

Cover Story of the Month



Media Regulation Rules

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From the Desk of Editor-in-Chief

Greetings from all of us @ The Editorial Team to all our readers.



The scenario worldwide, especially in India, is far from cheery, even after a doleful past year due to Covid-19 and its pandemic. With new variants of the old enemy, India is ranking almost top in the world, for the wrong reasons. And this time, we have no one else but ourselves to blame for this relapse for the worse. There is a local grandma's saying which advises you to *"never stretch your legs forward before sitting down properly."* In the case of our recovery from the pandemic, it looks like this is what we Indians, right from high society to the very common people, are guilty of. We brought down our guards too soon, we celebrated prematurely and we assumed victory before the reaching the finishing line of full recovery and relief from the pandemic. Now that the worst has struck, let us learn from this bitter lesson, and buckle up again. What more do we need to do, besides what we should already be doing, viz. masking, distancing and sanitising? Getting ourselves vaccinated. Stay safe and responsible, folks, for our own sakes and others' sakes.

This month's Editorial discusses the rampant cash-for-vote practices that took place in the recent State Elections. The Cover Story shares an insight to the recently introduced Regulations for Social Media, as it attracts protests and accolades for what it provides for.

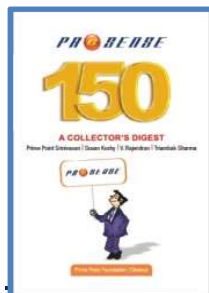
2nd April is annually commemorated as World Autism Awareness Day. And rightfully, we have included a write-up on the subject, to create awareness and sensitiveness to the condition as individuals and as society. Domain-Spoofing is the latest *cliché* in the Cyber Crime of Phishing. The article gives an insight about what it is and how to protect against it. Princetoon is present as usual.

This month, we have introduced a Guest Column, and our guest for this month writes about the digital shutdown of websites due to insolvency of a service provider, causing inconvenience to its customers.

I hope you will enjoy reading this edition. Please share your feedback with us at editor@corpezine.com. Your feedback is important to us.

Susan

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Editorial

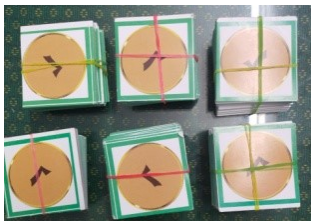
Cash-for-Votes in Recent Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections – Helpless Election Commission: A Quick Survey

While the efficiency of the Indian Election Commission in the smooth conduct of Parliament and Assembly Elections, is widely appreciated, the Commission appears helpless in curbing cash-for-votes. Recently, the Election Commission (EC) had announced State Assembly Elections in five states, including West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. At the time of writing this Editorial, the election process is not completed and results not announced.

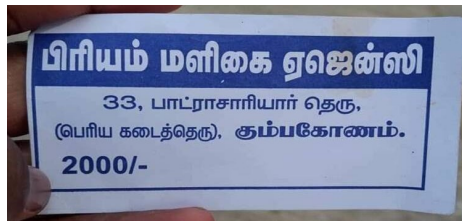
The Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections held on 6th April 2021, will go down in the annals of history for the unprecedented distribution of cash-for-votes in most of the constituencies. The Election Commission had appointed a large number of observers, and deployed security forces to seize and curb the movement of cash. They seized around Rs. 428 crores worth of cash, gold and liquor in transit in Tamil Nadu alone. Interestingly, many of the seizures were from vans carrying cash for ATM Machines of banks, gold jewellers moving to their shops, and small businessmen carrying cash for their business purposes. The team that seized them, went on to deposit the cash and the gold in the Treasury, recorded the increase in tally of seizure and announced it proudly on all TV media.

