



# DIVERSIFYING INTO HEALTHCARE



Tina Anil Ambani, spearheading the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group's corporate social responsibility portfolio, has ventured into healthcare by setting up a multi-million-dollar, not-for-profit hospital in Mumbai. Tina, who is also active in the art world, wants to consolidate her efforts before looking at expansion, writes **Anand Kumar.**

**F**OR someone who has been involved with social issues, moving to healthcare is a natural progression. Tina Ambani, former actor, an art connoisseur and collector, who has been organising the Harmony art shows for the past 10 years, is now fully involved in building up the multi-million-dollar Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital and Medical Research Institute, located in Mumbai's north-western suburb of Andheri.

"If you want to do something and contribute to society and serve the community you live in, you have to think large", explains Tina, whose husband Anil Ambani, is the chairman of the multi-billion-dollar Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG). "We are a huge country with a big population, and if you wish to contribute significantly to society you have to take up a large and ambitious project. My team has worked hard and we have put our hearts and passion into the project".

The Kokilaben hospital — named after her mother-in-law and the widow of Dhirubhai Ambani, the founder of the Reliance Group — is a 730-bed multi-disciplined hospital encompassing a million sq ft of space and spread across 19 floors.

India, says Tina, has a unique perspective to offer the world in terms of its healthcare expertise. "We have a centuries-old culture of ethics, care and compassion. If we can marry these with the latest, advanced medical technology, infrastructure and maximum care for the patient, we can offer the best in healthcare to the rest of the world".





Tina Ambani

In an interview with *India Now*, Tina talks about her pet project, about India emerging as a healthcare hub, her future plans and also about the art world in India.

**What prompted you to venture into the healthcare sector? Do you plan to expand to other cities?**

My father-in-law, Dhirubhai Ambani, believed that a disease cured or a life saved gives you a lot more gratification than anything else, be it any business, or profits, or financial gain. So we decided that we would get into healthcare.

We are not in this for the profit. We are also not planning to expand to other cities, though we may have satellite centres to be able to connect to the interior parts of India.

Let me make it clear, we are not a commercial entity, though our capital investments match those made by any hospital of international standards. Everything is based on American standards and our investments are far more than any other hospital built in India.

We have spared no costs in bringing in state-of-the-art equipment. Some of our equipment is probably the first of its kind, not just in India, but also in the region.

We have a vision to strengthen the sector in India by catering to the community's health needs and by empowering patients to make informed choices. Right now, the awareness levels are low. We want to create aware-

ness among patients and give them informed choices.

**What kind of investment has been made in your hospital and what are the returns that you are looking at?**

We have set up the hospital to serve people. If you look at the cost of even one of our latest equipment, even if we treat 10,000 patients, we will not recover the cost. We are providing a service and creating a healthcare set-up that is international.

Eventually, I definitely hope to make profits, but the profits will be going back into the hospital. It is not for the promoter. We are in no sense looking at anything like that. I want to be self-sufficient. Every institution should be self-sufficient as that is the only way to create an institution. But I am not looking at profits.

We will continue ploughing in money. Healthcare is a capital-intensive sector and we have to keep upgrading technology, which is a continuous process.

Though ours is a not-for-profit hospital, it has to sustain. It is a hospital and there are tariffs and payments that have to be made. But we are not exorbitant. We have a mandatory requirement



of keeping 10 per cent of our in-patient beds as free ones. Going forward, we will have a corpus that will take care of needy patients.

**Do you see India emerge as a major medical tourism hub? Is your hospital geared to meet the needs of international clients?**

We are looking at opportunities in medical tourism in a big way. We will be catering to patients from the West, the Middle East and from South-East Asia. Healthcare in the West is very expensive and it is also very insurance-oriented.

In England, they have the National Health Service, which has a huge waiting list. If a patient needs treatment urgently, he will have to look at another country. Some heart patients have to wait for as long as six months for treatment. We hope to reach out to such patients.

We have provided the best facility available anywhere in the world. From our point of view, it is very important that we have doctors all the time at the hospital because we want our patients to be taken care off.

We also have 50 dedicated beds as patient-relative rooms. Overseas pa-

tients can be accompanied by relatives, who can now stay within the hospital.

India has a unique perspective to offer; we have a centuries-old culture of ethics, care and compassion. If we can marry these with advanced medical technology, infrastructure and maximum care for the patient, we can offer the best in healthcare to the rest of the world.

**Are you looking at attracting Indian doctors settled abroad to return home and work for your hospital?**

We already have doctors from the US, the UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia working full-time with us.

**Will you be looking at the option of acquiring hospitals in India? Are you also looking at strategic alliances with other international hospitals?**

We have just begun our hospital and right now we want to concentrate on providing the best in healthcare. We have cut no corners and we have not been stingy in any manner.


We have no plans for an alliance with international hospitals, though we are open to joint workshops, exchanging notes, or conducting joint research

programmes. I am not looking at tie-ups in terms of branding.

**Has this project taken a lot of your time? Has it affected your art collections and your Harmony shows?**

I have been involved with this project since October 2005. I am a great believer in empowering people and teamwork. If you can create good teams and empower them, they are going to deliver the best and be responsible for what they deliver.

I have had a great team, whether in my art endeavour, in the Harmony Foundation's work for senior citizens and for this hospital. If you start something, if you have passion for it and if you work with like-minded people, it is not difficult to achieve your goals.

The art market has been impacted by the global economic meltdown. Liquidity is a problem, so where is the question of people investing in art. But for me art has always been an intuition, a journey and a pleasure. For me to discuss art commercially — I cannot relate to it. I buy intuitively, and I buy if I like something and if I can afford it. Otherwise, I just appreciate and admire it. 

## GOOD AS GOLD FOR THE SILVERS

THE Harmony Foundation started by Tina Ambani has been involved in a range of activities for senior citizens. Recently, it set up a national helpline for senior citizens, answering their queries relating to the reverse mortgage loan scheme that the National Housing Bank (NHB) introduced last year.

"Reverse mortgage is a big thing in the West", explains Tina. "But in India it has not taken off as expected. There is a taboo in India about mortgaging our homes and many people are not aware what this scheme is all about".

The national helpline has been getting

about a thousand calls a month from all over India, "especially from the silvers, the seniors", adds Tina. "We try to sort out the different issues, explaining to them the advantages of the scheme". The foundation has also organised two seminars in Delhi and Mumbai.



Seniors need to be open-minded about the scheme as it offers them financial independence, points out Tina. But she admits that it is difficult to change the mind-set. The scheme enables a senior citizen — owning a home — to mortgage (or reverse mortgage) it to a bank that will then advance money, worked out on the basis of the market value of the unit.

The senior citizen can then start repaying the loan through monthly installments. In the event of his or her death, the children can opt to repay the loan and get back the home.