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**Plastic Surgeries: Hope to Life or Beauty Business?**

If you are a social media user, or you follow any other electronic or print media, you probably come across many celebrities and beauty influencers, almost every day. Eye-catching advertisements, movies, dramas, and even personal social media accounts, you see these popular people everywhere, showing off their ‘perfect’ skin, facial features, and bodies.

These shows of ‘perfection’ and ‘beauty’ on daily basis, have a high tendency to make common people envious of these public figures, and feel inferior about their own bodies and selves. Societies have certain standards, and if a person does not fit upon these standards, they are not allowed to feel beautiful and confident about themselves. And so, the marathon, in pursuit of perfection and beauty, begins.

Ever since ancient times, some sort of makeup and beauty products have been a way for people to temporarily 'fix' their imperfections to some extent. But as time passed, people tried to develop techniques to make permanent changes to their appearance as they want. And this is how, I believe, plastic surgery originated.

The term plastic surgery came from Greek language, in which “plastikē (tekhnē)”[[1]](#footnote-1), refers to ‘the art of modelling’ (of soft flesh). The idea of using surgical procedures to modify one’s physical features, dates back to around 800 B.C. (or to sixth century[[2]](#footnote-2) by some other sources,) when ancient Indian physicians started to practice skin grafting.[[3]](#footnote-3) With time, medical sciences started to flourish, advancements in plastic surgical techniques also occurred, and the skills spread to the West as well. However, the West was slower in this progress of plastic surgery techniques.

Initially, plastic surgeries were aimed to help reconstruct the abnormal physical features of people, who suffered serious wounds, burns, disease or some birth disorders, or trauma[[4]](#footnote-4). The goal was to return the normal appearance and functionalities of treated body parts. During the World War I, modern plastic surgeries became popular, since many soldiers either lost body parts or had their faces disfigured in the battle. Sir Harold Gilles, father of Modern plastic surgery, proposed for their wounds to be closed and treated using tissues from some other part of their own bodies[[5]](#footnote-5). Plastic surgeries performed with this technique, gave the soldiers an opportunity to get their natural features restored and their scars healed, so they can start their lives normally, once again.

With time, plastic surgery procedures became very advanced, so much that they leave almost no traces once fully recovered. This is when people realized the true magic that plastic surgeries can do and hence, people with naturally normal features also began to demand these surgeries, as a way to improve the aesthetic appeal of their appearance. And so, in the eighteenth century, surgeries for cosmetic purposes became a real thing.

Nowadays, cosmetic surgeries have almost taken over the initial purpose of plastic surgery, and its impact can be seen in the fact that the term plastic surgery is now commonly used as synonym for cosmetic surgeries. Plastic surgery and cosmetic surgery are actually two fields, different from each other in purpose and goal. The goal of plastic surgery is to restore normal appearance and function of a body part, while cosmetic surgery aims to enhance the beauty and aesthetic appeal of physical features. [[6]](#footnote-6)

These days, the progress in the field of plastic surgery is rapid but Eastern world, especially South Korea is still the ultimate wonderland, that people from all over the world visit, in order to experience the miracles of plastic surgery.

But do people really need to modify their bodies, what are the limitations of these changes a human body can handle, which of these procedures should be practiced and which ones not, or if people should even be allowed to interfere with the natural aesthetic of their bodies, these are few of the questions that I frequently ask myself these days.

If you are someone interested in multiple cultures, or follow people from different regions and cultures, you realize that the standards of beauty and perfection are not actually a standard. You may see western beauty gurus on media, making everyone believe that beauty is tanned skin and hourglass figure, and that everyone needs a Kardashian-like body to look and feel beautiful. On the other hand, the Asians want every woman to look very thin, with white and flawless skin.

This variation in beauty standards make me question the very definitions of 'beauty' and 'perfection'. Do any standards actually exist, or are these just social constructs? Do we really wish to go through painful and risky procedures to modify our appearances, when even after certain modifications and fulfilling the standards, we are beautiful in just one part of the world? Does it worth the pain and our hard-earned money?

Well, most people should not be concerned about these questions, since you need satisfactory answers to these questions when you are actually thinking about trying cosmetic surgeries. But these surgeries are not everyone’s game, a common middle-class person will have it hard even if they need a very necessary procedure done, solely for medical reasons, since the expenses are very high. Only the very rich can afford to pay for these advanced cosmetic surgeries, making life more miserable for the others by raising the demands of standard beauty. You need the money to afford it first, thinking about ethics and morals comes after that.

