

Of plastic smiles and silicon lies

SHARMISTHA CHATTERJEE

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Parveen Chaddha (name changed), 37 is well known for being a perfectionist. But she has one problem _ the contour of her nose never satisfies her. Described by her doctor as a limelight patient, she has undergone nine surgeries to get her nose fixed which includes several trips abroad.



Sunil Jayraj (name changed), 42 is blessed with reasonably good looks. He is unhappy and wants to look younger. He approached an aesthetic surgeon with a photograph of a young Lord Krishna and asked him to make him look alike. The surgeon asked him to see a psychiatrist. People's obsession with looking good today has taken bizarre proportions. Affluence and easy access to the steadily growing number of cosmetic surgeons has people turning to these beauty merchants with some of the most unreasonable prospects. "People come up with unrealistic expectations," says cosmetic surgeon Dr Ashok Gupta. "Looking good has emerged as a psychological need."

And daily glossies glorifying the slim and near perfect look of stars and celebrities have only fuelled it. "They are obsessed with their body parts to such an extent that it interferes with their daily functioning. They want to look beautiful without considering the viability of such a proposition." While a certain segment like models and actresses have professional compulsions, for others it could be

as varied low self esteem, disgruntled life to unhappiness. Mental science terms such patients as possibly suffering from a condition called Body Image Disorder. "This condition could be caused by anxiety, depression or some major mental disorder," says psychiatrist, Dr Vihang Vahia. "But each need individual treatment." But very few patients are referred to counselors. While bulk requests are for nose jobs and lipo-suctions, a sizeable number today come from the men who want implants done on their chests and calves to accentuate their looks. Breast implants, fillers, Botox injections for wrinkles are equally popular. Chemical peels are preferred by many for "no matter how fair a person she wants to be fairer," observes Dr Jamuna Pai, skin specialist.

The search for that alluring look, under the surgeon's knife however could be a disaster as seen in the case of pop star Michael Jackson. Badly done jobs and repeated surgeries could cause the skin to rupture, too much Botox could result in temporary paralysis of the face and gel implants could lead to cancer. However, the ultimate onus lies with the medical fraternity who should behave responsibly. "One should always make sure that they visit qualified practitioners when they want cosmetic surgery done," says Dr. Gupta. "Doctors should use their discretion and listen to patients needs and be brave enough to say no when necessary."