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Everything about VA Shiva Ayyadurai, the Indian who invented Email!



Blog by Rituparna Malini

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Several decades have been spent over debating who in reality invented the 'E-mail'; was it VA Shiva Ayyadurai or Ray Tomlison?

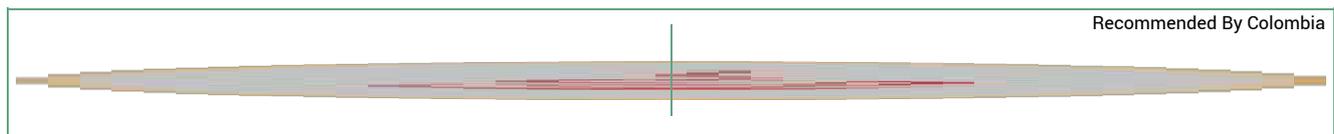
A scientist, inventor and entrepreneur from India, Dr. VA Shiva Ayyadurai, now living and working in the US, left India as a seven-year-old with his parents and in 1979.

When he was a high school student, he developed an electronic version of an interoffice mail system, which he called "EMAIL" and copyrighted in 1982 against all odds.

So, he is widely credited as being the inventor of email. The Smithsonian National Museum of American History incorporated the paperwork documenting the creation of his program into their collection.

Dr VA Shiva Ayyadurai remembers his early days in India with fondness and awe. He saw India as a juxtaposition of two different worlds. On one hand was Mumbai, where he was born – a cosmopolitan city with multiple ethnicities, cultures and religions. On the other hand was his hometown in Muhavur, a small village in South India – with calm peaceful, emerald paddy fields, grazing cows – where the backyard was a jungle.

His grandparents were poor farmers and practised ancient Indian traditions.



He saw them do some amazing things which people may find magical. They were poor people leading very rich lives. His grandmother was a healer, she cured people of ailments. She was a healer – she had no degree but used Siddha, India's oldest system traditional medicine, to heal people and support local villagers. It really motivated him to understand how a simple woman could heal people. It established the line he wanted to progress in.

"They hardly had money but lived a hardworking and honest life. They served their community. It wasn't about making

money, but giving back to people. These aspects left an abiding impression on him – of giving back to the society.”

By the time he was 14, Dr Shiva had completed his Maths course and got accepted in a special programme at New York University. Only 40 students were selected and he was the only Indian Student. In the course he learnt seven computer programming languages making him a pretty well-trained programmer by the age of 14.

His mother, Meenakshi, was working at University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey at Newark. She introduced Dr Shiva to a physicist who worked in that medical college – Dr Leslie Michelson.

The college was in three campuses and had early computers. Dr Shiva was challenged to reduce the office memo to an electronic format. The system of work was formidable and archaic. In the college, they had about a 1000 offices, each with a secretary, a desk with a typewriter and physical metal inbox and outbox, metal cabinets, trash basket and lots of paper on which memos was typed as per a strict format, with a carbon copies. These were then put in envelopes and send to other offices – transported by cars or vans.

This was an interoffice mail system that connected the various campuses that Dr Les Michelson wanted to convert to an electronic format.

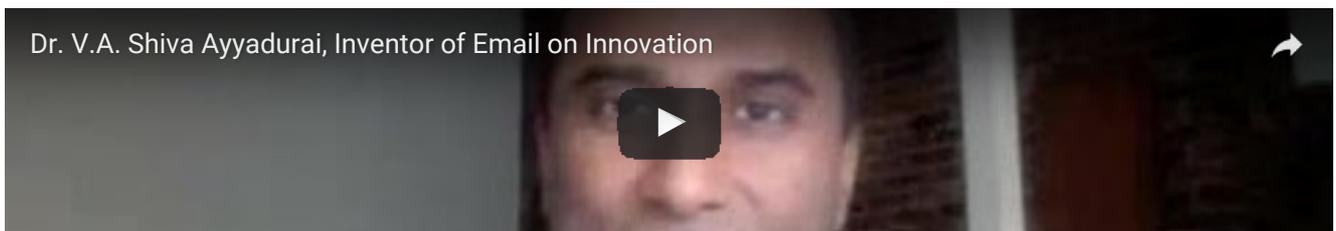
There were few computers, huge in size (occupied a room or a warehouse) and were used for data processing. A secretary could take dictation, type a draft, get it corrected, retype it, put it in an envelope and mail it – but her using a computer was inconceivable.

Dr Shiva worked and created a code with 50K lines and converted the system of interoffice mail to an electronic format. There were several features – he electronically replicated the Inbox, Outbox, CC, BCC etc. The challenge was that the system had to have all features of physical mail and yet be easy to use – secretaries of the time had never used computers.

He called the programme – EMAIL – a term that had never been used before. The language only allowed five characters – and that too contributed to the short name.

And once it was successful, he got a unique business experience. He was the one man show, the inventor, programmer, customer service person, spokesperson who held seminars, handled questions, the salesperson, and maintenance man all in one.

A lot of people rejected the idea since they thought by using email they would lose their secretaries. So he learnt how to talk to people, how to handle rejection.

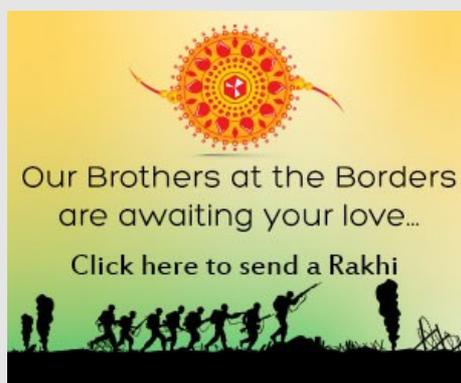


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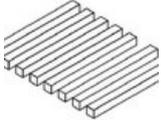
ALL SPEAKING TREE MY PROFILE

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	Vighnesh Sandip Bagdekar SILVER	2 Rank	1001 Points

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