

DECCAN Chronicle

INTERVIEW WITH AYYADURAI

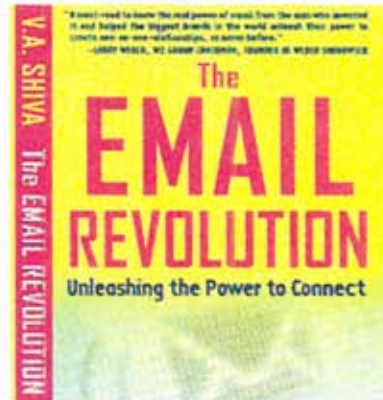
Copyright awarded for first Email in 1982: Shiva

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Shiva Ayyadurai's book, *Email Revolution*, when it comes out, intends to put an end to accusations that he has falsely claimed to have invented email. In this interview, the 49-year-old Indian American researcher and entrepreneur sets the record straight.

DC: Why this controversy?

Shiva: There is no controversy. In 1978, Leslie P. Michelson hired me to be a research fellow in his laboratory for computer science at the University of Medicine and Dentistry, New Jersey (UMDNJ). I was asked to create a computer programme that would be the electronic version of UMDNJ's interoffice paper-based mail system. I wrote 50,000 lines of computer code, based on his observations of the office environment where boxes, titled inbox, outbox, drafts and others, were kept for communication. I was aw-



arded the first copyright in 1982 for email.

So, the facts are black and white. My detractors claim that email was invented in 1971, but the Oxford and Merriam Webster dictionaries did not have such a word at that time, not until my discovery.

DC: How do you plan to counter the detractors campaign?

Shiva: Firstly, anyone who understands the communication system that existed in the 1970s would realise the truth about my invention. I was awarded in the Whitehouse compe-

tition in 1993 for automated email analysis. I have the original documents to prove the facts.

Secondly, my well-wishers created the 'www.inventorofemail.com' website and documented the primary facts and false claims made by my detractors. We have links, which clearly show how Thomas Haigh, Ray Tomilson and BBN (Bolt, Beranek and Newman), a multi-billion dollar military contractor that promotes itself as an innovator and cyber care industry, started all the hullabaloo just after the Smithsonian accepted my documents.

DC: What are your plans for India?

Shiva: I have started a web portal for testing and producing Siddha drugs online. My grandmother, Chinnathaiammal, was a Siddha healer; she was my inspiration. I have projects to prepare Siddha medicines, backed by scientific studies.