

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

With her multifarious interests and constant urge to learn new things, she has touched a thousand lives through her countless contributions to the society.

BY SHIVPRIYA BAJPAI

When it comes to realising our dreams and achieving our goals, we tend to succumb to the pressures of the mindless rat race, in one way or the other. We often end up measuring success with materialistic gains, of which we tend to tell

tall tales, in our quest for social affirmation. How often are our aspirations in line with the best interests of the society? This got us thinking hard, as we try to seek some answers from one of the leading scientist, industrialist and philanthropist of our country, Dr. Swati Piramal. Also, the Vice Chairperson of Piramal Group, she does all that it takes to give back to the society, with contributions in

supporting Indian artists, innovations, new medicines, public health services, and more.

In this exclusive interview, Dr. Swati takes us through an inspirational journey. Here are some edited excerpts.

How did you get interested in science and social welfare?

From a very young age, I have been passionate about finding cures and solutions for preventative ailments, and raising awareness about the need for better health practices. This led me to pursue my training as a doctor, and later as the head of the research and development department, at Piramal Healthcare. My husband and I both wholeheartedly believe in the value of giving back to society and bringing about a positive change.

You are the inspiration for millions of women in India. What inspires you and how do you stay motivated?

Today's women have clear goals in mind, and are able to drive their objectives and create an impact, with determination and grit. Reading and witnessing the success stories of women who are working towards social upliftment brings me immense joy and motivates me to continue my efforts.



1. Piramal Museum of Art 2. Kaleidoscope art from the museum 3. Miniature fairy garden from "Back to Nature - A Space to Grow" initiative 4. Dr. Swati Piramal

How do you think innovation can be roped in for public health services?

Primary healthcare should be a right for every Indian. In India, we must look at solving healthcare problems through technology-enabled innovations that are cost-effective, agile, and can be deployed at scale. The state is adept at implementing programmes at the grassroots level. Through Public-Private Partnerships, innovations can be further nurtured and deployed to provide solutions and support large populations.

We know you take keen interest in culinary activities and horticulture. Where were you introduced to this concept?

I love baking – especially French sweet treats, and making multiple flavoured gelato. I have a small gelateria and bakery in my home. Whenever I can, I attend classes at the Cordon Bleu or a chef's atelier. My other interest is participating at the Chelsea Flower Show, or organising unique flower shows in India for Piramal Realty. Two years ago, we organised a flower show at Piramal Vaikunth, our real estate project in Thane, which made me realise that we are genetically hardwired to a concept called *Biophilia*, which is the connection of human beings with nature. I am committed to it, and I insist that every project of ours has 50 per cent green space.

Our latest project, Piramal Mahalaxmi, is a part of our commitment to biophilia. At the Piramal Mahalaxmi Experience Centre, I recently launched a concept, Back to Nature - A Space to Grow, where over 60 exquisite and unique miniature gardens were showcased.

The paradigm of contemporary art in India has witnessed a major shift in the last few years. What are your views on the same?

Indian contemporary art has been thriving for a long time in India, however what has

seen a rise is the interest and understanding of the value of our contemporary artists. As Indians are maturing into a more evolved audience, placing importance on art and culture, we hope to make them aware of Indian contemporary art and encourage the next generation of masters.

How is Piramal Museum of Art supporting the budding artists of India?

We at Piramal Museum of Art, have the Piramal Art Residency, located in Thane, which is a space for nurturing creative talent, and providing artists with a forum to interact with peers and seniors from across the country. The artists for the residency are selected through an application process. Each residency is organised around a particular theme (called a Cycle) drawn from art, history, science, literature or social studies. Fully funded, the residency is open to artists working in various disciplines of visual art, as well as writers and curators. The latest residency cycle was based on 'Iterations

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in Wood' – with a focus on woodcut, a printmaking technique. We intended for printmakers to join the residency, and have an enriching experience too.

What will be your focus areas going forward, in terms of propagating art in India?

We started the Piramal Art Foundation in 2014, with an aim to preserve the artistic heritage of modern and contemporary Indian art. The Art Foundation undertakes the collection, preservation and documentation of artworks for public display as well as for research and education. We have supported the archival and digitisation of materials in artist's studios, sponsored important national fine art exhibitions, and arts management programmes in the country. Our focus remains on strengthening the Art Foundation, and its activities.

