to be able to carry yourself with grace, to walk with confidence and yet show humility. That's beauty.

What do you do to stay in shape?

I am a fairly active person. I used to regularly practise yoga. Now, I go to the gym at least twice a week and I hike outdoors sometimes. I try to eat clean most of the time and I avoid fast food and fried food. But of course I have my cheat days so that I don't lose out on the good stuff. Cheat days are essential for making sure we don't stress out with a tough regime and end up giving up.

What do you do for fun?

To me, having fun is being with friends. I spend a lot of time with my friends trying out new things, going to new places or just chilling out together. Despite my busy schedule, I always make time for friends and family.

Any guilty pleasures?

Chocolate. Dessert. Anything sweet. This is why I make sure I stay active and fit, so I can afford to have my guilty pleasures once in a while.

What are the three local food you can't live without?

Nasi Lemak, Apam Balik and Satay

Your favourite places to dine in the Klang Valley?

My parents used to have a restaurant called McCurry in Jalan Ipoh, so I grew up having good food. Now my mum runs a restaurant in OUG called Nice 'N' Spicy at Yarl's. That is obviously my most frequent food place. Apart from that, friends and I love to go to Devi's Corner in Bangsar its Banana leaf rice meals. For vegetarian meals, I usually go to Chat Masala in Brickfields. My favourite dessert place is Dip N Dip in Bangsar.