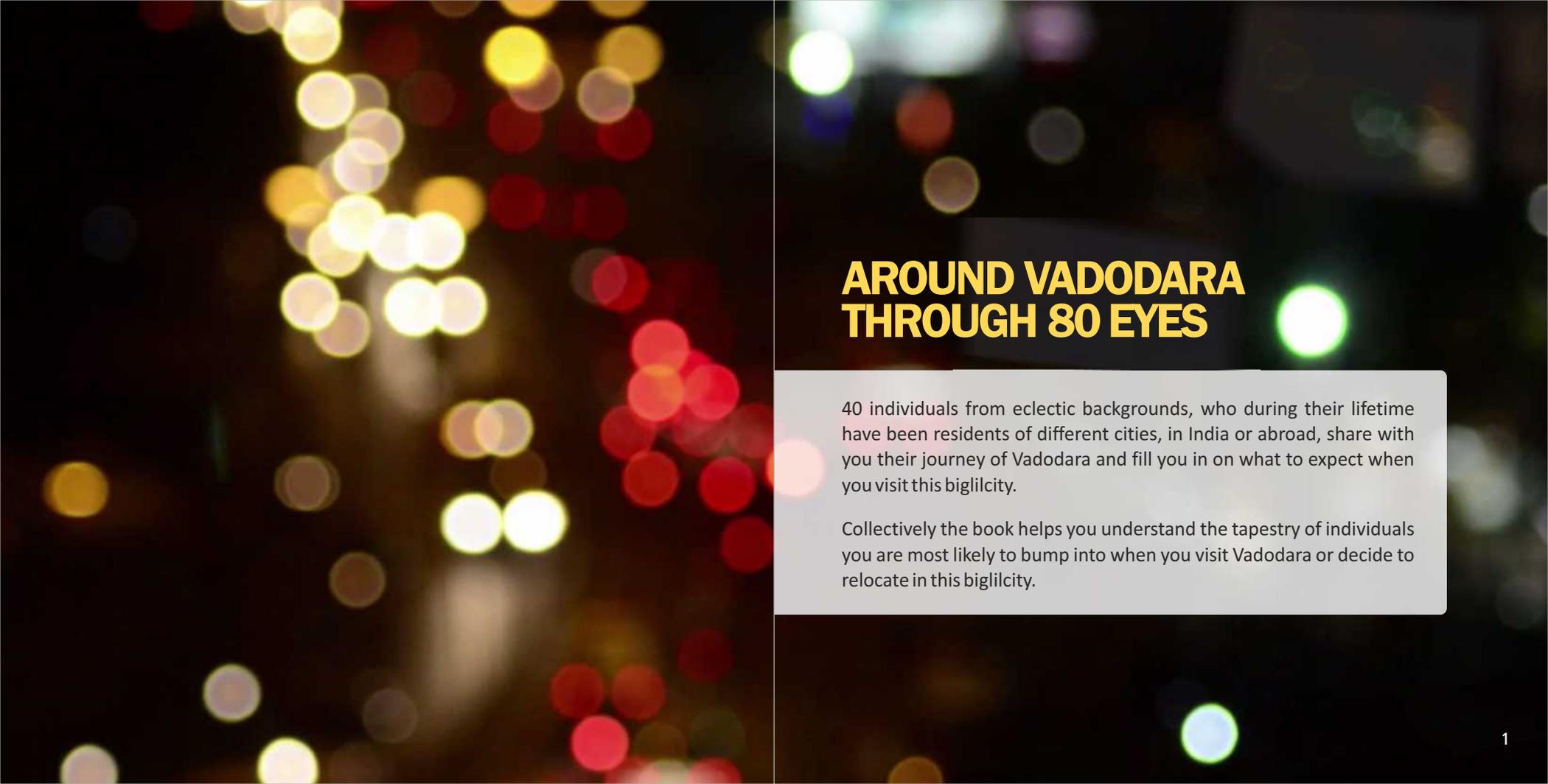


**AROUND VADODARA  
THROUGH 80 EYES** **VADODARA** વડોદરા

THE BIG CITY IN A SMALL PACKAGE



## **AROUND VADODARA THROUGH 80 EYES**

40 individuals from eclectic backgrounds, who during their lifetime have been residents of different cities, in India or abroad, share with you their journey of Vadodara and fill you in on what to expect when you visit this biglilcity.

Collectively the book helps you understand the tapestry of individuals you are most likely to bump into when you visit Vadodara or decide to relocate in this biglilcity.



## Madhavi Agrawal

Founder, Cygnus World School

Born in Kolkata; schooled in Delhi.  
Hated the thought of coming to Vadodara.  
Now, after 12 years, does not want to  
live anywhere else.

First of all, Vadodara is remarkably safe, especially for women and children. In fact, the first thing that struck me about the city was how freely girls could move around, even late at night. I'm from Delhi and you can imagine how scandalous this must've been for me. When my children go to school, I don't find myself constantly paranoid about their safety. In the bigger cities, these are real challenges people face on a daily basis.

The art and culture here is nothing short of incredible - I've learnt so much. It's not commercial but simply art - expression in its purest form. Everyone is open and friendly. People here are smart, intelligent and above all, genuine. Unlike most other places, the city is not about the car you drive or the clothes you have or the watch you wear; it goes much deeper than that.

There's a beautiful golf course here which is responsible for the wonderful golfing culture in the city. The gyms and clubhouses are world-class. There are constant matches going on - basketball, tennis, cricket, football, badminton - you name it.

Professionally, Vadodara's given me a huge space and opportunity to build upon my passion. Given the short distances and the easy-going environment here, you get the time and space to do things that you want to do. More than money, you're motivated to go after what's in your heart. Reflecting back, I wouldn't have been able to do this in Delhi. Cygnus has been an ambition both for me and for my family - I love education and I love kids - with this project, we've officially opened our hearts and doors to the children of Vadodara and I think they've responded well. We will constantly endeavour to provide them with the quality of education they deserve.

"The whole world is clamouring for a work-family balance. We have it here - why leave it and go some place else."

Before moving here, we had a lot of apprehension about what the city would be like - we were a young couple and we had no idea about Gujarat or about Vadodara. Slowly things settled and we started enjoying our life here.

Though I'm nostalgic about Kolkata at times, I would really not want to go back. Sometimes, it's very surprising to think that way but that's how it is - Vadodara has somehow gotten into us. It's peaceful, safe and comfortable. People are friendly and warm. When there's an accident, nobody rage about it - people get up, help each other and move their own way. It's things like this that catch your attention here.

From the very first day that I got here, I've never once thought that I didn't have family here. We had our first kid here and we've grown as a family together. The crowd is cosmopolitan - there's a great mix and there're no negative vibes of regionalism.

*"My husband and I are very art-oriented - we love music and cultural activities and we've found ample opportunities to explore them here."*

We have great neighbours - they've always come to our help.

Business runs in the veins of this state and trade goes on fair and square. We've never felt cheated. The opportunity to enjoy art, music and culture is ample. There is always something happening in the city and it's fantastic.

I never had to worry about education here. There are enough and great schools. My children have enjoyed their childhood instead of being subjected to unhealthy competition of the rat race. There's a gradation system and there's no competition among the parents - they're rather supportive and encouraging - believe me, this is an issue for parents because I've seen things back home which are not very pleasant.

The best thing about Vadodara is that it includes all kinds of people but still retains its character. It's fantastic.

## Aditi Bandyopadhyay

**Manager - Information Systems  
L&T - Sargent and Lundy Ltd.**

An out-and-out Kolkata resident. Came to Vadodara with her husband in 1998. Fell in love with the city, settled down, had her first kid here and hasn't looked back since.





## Emily Brammer

**President and Founder  
Axon Advisors**

American entrepreneur; has been outsourcing IT product development to Vadodara. Came down for some face-time with the development team and stayed on for a year.

I've been outsourcing to a product development group here since last November. I came down to Vadodara because I wanted to have a more face-to-face interaction with the group.

I've met some extraordinary people here. I have never met people with such warmth and hospitality, with the willingness to drop everything and help you get settled. Getting to know the expatriate community has also been a really interesting experience. There's a great balance of the locals and the expat community so you never feel out of place or uncomfortable.

Business-wise, it's been great. Outsourcing has its challenges but the city has coped up well.

There are some exquisite farms both within and on the outskirts of the city. Landscaped by famous architects, most of them look like an Asian dreamland with hills and man-made bridges and lakes. It is nature, set somewhere in the middle of modern urbanity.

There are a lot of people I know who'd gone to the US for their doctorates - these are very smart people who've turned down great work opportunities and the chance of a really rewarding life - and have come back home to Vadodara. Only now do I realise that more than home, they've come back to a fulfilling and peaceful life.

*"The technical work and capability of the people here is fantastic. They're intelligent, ambitious, smart, hard-working and at par with the best-of-the-best in America."*

## Chris and Simi Anderson

### Restaurateurs, Paprika Grill

Chris and Simi chose to come to Vadodara from London in 2009 so that their children could grow up here and experience the rich culture of India.



Initially we were shocked by how much Vadodara had changed - it was alive, happening and there was this different vibe to it which is changing continuously. We had expected it to be a lot quieter but there's a lot of buzz at night. It's the manner of life here that hits you - energetic, vibrant, safe and positive.

People are fantastically kind and helpful. Nobody hustles you - you can go shopping and enjoy the experience instead of being badgered all the time. You don't have to struggle to balance life - home is about 5 minutes away so I get to give equal attention to business and home. There's plenty of help around and at reasonable rates. It's safe and in fact, pro-women - women are encouraged and not looked down upon. Socialising is easy given the short distances.

