



દિવ્ય ભારત

# THE LUMINARIES

Architects and Interior Designers  
of Gujarat



A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a patterned blazer over a light shirt, stands in a garden. To his left is a large, rounded bush. In the background, there is a statue of a person holding an umbrella and some potted plants.

# Ishwar Gehi

Practicing Since 1995

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Ishwar Gehi, the man behind the foundation and walls of many a luxurious bungalows and high-rises, is a revered name in Gujarat. He has won many awards by the RBA, honouring his excellence in real estate for the best residential township award, best low-rise and high-rise award. He also received the AYA Award (Architect of the Year Award) by JK Cement, the CNBC Awaz Award and Gauravanta Gujarati Award by the International Creative Art Society (ICAS). The list is long, and we hope it continues to grow.



*"I am a risk taker, take quick decisions and am not afraid of people and circumstances. Love and loyalty towards work are the bedrocks of success. I admire the work of Charles Correa and consider my staff my biggest critic."*

*Ishwar Gehi*



## Luxury Of Seamlessness

**The best preparation of tomorrow is doing your best today. - H. Jackson Brown, Jr.**

At times in life, serendipity plays out, and how! Mr Ishwar Gehi almost lost out on becoming an architect, when starting with a course in Civil Engineering. But fate had other plans. While writing the forms, he had accidentally picked the column for Architecture. A candidate in design school decided to leave and thus arose the opportunity for him to foray into the field where he would design dreams.

Born in Junagadh in Gujarat, Ishwar was the third of six siblings. Son of a grocery dealer, he had a humble upbringing. He often had to turn to family friends for loans to finance his education. He graduated and got his first job in 1991. By 1995 he had established a private practice.

Marriage followed soon after. He fondly remembers the time his mother-in-law had come for their first meeting. Young and entirely on his own, he hadn't accomplished much to prove his worth then. However, the lady impressed with his determination, happily betrothed her daughter,

Pooja to him. The happy couple had a modest beginning – a rented house and a scooter that they called their own. But Mr Gehi was rich in his confidence with the support of his wife Pooja; he had an unshaken belief that things were going to change for the better. And they did, very soon.

Mr Gehi had always been passionate about Architecture. Blending that with hard work he strove to establish his brand. Nature inspires him, influencing his architecture - his designs are special in that everything seems to come together seamlessly. He loves to create spaces with water, plants, wood and stones. These natural elements are what he credits for the longevity and youthfulness of his designs. Proportions and scaling are vital to the art of designing, he says. Architecture, landscape and interiors- these are the cornerstones of designing, and he's learned to blend them in perfectly. Practical and economic- this is what he intends his designs to be.

He has a unique method of working. Space designing - the art of visualizing the result is crucial to an architect's work. Most designers, he says, build a 2D working piece and then graduate to 3D.



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He however always begins with the 3D sketch and then 2D. This way a mini model is available for him to work upon even before the actual work has begun. Design is his calling- his *raison d'être*. He lives and breathes design. At a glance, his wife, Mrs Pooja Gehi can tell you if he's consumed with work and knows better than to disturb him! He once told his wife, Pooja that his first marriage was with his work. It's no wonder then that his designs are some of the most unique in today's architectural milieu.

A typical day for him begins at 6 in the morning. A quick shower and breakfast later he's in his office, ready to take on the world. Weekends are spent at his Surat office - which essentially means he works all week. His love for work borders on obsession. Ishwar is a hands-on architect and is known to make frequent site visits - sometimes even those that aren't sponsored by his clients. That way he ends up paying for the airfares himself. This strong work ethic is why he enjoys such massive standing among his



clientele. He worked with a customer in 2003 and the man's daughter after these many years contacted him for designing her new house. His clients remember him after years and find him irreplaceable bears testimony to his skills.

Starting with a paycheck of INR 1150, he is in a position to demand a lot more than that! What is the recipe for his success, you ask him. Hard work - he quietly puts it; passion and an unwavering dedication to his work. Mr Gehi opines that more than formal education, what is necessary is the ability to apply those skills to real-life situations. He lets his work do the talking and only takes up projects he believes will boost his oeuvre. For him, customer satisfaction is the ultimate reward. To quote him- "I am a risk taker, make quick decisions and am not afraid of people and circumstances. Love and loyalty towards work are the bedrocks of success. I admire the work of Charles Correa and consider my staff my biggest critic."

His projects are genuine pieces of art- he is loath to copying even from his previous works! For every assignment he holds brainstorming sessions with the stakeholders, gathering their idea of the perfect space. Thus is born a design created specifically keeping that client in mind. That he is being copied by other designers doesn't ruffle him. He's happy knowing that people derive inspiration from his work.

His first project was one with Ar. Kishore Trivedi. He is grateful for the autonomy he was granted to execute his ideas. The results were spectacular. He realized the vitality of creative freedom in an architect's life and bears that in mind while working with his team. Ar. Kishore Trivedi had been very kind to him, at one time providing financial assistance in his difficult hour. He remains indebted to him and considers him his mentor.

Ishwar likes to dream big. "It's acceptable to miss an ambitious target but what is unforgivable is dreaming small"-remains his guiding philosophy.

He has worked on many grand projects, but one that remains high on his wish list is designing an airport. He loves creating properties that exude luxury. Mr Gehi hates the fact that flying has come to be intrinsically associated with stress.

He wants to provide a rejuvenating experience that puts the fliers in a happy and peaceful space.

If Ishwar Gehi is about glamour, he also knows how to give back to society. His father's house has been earmarked for a Gurudwara committee. Also, he plans to design a space for the destitute where they can enjoy the finer things in life. He wishes to entertain them with good food, movies and even a swimming pool! This earnest desire serves to highlight his sensitive nature. His elder son Yash and younger son Meet are gearing to follow in his footsteps. Students of Architecture in London, their father, is their biggest inspiration. For Mr Gehi family is of utmost importance.

What message does he have for the young? Be dedicated, do what you love and then work hard. Have confidence in your abilities, and you shall achieve good things. "I pray to God that when I die, I should have a pencil in my hand"- he muses

