

Course correction – CA, Facebook & You

The controversy is a wake-up call to press ahead with a robust data protection law

The world has just learned how a data analytics firm, Cambridge Analytica, harvested the data of 50 million Facebook users and used that information to feed strategies such as 'behavioural micro-targeting' and 'psychographic messaging' for Donald Trump's presidential campaign in the U.S. Chris Wylie, a former CA employee-turned-whistle-blower, set off a storm with **revelations** of how the company had **deployed** a 'psychological warfare' tool for alt-right media guru Steve Bannon to try to sway the election in Mr. Trump's favour. CA chief executive Alexander Nix, who was suspended a few days ago following an **undercover** report by a British TV broadcaster, said the company has used other **dubious** methods in projects worldwide including **honey-traps** to discredit clients opponents. The combination of using personal data without consent and tailoring **slander** campaigns, fake news and propaganda to discovered preferences of voters is a potent and **corrosive** cocktail. Facebook has said its policies in 2014, when a personality profiling app was run on its platform, permitted the developer to **scrape** data not only from those who downloaded the app but also from the profiles of their Facebook 'friends'. Yet it did not make sure the data were destroyed by the app's developer Aleksandr Kogan, a Cambridge University academic, nor by CA itself when it came to light that Mr. Kogan had sold the data to CA, a third party. Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg has offered an apology and expressed willingness to cooperate with inquiries and **potentially** open up Facebook to regulation.

This episode has brought to light several issues that need to be addressed. First, companies have been collecting data and tailoring marketing campaigns accordingly. The issue here is particularly **prickly** because politics and elections are involved. Second, regardless of whether what Facebook and CA did was legal or not, something is broken in a policy environment in which the data of millions are taken and used when only 2,70,000 people knowingly or unknowingly gave consent. Third, technology is **evolving** at a rapid pace, raising the question whether laws need to be reframed **mandating** an opt-out approach universally rather than an opt-in-approach. Individuals often share their data without being aware of it or understanding the implications of privacy terms and conditions. Fourth, there must be clear laws on the ownership of data and what data need to be protected. Personal data cannot be the new oil. Individuals must own it, have a right to know what companies and governments know about them and, in most cases, that is, when there are no **legitimate** security or public interest reasons, have the right to have their data destroyed. The CA issues is a wake-up call for India; the government is still **dragging** its feet on framing a **comprehensive** and **robust** data protection law.

WORD LIST

1. **Revelations** : (disclosure, telling)
Synonym : announcement, discover, epiphany, leak, news, broadcasting, expose, exposure
2. **Deployed** : (redistribute, station troops or weapons)
Synonym : expand, open, set up, use, arrange, display, dispose, utilize, setout
3. **Undercover** : (secret, spy)
Synonym : spy, clandestine, concealed, confidential, creep, hidden, furtive, private, stealth.
4. **Dubious** : (doubtful, vague, unclear)
Synonym : arguable, debatable, equivocal, fishy, hesitant, improbable, problematic, questionable, reluctant, sceptical, suspicious, uncertain, unclear, unconvinced, unreliable, unsure.
5. **Honey-trap** : (plural noun : honey-traps)
Synonym : a stratagem in which an attractive person entices another person into revealing information or doing something unwise)
6. **Slander** : (scandalous remark)
Synonym : defamation, disparagement, libel, misrepresentation, smear, backbiting, detraction, dirt, scandal, slam, slime.
7. **Corrosive** : (consuming, wearing; bitter)
Synonym : acerbic, caustic, destructive, incisive, trenchant, corroding, cutting, wasting
8. **Scrape** : (bad or embarrassing situation scratch, remove outer layer)
Synonym : corner, difficulty, dilemma, distress, embarrassment, fix, mess, pickle, plight.
9. **Potentially** : (conceivably)
Synonym : likely, possibly, probably, imaginably, may be.
10. **Prickly** : (thorny or difficult) (irritable, bad tempered)
Synonym : complicated, knotty, nettlesome, ticklish, tricky, annoying, barbed, bristly, intricate.
11. **Evolve** : (develop, progress)
Synonym : derive, emerge, expand, get, grow, mature, unfold, advance, elaborate, enlarge, increase, obtain, ripen.
12. **Mandating** : (as in approve, delegate, deputize) (allow, authorize)
Synonym : accept, advocate, agree, authorize, certify, confirm, endorse, establish, okay, permit, recommend, sanction, support, uphold.
13. **Legitimate** : (authentic, valid, legal)
Synonym : appropriate, certain, consistent, correct, fair, genuine, lawful, logical, natural, normal, proper, real, reasonable, reliable, rightful, sensible, true, accepted
14. **Dragging** : (tiresome, monotonous)
Synonym : boring, dull, long, prolonged, protracted, humdrum
15. **Comprehensive** : (inclusive)
Synonym : all-inclusive, broad, complete, exhaustive, far-reaching, full, global, overall, thorough

