



Spreading Smiles

.....Raksha Choubey

It took an Oscar winning movie called 'Smile Pinki' which is based on a congenial deformity called Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate to open our eyes to a defect that leaves a child unable to smile.

But there are a few who have been working hard for many years to make a difference to the world of these suffering children.

One such person is Dr. Parag Sahasrabudhe. He is a plastic surgeon and he uses his skill and knowledge to serve those with lower means. "A cleft lip or palate can be successfully treated with surgery especially if conducted soon after birth or in early childhood" says Dr. Parag.

Acting as a subservient not just for the general public but for the under privileged, he has started a Cleft Centre at the Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital and organises regular camps there is association with The Rotary Club. Dr. Parag does not charge a fee conducted at the camp. He also conducts free surgeries at Sassoon Hospital. He says "I provide a free treatment for the underprivileged who cannot afford to remove this life altering facial disorder".

Oral Clefting(Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate) occurs when the tissues of the mouth and/or lip of the foetus are malformed. Cleft lip is where the upper lip is split either in the middle or

on one side or both sides. Cleft Palate is an opening between the roof of the mouth and the nasal cavity. These children grow up with missing teeth, speech problems and are not able to smile. They cannot eat or drink normally. To add to all this, they are alienated by society and ridiculed among their peers. More than a million children with Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate are born in India.

Dr. Parag Sahasrabudhe, acts as a patron to the parents of small children who have cleft lip, "I always try and teach them that your child is as normal as other children around and this disorder can be successfully removed after the surgery" he says trying to reassure the parents and to reduce the feeling of desperation in them.

He explains "The group of muscles required to purse the lips run through the upper lip, to create a less obvious scar. The surgeon tries to line up the scar with the natural line in the upper lip. After birth the preferred age of the surgery is at approximately ten weeks of age or early childhood so that the child could look and speak properly before entering into the educational world".

Dr. Parag is a part of a larger team that conducts these treatments. The team comprises of paediatrician, speech language pathologist and ideologist, plastic surgeon and orthodontist, they all have been working together for this particular cause "We make the child recite Sanskrit to improve his/her way of speaking", states Dr. Parag.

He has been working selflessly for this cause to make the life of these children better in so many ways. His life is more professional than personal, "I start from home at 8:30 am and end up back home by 8:30 pm, I try and manage my personal life along with my busy schedule", says Dr. Parag. He does teach us to keep doing the good work no matter whether it pays you materialistically or not because in the end tranquillity of mind and soul is what you need.