On the other hand, it was an open secret that the major political parties in Tamil Nadu distributed cash ranging from Rs.500 to Rs.5000 per voter, in most of the constituencies, three days before the elections. Strangely, the authorities reportedly did not receive any complaint from anyone, and the distribution was completed without any hassle. In some constituencies, people staged *dharna* on the highways, for non-receipt of the cash. From the conversation *PreSense* had with several political workers of all major parties, it is speculated that around Rs.5000 to 6000 crores might have been distributed to voters and booth agents before the elections. *PreSense* understands from the political workers that there was a power shutdown in some centres in the midnight, to enable the parties to distribute the cash. A case was reported that one candidate bribed an entire police station of staff openly and when it became big news, the DGP (Director General of Police) ordered a CBCID (Crime-Branch Crime Investigation Department) investigation.

Some of the candidates issued tokens to voters, to avoid being caught in cash disbursement. Interestingly, one candidate issued tokens to voters to collect Rs. 2000 worth of provisions from a store, and people began crowding that shop. The shop had to put up posters, disowning responsibility for the tokens issued by candidate.



Tokens bundled and kept ready



Token to collect provisions worth Rs.2000/-



Poster put up by the shop, disowning responsibility for tokens issued by candidate

During the entire operation by the political parties, the Election Commission could not do anything as they do not have enough powers to ban the candidate or the political parties, violating the rules. The authorities and the people will forget these incidents once the results are announced, and discussions about them will be revived during the next General Elections.

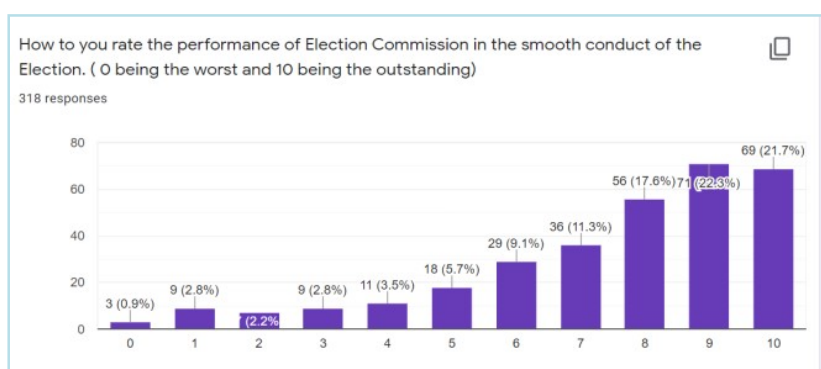
PreSense had repeatedly pointed out that Electoral Reforms were urgently needed to be put in place, to curb illegal money flow during the elections. For selection of candidates, some political parties allot seats only to the 'highest bidder', who can spend more for the campaign and the elections. Many vibrant young political leaders with great vision but without enough money, are disillusioned by this, and move away from the political system, leaving the space open for moneyed and corrupt candidates.

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A Quick Online Survey

After the completion of the single-phase elections on 6th April 2021 in Tamil Nadu, *PreSense* conducted a quick online survey to understand the perception of tech-savvy (users of the internet) voters, living in Tamil Nadu. 318 people responded within 3 days. 85% men and 15% women responded, representing all the districts and various age groups of Tamil Nadu. Youngsters and those under 40 years of age, who participated in this survey, represented only 21%. The respondents were requested to remain anonymous for the survey, and not disclose their identity. The responses revealed high level of maturity.

Rating of Election Commission



When asked how they rated the Election Commission (EC) for the conduct of the elections on a scale of 0 to 10, the respondents gave an average rating of 7.4 out of 10. Sixty percent of them gave a rating of more than 8 out of 10. From the comments given by the respondents, it is felt that the people were not happy

about the 'inaction' of the Election Commission, on the violators of rules (cash-for-votes and Covid norms). We feel that this factor has pulled down the rating to 7.4, in spite of best efforts by EC to conduct the elections smoothly.

