

Acknowledgment

“Where there’s a will, there’s a way”

It is a well-proven truth that the journey towards success and achievement in life is not possible without a strong will. This truly has been a journey...I started it with firm determination and strong “WILL”, I found a way to accomplish it regardless of obstacles. This thesis represents not only my work at the keyboard, it is a milestone in more than 6 years of work at MESCRL, Dept. of Biochemistry. It has been nothing short of amazing. Since my first day, I have felt at home at Dept. of Biochemistry. Throughout these years I have learned that there are some who build tools and some who use them; my passion is in creating the tools used in cutting edge research. Undertaking this Ph.D. has been a truly life-changing experience for me and it would not have been possible to do without the support and guidance that I received from many people. This thesis is the result of many experiences I have encountered from dozens of remarkable individuals who I wish to acknowledge.

*First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my research guide, **Prof. Sarita Gupta**, for introducing me to this exciting field of stem cells. This work would not have been possible without her guidance and involvement, her support and encouragement right from the beginning of the Ph.D. till date. Under her guidance, I successfully overcame many difficulties and learned a lot. Her enthusiasm has been so infectious that I derived confidence from it every time I interacted with her. I owe her lots of gratitude for having me shown this way of stem cell research. I am really glad to be associated with a person like Prof. Sarita Gupta in my life. She has supported me not only by providing a research assistantship over almost seven years but also academically and emotionally through the rough road to finish this thesis. Ma’am your supervision has been invaluable to my growth as a scientist and person, and I am incredibly fortunate to count you as a mentor. Once again Thank you very much ma’am for believing in me and offering a never-ending optimism and patience.*

*I gratefully acknowledge **DBT-MSUB-ILSPARE** and **DST-SERB** Government of India, for extending financial support for my Ph.D. tenure as JRF and SRF.*

*I sincerely thank **Prof. Yogesh Singh**, Ex-Vice Chancellor, and **Prof. Parimal Vyas**, current Vice-Chancellor, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Vadodara for allowing me to work with this prestigious University.*

*I wish to thank **Prof. A. C. Sharma**, Ex-Dean, Faculty of Science and **Prof. Haribhai Kataria** current Dean, Faculty of Science and **Prof. C. Ratan Prabha**, Head, Dept. of Biochemistry, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, for the support and guidance for completing this piece of work.*

*My heartfelt thanks to **Dr. Ramesh Bhonde**, Research Director, Dr. D. Y. Patil Medical College, Hospital & Research Centre, Pune for his valuable guidance, perceptive encouragement, and indispensable suggestions which led to the successful completion of this study and thesis. I feel privileged to be associated with a person like him during my Ph.D. work. Further, I would like to express sincere appreciation and gratitude to **Prof. Girish Shah**, Laval University, Canada, and **Prof. M.S. Patel**, State University of New York at Buffalo, USA for their support and guidance. Further, I appreciate **Dr. Anandwardhan Hardikar**, the University of Sydney, Australia for initiating microRNAs experiments in my Ph.D. work.*

*I am extremely grateful to **Dr. Anoop Khandelwal** of Shubh Hospital, Vadodara for providing the Bone Marrow samples and patient data for the research. My heartfelt thanks to all the patients who generously contributed their bone marrow sample for the betterment of the Scientific community as a whole.*

*I am indebted for the support received through the collaborative work undertaken with **Prof. Jayesh Bellare** and **Dr. Surendra Kumar Verma**, Chemical engineering department, IIT-B, Mumbai for providing HFM encapsulation device.*

*I would like to thank my external and internal doctoral committee members, **Prof. G. Naresh Kumar**, his valuable advice, positive appreciation and counsel throughout the investigations which led to the successful completion of the research work, **Dr. Sharad Gupta**, I am deeply thankful for his countless suggestion and helpful for directing my research work towards more clinical set up throughout this work, and connecting me to **Dr. Anoop Khandelwal** for providing the valuable bone marrow samples. He has always encouraged me during my Ph.D. with his vast knowledge in the field of clinical pathology. **Prof. Vihās Vasu**, thank you for always giving valuable inputs, advice, and encouraging me in the course of my Ph.D. and **Prof. Rajesh Singh**, his excellent eye for science (mitochondria and microRNAs) has always motivated me to work harder and aim higher.*