Chris's parents, especially, enjoy the whole experience of being here when they come to visit - they blend in and move around almost like locals.

The Expat Club, of which Simi is a member, has worked fantastically as a support system and as a place for enjoyment. Existing expats support the new ones to get used to the city - what to do, where to go, where to shop, what's best for your kids - things like that.

What has stayed with us the most is the dance festival - Navratri. It takes over the whole town - it's an amazing experience when you see that volume of people dancing at the same place that way. Unless you experience it first-hand, you can never understand what it really is.

"The children love it - they go to an international school and speak Gujarati, Hindi and English - far better than I ever can. They've also got great friends from diverse backgrounds which is great."

My husband works for Kohler and it was his work assignment that brought us to Vadodara. We also wanted to be in India because our parents are here. We've been here only 5 months and it's been a very interesting experience, to say the least.

Vadodara is so cosmopolitan. There are people here who have studied abroad and have come back with great education and are now involved in growing their family businesses.

We've had some great interactions - it's not just the intellect of the people that takes you by surprise, they are very open-minded, love to party, are open to adventure and extremely warm and friendly.

There are great multiplexes and malls. There's a lot of money in this town so work opportunities are plenty. I think we've settled in quite easily and it's hard to even think about leaving this town.

*"It's very cosmopolitan  
- there are people from  
32 nationalities living here."*



**Akshi Jain**

**Homemaker**

Originally from Rampur, UP; lived in the US for 6 years. Came to Vadodara with her husband who is on a 2-year assignment with Kohler. Loves the cosmopolitanism of the city and is amazed by the density of luxury cars.



## Jagruti Gala

**Founder Trustee  
AURA - A Learning Place**

A total Mumbaikar. Marriage brought her to Vadodara 18 years ago. Is now wedded to the city's cultural and intellectual environment.

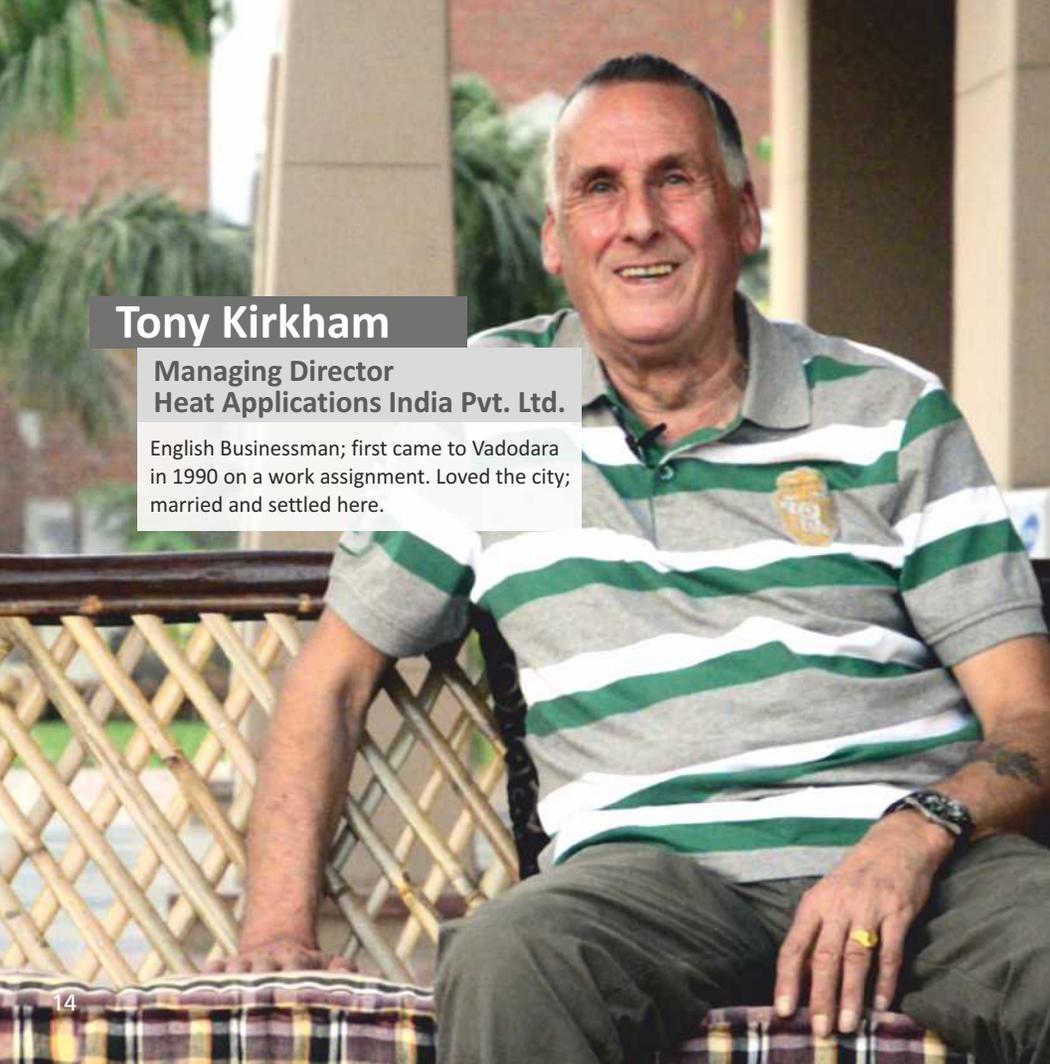
Everything here is so simple. The people are wonderful. You're surrounded with art and beauty. It's peaceful and green. I've never had to worry about my children's safety. Travelling is easy - everything is 15 minutes away. And it's highly affordable - from food to shopping to lifestyle, you don't have to go out of your pocket and yet you can do so much. I've grown up in Mumbai so it holds a very special place in my heart but once you've experienced Vadodara, everything changes.

One of the greatest things about this city is that people here actually live their lives differently. They make quiet choices and continue doing what makes their lives meaningful without making any fuss or noise about it. It's the vibe here - there are no crazy benchmarks expected from you - there is great work

happening around you which itself is inspiration enough, you're given your personal space and you're encouraged to be fearlessly creative.

My school, AURA (Awareness-Understanding-Reflection-Action), was born after I got back from Harvard. It's a place where children love and learn without fear. We only act as facilitators and help them build greater awareness and deeper understanding. We provide them with tools and experiences which they can use to reflect upon their journeys so that they move into more informed and loving actions in order to make a greater impact upon this world and on themselves. It's been a really rewarding and satisfying journey so far and frankly, none of it would have been possible back in Mumbai.

*"Here, you're given your personal space and you're encouraged to be fearlessly creative. So, if my formation happened in the metros, my evolution happened in Vadodara."*



## Tony Kirkham

**Managing Director  
Heat Applications India Pvt. Ltd.**

English Businessman; first came to Vadodara in 1990 on a work assignment. Loved the city; married and settled here.

Today, after almost 21 years, I'm extremely happy and well-settled. I came here in 1990 on behalf of my old company on a contract which gave me the chance to interact with the people of Vadodara and understand the business climate here. Even then, the city was full of entrepreneurs who were more than happy to do business with foreigners.

Eventually, I opted out of my firm and started my own business. The only apprehension I had was whether I'd be successful in my venture. But I found it more than easy to navigate my way through as a stranger and my business has grown from a staff of four and a rather small turnover to a staff of 60 and an attractive turnover.

So yes, it's been a great journey.

For the traveller - Vadodara is great if you want to experience India. It has its own unique, distinctive cosmopolitan culture which doesn't take much time to grow on you. Also, it has great connectivity - there are regular flights out to Mumbai / Delhi. Ahmedabad which is just two hours away has flights going out to various parts of the world. Moreover, NH-8 offers you with the chance to see really interesting places in India.

For the family man - Vadodara is incredibly safe. Friendly and caring people. Good schools. Great houses at competitive prices. Household help is also easily available. I can tell you from my experience - once you ease in, which is fairly quick, it'll be next to impossible for you to leave because you wouldn't want to trade your newfound comfort with anything - not for the world.

*"It's a fine city with great business opportunities and a beautiful social life. It's hard to find this equilibrium anywhere else."*



## Bishen Gurung

**Asst. Restaurant Manager  
Mainland China**

Came down from Darjeeling in 2010 looking for better career prospects. Has found a job and says the city is way too perfect to leave.

I'm a family man and Vadodara for someone like me is just right - peaceful, safe, welcoming, less traffic and short distances. You get plenty of time both for work and family. My wife is happy. There's greenery all around. People are great - genuine and tremendously helpful - especially to outsiders. There are great places both in and around the city. It's just too perfect to leave.

*"My daughter goes to school here. In all honesty, I wouldn't want her growing up anywhere else."*



## K. Ravindranath

Executive Vice President  
L&T Hydrocarbons

Another Mumbaikar who came to Vadodara in 2009. Says Vadodara has the warmth of a culturally-rich small town with all the opportunities of a big city.

In late 1993, when we decided to set up a joint-venture engineering company in the hydrocarbon sector - we had a lot of choices but we settled on Vadodara - not just because Gujarat is the capital of the hydrocarbon industry but because Vadodara, in particular, is in a strategically important location.

There are several hydrocarbon industries in close proximity, it is very well connected to all the major cities and it is an emerging city with growing infrastructure.