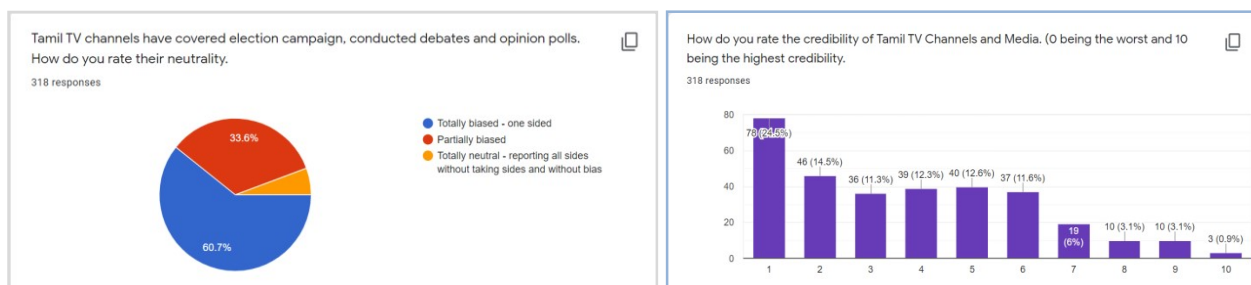
Plus and Minus

When asked to specify one major item that irked them about the elections, the respondents enlisted three main aspects, viz. (1) Indecent and hate speeches by leaders (40%), (2) Cash disbursal to voters (27%) and (3) Election Commission not taking action against violators (22%).

On the positive side, the main aspects were (1) Use of social media during the campaign, (2) Limited acts of violence, and (3) Leaders talking about achievements and developmental schemes during the campaigns.

Rating of Media

When the respondents were asked to rate the media, 94% perceived the media as completely or partially biased (61% felt the media was totally biased and one-sided). When the respondents were asked to rate the media credibility on 0 to 10 scale, the average rating came to 3.7 out of 10. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents rated it below 4.



PreSense has been insisting on several platforms, that there should be some regulation in the broadcast / publication of opinion polls before the elections. Many of these opinion polls are done in secret collaboration with political parties, and they are not done scientifically. These biased opinion polls, when aired frequently, tend to influence the voters too.

PreSense has always been insisting that the right to 'freedom of speech and expression' as provided in the Indian Constitution, is being misused, to benefit the wrong people. It is also worth mentioning that on 23rd April 2021, Justice Shri Bobde, Chief Justice of India on the day of his retirement, mentioned that freedom of speech was the most abused right at present.

If the Government does not have the willingness to introduce the Electoral Reforms, EC itself should find out the provisions and rules available in the Act and the Constitution, just as EC under former Chief Election Commissioner, T N Seshan did, to curb money power in politics, and discipline the political system.

While *PreSense* appreciates and salutes the Election Commission for their excellent task, to protect and uphold the Indian democracy, they should not remain helpless observers, when political parties and candidates violate the rules. If the Government does not have the willingness to introduce the Electoral Reforms, EC itself should find the provisions and rules available in the Act and the Constitution, just as EC under former Chief Election Commissioner, T N Seshan did, to curb money power in politics, and discipline the political system.

by K. Srinivasan, Publisher and Managing Editor

Cover Story

Regulations for Social Media and OTT Platforms: A Review



Background

The Digital India Programme has now become a movement which has empowered many Indians to use the technology platforms for communication, ecommerce, banking, etc. in a significant manner. According to the Government of India Press Release, the Indian user base of social media platforms like WhatsApp (53 Crore users), YouTube (44.8 crores), Facebook (41 crores), Instagram (21 crores) and Twitter (1.75 crores), is on the increase daily. These social media platforms have enabled common Indians to showcase their creativity, ask questions, be informed and freely share their views, including criticism of the Government and its functionaries.

