

Looking Good, Feeling Better

Top aesthetic practitioner, Dr Komathy Rajaratnam, believes that improving one's looks has a positive bearing on the psyche

By **NITHYA SUBRAMANIAN**



Practical Dermatology from the University of Wales (UK), her interest in aesthetic medicine and dermatology started while working in Sydney in the early 90's. She is one of the first few doctors trained in laser hair removal when it was introduced 12 years ago in Singapore, and has a strong reputation in the field of laser hair removal.

Unlike in plastic surgery, aesthetic medicine does not involve any major surgical procedures. "An aesthetician must have an eye for beauty and this is something he/she is born with. It is a skill that is gifted and I seem to have that. I don't need to take detailed measurements; I can just look and make the necessary corrections. It is also important for an aesthetic doctor to know when to stop, the enhancements must be done in such a way that it looks natural and nobody can pinpoint that something was done," said Dr Komathy Rajaratnam.

In the recent years, her clinic has also seen a growing number of men seeking aesthetic intervention. The good doctor also believes in doing her bit to help needy people. "Recently a poor boy suffering from eczema was brought to me. I waived consultation fees and tried to help him as best as I could," she said.

Here are excerpts of an interview with Dr Komathy Rajaratnam:
India Se: Tell us a little about your childhood, family and upbringing? What persuaded you to take up medicine?

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam: I am the eldest of four children. Basically all through my childhood and later years I excelled in my studies and went to the top schools. In my mind I always wanted to be a doctor. To help someone heal is a noble thing.

India Se: You've said

that you got interested in aesthetic medicine and dermatology in the 1990s in Sydney. What led you to specialise in this field?

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam: My last medical posting before I moved to Australia was dermatology. During that posting I realised that I had an inherent liking to that subject. When I was in Australia, which was in the early 90's, I was treating lots of dermatology cases. Aesthetic medicine was coming into being part of dermatology through the need to repair sun-damaged skin. At that time start of use of chemical peels and laser to rejuvenate the skin. Botox for aesthetic use had yet happen. Over the years since aesthetic medicine has evolved to be an entity of its own. I consider myself fortunate to have ridden on the wave from the beginning.

India Se: How would you define your area of specialisation, considering the fact that there is public perception that aesthetic medicine caters to vanity? It is all about looking good?

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam: My patients are not ill but unhappiness with one's appearance can lead to illness. The term vanity can be taken two ways... On one hand, looking good can be linked to self respect and on the other hand it is excessive attention to oneself leading to a warped sense of appearance. Feeling good about yourself is a mood elevator that brings out confidence. My job gives me lots of happiness, seeing a smile on faces of teenagers with bad acne or women with facial hair or hyper pigmentation after they get better.

India Se: You started your practice at a time when the Singapore market was at a nascent stage, you were one of the few trained doctors who offered laser treatments. What were some of the challenges that you faced and how did you overcome them?

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam: When I returned to Singapore, I realised there were hardly any aesthetic practices here. Knowing about the stringent rules laid down by Singapore's Ministry of Health, I went on to get a diploma in dermatology from the University of Wales, as a form of certification. I went overseas to train on usage of botox and fillers under experts. So when the Ministry of Health decided to regulate doctors practicing aesthetic medicine, I had all the certification required and more. At a point I was among a handful of doctors allowed to carry out procedures such as mesotherapy and dermaroller. But that has been disallowed because the ministry needs research done locally although there is ample research done abroad. Local research is difficult to conduct in a private clinic.

India Se: Could you talk about some of the treatments and/or procedures that you offer?

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam: I can be considered an expert in laser hair removal, treatment of

hyperpigmentation and especially treating skin which is tanned. Skin type 4 and 5 is most difficult to treat as the skin has lots of melanin and thus when using any procedure be it chemical peel or lasers... you have to be so careful. My long years of practice in this field have helped delineate which lasers and chemical peels are safe. Also which machines are unsafe such as IPL.

In the expat Caucasian community here, I have a reputation of being one of the best Botox and Fillers doctor.

India Se: What are some of the common issues that women face and are the solutions long-term or do they need periodic visits?

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam: Problems related to pigmentation are quite common and that applies to all races. It ranges from freckles, sun spots to melasma. Melasma is a difficult condition to treat but we have successfully treated many and treatment is life long. The other is aging face. These days woman wish to age well... meaning look younger and fresher. My advice is to start as soon as signs of aging occurs be it fine lines on forehead or around the eyes or sagging of lower face. The earlier you start the results are far better with treatment and if you maintain... as you chronologically age...we all cannot stop aging but the face will not age at that pace.

India Se: Also tell us a little about your clients. Are they mainly women and do you see a large number of Indians coming to you to improve their looks?

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam: Seventy per cent of the patients are women. We are seeing more men now, younger men for acne scars and older men to get even-colouring and tighten sagging lower face. Over the last few years the number of Indians have increased more from word of mouth and publicity on TV and radio and publications.

India Se: Going forward, how do you view the future of aesthetic medicine?

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam: Aesthetic medicine is exciting as ever evolving. Every year there is a new discovery - a novel way to treat conditions. For example, years ago balding in men and women was difficult to treat. These days with improvement in technology we are able to directly stimulate hair root to grow. Rejuvenation of an aging face can be done with very little downtime and people can look youthful without looking plastic.

India Se: Tell us a little about your family here. What are your other interests and hobbies?

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam: I have two children - my daughter is 23 and a law trainee and my son is 19 and currently doing his national service. I love to travel, read and enjoy eating at fine dining restaurants.

India Se: Anything else that you wish to add.

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam: Indians should seek treatment from doctors who have loads of experience treating such skin. Also the issue of vanity and money spent on a face should not be an obstacle to seeking to improve oneself. Women belonging to other races including Chinese do spend money on themselves. What is the use of wearing an expensive saree or jewellery if your face which everyone looks at everyday is covered with acne or pigmentation or hair! ☑

A visit to an aesthetic doctor is not about pampering your vanity, but about boosting your confidence.

Dr Komathy Rajaratnam, one of Singapore's leading doctors in aesthetic medicine with over 18 years experience, believes in taking an holistic approach to treatment. "Insecurity about one's looks affects the psyche, especially among the teenagers," she said.

The Lifestyle Clinic created by her provides an entire suite of cutting edge aesthetic services. All treatments are tailored individually to suit each patient's requirements after a thorough consultation. So whether it is the use of hormone therapy to correct issues caused by imbalances or nutritional medicine, Dr Komathy believes in providing long term solutions.

Armed with a medical degree from the National University of Singapore and a Diploma in



The Lifestyle Clinic



Dr Komathy with her daughter at Navratri celebrations.



From Dr Komathy's travel diary, with a Nepalese woman in Kathmandu.



At Prince Of Monaco's Charity Gala Function.