

CITY SUPPLEMENTS: BOMBAY TIMES

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Plastic surgery offers them a second chance

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When her husband disfigured her face by throwing acid, life almost came to a standstill for 22-year-old supriya. While a plastic surgeon was beyond her means, it was a neighbour's advise that took her to amravati, where a visiting doctor reconstructed her face by means of maxilofacial surgery. Physical reconstruction is no longer a privilege of the rich, now with the organisation fresh start surgical gifts economically under-privileged can avail facilities for constructive surgery, all free of cost. Recalls dr. Ashok gupta, the brainchild of fresh start surgical gifts, "it was during my days in oxford that I noticed doctors very often traveling to peripheral hospitals to undertake operations." adds the plastic surgeon who has successfully conducted over 200 free surgeries, "this not only reduced the load in the tertiary hospitals but also made things easier for the people living in the interiors." it was only after a chance encounter with a German missionary that he traveled to chattisgarh, which had a well equipped hospital catering to the financially backward section of the society, and decided to go ahead with his plan. He soon started visiting hospitals in remote parts of Maharashtra and carried out reconstructive surgeries. "These poor people can barely make both ends meet, forget about paying the doctor's fees. But this doesn't mean that they should be denied such treatments." fresh start has arrangements with local doctors and hospitals for conducting surgeries on patients suffering from various physical disorders caused by birth defects, accidents and diseases or physical abuse. But dr. gupta points out that most medical camps held for this purpose, aren't equipped with post-operative care. "An operation does not solve the entire purpose," he says. "Often a follow-up action needs to taken and we ensure that." while fresh start depends mostly on donations, it has tied up with a similar organisation in the us for sharing of technological expertise. Says dr. gupta, "we are an independent body which has to rely on charity."