India is the world's largest open Internet society and the Indian Government has allowed all international social media and Internet companies to operate here, subject to the condition that they have to be accountable to the Indian Constitution and Indian laws. While social media has empowered Indians in many ways, it has also thrown up various challenges like fake news, frequent abuse by sharing morphed images of women and children, misuse to settle corporate rivalry, use of abusive language, defamatory and obscene contents and blatant disrespect to religious sentiments, etc. Criminals and anti-national elements have started misusing the social media extensively, to generate unwanted emotions and create disturbance in the society.

It was found that currently there is no robust complaint mechanism wherein the ordinary users of social media and OTT platforms can register their complaint and get it redressed within a defined timeline. Lack of transparency and absence of robust grievance redress

mechanism have left the users totally dependent on the whims and fancies of social media platforms. Often, it has been seen that a user who has spent his time, energy and money in developing a social media profile, is left with no remedies in case that profile is restricted or removed by the platform without giving any opportunity to be heard. Serious concerns have been expressed in various platforms like Civil Society, Judicial Orders, Parliament, Parliament Committees, etc.

In order to address these issues, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, after various public discussions, on 25th February 2021 issued guidelines known as Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 under Sec 87 of IT act 2000.

The New Guidelines

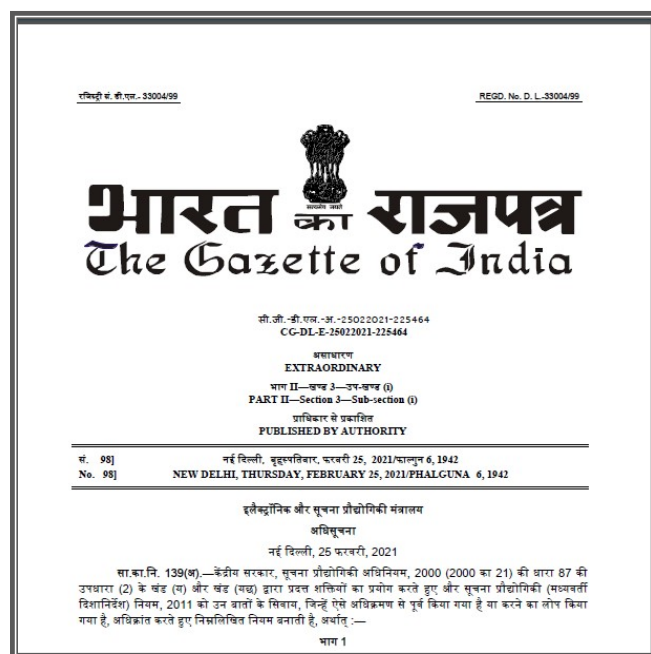
Diligence to be Followed by Intermediaries: All intermediaries, be they network providers, telecom providers or OTT platforms, or social networking sites, have to comply with the concept of due diligence. Although the concept of due diligence has already been discussed in the original IT Act, it was not clear and was subject to interpretations to be read with other sections of the IT Act. Now, these rules throw more clarity on this.

Grievance Redress Mechanism is an altogether new feature now. All intermediaries are now mandated to have grievance redress mechanism in place, and resolve user complaints. Right now, there are thousands of users of social networking sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, who have faced some form of victimisation in such platforms, like their account getting hacked and misused, with the victims not knowing the procedure to lodge a complaint. These rules address this issue.

Ensuring Online Safety and Dignity of Users, especially Women Users: Intermediaries shall remove or disable access within 24 hours of receipt of complaints of contents that expose the private areas of individuals, show such individuals in full or partial nudity or in sexual act or is in the nature of impersonation including morphed images etc. Such a complaint can be filed either by the individual or by any other person on his/her behalf.

Categories of Social Media

Social media intermediaries are now categorised into two types viz. (1) social media intermediaries and (2) significant social media intermediaries. Depending upon the volume of usage, the Government will fix a threshold and classify what is to be brought under 'significant social media'. Presumably, giant intermediaries such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp will come under this. The significant social media intermediaries will have to comply with some additional rules like having a Chief Compliance Officer responsible for ensuring compliance with the Act and Rules, a Nodal Contact Person for 24x7 coordination



and a Resident Grievance Officer. All these three should be residents of India with their contact details clearly publicised. The Government has now mandated this by these rules.