There are great academic institutions, a big talent pool of engineering graduates,

a very cosmopolitan and smart crowd, top-class housing, and entertainment, sporting events and festivals happening through the year. So this city offers a great work-life balance and an excellent standard and quality of life to our people.

On the other hand, L&T offers a great culture. Personally I enjoy the warmth, the culture, the heritage and the right blend that exists here - of art, education, entertainment and work. It's hard to get this in other places.

*"It has all the facilities, amenities and opportunities of a big city and has still preserved and exhibited the warmth and vibe of a culturally rich town."*

I would say Vadodara is one of the finest and the most beautiful cities to settle down in. Great people. Short distances. Less traffic. Good schools. Brilliant hospitals. Decent roads. Lots of malls, multiplexes, cafes. Amazing bookstores - the works. It's also very well placed with great connectivity both by road and by air - you can reach Mumbai in 40 minutes and Delhi in about an hour.

Vadodara is also growing rapidly. Linde,

Siemens, Bombardier, Mitsubishi, Hyundai, L&T - all of them have a very strong presence here. A lot of expats come here on assignments. Plus, the people here are very fond of going out and having a good time. They love to try different cuisines. So, looking at this growing market, we decided to get into restaurants. On an average - Little Italy gets 25-30 expats and Mainland China gets around 30-40 expat guests.

*"There are lots of new industries coming in which translates into a lot of business opportunities."*



## Bharat Shah

**Restaurateur, Mainland China & Little Italy - Vadodara**

A Barodian; was living in Los Angeles. Was keen to grow with the growing Vadodara. Returned and set up speciality restaurants.

After graduation and working for a few years, I decided to start my own business. We realised that Vadodara was the right place to start a business from because of the great balance it offers in terms of work, leisure and family life.

First of all, the size of the city is small so you don't spend much time commuting. I can get from home to the tennis courts, play tennis for two hours, go back home, freshen up and still get to the office in time. 10 hours of office work and then I join my family for dinner. So, the life here is convenient, easy-going and balanced.

Second, there is a sufficient talent pool here - both in terms of intelligence and cultural diversity. In the technology business, we need smart and creative

people and Vadodara offers these in plenty. Moreover, being home to the MSU, Vadodara has both education and cosmopolitanism in its genes. There are people from all walks of life - art, culture, music, science, technology - everything.

Finally, when you go out and socialise, you see people from varied background. Honestly, Vadodara is one of the few cities which offer many opportunities to interact with a large diversity.

Our company Matrix exports telecom and security solutions to more than 25 countries - all researched, designed, engineered, manufactured and marketed from Vadodara. This is what Vadodara offers!

*"The intellectual stimulation here is just phenomenal."*



## Ganesh Jivani

**Managing Director  
Matrix Comsec**

This first-generation entrepreneur arrived in Vadodara to study engineering. His start-up, headquartered in the city, is the country's leading PBX brand and retails across the world.



## Geeta Goradia

**President  
Federation of Gujarat Industries**

Originally from Mumbai; set up Jewel Brushes in Vadodara in 1993. Today, it is India's largest manufacturer of toothbrushes, with exports to over 50 countries.

Vadodara tends to grow on anyone who lives here for more than a few months. This is the reason why so many families of armed forces personnel have decided to stay back after coming here. There is something very unique about this city.

I have seen the city grow in every way; be it industrial, population or in terms of infrastructure. In 1958, when oil was struck in Ankleshwar and Khambhat. The FGI played an important role in bringing Koyali refinery to Vadodara. That resulted in other big companies like ONGC and GACL coming in along with other smaller ancillary units. Then there was a boom in between where many large companies like Bombardier, L&T, ABB, Thermax, Jindal and Apollo came in and set up units here.

Vadodara, today, is more than just a pharma, chemical and petrochemical hub, now it is also an engineering and auto

ancillary hub. There is also tremendous scope for sunrise sectors like agro & food processing and medical tourism in Vadodara.

The city has also benefitted from being part of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and the Dedicated Freight Corridor. The longest network of gas grid in India is in Gujarat and Vadodara gets a big chunk of it.

Vadodara is the most well placed city in the state of Gujarat when it comes to quality of workforce. There has always been a lot of emphasis given to education and excellence in terms of people. It has always been an educational hub and we also have a big cosmopolitan crowd.

God forbid, if I ever have to leave, I would really miss the peace, quality of life and the cultural heritage that this city offers.

*"Vadodara has always had a rare combination of culture and business."*



## Mayur Patel

Owner  
Crossword - Vadodara

A dynamic businessman of Mumbai. Used to visit Vadodara often as he had factories here. Fell in love with the city and shifted permanently with family.

I moved to Vadodara about 10 years ago and to say the least, coming here has been a blessing. It's peaceful and green. Less traffic. Less pollution. Much lesser commuting time. Quality of life both as a parent and as an individual is far superior - you can work as well as spend enough time with the family.

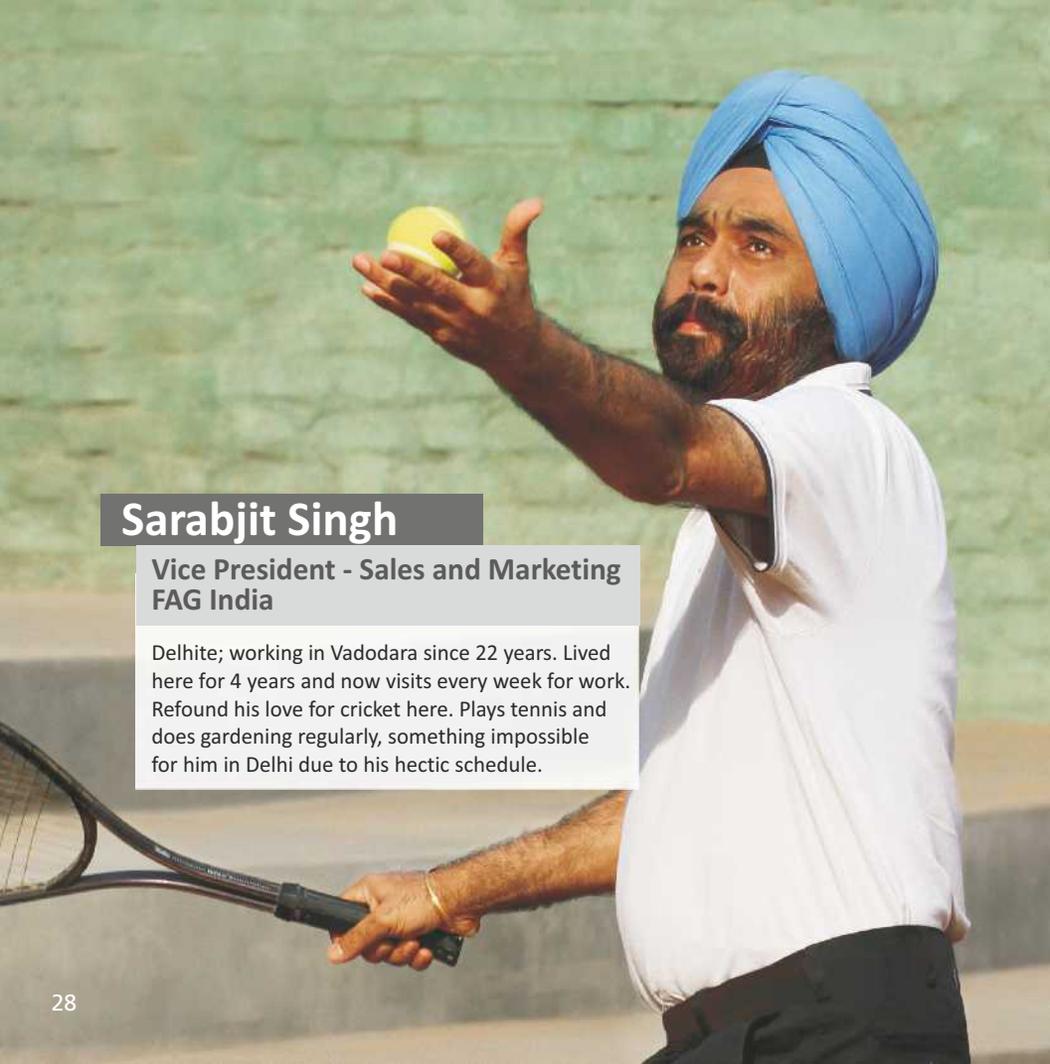
Vadodara is also very well connected - you can make it to places like Udaipur, Mt. Abu, Mumbai in just 4-5 hours. Ahmedabad with its international airport is just 2 hours away. There are beautiful places like Jambughoda and Champaner within 45 minutes from here. Overall, it's conveniently located - it's the South Central city of Gujarat.

Vadodara is the cultural capital of

Gujarat, and an education hub. The presence of the M.S. University has had a strong influence on the city. While in Mumbai I used to take my kids to Crossword every weekend. Sensing the intellectual vibrancy of Vadodara and the fact that there was nothing like Crossword in the city we decided to open a Crossword in Vadodara.

At the outset the idea did have its share of sceptics but we went ahead. We started with 6,000 sq. ft. and within 3 years, we expanded to 10,000 sq. ft. Today, after 12 years, it has become a destination place - there's a large open space where one can browse around and read - there's no pressure of buying anything - there's music - we also have a café - it has worked like a charm.

*"I've grown so attached to the city that when I go to Mumbai, I feel like coming back on the same day."*



## Sarabjit Singh

**Vice President - Sales and Marketing  
FAG India**

Delhite; working in Vadodara since 22 years. Lived here for 4 years and now visits every week for work. Refound his love for cricket here. Plays tennis and does gardening regularly, something impossible for him in Delhi due to his hectic schedule.

