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## Shiva Ayyadurai: The Man Who Invented Email

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*Ayyadurai says social media will not pose any threat to e-mails, writes Arshad Khan*

Mumbai-born Shiva Ayyadurai created the world's first email system in 1978, a few years after his family moved to America. "India has been the land of innovations for the past 5,000 years, it's just we aren't good in marketing ourselves," he said.

On August 30, 1982, the US government recognised Shiva for his innovation and gave him a copyright for e-mail. Thus, he joined the exclusive league of Indian innovators.

In an exclusive interview, Ayyadurai gives an insight of his upbringing, success and the hurdles which he easily crossed.

Born in Mumbai, Ayyadurai's parents moved United States when he was seven for better opportunities. Good in athletics, Ayyadurai moved to New York University (NYU) with special permission because he had finished Calculus by the 9th grade and there was nothing engaging for him in Morristown.

In NYU, he was the only Indian out of forty selected students to learn multiple programming languages. By the time he reached fourteen, he moved to Newark where he was given a challenge by Dr. Leslie Michelson to translate the paper-based interoffice mail and memo system into an electronic communications format. He succeeded in changing the format in 6 months and kept on changing version to ease the process.

Finally the first e-mail was sent by him in 1978.

Remembering his early days in US, says, "We landed in US post the Vietnam war. The country was going through a rough phase. It was sex, drugs, rock and roll everywhere and living in of the poorest region of US Paterson, New Jersey was difficult." For the first two years, Shiva worked free of cost.

On the thirty-three year long journey of e-mail, he said that things rapidly changed post 1993 when worldwide web (www) originated. "It opened a whole new window of opportunities and the world saw the emergence of e-mail services from Hotmail, Yahoo and Google. From what was an origin for business applications changed to consumer friendly interface," he said.

Ayyadurai currently heads seven companies, most of them deals in Alternate medicine. He also holds ten patents under his name and has hundred plus publications.

He is confident that social media will not pose any threat to e-mails as both play important role in the communication cycle. "In future the interface may change but the basics of e-mail will remain the same," he concludes.

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