In the case of OTT platforms, there is a self-classification system of categorising the OTT content (films, short films, feature films or any story) as suitable for those under 7, or 13, or 13 plus age, or 17, and finally the adult content. There are three levels of regulatory mechanisms: (i) a self-regulatory mechanism (ii) self-regulation by a body of publishers (something like the Press Council of India for the print media) and (iii) oversight mechanism, to be formulated by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

The Legal Battle

Some online media news portals have filed a case in the Supreme Court. They argue, inter alia, that the IT Rules, 2021 go far beyond the remit of the parent Act and seek to regulate digital news media by imposing a 'Code of Ethics', with all manner of stipulations as 'half-truths', 'good taste', 'decency' etc., and vest the power of interference ultimately with the Central Government as the chief regulator, at the highest of three tiers. They contend that the Central Government has framed these rules under section 87 of the IT

Those who oppose these rules should also keep in mind that in the name of 'freedom of speech and expression', they should not get protection for the wrong persons, leaving the genuine helpless citizens to suffer.

Act (*ie.* the rule-making powers of the Government, to carry out the provisions of the Act) and since these portals are not intermediaries, nor are these the provisions or objective of the Act, these rules cannot be framed under this Act in this manner. They add that these rules travel beyond the terms of the IT Act, which is limited to 'intermediaries' or 'agency of the Government', and that too on grounds relating to security interests of the State.

The rules now provide for tracking the originator of the message or newsfeed with the objective that any legally objectionable news can be traced and be blocked by the OTT platform and the creator may be punished, as may be required as per law. During the course of the legal proceedings, an affidavit was filed by Dr V Kamakoti, a senior professor from IIT-Madras and a member of the Prime Minister's Scientific Advisory Committee, on the question of traceability of messages to the originator. It was stated in the affidavit that such traceability is possible by adding an originator information with each message, which will be displayed during the decryption. Services like WhatsApp, which vociferously claim 'end-to-end encryption', raise objection to such a technology and scenario. Now, WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram and others assert that they may have to cope with the issue of breaking the privacy of end-to-end encryption and tracking the originator. The Supreme Court is currently adjudicating on the issue of how the intermediaries can trace the originators of a message shared on their respective platforms.

In the entire discussion on this subject, a distinction is being sought between original content and curated content, justifiably, to fix the responsibility of the stake holders. Curating a content means finding such a content that will suit your audience catering to their likes and tastes, and which is not created by you. Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc come in this category, where they air feature films, short films and such videos, like distributors or theatre owners of feature films. From the guidelines or control perspective, such firms only air the films, not owning the responsibility for the content in such films. If it were a feature film to be released in theatres, there is the Film



Censor Board which certifies it before release in cinema houses. In this case, there is no such certification. On the other hand, media news houses or WhatsApp groups and any social networking groups create the content and air the news. Thus, they are the 'owners' or 'creators' of the posts and hence are undeniably responsible. Information security professionals argue that controls should naturally be applicable for both these categories viz. the curative contents and the normal contents like WhatsApp posts and newsfeeds.

Atul Kumar Tiwari, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) reportedly said, *"OTT (Over-The-Top video streaming industry) is a strange animal but our self-regulation model will only apply to curated content on streaming platforms (like Netflix, Amazon, Hotstar and others) while user-generated content and social media would be the reserve of the IT Ministry"*. Subsequently on 9th November 2020, the President of India issued a notification under Article 77(3) of the Constitution, amending the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 which granted MIB the power to regulate online news platforms and OTT platforms.



Clarification by Government

The Government has clarified that it respected freedom of expression and is committed to it. It only wants accountability for the social networking media and the firms which have a huge user-base running into crores in India, like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter etc. The Central Government has made it clear that if they want to do business here, they will have to abide by the laws of the land.