I've got a lot of years and memories associated with this city both as a regular visitor and as a resident. I was with my family for about 4 years. Now, my family's back in Delhi but I come every week. I like Vadodara for the basic culture that it exhibits - the simplicity and the small distances. Home to workplace is not far - this simplicity gives you peace of mind and tranquillity - it's really hard to get this in Delhi.

I also rediscovered my love for cricket - there are constant cricket matches going on here - and there are some really good cricketers here so that makes the game altogether a different experience. I also get to play tennis here - something I couldn't find the time to do in Delhi. I love gardening as well and I'm able to do that too - it's amazing.

Although I come from a Punjabi background, I have a lot of Gujarati

friends - that's the thing about this city - people are open and they just absorb you as their friend.

Another thing is that since 1989, when I first came here, I've seen a lot of development in all areas. It's mind-blowing - malls, roads, residences, schools, hospitals. And yet, there is simplicity in living.

The work culture here is great. Gujaratis are enterprising, committed and adapt very quickly, so Vadodara has always been an attractive proposition for the corporates to set up base here. Moreover the diversity acts as a major added advantage because you get the right kind of culture within your organisation.

All in all, the lifestyle here is modern but at the same time it has the advantages of a small town. I really don't know of any other place that offers this balance.

*"It's a cosmopolitan city."*

In the 90s, we were hunting for a location to develop an engineering centre for our hydrocarbon and power businesses. After a detailed search, we settled on Vadodara because it offered the right mix - close to our manufacturing facility, of the right size, great infrastructure, booming city and culturally rich - which summed it up to be a great place for people to both live and work.

I've lived in many places - Mumbai, Delhi, Chandigarh, London (UK), Princeton (USA). I can say that overall, Vadodara offers a very balanced quality of life. It has the right mix of a big city and a small town.

Firstly, the luxury of time and short distances - I can leave home just 10 minutes before check-in time. Other places, you have to plan - it can take anywhere between 30 minutes to 3 hours. Here, I can predict the traffic and

it'll still be 15 minutes or 20 minutes of driving time.

Second, it's peaceful, safe and offers a lot of opportunities for leisure. There are lots of shopping malls, cinema halls, multiplexes, restaurants etc. I'm a member of the Golf Club and I get to spend quality time there with my wife.

Third, I actually enjoy working here. L&T knowledge city is a place different from the rest of the places in Vadodara or for that matter, from any other L&T operation in the country. Not just me, but everyone actually likes to come and work here. We have a lot of ambitious plans to take this further. We are also planning, to come up with, among other things, a hostel, a place for entertainment, a lounge and a place for people to relax. These will enhance the campus further and will make it truly unique.

*"It's a great place,  
both for families to enjoy life and  
for bachelors to groom their careers."*



**Sunil Pande**

**Executive Vice President  
Marketing and Communication  
L&T Power**

His career in L&T has taken him to Mumbai, Delhi, Chandigarh, London (UK) and Princeton (USA). After a year in Vadodara, considers the city an ideal place for families to live together and for bachelors to groom their careers.

A portrait of Shagun Mehra, a woman with dark hair, smiling. She is wearing a green top with a gold-colored vertical stripe down the center.

## Shagun Mehra

**Project Director  
Surya Palace Hotel**

Born in Vadodara; lived in Switzerland, Paris and Mumbai. Got married and had settled down in Mumbai. Couldn't resist the tug of Vadodara and returned in 2009.

Vadodara gives you the time and space to focus on things that are relevant. I can pack so much in a day - I go for a swim at the palace early in the morning, play some golf, come to work, golf some more in the evening, then go to the gym before returning home to my two-year old daughter and books. It would be a nightmare to accomplish this balance in the bigger cities.

Coming back to Vadodara and meeting people, who like me have travelled to different places of the world, is really fun. The mix of experiences adds a completely different flavour to the city. It's really refreshing to be with someone who is just as enthusiastic about life as you are. I've met a lot of foreigners at the hotel

who've been to Varanasi, Rajasthan, Kashmir, the South, the metros - all of them say that there's something about Vadodara which is different - it's probably the open-mindedness. We don't get stereotyped into any slots and this gives me a lot of pride.

It's a city that has contributed immensely to making me who I am today - and I take that home very warmly. I've always seen my father, Piyush Shah, going the extra mile to give back to Vadodara in whatever way he can - whether it is to keeping the city green or keeping it alive with renovations. I see this passion even amongst my friends and so many other young people here.

*"In Vadodara, I've discovered this whole new world of people who have travelled across the world, experienced different things in life and have now moved back to the comfort of Vadodara."*

I came here to give a series of lectures on Italian art to MA students. At the end of the series, I decided to stay on because I realised that Indian art was a totally different story - a very different art form. I wanted to learn more about it and Vadodara seemed to be the perfect place.

It can get tough for a single woman in a different country but here I feel absolutely safe. It's easy to get around. I travel in rickshaws most of the time and I've never felt threatened. In fact, they're friendly and helpful. The women's expat group has been a wonderful way of enjoying life here - they organise a lot of activities - we meet for lunch once every week - we explore Indian food and talk about Indian culture and our experiences. There are great restaurants here - once you get used to the spicy food here, you start enjoying it.

Vadodara is an interesting town because it consists of the old city, which dates back to the 18th century, and the new Vadodara which was begun by Maharaja Sayajirao III in the 19th century. He initiated a renovation program in the 1870s and employed two architects, Robert Chisholm and Major Charles Mant who were responsible for introducing Indo-Saracenic architecture to Vadodara. They designed hospitals, markets, museums, the palace, the university etc.

The central dome in the M.S. University campus, designed by Chisholm, is the second-largest dome of its kind in India. The Lakshmi Vilas Palace is also very fascinating - it's four times bigger than the Buckingham palace and is set in 700 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens. All this makes the city distinctive and very interesting - it's not something you'd just walk past.

*"Vadodara has this quiet energy here  
- this sense of love for life and culture  
that grows on you with every passing day."*



## Berenice Schreiner

**Art Professor and Curator**

South African art professor; lived in Italy. Came to give a series of lectures on Italian art in 2009. Enchanted by the city, stayed on and has been rediscovering her love for art and architecture since.



## Dr. Jacques Mouton

### Technical Director, Sasol

South African professional; here on a 3-year assignment. Loves the fantastic support system that the city offers for expats.

Sasol had been looking for the perfect city in India for sourcing equipment and services to be exported to Sasol plants all over the world. Vadodara has great suppliers who are capable of providing us with our technically complex equipment. Travelling and logistics work out well - less traffic and great connectivity, with regular flights to all major cities. The Ahmedabad international airport is not very far. Plus, community life here is great and the city's safety factor is unbeatable.

It's been a great transition even for my family. The children go to an international school and are very happy there - they've fit in quite well. For housing, there are lots of options available in terms of size, rent, area etc. For food, we found a few places which had everything, right from

different types of cheese to different sauces to frozen seafood. Moreover, the quality is excellent whether it's locally manufactured or imported. There are lots of restaurants offering international cuisines - right from Chinese to Continental to local Indian food. Even the fast-food chains of the world like McDonald's and Pizza Hut have been around for quite a while.

We regularly visit Crossword, a lovely bookstore with a small coffee shop. They've got a varied collection of books and at very reasonable prices. There are lots of shopping centres as well with all the major brands of the world for clothing, sports and electronic equipment.

*"My Mumbai colleagues are especially jealous. They realise now that Vadodara is not just advantageous on the personal front but also from a business perspective."*

When I got onto the train at Borivali, I had one thought running at the back of mind - I'm going to a village with cows and dung everywhere. When I got here, it was silent and soft and sober. I was in an unfamiliar zone because I was used to travelling in crowded trains and people all around wherever you go. So frankly, the first few days of Vadodara were awkward.

But all of it has changed for the better - I found peace here - this peace of mind was missing in Mumbai. It has given me the space and time to think and understand who I am - it has helped me work both physically and mentally and prepare myself for various kinds of challenges. After dinner, I go for a walk. It's like the most important time of the day for me and here the air is clean; no honking of cars or for that matter, no cows and dung on the streets. I can sleep for 8 hours with no traffic noise to disturb me. The ambience is great. The people

are awesome - far more decent and well-educated. It's safe on the roads - you can go for walks and drives late at night without the fear of getting mugged or hassled in any way. There's a lot of buzz during the day - it acts like any metro during the day and at night, it's relatively quieter. So it has both flavours - those of a big city and those of a small town.

There are lots of hotels and joints so every Sunday you can enjoy a different variety of food - Punjabi, Gujarati, Mughlai, Kathiavadi - it's all there. I once tasted ten different kinds of Pani Puri, Vada Pav - I'm from Mumbai and my perception about these has totally changed.

My first choice will always be Mumbai no matter where I am, but that aside, Vadodara wins hands-down. I've been to a lot of places but there's just something about this city that keeps pulling you back.

*"Vadodara has been  
my road to inner peace."*



## Rohan Jojode

### Executive-Quality Management L&T Power

A fast-talking Mumbaikar; didn't want to come to Vadodara at all. Now, the city is amongst one of his top preference as the perfect place to settle down.



## Nasser Al-Alawi

### Production Measurements & Field Automation Supervisor Petroleum Development Oman

A resident of the Sultanate of Oman, work brings him to Vadodara for long durations. Is all praise for the fantastic hotels, shopping avenues, delectable cuisine and the warmth with which the city envelopes him.

