

Mr Fixit!



A.R. SUMANTH KUMAR

A WEBSITE INTRODUCED ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO MAY JUST BE OUR ANSWER TO CIVIC PROBLEMS IN OUR LOCALITY...

Sudhir Srinivasan ADYAR

So, you walk out of your house, and while on your way to work, notice a civic problem in your locality. You wonder how to bring the matter to the concerned authority's attention, and as it involves spending much time and energy by travelling to the local councillor's office, you decide it doesn't really matter and hope that somebody else will take care of it.

The above is a scene most of us would have experienced, at one time or another. If only there was an easier way to route complaints through to the Corporation! Well, that excuse was invalidated two weeks ago when <http://www.fixourcity.org> was launched. The story of Selvam Velmurugan, a resident of the United States and Founder-Promoter of the website, is very much like Shankar's Sivaji. Without the songs and the

fight, though.

Selvam went to the US in 1996 to pursue his Masters, after graduating in Computer Science at the Anna University. "It was a decision that changed my views on several issues," he

was promoted to the role of a team leader in '06. This promotion caused him to return to Chennai to set up a development centre in Taramani. "In those two years ('06 and '07), I noticed a number of problems that did not receive

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Selvam Velmurugan
Founder of www.fixourcity.org

says, "I'd always thought that governing was the job of those elected. But only after I noticed a certain transparency in the functioning of the American society did I realise what India was missing." Selvam went on to find employment at <http://www.amazon.com>, a popular online retailer, and

any attention," he says, "For instance, when I applied for a passport, the policeman who came home to verify my identity demanded a bribe. This is just one of the many problems I faced. I just didn't know how to bring people's attention to these problems."

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Selvam has now resigned his plum job in Amazon, and has launched this website in a bid to create a convenient platform for people to register their complaints. We asked him the inevitable question. Doesn't the Corporation have a similar website, already? "It does," he says, "Apart from periodically failing to function, the Corporation's website also has numerous fields that tire a user. Most importantly, our website, with minimal information, routes it to the correct department, and is also extremely user-friendly." Selvam also points out that his website does not expect the user to register herself/himself, and has also strayed away from trying to make money with advertisements. "I don't want to get involved in premature monetisation of the website as it tends to trivialise its motive," he says. No matter where you are in Chennai, no matter what your civic problem is, you can enter it into the website, and have it automatically routed to the Corporation. "The Corporation is obliged to solve all problems brought to its attention," he explains, "This way, people can save much energy and time. All one has to do is enter one's area details in the opening page, and register their complaint in the following self-explanatory pages." Fixyourcity.com has managed to solve three of ten complaints it has received during the last few days, and invites people to participate in governance by not being indifferent to civic issues.

"For now, it's just issues that pertain to the Corporation that we are concentrating on," Selvam says, "In the future, we plan to mediate between the public and other departments like the Chennai Metro Water Supply and the electricity boards." The website, apart from allowing you to browse through previously registered complaints, also provides phone numbers of the local councillors to follow-up on the complaints, in the unlikely event that they go unresolved. "If the website manages to solve about a thousand complaints by the end of this year, there wouldn't be a happier person," Selvam smiles.

Be it a pile of garbage that lies unattended or a damaged road, remember to file the complaint on <http://www.fixyourcity.com> and do the least you can.