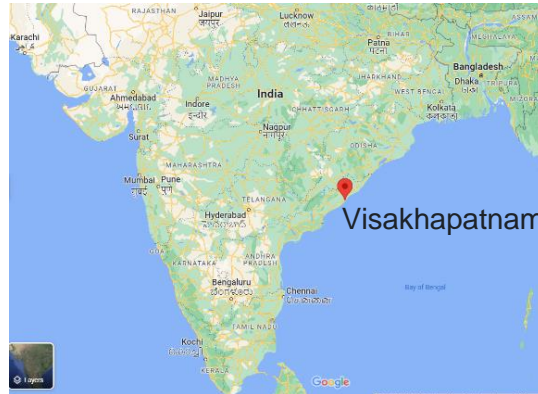


Stories of my Life: *by Padma*

Growing up in India – and beyond

My name is Padma and I have lived in New Zealand for 22 years, but my early years were spent in India in a city called Visakhapatnam on the South-eastern coast.



With a population of 1.3 billion, compared to New Zealand's 5 million, Visakhapatnam is just one of India's many metropolitan cities. Its population alone is 1 ½ times the whole of New Zealand! India is certainly a vast country with wide ranging temperatures, but in my city, it never dropped lower than 20°C in winter and was frequently over 40°C in summer,

My father was a successful business man so we lived in a lovely two-story house with terraces. Four servants looked after our family of nine and guard dogs kept the household safe. As a child I was very happy. I loved school, especially math classes and did well academically. All lessons were conducted in English, although Telugu, my mother tongue, was spoken at home. My daily routine was to get up early in the morning at 5am. This gave me time for a lesson before school to learn the graceful art of Indian Traditional Dance.

At 8am a rickshaw man arrived on his rickshaw to take us children to school. He was skilful in the way he negotiated his way through the chaos of noisy bustling streets that were full of pedestrians, Indian scooters, street-carts, buses, cars, lorries, rickshaws, bicycles and street vendors. One of the servants used to arrive on a bicycle at lunchtime with some home cooked curries, Samber, Yoghurt and rice.



A Typical Street Scene in Visakhapatnam

I have an educational background in Commerce & Accountancy, a Law degree, a Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management and a MA degree. Before coming to NZ with my husband and daughter, I worked as a public prosecutor.



It took a while to adjust to the climate, but I've grown used to the cooler climate here and New Zealand is now my home. Since living here I have done a few different jobs, including one for Housing New Zealand Corporation as an IRR specialist – an income related specialist for low-income families wishing to apply for a government subsidy.

In 2002 I had open heart surgery, but then in 2004 I suffered a stroke. The stroke unfortunately affected my speech and mobility in the right side of my body. My right dominant hand is still paralyzed, but I have persevered and although I still find it hard, I have regained the ability to use my non - dominant hand and now enjoy painting.



Some of Padma's striking art work

Post Script from Rosemary Smith (Editor)

As a newly joined member of U3A Tawa, I first met Padma at the U3A Art Group. From the beginning she made me welcome with her friendly, happy smile. I absolutely have the utmost admiration for this lovely lady. Some years ago, due to a stroke, Padma became partially paralysed, losing considerable movement in her right arm and leg. Everyday tasks are extremely difficult for her and although often in pain, not once have I heard her complain. She remains bright and cheery with an undaunted zest for learning and is truly an inspiration for all of us.