

While surveillance in public seemed reasonable, the same “larger good” logic is now being weaponised to monitor the data in our phones. Apple, sometime in 2018, discussed introducing a feature that could check the photos sent on iMessage on the phone of any user to prevent the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. While child abuse should be prohibited and abusers should be punished, the fact that a private company could legally and willingly admit openly and proudly that they now have the technology to scan the photos in your phone is a scary thought.

Until now at least, we knew we were being watched. However, with the rampant presence of virtual assistant devices, our privacy becomes non-existent as soon as we buy/use them. For no conversation around such a device goes unrecorded goes unrecorded. In 2018, a court in New Hampshire, during a murder trial, ordered Amazon to produce audio recorded in its smart speaker. Though not stated explicitly, the underlying principle is that for the larger good -- the safety of society -- it is important that alleged criminals are tried, though the trial may require comprising what is being spoken within the boundaries of one’s home.

The need for surveillance is always wrapped up in the language of the “larger good” argument and the demonisation of those who speak against it. For example, when opposing voices were raised against allowing Amazon to present the audio recordings made by its device in the murder trial, they were termed “opponents of a safe society” and “supporters of crime”. While the demonisation of dissent is a pattern, it is important to ask ourselves, how much of a “larger good” is too good? Where do we draw the line for privacy when it keeps shifting away from us?

As of now, we really have no choice over sharing our data: refuse and you might not get any access to technology and you may also be labelled a misanthrope, an anarchist, a Luddite. Our acquiescence is assumed, and that is where the problem lies.

(Source: Deccan Herald, Tejas Kishore Motwani, Percy Barucha, JAN 12 2022)

Question:

Do you think technological advances erase the idea of ‘individual privacy’? Justify.

(10 marks)

4. Answer any ONE of the following essays in 500-600 words.

- 4A. The notion of creativity as redefined among today’s youth.
- 4B. The classrooms of the future in India.

(10 marks)