*With a sense of regard and reverence, I take this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude and heartfelt thanks to the Faculty members **Prof. Rasheedunnisa Begum**, **Prof. C. Ratna Prabha**, **Prof. Pushpa Robin**, **Dr. Shashikant Acharya**, **Prof. Rajesh Singh**, **Prof. Jayshree Phonekar**, **Dr. Laxmipriya Nampoothiri**, **Dr. Ravi Vijayvargia**, **Dr. Sanjeev Upadhyay** and **Dr. Devesh Suthar** in the Dept. of Biochemistry for always helping, encouraging and giving valuable inputs for completing this piece of work.*

*I thank the Non-teaching staff of my department **Pethe Sir**, **Akshita Ma'am**, **Rameshbhai Nare**, **Rameshbhai Kamle**, **Shaileshbhai**, **Manishbhai**, **Sandeep**, **Balwantbhai** and **Anilbhai**; My special regards to animal house staff **Rameshbhai Parmar**, **Vijaybhai**, and **Narayanbhai***

for helping in animal experimentation and who were always ready to give their timely help whenever required. I thank **Nitish Bhatt** (Account officer) for making sure that everything went smoothly in the project administratively.

My sincere thanks goes to all past lab seniors **Prof. Vihās Vasu, Dr. Jyoti, Dr. Anil Pillai, Dr. Laxmipriya, Dr. Chirayu Pandya, Dr. Niraj Bhatt, Dr. Prakash Pillai** and **Dr. Sanket Soni** for not only helping me learn science and experiments but also providing full support till the end of my thesis.

A good support system is important for surviving and staying sane in any place. I am lucky to be a part of one I like to call it “**SGL (Sarita Gupta Lab’s)**” At this moment of accomplishment, I am greatly indebted to my SGL family, **Dr. Nidheesh (Guru Ji: Scientist)**, thank you for showing me the ropes in the lab when I was a newbie. You have played a decisive role in encouraging me to start my Ph.D. I admire you and your work and I feel very grateful for having the opportunity to exchange ideas and useful conversations with you. **Dr. Akhilesh (AK Badshah: Perfectionist)**, he is very helpful and knowledgeable about everything related to initial experiments and I appreciate his help very much. **Dr. Tushar (Patel Saheb: Lab’s Convener)**, who has willingly devoted time in guidance guiding me to crack the entrance exam. **Dr. Muskaan** is always friendly and supportive for experiments. **Dr. Ragitha (Didi: Multitasking)**, deserves special mention here for her constant support and help in quickly proofreading and organizing the thesis in a logical order. you were critical in the success of my thesis by sharing your excellent advice. Without your valuable suggestion, my thesis might not have ever come to fruition. She is in true sense the “editor-in-chief “ of my thesis. I am falling short of words for expressing how thankful I am. I particularly want to thank **Dr. Abhay (Aka Bhailu: Idealist)**, with whom I started this work and many rounds of discussion on my research with him helped me a lot on experimental design and made me technically sound in the field of islet biology. He taught me a lot about scientific writing. I am also thankful for his friendship, patience, and motivation. I’m glad to work with him in SGL. **Dr. Komal (Aka Komli: Best Orator)** is an expert in high-throughput techniques like confocal and FACS. She helped me in designing and conducting experiments related to confocal and FACS. I would like to express my heartiest thanks to my lab buddy **Gaurav (Lab’s Kohli: All-rounder)** who is more of a friend than a junior for always being around for help. He helped me especially with the mammoth task of final formatting and editing of this thesis. I will never forget our “JUGGAD” to solve lab problems by innovatively using limited resources. Gaurav, our lunches would not have been as entertaining without the discussions on everything from politics to movies. I would like to thank **Gurprit (Aka Gappi: Excellent Singer)**, who never failed in asking me if I ever needed any help. She has always been good support by listening to me unwearingly whenever required. Always ready to perform new experiments. It was also nice to complain together about our research struggles. She helped

me a lot in my experiments as well as thesis proofreading and editing. **Kishan (Kishan Lal; passionate boy)** is a friendly, smart, and intelligent boy and a fun bunch with lots of enthusiasm and optimism. He helped me a lot in shaping my thesis and supporting me whenever required. **Pankti (Panto: Compassionate girl)** is extremely nice and readily helped me in my Ph.D. experiments and thesis. I thank them all. This group has been a source of friendship, good advice, and collaboration.

I am also grateful to lab past member **Parth Pandya, Komal Chawda, Ankita Ambegaonkar, Aditya Gupta, Sucheta Solanki, and Dr. Bhavesh Mistry.**

Thanks to all the students **Nitin, Dixit, Gauri, Shubham, Deep, and Niyati** who have worked with me for their dissertation. Thank you for your valuable contribution to my thesis. Their jovial nature, hilarious talks, and laughter have always kept me buoyant.

