

feature

People, Philosophies, Possibilities

Laugh the years away

It's easy to improve on nature's handiwork when aesthetic medicine has the tools to erase or lighten imperfections while enhancing attractive bits.

But there's a line between ageing gracefully, and disgracefully, when a little too much can take you from firm to fake. Use your judgment but don't let emotion dictate how you should look. Accept that when you hit middle age, even the best care will not keep you looking 25 up close. Rather, work at not being sullen or boring. As our cover girl Dr Komathy Rajaratnam says, you're beautiful when you are happy and contented.

A sparkling example is author Catherine Lim who turned 70 on 23 March. The sexy septuagenarian looks on the light side of 50; is as charming and curious as a teenager; and glows with a vivacity all her own.





The Doctor is IN

In-style and in shape, Dr Komathy Rajaratnam is an inspiration to all who aspire to age gracefully. Genetic gift or hard work asks RACHEL CHAN?

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam, 51 this year, is a picture of minimal chic in a black sheath dress with black strappy wedges and silver earrings.

The elegant doctor, a General Practitioner with an interest in aesthetics and dermatology, disabuses us of the notion that her job is glamorous or simple.

Avoiding injuries and mistakes

“Aesthetic medicine is not easy. Things can go wrong at any time. Whether we are doing peels or using laser machines, there can be complications such as burns. For Botox, mistakes can result in drooping eyelids, uneven eyebrows or a crooked mouth.”

Technical skills and comprehensive knowledge of dermatology aside, she must manage patient expectations and provide patients with her undivided attention when she is treating them.

“You need to always be upfront. Explain the outcome – both the bad and the good. Never overpromise, it’s better to underpromise. Aesthetic patients are not diseased. Their expectations are a lot higher. When I treat, I don’t like distractions or being pushed for time.”

For example, with laser hair removal, patients sometimes forget to stay out of the sun before coming for their laser sessions – despite reminders to do so.

“At the end of the day, the doctor has to share some of the blame. Although you’ve told the patient, you still need to be observant. If you burn the patient, you will be accountable. The vigilance must always be there,” Dr Komathy explains.

Hirsute women

Having spent 15 years as an aesthetic surgeon, what keeps her going is the variety of cases she handles, mentally stimulating nature of her job and satisfaction from helping patients to erase their physical flaws and enhance their appearance.

“That’s the best part, when I get a thank you or see a happy face!”

Some of her most satisfying work includes laser hair removal for Indian female patients.

“I’ve seen everything from beards and moustaches, to nipple hair and hairy chests. They are all young Indian women and not married yet. Imagine the fright their husbands will get when they see their wives with what looks more like a man’s chest,” she remarks.

Dr Komathy’s Style File

My monthly beauty treat is washing and blow-drying my hair at The Salon in Wheelock. I spend more money on my hair than my face because it’s my crowning glory. Everyone notices beautiful hair.

How I dress for:



Work Sheath dresses or skirts with shirts. Always with heels and earrings.



Cocktail Event Cocktail dresses in black or nude.



Gym Session Tank top with shorts or ¾ tights.



Brunch with Friends Pantsuit with flats or long dress with slippers. Sometimes, I will wear shorts with a shirt and match it with platforms.



My three must-have make-up items are: Lipstick and blusher to colour my face and eyeliner to open my eyes.

To look presentable without splurging, try the following wardrobe staples: For work, try a nice sheath dress. Most of my clothes are from Zara as they are good quality and affordable. All my party-wear comes from Bali where I can find funky and different styles.



To help her hairier female counterparts, Dr Komathy of The Lifestyle Clinic, has even taken on pro-bono work. An example was a 45-year old divorcee with a hairy jawline and chin, referred to her by a beautician. With the hair growing back within a week after each threading session, the cost of threading was becoming unaffordable.

Empathising with the divorcee's plight and recognising that laser hair removal was the permanent solution, Dr Komathy removed her facial hair for free.

Clinical perfection or human allure

With just about every celebrity having some kind of cosmetic surgery to prolong their shelf life, it's not surprising that ordinary folks too want in on youth-enhancing treatments.

A few even get addicted. Dr Komathy believes that the root of aesthetic surgery addiction stems from insecurities and happens to people who typically suffer from an unhappy childhood or miserable marriage.

"Aesthetic doctors have a major responsibility to counsel patients because many of them have psychological problems. When they come to us, the onus is on us to detect it and do something about it," Dr Komathy says.

"I was telling a friend 'Thank God I am in this profession. If not I'll be all scarred.' For the first time, I've been getting treatments (chemical peels, creams, lightening treatment) diligently. Whatever I prescribe for my patients, I apply on myself," she divulges.

There's nothing wrong with correcting an imperfection like a crooked nose, jug ears or dropping eyelids. But, she draws the line when it comes to augmenting the looks of someone who looks normal.

Although she is in the business of improving physical appearance, Dr Komathy believes in beauty being more than skin deep. Hence, it's important to cultivate inner beauty and to distinguish between looking beautiful and being attractive.

She feels that happy and contented people, comfortable in their own skin, are beautiful individuals who draw people with their positive energy.

"Sometimes when you walk down a street, you will see a beautiful woman who catches your eye. That woman might not be physically perfect, but her face is radiant and happy. On the other hand, you could have a very attractive woman with no smile and a cold-as-a-fish demeanour."

Her own good looks are attributed to genes, regular exercise, proper grooming and dressing well. Would she resort to plastic surgery in later years? Preferably not, she says as her children, 15-year old son and 19-year old daughter, prefer her to age naturally, so non-invasive procedures are the way to go.

Despite her advantages, the doctor assures us she is as prone to ageing and skin problems as the next woman. With menopause has come pigmentation woes, hair loss and acne on the chin. ■