It has been repeatedly asserted, including in many Supreme Court judgments, that freedom of expression is not an unfettered one and is always subject to reasonable restrictions. Viewed in that context, these rules are a significant step in that direction.

We are not sure how effective the implementation is going to be, and how much legal hurdles these rules would face in the days to come, besides the technological issues. As expected, there are protests that these rules are draconian and are an onslaught into the freedom of expression. Besides the technological difficulties envisaged in tracing the originator, there are also objections on the legal technicalities of these rules, that the IT Act was mainly passed with the objective of recognising electronic records, and passing such kind of rules does not come under the purview of the IT Act. All these points are to be debated in the apex court. Perhaps in the arguments that come up during the trial, much more clarity may emerge and the Supreme Court in all its wisdom, may interpret and pass the verdict with the larger interests of the nation, in its avowed commitment to protect the sovereignty, and try to bring in some control in the otherwise uncontrolled beast called the 'Internet'.

Observation by Supreme Court

On 25th February 2021, while passing orders in a different case, Hon'ble Supreme Court had mentioned about these Rules, as follows:



Quote

A perusal of the Rules indicate that the Rules are more and more in the form of guidelines and have no effective mechanism for either screening or taking appropriate action for those who violate the guidelines.

Unquote

For this remark, Mr. Tushar Mehta, the learned Solicitor General submitted that the Government shall consider and take appropriate steps for regulation or legislation as may be found fit by the Government, and the same shall be placed before the Court.

**“Freedom of speech is the most abused right at present” -
Shri Bobde, Chief Justice of India**

Conclusion

After all, every industry, society, entity or set-up needs some kind of monitoring or control and the government cannot be expected to be a mute spectator if any arm of governance and administration including of course, the media, is misused to destabilise the sovereignty, cultural fabric or the social harmony in the nation. Inefficiency in administration is not a virtue, and a government has to be capable even if it is not 'good' to everyone!

Those who oppose these rules should also keep in mind that in the name of 'freedom of speech and expression', they should not get protection for the wrong persons, leaving the genuine helpless citizens to suffer. A day before his retirement, Chief Justice of India, Sharad Bobde in an exclusive interview, observed, *“Freedom of speech is the most abused right at present.”*

by K Srinivasan, Publisher & Managing Editor & V Rajendran, Editor

Consulting Editor, PreSense Wins Lifetime Award

Shri TN Ashok, Consulting Editor for your eMagazine, was recently awarded the Media Excellence Award for the year 2021 for his 'Lifetime Contribution to Journalism', on completion of 50 illustrious years in the profession.

The Award was given by Aalami TV, a Delhi-based 24x7 TV channel.

Its founder, Dr Kabir Siddiqui presented the Award to Shri Ashok at a distinguished gathering of journalists, playwrights, authors, poets and artistes at the Foreign Correspondents Club of South (FCC) South Asia in New Delhi on 31st March 2021.



PreSense congratulates Shri Ashok for the recognition bestowed on him and wishes him many more to come.



Health

Autism – A Differently Abled Special Condition

April 2nd is observed as World Autism Awareness Day since 2008, ever since the United Nations Organisation (UNO) recognised and designated the date. World Autism Awareness Day is observed to inform people, so that they know and understand about the world of autism. This awareness should help them to accept and empathise with those affected by autism, and extend encouragement and support to them as well the parents and other caregivers of the autistic.

As per the 2011 Census of India, there are nearly 80 lakh children below the 19-year age group with disabilities, among which nearly 6 lakh have intellectual disability. The study also states that one in 66 children was autistic in India. Despite being an alarming issue, awareness about autism is low, even though its incidence has increased over the last decade.



The Editorial Team sought the professional opinion of Dr A V Srinivasan, world-renowned neuro-physician, about autism. Dr Srinivasan has been a practising specialist, and visiting professor to international universities, for over four decades.

Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental condition that involves persistent challenges in social interaction, speech, non-verbal communication, and restricted/repetitive behaviour. The effects of ASD and the severity of symptoms are different in each person. Incidentally, Spectrum Disorder is a range of related conditions/disorders, having similar symptoms or similar causative mechanism.

ASD has five identified sub-types: Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, Rett's Disorder, Child Degenerative Disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disorder (Not Otherwise Specified). While the conditions and symptoms among these sub-types are similar and seem overlapping, Asperger's Disorder is the mildest of all the conditions. Rett's is predominant in girls.

ASD occurs in all ethnic, racial, and economic groups. The cause is attributed to a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Dr Srinivasan shared his considered observation based on his 40 years' clinical experience, that parents who work excessively on computers, tend to have children who are affected by autistic and dyslexic tendencies. Dr Srinivasan however, was cautious to underline that this observation is not yet substantiated by any conclusive study, and is based purely on his experiential observation.

The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and, in some cases, may be able to live entirely independently. The signs of autism usually appear by the age of 2 or 3 years. Some associated development delays can appear even earlier, and often, it can be diagnosed as early as 18 months after birth. Research shows that early diagnosis and intervention can lead to positive outcomes later in life for people with autism. Although ASD can be a lifelong disorder, treatments and services can improve the person's condition and ability to function.



According to Dr A V Srinivasan, autism can be generally understood by its acronym, AUTISM:

- A** – Abnormally excessive number of neurons that result in autistic tendency, causing
- U** – Unbalanced excited and inhibitory network,
- T** – Test of facial and emotional expressions, which are worst affected in these children,
- I** – Impairment of verbal and non-verbal communication,
- S** – Social interaction impairment, all of which are due to
- M** – Modulation of neurexin and neuroligin genes being affected, causing the condition.

What Causes ASD?

Scientists believe that both genetics and environment likely play a role in ASD. Researchers have identified a number of genes associated with the disorder. ASD could be a result of disruptions in normal brain growth very early in development. Many of the genes found to be associated with autism are involved in the function of chemical connections between brain neurons (synapses).



Dr Srinivasan explained that synapses are brain structures that allow the neurons to transmit an electrical or chemical signal to another neuron. Neurexin and neuroligin are proteins associated in the extracellular space between synapses in the brain, and they play a crucial role in the functionality of the brain's synaptic circuitry.

Synaptic pruning is a natural process that occurs in the brain from the very early years of a child. During synaptic pruning, the brain eliminates extra synapses that a new-born baby is normally born with. 'Slicing' or 'pruning' enables the child to develop normal motor movement. But for unknown reasons, if the excessive neurons are not removed, the excessive connection of neurons cause abnormal synaptic function and neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism spectrum disorders.

Theory of mind is a popular term from the field of psychology. Theory of Mind is the ability to appreciate the mental state of the other person, as it provides the ability to predict and interpret the behaviour of others. This is possible if we have Mirror Neurons in our brain. These neurons do not function normally in the autistic child. Thus, the child is unable to understand the mind of the other person. This means he will not have empathy, sympathy and apathy as the mind needs to appreciate the other person to feel these emotions. Normally, a child learns to socialise by 4 years of age, through observation, but an autistic child is not able to, due to inadequate mirror neurons.

Signs and Symptoms

Typical infants are curious and interested in the world and the people around them. By the first birthday, a typical toddler interacts with others by looking at people in the eye, copying words and actions, and using simple gestures such as clapping and waving. They show interest in social games.

But a young child with ASD might have a very hard time learning to interact with other people. They might not even be interested in other people. Others might want friends, but not understand how to develop friendships.

They may have problems with showing or talking about their feelings. They might also have trouble understanding other people's feelings. Many people with ASD are very sensitive to



being touched and might not want to be held or cuddled. Self-stimulatory behaviours like involuntary repetitive gestures are common. Anxiety and depression can also affect some of them with ASD.

