

# Acid attack victim undergoes unique surgery

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NEW DELHI, 30 AUG: It was a big day for 27-year-old acid attack victim Sonali Mukherjee as she underwent a reconstructive surgical procedure at the BLK Super Specialty Hospital. A group of 18 senior doctors performed the surgery - perhaps the first-in-a-kind serial reconstructive surgical procedure in the world - of the victim of an horrific acid attack ten years back.

According to doctors seven surgeries will be conducted over 12 months to restore normal life. The first of the series of surgeries was conducted on Thursday, to restore normal face and life for Sonali was undertaken on Monday. The team is led by Dr AS Bath, HOD, Department of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery at the Hospital.

"I yet again dream of a new life. This is the most generous blessings that I could have got from God," said Sonali. "After years of agonizing wait and psychological and physical trauma, this team of doctors is god sent to put my life back in shape. I am deeply

touched by the level of medical expertise, I thank god for all this."

Hailing from Dhanbad in Jharkhand, Sonali was a young beautiful 18-year-old NCC Cadet who dreamt of becoming a career woman before her aspirations were cut short. In a brutal attack on her, three boys threw acid on her in a bid to revenge after she complained against them for eve teasing.

She was facially disfigured to such a terrible extent that she lost both her eyes due to deep cornea burns, lost her right ear & with near total deafness bilaterally, destroyed ear drums, deeply scarred facial tissues and muscles of her forehead, cheeks, cheekbones, neck, complete burns of her back, breasts, & upper arms.

This caused chemical burns injury on almost every vital organ besides causing immense psychological distress. Pre admission Sonali can't see or hear, facially badly scarred, she has little or no back or chest tissues, severe contractures of her arm-neck muscles causing her great physical disability.

Post surgery Dr Bath explained, "The procedures planned are post-burn upper lip ectropion, contractures release with reconstruction of defect using Z plastics (multiple) split skin grafting and serial scalp expansion with expander placements under the scalp for later coverage of hairless grafted scalp & various new innovative technologies of microscopic vascular & reconstructive surgeries."

Dr U K Valecha, HOD, Anaesthesiology, said, "Anaesthesia for reconstructive surgery for head and neck is always special and complicated. Issues of airway, bleeding and post-operative pain will be addressed to adequately and safely."

Dr Sunil Kathuria, Sr Consultant, ENT and Cochlear Implant, added, "Sonali is suffering from conductive hearing loss of 60 DB. CT shows damaged ossicular chain and middle ear. So we will be conducting Tympanoplasty - surgery for the reconstruction of ear drum, and Ossiculoplasty - operation of three middle ear bones to improve hearing."