We have a project going on with L&T and am going to be in the city for a couple of months until the design is over. This is my third time here - it's very different from where we come, but whatever I've seen of it, I've liked.

The people are nice. The shopping malls are great. It's modernised now - top-class restaurants - Mainland China is especially very good. First-class hotels - good facilities and amenities along with fantastic service.

The Navratri is an interesting experience - it's really interesting to see such mass

coordination - very colourful. The city has a very different vibe - there's lots of energy. The only downside is the traffic but still, the scene isn't as bad as in the metros of India - and I'm amazed at how people control their moves - there are all kinds of vehicles yet there's very good harmonization.

I'm looking forward to working here - especially at L&T Knowledge City - it's a modernised centre which competes with the rest of the world in terms of setup, knowledge and skill.

*"The city has a very different vibe  
- there's lots of energy."*

First of all, people here are kind and understanding. I go to NIS and I have not had any problems settling in. I have a great bunch of friends there. I also became a good swimmer here because of my coach - I've represented Vadodara at the state-level championships.

I'm learning the guitar at RCA - they've great teachers and I can now play lots of rock songs that I've always wanted to.

*"I have been to many countries in Asia but Vadodara is very different."*



## Koki Yoshioka

**Student**  
**Navrachana International School**

Bright Japanese kid; has lived in many countries because of his father's expat assignments. Finds Vadodara the best of them all, for all the lovely friends he's made here.

A portrait of S.R. Kulkarni, a middle-aged man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a blue patterned tie. He is standing in front of a green wall with vertical panels.

## S.R. Kulkarni

### Head - HR, L&T Power

Was hesitant to leave Mumbai, finally came to Vadodara 8 years ago. Now, is the President of Baroda Management Association. Is impressed with the top-notch medical facilities and the warm caring doctors. Has decided to stay back in Vadodara post-retirement.

There were only a couple of engineering companies operating from Vadodara when L&T decided to start operations here. It has grown rapidly.

Initially, I had a lot of reservations about coming to the city. Mumbai has been my karmabhoomi and I'd been living there for several decades. I was worried if Vadodara would provide me with the right kind of environment for a mature professional growth. Plus, my family was used to their life there. After coming here, it's fair to say that all our concerns and problems had been dispelled, all our needs met.

There are many industry bodies, associations and clubs for one to make the right professional connections. I'm myself very closely associated with Baroda Management Association - I've been the President for the past two years and even prior to that I was fairly actively associated with them.

I'm also closely associated with CII,

Gujarat as the chairperson of HR - IIR panel. So, the professional environment is industry-friendly and work opportunities are plenty. Vadodara is home to many large public sector units. There are great academic institutions here. There's no shortage in the supply of manpower.

There are top-notch medical facilities with some of India's leading doctors. The distances are short. Traffic is not a problem. It is extremely safe for my family - my wife in particular - to move around. The cost of living is low - you get to enjoy life and invest in assets equally.

We've been able to create a very good social network for our employees called Indradhanush which is a cultural as well as a sports forum. Indradhanush has created an excellent band called Melody Tanda that performs regularly here. The club also organises a lot of sporting activities - there are regular cricket matches and professionals from other industries participate in these as well.

*"Vadodara is fast becoming one of the premier cities of India."*



## Trilochansingh Bhatia

Head - Product Design, FAG India

Brought up in Ahmedabad; studied at the renowned M.S. University of Baroda. Joined FAG and has been residing in the city with family since 24 years.

Before joining college at Vadodara, I spent 18 years in Ahmedabad. After graduating from MSU, I started my career at FAG India as a trainee engineer and have been working here for 20 years now. I'm here with my family - my parents, sisters, brothers and my wife and son. My father himself worked as an engineer at MSU and is an author of several books.

Vadodara has changed a lot in the last few years. There are lots of malls and multiplexes now. There are lots of sports facilities as well - my son plays tennis everyday which has helped him tremendously and at multiple levels - he plays at state-level now. There are many surrounding places where you spend time with family - Pavagadh, Ajwa-nimeta. Kamati baug is the perfect place to relax and unwind. My son loves the zoo. Sursagar gives you peace of mind.

EME temple is also a great place. We love non-veg food especially during winter - and there are lots of places here where you get amazing non-veg food. We've started eating South Indian food as well. There's a lot of variety here and it is this variety that helps one develop their taste buds. On the religion front - there are 3 Gurudwaras here. In fact, there are lots of spiritual and religious places for all faiths here.

We've grown very fond of the place and have integrated pretty well into its culture - my colleague tells me that I'm a Punjabi-Gujarati now. People get shocked that despite being a Sikh, I can fluently talk in Gujarati. If I was to leave the city, I would really miss the people - their nature, attitude and positivity - they're not cunning or sly but helpful and supportive. So, it's a very safe and secure place.

"The core thing about Vadodara is that it's green, peaceful and a great place for family."



## Marinda Mouton

### Homemaker

Came from South Africa. Been here four months, she is supposed to stay for three years. She thinks, Vadodara is a crime-free city and everybody is very friendly and helpful.

The day after we moved into our house, our neighbours invited us to a birthday party and there we met a lot of other expats after which we really got involved with all the activities of the women's club - lunches, meetings etc. Our activities happen really often and we meet each other frequently. The women's club was started about 6-7 years back to get women together on a monthly basis and help them out in every way. It's important to say that it's a support group and not a networking club. My friends in Mumbai complain that there's nothing like this over there and that they get really lonely at times. Here, you have good connections.

In the last couple of months, Vadodara has become really close to our heart. It's almost a crime-free city and everybody around here is very friendly and helpful. I have two daughters - 15 and 12. They go to Navrachana International School. It's a great school because it really makes an

effort to make them feel at home. They have a buddy system - these buddies introduce them to the system and other things so they get comfortable really quickly. The international curriculum's great so as parents, we're not concerned about their studies or their future.

There are extra-curricular activities happening year-round - both my daughters learn music - they go to the RCA music studio which is just around the corner - my younger one learns tennis right next to the Sterling gym so yes that's also available - it keeps them busy - our housing society has a pool and a gym - so it's easy even for us to do things and stay active. Back in South Africa, we were living by the countryside so it was difficult for the kids to go out in the evenings and meet friends but here they can - they go to restaurants a lot and get to hang out with their friends often - when we go back, they're going to miss that a lot.

*"It's like a countryside city - drive just 5 kms from the city and you're around trees and nature."*

Before moving to Vadodara, I was working with a company in Houston, Texas. The move hasn't been difficult to handle - it's surprisingly quiet but there's a mix of the old and the new - tradition and modernity - so it's been great so far.

The one great thing about Vadodara is the employment opportunity it provides for a lot of professionals - there are a lot of engineering companies, manufacturing and production facilities are plenty, so not just for engineering but there's plenty of stuff for anyone who wants to pursue careers in other sectors as well.

One of the advantages of Vadodara is that I got back to playing tennis, something I didn't get the time to do in all the other places. There are lots of multiplexes and malls here - INOX is my favourite. There are plenty of food options and the restaurants here are amazing - we visit a few quite regularly.

There are some very interesting places just on the outskirts of the city. I'm looking forward to the Sardar Sarovar dam which is next on our list. Moreover, the city is extremely safe. So, it's a great package in the form of a small town.

*"The Champaner mosques are exceptionally beautiful."*



**Seshu**

**Executive  
L&T Engineering Services**

Originally from Hyderabad; worked in Houston, Texas before moving to Vadodara. He appreciates the opportunity to grow as a professional. He rates Vadodara as one of the most safest city to live in.

## Mahipalsingh Panwar

**Manager - Application Engineering  
FAG India**

Originally from Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Lives here with his wife. Been working here for the last 5 years. At first thought that Gujarati food won't suit him, but now loves the food, the city and its people. A family man, he loves the fact that he finds ample quality time here.



I joined FAG in 2007 as an application engineer. I preferred this city because it's like a mini-metro. I get to enjoy a good work-family balance here - there's no point living in a metro where you spend 4-5 hours on the road and by the time you get home, your wife and kids have already called it a day - I'm a family man and it's very important to me to give home its due time. I can do that here. Coming to think of it, everyday is like a weekend. And I don't need to plan for going some place - places are close by.

The city is also very secure - my job profile involves a lot of travelling. If I'm out, I'm always at peace. Women can move around at any time freely. The crime rate is almost zero as compared to the other cities. The law enforcement is pretty good. People are co-operative and helpful. It's a modern city in a traditional outfit.

*"Come to think of it,  
everyday is like a weekend."*

When I don't come to Vadodara at the Navratri time, for the festival of Navratri, I really miss to play the Garba, to be here in this crowd, with more than 30,000 people playing the Garba. I miss the colours, I miss the joy and I miss the good music. And I just love to come every year.

I came here for the first time in 2005 and I was just watching the festival, the people playing and it is a joy, and from 2006 onwards, I was also playing the Garba. And now, I can't just miss it. I come particularly for this festival. I was a resident of Vadodara for more than 4 years. I relocated to Germany in 2009 and since then, I come every year and play nine nights of Garba. It's just a very emotional thing for me, just to sit here and listen.

I miss my friends, miss the culture and miss the food. Not really food, because I started cooking Indian food on my own. Also I miss the exciting life here. Sometimes it's a big challenge to deal with it and on the other hand, not a single day is boring.

