

# CHENNAI CALLING

The American ambassador to Guinea, Patricia Moller, has a special connection with Chennai. In conversation with **Kirthi Jayakumar**

**W**hen Patricia Moller enters a room, you can be sure to find yourself in a space that's been lit up a thousand shades brighter. With buoyant energy and effervescent charm, Patricia, serving as the American ambassador to Guinea, bowls you over with her charisma. After having served in Chennai until 1991, Patricia has, in the course of her career, served in overseas locations. She's also made plenty of trips to Chennai.

**You served in Chennai as the Consul General in the early '90s. Between then and now, what do you think has changed most, vis-a-vis the city?**

Back then, the traffic was bad. And now, the traffic has gotten a whole lot worse! Jokes apart, there's this exhilarating feeling in the air, speaking of the wonderful freedom that the Indian youth now have to follow a dream. It is really exciting, because the emergence of India as an important world component is something both my husband and I were waiting for. There are so many wonderful Indian expats in the US doing such wonderful things in different fields, and Chennai has, like its other counterparts in India, opened up to the fact that Indian youngsters have the world at their feet for their future.



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**Could you walk us down the memory lane and tell us something about your time in Chennai, back when you were the Consul General?**

When I arrived in 1989, I would come out of my gate at 6.15 am every day after my yoga master left. I was often dressed in a pair of shorts and a singlet, something that was not terribly usual in those days. I would run down Boat Club Road for an hour. For the first month, all the *chowkidars* got together in the corner and stared at me, but after a month I was not interesting anymore. Those moments were peaceful and lovely. I got to see India world waking up. I would see women drawing *kolams* outside their houses. The only time I felt threatened was during the mating season of the water buffaloes in the area. They were

terribly active at those times.

**What inspires you?**

I believe that by simply approaching every task, goal and mission to see what value you can add to it makes all the difference. I ask myself what I have that I can add to the assignment. I know that getting from Point A to Point B is the assignment, but I make sure to assess what I can do to add value to that assignment.

**How do you feel about Chennai today?**

I am so impressed by Chennai. It continues to be a thrill to return, and I simply love it! I always say that once you've been in India, nothing else is more exotic. To me, even a walk to the Nilgiris store, and up and down the spice corner, is a lovely trip to make. ●