But life would be easier if the story ends with people having no money to afford cosmetic surgeries. Social pressures and the need to get an acceptance certificate from everyone on how you look, is the real cruelty of life. It is hard to not care or escape from others people’s views and comments about you, when you have to live with them, but we need to bear it all and survive. The most unfair part of this all, is that mostly, it is only women in the society who undergo all this pressure, and are forced to change themselves, to appear pleasing for others. World is patriarchal even after so much progress, and some of the development is sort of fueling the patriarchy, for example cosmetic surgeries making women’s lives even harder by raising the standards of appearance aesthetics.

This also leads us to question the involvement of free will. Except for the illegal practitioners, you have to sign legal documents including consent forms before going through any surgical procedure, the same goes for all kinds of plastic surgeries. But does this consent really show your free will? What about the role of social pressure and stress these cruel standards put on you? Do people really do this because they themselves want it or is this the society that forces them to consent to these modifications in their bodies?

The only cases where one can be sure about free will, and one of the few positive things about plastic surgeries is when people go through gender transitions, or when people just themselves want to look a certain way. The advancement in plastic surgery has done one amazing job and this is for transgenders. Nowadays, it is possible to completely transform your body if you are a man who wants to become a woman, or vice versa. Plastic surgery turns you into a whole new person, from head to toe, so you can enjoy your transitioned life as if you were born this way. Sadly though, as I mentioned before, not everyone can afford this happiness.

Plastic surgeries also help survivors of cancers and other diseases. For example, Breast cancer is a very common nowadays. Although, it is curable now, the survivors usually end up losing some part of their chests, making it look asymmetric and disfigured, reminding the person of their disease again and again. With plastic surgery, they can get their normal body shape back and enjoy their newly blessed life without having any memories of the trauma they went through.

Even with normal people, no matter if its wrong religiously or ethically, cosmetic surgeries might be the reason many people became able to live a normal life. I recently watched a South Korean drama serial, with the literal English title “My ID is Gangnam Beauty”, where the lead girl did not have facial features that fit the strict stereotypical beauty standards of Korea. The girl had a miserable life until high school, she was bullied for being ‘ugly’ and it affected her so much that she always hid her whole face with her hair. She even tried attempting suicide because life is hard when society expects something from you which is not in your control, and you get tortured for it. Before starting college, she makes the decision to change her appearance and got her entire face changed with plastic surgery and her life changed completely.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The drama showed how people will still criticize you, calling you names and saying that you are artificial, but still things do get a lot better. One’s physical appearance do play a part in building up their confidence, and there is nothing wrong about that. May be your decision is a result of social pressure and your stress, but if it can give you happiness, even little, I believe that it is just right to try. After all, everyone is the master of their own selves and they have right on their body.

But as we have right on our bodies, I think that our bodies do have a right on us. Since all our body parts play their role and help us with living our life to the fullest, it is just fair that we take care of the well-being of our body. For medical reasons to restore the ‘normality’, or for aesthetic purposes, you can try anything on your body but there are things that one should always care about. We should be well aware of what we are putting ourselves into, the person whom we are trusting our body with, and the limitations of how much we can handle.

It is very common with cosmetic plastic surgeries that people either go to a wrong doctor instead of a certified expert, just to save some money, and regret their decision for lifetime. Not every surgeon is sincere with there work as well, so you should take reviews from other people about the consultation process and results. You can see many such cases in the famous American plastic surgery show ‘Botched’, where people come to get their ‘plastic surgeries gone wrong’ fixed. Usually, plastic surgeries fail because the doctor did not inform them of all the risks and limitations, as a result, people temporarily lose sensations in that part of the body or the blood vessels are damaged to an extent that the blood supply to the operated area stops, and that part of the body has a high chances of becoming dead and eventually just falling off. An example of this was shown in the case of a British DJ, whose wish to get a small nose like Pikachu, made her to get multiple nose-jobs, with no actual success in her wish. When she appeared on the show to get another surgery on her nose to get it done even thinner, the surgeon on the show asked her if she had trouble with breathing. Turned out, in her wish to get a thin small nose, her previous surgeries resulted in her nasal passage getting blocked there was not enough space for air to pass.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In conclusion, like every other scientific progress and technology, plastic surgeries have their own pros and cons. On one hand, they can become a reason for someone to take a fresh start in life, or turn their appearance into whatever they want, and hence provide happiness, but on the other hand, the risks and dangers follow all the science. In my opinion, plastic surgery in itself is a wonder of science, but how it is taken socially, and how medical practitioners play their role in providing consultation and treatment, is what provides the results. Also, like every scientific advancement, we see capitalism playing its part in this field as well, you need money to help yourself, whether the procedure you need is medical concern or an aesthetic need. If I am to answer the question in the title, I believe that plastic surgeries are playing the role of hope in many people’s lives, but those who want, are using it as a beauty business too, caring just about money without any morals or ethics. At the end of the day, it is up to humans to decide what to do with the science and technology they have access to, humans are to praise or blame for all the results.

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