I would definitely come back, if I get a chance and I recommend going to Vadodara, because it is a very good place to live in India and it is not as crowded as other cities like Mumbai, Delhi or Bangalore. Everything is so close and you will meet a lot of other expats here. What makes me come again, is to see my friends. Even my Indian friends come and visit me in Germany. So, there is a close connection to Vadodara.

*"Listen to the voices, listen to the music, listen to the tabla, and when these clear voices go up the night sky and half moon is there, that is the best thing you can experience in Vadodara."*



## Helen Beier

### IT Professional

Lives and works in Germany. Has fallen in love with Vadodara's Navaratri - the largest dance festival with the longest duration in the world. Ensures that she's here, every year, to experience the magic.



## Chandni Saraf

**Design Engineer, Matrix Comsec**

Resident of Abu Dhabi; studied in Mumbai; came to Vadodara in 2009. Is glad that she didn't opt for a larger city - absolutely loves the extra time she gets here.

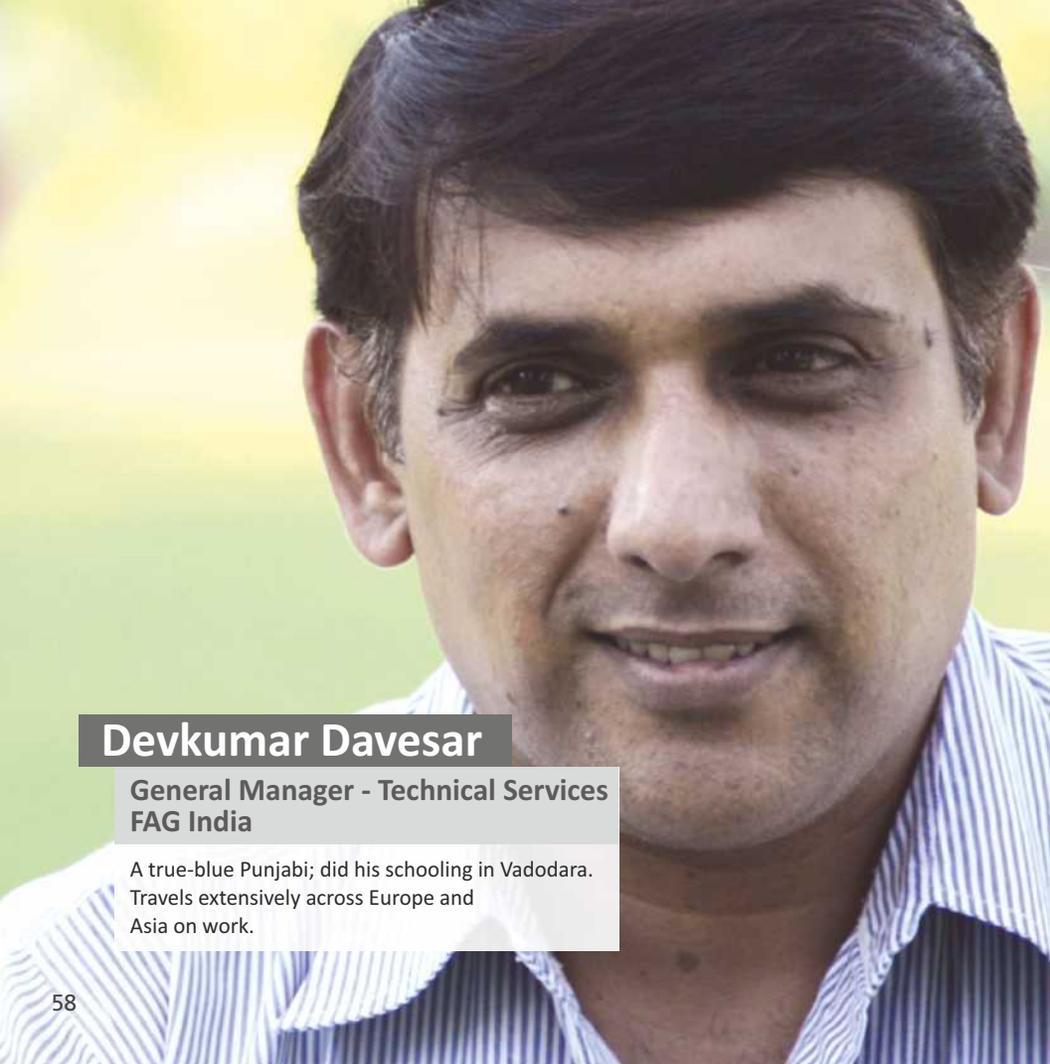
I was born and brought up in Abu Dhabi and if I was to settle down in India, I wanted it to be Mumbai. I had done my engineering there and I loved my life there. But circumstances got me here and it took me about 6 months to settle down but once I did, there was no looking back.

The cost of living is optimum. It's a growing city in terms of industrialisation and is expanding rapidly so everyone has good growth opportunities. People here are friendly and broad-minded.

It's a major railway station so you get trains to any part of India. There are regular flights to the major cities. The Ahmedabad expressway provides a good connectivity to the international airport. Public transport within the city is also great. You can move around freely in complete safety.

It's so easy to manage work and home - this is a luxury that people in big cities don't have.

*"The living environment is great - it's beautiful, peaceful, clean, easy-going and cosmopolitan."*



## Devkumar Davesar

General Manager - Technical Services  
FAG India

A true-blue Punjabi; did his schooling in Vadodara.  
Travels extensively across Europe and  
Asia on work.

I came to Vadodara back in 1979. It was a very small city then but I was amazed by it - it was full of energy, creativity and love - friendly and helpful people, lots of students from various parts of the world, things happening all the time - concerts and plays and sports - it was alive and happening even then. And in this regard, it hasn't changed one bit.

Now, it's expanding - there are lots of things coming in and around the city - resorts, clubs, industries, schools, malls etc. But despite this influx of

infrastructure, the spirit and moral fabric of the city hasn't changed - the people are still wonderful - they'll welcome you even at 10 in the night.

Everyone wants to be together and have fun. You can celebrate all kinds of festivals - doesn't matter where you're from. The traffic has surely increased but the distances are short so it all works out beautifully. The city is still green - Kamati Baug with its planetarium and museum is still the very same landmark it used to be.

"Every festival - Navratri, Diwali,  
Dussehra, Uttarayan, Eid, Christmas  
- it's all celebrated in equal measure."

A man with glasses and a blue striped shirt is sitting on a white ledge outdoors. Behind him are several large potted plants, including a tall fern and some leafy green plants. The background shows a building with a red and white facade.

## Vinod Srinivasa

### Executive - Quality Management L&T Power

Moved to Vadodara 2 years back from Bangalore. Loves the food, the culture, the people, the sport. He plays badminton and is preparing hard for the 9 nights of garba.

Frankly, my first reaction to Vadodara wasn't positive - I had very little knowledge of the city and more so, I was used to life in Bangalore which I thought was perfect and couldn't get any better. When I got here, I was put off by the weather - Bangalore weather is probably the best and honestly, for me, it can't ever be replaced.

But once you start living here, after the initial getting-used-to, you soon start seeing the real Vadodara. The culture, the food, the people, the way of life - it's all very unique. After you are done with looking at the curtains and cribbing about them, you see what's happening beyond them.

I used to be a good badminton player back in school. Now, I play at Bal Bhavan - they've got a decent indoor stadium - it's refreshing and I'm getting back to it so I'm happy. I even played at the L&T tournament so the action is back on.

Study-wise, I'm inclined towards the management and recently, I got to hear about the Baroda Management Association - I've been to a few of their talks. Every Wednesday, there are sessions that I don't want to miss out on - very unique and interesting topics being discussed. I'm experimenting a lot in terms of food, travelling - whatever is possible. The food here is awesome - I'd never tried street food but it's really tasty and I was kind of forced to give way to my initial inhibitions. Once in a while, I also try the Gujarati Thali.

Professionally, it's been great. I'm growing with the organisation here. There are lots of opportunities - be it in my own technical stream or with the various associated functions. I'm also someone who likes to interact with different kinds of people and that opportunity is available here in plenty. I'm still getting used to a few things but so far, it's been super.

"There's a lot of meaningful stuff happening here."



## Erica Harris

### Artist

Lives in Brooklyn, New York. Is known for her fascinating mixed media collages. Teaches art to children across the world. Has facilitated projects in Vadodara, Guatemala, Macedonia, Brazil, El Salvador, Southeast Asia, and Brooklyn in recent years.

Even in an opportune land like New York, there's this constant financial stress which restricts me from creating opportunities for other people to do what they have never done before. Whereas here in Vadodara, it's so easy for me. I don't share a language with the people but the ability to leverage art as a medium to create something together is really priceless.

When we came here, we wanted to create a connection with the community which would sustain itself, even after we left. Everything just fell in place - easy commute, being able to just join in and do projects, and above all, the city's ability to keep things

casual. The kind of exposure, success and appreciation we have got for our projects is really good.

The city is so inclusive that I don't feel like a tourist here. In other cities, there's always this lack of connection, but people in Vadodara envelope you with their warmth. They make you feel really welcome; for them meeting and greeting us becomes almost a kind of celebration.

To know more about Erica's work in Vadodara, visit <http://www.ericaharris.org/2012/03/baroda-gujarat/>

*"In Vadodara, I really feel connected to the culture in many different ways and there's a lot that you can absorb off the city, which is not possible in other cities."*

A portrait of Aaditya Moholkar, a man with dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt with a small logo on the left chest. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with greenery.

## Aaditya Moholkar

**Manager - General Purchasing  
FAG India**

Born and brought up in Indore. Shifted here in 2010 for work. The friendly people and great work motivate him to shift here permanently.