16. **Robust** : (healthy, strong)

Synonym : booming, hearty, hefty, potent, powerful, prosperous, tough, vigorous, fit

Course correction – Curbing Misuse

Protecting innocent persons is fine, as long as the SC/ST Act is not de-fanged

Will laying down **procedural safeguards** to **curb** false **accusations** work against the interest of protecting the oppressed from discrimination and caste-based **atrocities**? This is the salient question that arises from the Supreme Court **verdict** that has taken note of the **perception** that the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, is being **rampantly** misused to settle personal scores and harass adversaries. On the face of it, it is difficult to fault the court's approach. It is settled law that the mere scope for misuse of an Act is not a ground to **invalidate** it. Constitution courts seek to preserve the spirit of such legislation on the one hand and to evolve guidelines to prevent its misuse on the other. This is precisely what the two judge bench has aimed to do. It has ruled that Section 18, which bars grant of **anticipatory** bail to anyone accused of violating its provisions, is not an absolute bar on giving advance bail to those against whom, *prima facie*, there is no case. In addition, the Bench has prohibited the arrest of anyone merely because of a complaint that they had committed an atrocity against a Dalit or a tribal person. In respect of public servants, no arrest should be made without the written permission of the official's appointing authority; and for private citizens, the Senior Superintendent of Police in the district should approve the arrest.

In doing this, the Supreme Court has sought to strike a balance between protecting individual liberty and preserving the spirit of a law in favour of oppressed sections. Without any doubt, atrocities against Dalits are a **grim** social reality, necessitating a **stringent** law to **combat** it. The act was amended in 2015 to cover newer forms of discrimination and crimes against Dalits and tribals to add teeth to it. It is true that conviction rates under the Act remain low. The **lackadaisical** approach of investigators and prosecutors to bring home charges against perpetrators of such crimes among the dominant castes is reflected in statistics. Even if courts are right in taking note of the tendency to misuse this law, society and lawmakers must be justifiably worried about the sort of messaging contained in their rulings and observations. In an ideal system, as long as every charge is judicially scrutinised and every investigation or **prosecution** is fair and honest, one need not worry about misuse and its adverse effects. However, social realities are far from being ideal. It ought to concern us all, including the courts, that some laws designed to protect the weakest and most disempowered people do not lose their teeth. Words of caution and rules against misuse may be needed to grant relief to the innocent. But nothing should be done to **de-fang** the law itself.

WORD LIST

1. **Procedural** : (Relating to an established or official way of doing something)
Example : "the developers had complied with all the relevant procedural requirements".
2. **Safeguard** : (protection)
Synonym : security, shield, armour, defense, escort, guard.
3. **Curb** : (restraining device ; check) (repress, restrict)
Synonym : barrier, ledge, rein, restraint, restriction.
4. **Accusation** : (charge of wrongdoing, fault)
Synonym : allegation, complaint, denunciation, impeachment, indictment, recrimination, censure, imputation.
5. **Atrocity** : (outrageous behaviour)
Synonym : cruelty, offensiveness, barbarity, horror, enormity, wickedness.
6. **Verdict** : (low judgement)
Synonym : answer, award, conclusion decision, decree, finding, opinion, ruling, sentence.
7. **Perception** : (understanding, idea)
Synonym : approach, attention, attitude, awareness, concept, consciousness, feeling, image, impression, judgement, knowledge, notion, opinion, recognition, sense, thought, viewpoint, conception, insight.
8. **Rampant** : (uncontrolled, out of hand)
Synonym : excessive, flagrant, growing, prevalent, raging, unchecked, uncontrollable, unrestrained, violent, wanton.
9. **Invalidate** : (render null and void)
Synonym : abolish, abrogate, annul, discredit, disqualify, impair, negate, nullify, quash, revoke, undermine, undo, cancel, offset, unfit.
10. **Anticipatory** : (expectant)
Synonym : anticipant, anticipating, awaiting, expecting, hopeful
11. **Grim** : (hopeless, horrible in manner, appearance)
Synonym : bleak, cruel, ghastly, gloomy, glum, gruesome, harsh, horrid, ominous, shocking, somber, sour, stern, terrible.
12. **Stringent** : (rigid, tight)
Synonym : binding, demanding, exacting, forceful, harsh, inflexible, ironclad, rigorous, severe, stiff, strict, tough
13. **Combat** : (battle, fight)
Synonym : conflict, action, contest, encounter, fray, shoot-out, struggle, war, warfare, flap
14. **Lackadaisical** : (careless, indifferent)
Synonym : apathetic, half-hearted, laid-back, lazy, lethargic, listless, passive, dull, energyless, idle.
15. **Prosecution** : (the act of furthering a project)
Synonym : pursuit, accomplishment, achievement, execution, performance, pursuance, undertaking.
16. **De-fang** : (make something harmless or ineffectual)
Example : "the president had largely defanged the opposition.

