

LOOKING GOOD

What is the purpose of your trip to Goa?

I have been associated with Goa for the last three years. I make it a point to visit the state at least once a fortnight to conduct cosmetic surgeries at the Vintage hospital in Panjim. Even during the monsoon season there is a tremendous rush and it is increasing every year. Last year I operated on around 1,500 patients in Goa.

You have spent quality of time in USA as you received your degree there. So what was the reason to shift base?

I went to the USA 31 years back with just 30 US dollars in my pocket. It was during the chilly days of September that I landed in New York. I was not given any scholarship or sponsorship. It was just because of the plain fact that I wanted to do something in my life. I struggled hard to earn a medical degree and get myself trained in the best hospitals. I have worked in the field of surgery for 16 years. But in 2001 when I returned to India to look after my old parents I thought of sharing my expertise in the field of cosmetic surgery.

Why did you choose to become a cosmetic surgeon?

Basically, I have an artistic tendency. I don't like to do things mechanically. And I think this particular field is the best example of art and science. It also involves sculpture. So this was the right choice for me. I have a passion for my work and that brings out the best in me.

Do you think it is really important to look picture perfect?

Few years' back cosmetic surgery was restricted to the rich and famous but now all of us want to look good as it makes us feel good. When an individual has any physical deformity it generates a certain negative reaction in society and this affects the

individual. For example a lot of teenagers are driven towards cosmetic surgery by the rude and sometimes harsh comments of their peers.

Where do you draw the line?

It is a valid point, as there should be a limit for everything. If an individual comes to us saying he or she wishes to try cosmetic surgery just to look good, we might reject the case if we think there is no need for it. At our clinic, surgical treatment is the last step. We first start with diet, exercise and medication.

Do you think exposure to media influences individual choices?

Yes, it does. On TV and in Bollywood everything is perfect so people tend to imitate that. The best example is the use of fairness cream. We are bombarded with these advertisements all the time. It is because of the fact that Indians are obsessed with fair skin. Do you know that the fairness cream business is worth Rs 1,500 crore in India.

You are also associated with the concept of medical tourism. Can you elaborate.

I am one of the architects of the medical tourism in India. And I think Goa has huge a potential. Hospitals in the state are well-equipped. But still, there is a need for super specialty in the departments of neurosurgery and cardiac care. Right now, Chennai leads in medical tourism. The fact that it is a converging point for MNCs has helped. According to me, Goa is the best choice as one is more relaxed here. All you have to do is play your cards correctly.

What is your impression about Goa?

I just love coming down to Goa because I can't believe that I am working as it is so relaxing. People here are fabulous to work with as they don't hold grudges. When I leave Goa I am totally recharged and prepared for my hectic schedule in Mumbai.

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Dr Mohan Thomas is a certified cosmetic surgeon with a special interest in Goa. This Mumbai-based surgeon, who is one of the architects of medical tourism in India, was in his favourite chill-out place when **GT Features** caught up with him to speak on the concept of looking good.