When I came here, I was concerned if I had made the right choice. Soon enough, a lot of my worries had been dispelled. Everything here is just right. People are cooperative, friendly, warm and open-minded. The food here is amazing - you get all kinds. There are some places where the food is just what I get back in Indore so I don't really miss out on home food.

The cost of living is the same as well - in fact, there's much more that you get here in the same amount. Work is going great. So it's been a great experience so far and all these things motivate me to stay here for longer.

*"There's much more that you get here  
in the same amount."*



## K.R. Vishwanath

**Sr. Manager-Import / Export / Logistics, L&T Power**

Mumbaikar for 30 years; Vadodarian for 2; loves the way of life here, the liberty to enjoy the small things in life and free time for himself and family. Plans to settle down in Vadodara post-retirement and has also bought a house with a garden for the same.

I lived in Mumbai for 30 years. The minute I got here, I fell in love with the city.

The way people live here in beautiful houses is the first thing that catches your attention. In Mumbai, we used to live in what we call pigeonhole houses. But here, even the buildings are beautiful with gardens and good roads around. And the people - which is the most beautiful aspect of Vadodara - I've seen many places and I've lived in many metros - let me tell you, the people here are altogether different - very cool, loving, caring and helpful.

I've decided to stay back here post-retirement. I've already bought a house of my own with a beautiful garden - today I'm so happy that I keep myself busy with the garden - the peace of mind I get is tremendous. My two sons are in Pune working in IT companies - they're always

eager to come and they always go back relaxed and happy.

Back in Mumbai, I used to be stressed out over time and distance. Here, I can even have breakfast. Travelling is so comfortable - no hassles whatsoever. On working days, I can go cycling and jogging. I'm very fond of games so on non-working days, I'm either swimming or playing football, cricket etc. I've been able to do these only after moving to Vadodara. And there are lots of beautiful grounds here for sports. In Mumbai, there'll be 25 teams on one small ground - I used to curse myself and wonder when I'd get to play on a ground that's all to myself.

In all honesty, even if I'm offered a job with triple my current salary, I wouldn't go - wouldn't ever compromise on the amazing life I have in Vadodara.

*"On paper, I'm 54,  
but after coming down to Vadodara,  
I am 25 at heart and by physique."*

The moment you enter the city, there's this warmth and acceptance from the people – people are very helpful; they're loving, caring, friendly. I feel living in a smaller city and that too Vadodara is much better than living in Delhi because your personal growth is much more. There are dramas, gigs, plays happening all the time. It happens in Delhi as well but it's difficult to commute because of distances and traffic. That way, Vadodara is much better - a phone call and you're there in 15 minutes. C.C. Mehta Auditorium, Kirti Mandir, the Palace - things keep

happening. And this is not run-of-the-mill stuff but really good stuff.

The smallest of festivals are celebrated in a big way which is a very good thing. Here it's more about tradition and culture and community, not just pomp and glory.

More often than not, I find myself stationed at Javnika (Kirti Mandir) - it's so peaceful there - you can just sit back, reflect and do whatever you want. Being from Delhi, it was hard to understand the unconditional love of the people but soon I realised that this is how people here are. I'd want to live here all my life.

"There is this clean vibe here – this unconditional love from people – people who neither know you nor are they looking to get anything from you."



## Tishya

### Psychologist & Hypnotherapist

A stage loving psychologist from Delhi; Finds the city large enough to pursue her varied cultural interests, small enough to feel cozy and loved; Seven years without an itch in Vadodara; Wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

I'm here because my husband has a 2-year contract with ABB and have been living here for almost 6 months now. When my husband told me that we were shifting here, I had no idea what or where Vadodara was. I googled it and the university with its beautiful building showed up. So I thought it might be interesting. In spite of my orientation where I was shown the architecture, the open green spaces, the people, I had some basic questions regarding quality of education, safety and language barrier.

And as it has turned out, it's an incredibly safe place, people are very helpful, nice and welcoming children go to an international school here - the first week onwards, we felt we have friends here - everyone wants to connect. If I'm standing in front of a vegetable store and I haven't got a clue what the vegetables are, people come and help me - people who don't even know English.

I have realised that it's a great place to live - my husband's working hard, my children are happy - for any young family, it's a perfect setting.

There are loads of interesting buildings here, lots of interesting period houses - you see heritage and that's something I haven't seen anywhere else. There's a stunning university here with beautiful campuses and students from all over the world. We love the Indian food here. There are these herbs and vegetables that I haven't seen anywhere. For the international food stuff, there are quite a few well-stocked shops around - Italian pasta, sauces, cheese, meat - you get everything here.

When we go back, I'm really going to miss the people of Vadodara - their sincere smiles, the warmth, the food, the laughs - I would miss the culture and the cultural misunderstandings - everyday you learn something new about this place and its people - it's wonderful.

*"It's an amazing, green, smiling, sunny, funky town."*

A portrait of Agnes Bachmann-Hoffmann, a woman with blonde hair and sunglasses on her head, smiling. She is wearing a white top and a necklace with large wooden beads. The background shows a brick building and a white car.

## Agnes Bachmann-Hoffmann

### Homemaker

From Switzerland; Husband's work brought her here for two years; Came with a lot of apprehension, none remain today; Big fan of Vadodara's people, buildings and food; Would miss Vadodara for its culture and people, when she leaves.

When I came here for the first time, we didn't know anything about India. We come from a very different culture - we had no clue what India is all about and how life goes on here. To be honest, we did expect a little hostility because I've travelled and we've lived in quite a few countries and that's what we were used to. But the people here turned out to be so kind and helpful.

My children go to Navrachana International School and they have never complained about anything. My son is a swimmer - he swims for Vadodara; it's something I'm very proud of. He also enjoys playing the guitar. The city is not congested so we can go wherever we want - whether for shopping or for work - everything is close by. My office is just 15 minutes away from home. I get to spend a lot of quality time with my family.

*"My job requires me to relocate every few years but our memories of Vadodara will always put a smile on our faces."*



## Toru Yoshioka

**Asst. General Manager  
Marketing Group, L&T-MHI  
Turbine Generators Pvt. Ltd.  
E&C Business Group**

Born in Japan, settled in Vadodara since 3.5 years and working with L&T. Loves the fact that Vadodara is not congested and everything is available in close proximity; be it shopping or work, it's just a drive away.



## Rahul Kumar

**Executive Assistant to President Schaeffler India**

From Pune; been here for past one year. Was struck by the short distances. Lived in Pune, Bangalore, Mumbai, Hyderabad where he feels the distances are huge. Was surprised to find that language is not a barrier. And delighted to get the time to pursue his passion for teaching kids.

When I came here, the first thing that struck me was the short distances. I've lived in Pune, Bangalore, Mumbai, Hyderabad - in all these places, the distances are huge. You spend a lot of time in traffic - here, the distances are short and the routes are not complicated so it's easy to find your way around. You realise that you're not spending your time on other things but on things you want to do. This work-family balance - It's hard to get elsewhere - home to office is not even 15 minutes. If I'm required to stay in the office till 8, I don't get worried about which bus to take and whether I'll get it at all - it's great.

A friend of mine here runs an MBA coaching class - I go there and teach -

there's no money but I love teaching - it's a passion and I get the time to do that here. I haven't had the chance to explore Vadodara enough but I've been to a few places in and around Vadodara - Pavagadh is amazing.

When I first came to Gujarat, I thought that language would be a big barrier but that never happened. People try to talk in Hindi even if they can't. My wife is also happy. She was a little disappointed in the beginning because she was used to her life in Pune but she settled down fairly quickly - she's started using a two-wheeler looking at the girls here - now she's okay because she can move around whenever and wherever she wants - and I'm not worried because it's safe.

*"I get to spend quality time with my family."*



## Shannon Holman

### Creative Writer

Lives in Brooklyn, New York. Came to India for an art-making workshop with Chhaap Foundation for Printmaking Trust. Her experiences in India made her feel like a tourist in Banaras and a resident in Vadodara. Finds the city safe, clean and progressive.

Initially Vadodara felt very closed because it's not a tourist town. While Banaras is easier to navigate, as it's all about people going there on pilgrimages from both inside and outside India.

But then it switched completely. At the end of 6 weeks in Banaras I felt that under the tourist welcome, it was a very closed city, whereas Vadodara really opened up to me. In just 4 weeks I have had some really meaningful interactions with so many beautiful people.

The art scene is so vibrant that it attracts a lot of artists from different states of India, I think there are more artists here than any other city in India.