Thanks to departmental research scholars, **Dr. Mrinal Sharma, Dr. Hemendra Vekaria, Dr. Rushikesh Joshi, Dr. Krishma Tailor, Dr. Ujjwal Trivedi, Sejal, Shahnawaz, Jayvardhan, Kritarth, Milton, Dhruv, Anjali, Fatima, Minal and Ridhi** for their kind support throughout my tenure at Bio-chemistry department.

I am also grateful to the **DBT-MSUB-ILSPARE, Dr. Vikramsarbhai Institute of Cell and Molecular Biology, Faculty of Science, The M.S. University of Baroda** for providing high-end instrumentation facility such as FACS, Confocal Microscope, Quant Studio 12K, Flask qPCR, etc. I owe special thanks to technical expert **Mrs. Pooja Gupta & Miss Komal Rawal** and clerk **Mr. Manoj Parmar** (For helping clerical work).

I have also received technical advice and help from **Pratik Arora** (technical expert in FACS) and **Pritesh Mevada** (technical expert in Nikon microscope), **Dr. Ganesh** (technical expert in Olympus microscope) for many interesting discussion and data analysis. I would like to thank **Dr. Virupakshi Soppina** for supporting the microscope facility in IIT Gandhinagar.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to **Dr. Prabhudas Patel, Dr. Rakesh Rawal, Dr. Dharmesh Patel** from Gujarat Cancer & Research Institute (GCRI) for their guidance and moral support.

My special regards to my Neo-Tech family, **Mr. Prakash Patel, Dr. Maunik Jani, Dr. Vinay Patel, Dr. Rita Mahapatra, Dr. Sanjay Yadav, Mr. Tejash, Mrs. Pallavi, Mrs. Priyanka, Miss Prachi, Mrs. Harshada** and especially **Mr. Dipesh Parikh**, more of a friend than a colleague, for their constant support and cooperation in adjusting my lectures whenever I needed during my Ph.D. work.

Outside the scientific community bunch of people have had an immeasurable influence in my life. The unconditional love and support (and money) from my family/friends who have seen

me through highs and lows. A special mention to my friends in a hostel, **Parth** (Financer), **Ronak** (Cheese partner), **Dipesh** (Bio-chemist), **Maulik** (iOS developer), **Vraj** (IT experts), **Dr. Jayesh** and college friends **Jignesh**, **Krunal**, **Hemang**, **Arpan**, **Kandarp**, **Dr. Kiran**, **Dr. Maulik** for their constant support and cooperation during my Ph.D. work. Their timely help and friendship shall always be remembered.

This thesis would have remained a dream had it not been for my ever-supportive family members. I would like to revere my grandfather **Chunilal**, my grandmother **Jasumati**, who departed this world during my Ph.D. for their heavenly abode. My parents deserve a special mention for their unconditional support and prayers. My Father, **Sh. Suresh Vakani**, in the first place, is the person who showed me the joy of intellectual pursuit ever since I was a child. My Mother, **Shm. Ranjan Vakani** is the one who sincerely raised me with her caring and gentle love. Selflessly giving me the very best of everything, I express my deep gratitude for their love, sacrifice, and support without which this work would not have been complete. I acknowledge the person who means a lot to me, my Didi Maharaj, **Rujupurna**, for her valuable prayers. I thank my supportive and caring siblings, **Ami and Zarna** my loving sister, for their love, devotion, and constant motivation throughout my Ph.D. I would like to thank **Jignesh and Hiren** for their timely advice and fatherly care. A special thanks to my nieces **Drashti, Yash, Maitri, and Aagam** for their love and affection. I would like to thank **Vishal** (my fire brigade for any type of IT problems) and **Keval** (Mentor) for their kinship.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the most important person in my life – my wife **Pranali**. She has been a constant source of strength, endless support, and inspiration. Honestly, it was only her determination and constant encouragement that ultimately made it possible for me to see this thesis through to the end. She never commanded and always provided space and time where I had to dedicate time to thesis writing.

A special mention to my little neighbor, **Manasvi** (Source of Happiness) I always feel sweet and implausible when I look at you.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank God. In the process of pursuing a Ph.D. and writing this thesis, I realized how true this gift of research is for me. You have given me the power to believe in my passion and pursue my dreams. I could never have done this without the faith I have in you, the Almighty.

Mitul Vakani

June-2020