

CORPORATE SOCIAL SENSIBILITY: THE CASE OF AMBANI AND HIS BILLION DOLLAR HOME

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ABSTRACT

India's richest and the world's fourth richest man has recently completed constructing what is billed as the world's first billion dollar private home. Situated as it does, close to some of the vast expanses of slums in Mumbai, Ambani's statement flies in the face of Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh's recent call on Indian business leaders to eschew conspicuous consumption and to be the role models of moderation.

The scale of Mukesh Ambani's display of wealth and ego can be readily seen when one considers that it boasts of 400,000 square feet on 27 floors, 3 helipads, swimming pools, Yoga parlor, numerous lounges, three balconies with terrace gardens, a health club, an ice-room with artificial snow flurries, parking space for 168 cars, and a staff of 600 to attend to the family of six. The house has attracted unprecedented media attention and has been variously labeled as a bold statement of taste, an edifice to the owner's ego, an architectural monstrosity, a living hell, a sheer waste of fortune, and an outlandish display of ego in a city where 6 million people live in slums. Comparisons are drawn with Bill Gates and Warren Buffet both of whom have decided to put their wealth to work for the welfare of mankind. On the other hand, arguments are also made about how this home has created jobs and put money back into the economy, the rights of individuals to pursue happiness the way they see fit, and so on.

In this paper, both sides of the argument are examined in detail. The concept of corporate social sensibility (CSS) is presented to help examine similar cases in the future.

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