

## Achievers

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## Real Versus the Virtual



His work is the embodiment of art blending with science. Dr Debraj Shome (29) specialises in the art of myoconjunctival enucleation — using coloured prosthetics for people in need of an artificial eye. "This technique calls for removal or treatment of the damaged eye, by inserting an orbital implant. The custom-made light-weight prosthesis is then fitted out of acrylic to ensure all implant motility can be transmitted to the prosthesis. The oculist colours the prosthetics to resemble the other eye. Blood vessels are also replicated," says Dr Shome, Head of Department of Ophthalmic and Facial Plastic Surgery, Orbit and Ocular Oncology at Aditya Jyot Eye Hospital, Mumbai. "Patients can now get 80 per cent movement of eyes, restricted by earlier techniques," says Dr Shome. "The effect of wearing a custom-made prosthesis is like wearing a custom-made shoe. It moves better as it is shaped for the socket of the person and creates less trauma much like a custom made shoe. The end result is an artificial eye that looks and moves just like the normal eye," explains Dr Shome. What's more, the customised silicon prosthesis he uses, just costs Rs 100, unlike the porous polyethylene implants which costs approximately Rs 16,000 and does not give good mobility. So, what led to the innovation? "We in India need cheaper alternatives. I came up with the idea after reading this technique in a 17th Century medical textbook," he informs.