SOME IMPORTANT IDIOM AND PHRASES

1. The icing on the cake

Example – I got MS in the University that I wished to and scholarship was like the icing on the cake.

Meaning – Something that turns good into great.

2. Jump the bandwagon

Example – When I put on few kgs, I immediately jumped on the bandwagon and join the gym.

Meaning – To join a popular activity or trend.

3. Cost an arm and a leg

Example – My laziness costs me an arm and a leg every time.

Meaning – Be very expensive.

4. The ball is in your court

Example – Now the ball is in my court and I will take the revenge on him.

Meaning – When it is up to you to take the next step or decision.

5. It takes two to tango

Example – The manager realizes that it takes two to tango before taking the decision.

Meaning – Actions or communications need more than one person.

6. Last straw

Example – If I complete this last straw, I will complete this level.

Meaning – The final problem in a series of problems.

7. Break the ice

Example – Always break the ice in a group discussion.

Meaning – To initiate a social conversation or interaction.

8. A bird's eye view

Example – The building gives you a bird's eye view of the whole city.

Meaning – A view from a very high place that allows seeing a very large area.

9. Be on cloud nine

Example – I will be on cloud nine when I pass the exam.

Meaning – Be very happy.

10. Eat humble pie

Example – The employee will have to eat humble pie for his misbehavior to his boss.

Meaning – To apologize humbly.

11. To show the white feather

Example – Becky showed the white feather and backed down.

Meaning – To act like a coward

12. To play fast and loose

Example – The TN reporter is known for playing fast and loose with the facts.

Meaning – To act in an unreliable way./Act carelessly or irresponsibly

13. Wear one's heart on one's sleeve

Example – Sumit always wears his heart on his sleeve, so there is no doubt who he'll be supporting.

Meaning – To make your feelings and opinions obvious to other people.

14. To make a long face

Example – Why have you got such a long face? Better luck next time.

Meaning – To look depressed.

15. In apple pie order

Example – Please put everything in apple pie order before you leave.

Meaning – Perfectly methodical arrangement./Very well organized.

16. To strain every nerve

Example – I was straining every nerve to break the code but failed every time.

Meaning – To try extremely hard to do something.

17. To have an axe to grind

Example – The best reporting is done by people who don't have an axe to grind.

Meaning – To have a selfish interest to serve.

18. To draw the line

Example – It's hard to keep young people under control, but you have to draw the line somewhere.

Meaning – To set limits/To separate one thing from another.

19. Beat around the bush

Example – Don't beat around the bush, just tell me what's happening here.

Meaning – To avoid talking about an embarrassing subject as you are worried about upsetting the person you are talking to.

20. A wild goose chase

Example – After five hours spent wandering in the city, we realized that we were on a wild goose chase.

Meaning – An absurdly hopeless enterprise./ Wasting time looking for something that you are not going to find.

21. A litmus test

Example – His performance in the Test matches served as a litmus test whether he would join the One-day team.

Meaning – An experiment that seeks to determine the state of one important factor./ A method that helps to know if something is correct.

22. To cry wolf

Example – Don't pay attention to her. She is just crying wolf again.

Meaning – To cry or complain about something when nothing is really wrong.

23. To be hard up

Example – James was hard up for cash to pay his bills.

Meaning – To be short of money.

24. To take to one's heels

Example – The man took to his heels to try to get the bus before it leaves the bus stop.

Meaning – To run very fast.

25. Cry over spilt milk

Example – There is no use of crying over spilt milk, instead of being careful in the future.

Meaning – Complaining about a loss or failure from the past.

26. At the drop of a hat

Example – She is always ready to go for an outing at the drop of a hat.

Meaning – Willingness to do something instantly.

27. Afraid of one's own shadow

Example – My grandfather always had panic attacks. He was the kind of a person who was afraid of his own shadow.

28. A house of cards

Example – That well-reputed company turned out to be a house of cards within a year.

Meaning – A poor plan or organization that is very weak and can be easily destroyed.

29. Black and Blue

Example – The thief was beaten black and blue by the public.

Meaning – Full of bruises (Black marks caused by being hit).

30. To be in the doldrums

Example – My friend is in doldrums since a week and nothing I do seems to cheer him up.

Meaning – To feel sad and lack of energy to do something.

*“Winners Never Do Any Different Thing
But They Do It Differently.”*