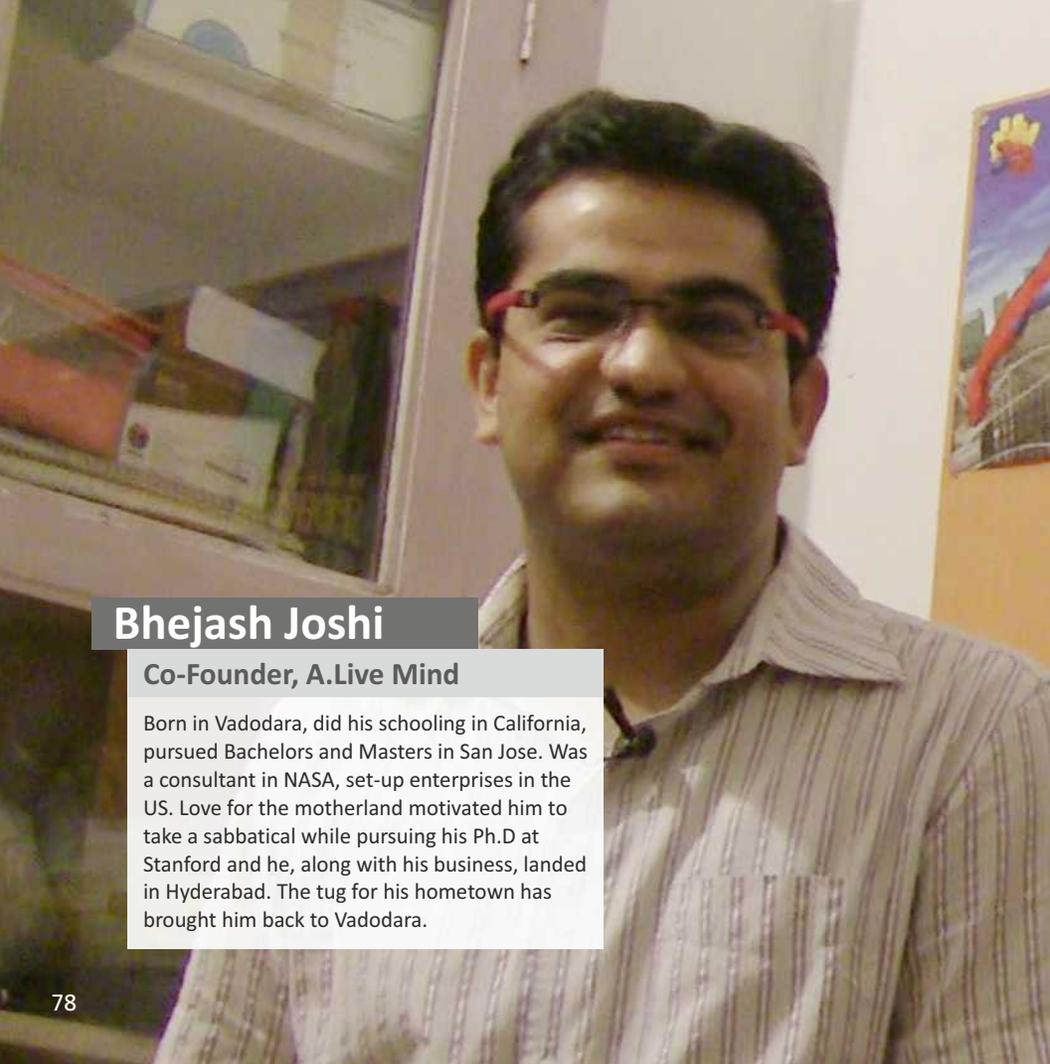
We did our project with 'Koshish Milap', an organisation that brings education

and medicines to the slum kids. We talked to local business owners and they were really eager to help. They were just super generous and someday, I would like to write some article about the 'Vadodara you don't know'.

In Vadodara, people can make a good living and be with their families and they are very, very satisfied. I know a fellow who moved his tech business here, after trying it in Chennai and Mumbai without much success. Then he shifted here, hired a new team and it was great.

At the beginning of my stay, diverse people told me that Vadodara is a city that grows on you. Initially you'd say I can't connect but after a couple of months, you would never ever want to leave and today I can vouch that this is true.

*"As an outsider,  
I have observed people here  
being so generous with their time,  
their efforts and their creativity."*



## Bhejash Joshi

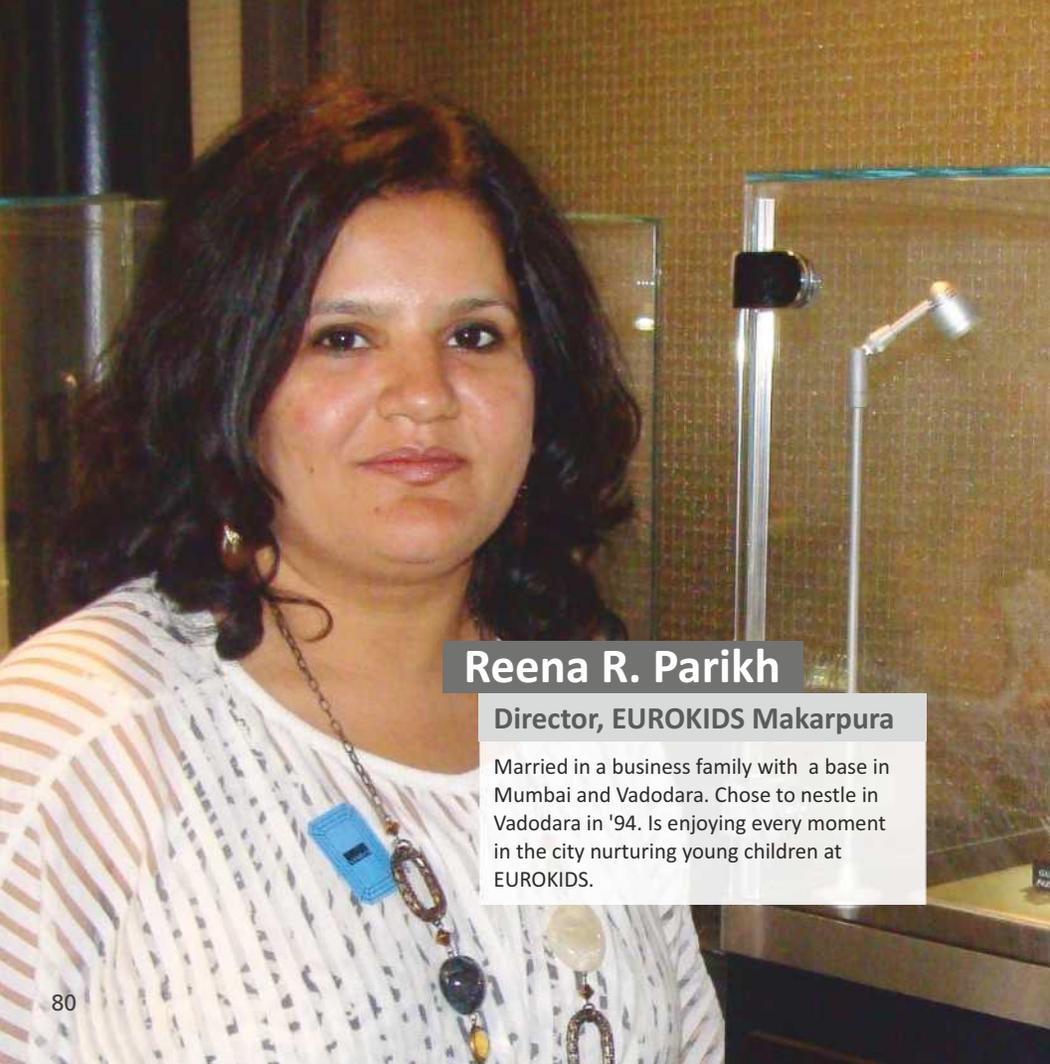
### Co-Founder, A.Live Mind

Born in Vadodara, did his schooling in California, pursued Bachelors and Masters in San Jose. Was a consultant in NASA, set-up enterprises in the US. Love for the motherland motivated him to take a sabbatical while pursuing his Ph.D at Stanford and he, along with his business, landed in Hyderabad. The tug for his hometown has brought him back to Vadodara.

Over 14 years ago, people over here were too relaxed. But now, I am seeing that people are ambitious. This city is very inviting. Wherever we go we are very well accepted whether it's us or our product. It's always easy to make connections and get assistance for our work.

The best thing about Vadodara is its size and its population. While it is small and not as big as Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi or even Ahmedabad, it has everything. We wouldn't have so much conviction in our business if we were in some other city.

*"From an entrepreneur's point of view, it's been the perfect city to pilot our product."*



## Reena R. Parikh

**Director, EUROKIDS Makarpura**

Married in a business family with a base in Mumbai and Vadodara. Chose to nestle in Vadodara in '94. Is enjoying every moment in the city nurturing young children at EUROKIDS.

Vadodara was my 'love at first sight'. It was during 90's; the first year of my college, when I visited a very appealing and lively Vadodara.

I was born and brought up in a small town and regretted its access to limited resources, but at the same time loved the peace one finds there. So I always dreamt of residing in a place which is a mixture of peace and growth. And Vadodara is absolutely that - it has the best of both.

My list of positive things on Vadodara is endless. The cosmopolitan environment; rich cultural heritage; friendly, helpful, honest and grounded people; disciplined lifestyle; safety; respect for quality work; availability of multi-cuisine restaurants and many more. Geographically, Vadodara has a very simple road map and unlike other cities, new travellers can easily explore the city on their own.

Professionally, when I started my preschool, EUROKIDS, it was totally a new concept in

the field of early childhood education, but people here admired it and accepted it with an open heart and mind. I really appreciate this attitude of Barodians - a willingness to adapt to positive things from any culture or country.

Also Vadodara has some of the best educational institutions in India. Schools and our M.S. University makes a remarkable difference in the overall attitude and personality of students making them better future citizens of India.

The city shares a rich heritage of art since Gaekwad's rule and it's well preserved and maintained, till now. It provides ample opportunities for upcoming artists too. The grand celebration of festivals like Navratri and Ganeshotsav make people fall in love with Vadodara immediately.

I have travelled across many cities of the world, and have many family members settled in Germany, Mumbai and USA but Vadodara is the most appealing place to be.

*"It is a dream city which provides comfort, peace, growth and prosperity with lot of intellectual & gregarious people around."*



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