Therefore, people with ASD often have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills. They might repeat certain behaviours and might not want any change in their daily activities. Many people with ASD also have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. Signs of ASD begin during early childhood and typically last throughout the person's life, maybe with increased or decreased intensity.

Children or adults with ASD could display the following typical symptoms:

- avoiding eye contact and wanting to be alone,
- having trouble understanding other people's feelings,
- preferring not to be held, or might cuddle only when they want,
- not knowing how to talk, play, or relate to people,
- repeating words or phrases said to them,
- repeating actions like flapping hands, or rocking their body,
- having trouble adapting when a routine change,
- Losing skills they once had (eg. stop saying words they were using)



Autism Awareness
Ribbon

How is Autism Treated?

So far, there appears to be no cure for ASD. Therapies and behavioural interventions are designed to remedy specific symptoms and can substantially improve those symptoms. The ideal treatment plan coordinates therapies and interventions that meet the specific needs of the individual, and the earlier the intervention, the better.

Medications: While medication cannot cure ASD or even treat its main symptoms, there are some that can help with related symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Antipsychotic medications are used to treat severe behavioural problems. Seizures can be treated with one or more anticonvulsant drugs. Medication, used to treat people with attention deficit disorder, can be used effectively to help decrease impulsivity and hyperactivity in people with ASD. Parents, caregivers, and people with autism should use caution before adopting any unproven treatments.

Therapy and Training: Early behavioural/educational interventions have been very successful in many children with ASD. In these interventions, therapists use highly structured and intensive skill-oriented training sessions to help children develop social and language skills, such as applied behavioural analysis, which encourages positive behaviours and discourages negative ones. Dr Srinivasan observed that training sessions with pictorial representations, including illustrative games like jigsaw puzzles, and music sessions and learning, help.

In addition, family counselling for the parents and siblings of children with ASD, often helps families cope with the particular challenges of living with a child with ASD.

by Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief

Experience of the Parent of Autistic Child

Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief, PreSense had a conversation with Smt Kamakshi Swaminathan, qualified trainer, counsellor and guide in multiple disability and neurological disorder, accredited by Spastic Society of India. She is an active volunteer in many schools, imparting management techniques for autistic children, and providing parent guidance and family counselling. She is also a volunteer with Saksham, Madurai, which supports autism-affected children and adults through training, guidance and counselling, and research.



Smt Kamakshi is a parent of autism-affected 22-year-old son, Chandrashekar. She shared her personal experiential knowledge on how to care for an autistic child.

Smt Kamakshi said that it is important that the parents of an autistic child be aware and informed of the condition, and acknowledge it to enable early intervention to address it with counselling, training and therapy.

The autistic child should be treated as normally as possible. The only difference is that more time would be taken by the autistic child, or for him, for his routine or for learning. Therefore, one needs patience, creativity, and empathy, and be willing to give the required space to the child. With time and training, the child will be able to learn to take care of himself, with periodical supervision.

The society's attitude towards such children needs to be sensitised. Usually, an autistic child's unusual behaviour is viewed as awkward by the society. The society must understand that such behaviour is not voluntary. It is triggered by an involuntary response to an internal stress situation. The society should be sensitive in the response to such erratic behaviour in public and be empathetic, not sympathetic.

Smt Kamakshi referred to three books that were written by autistic-affected adults. These books gave her insight to understand the mind of the autistic-affected, and her son's mind too. These books were '*Ido in Autismland*' by Ido Kedar, '*Dibs in Search of Self*' by Virginia Axline, and '*Wasted Talent*' by Krishna Narayanan.

Smt Kamakshi is involved in a project through Saksham, which trains children of 14 years of age and above, so that the child is able to take care of himself. The training is in self-maintenance and self-hygiene, and pre-vocational training. Saksham is also involved in research-oriented activities, such as yoga and music for therapy of these children.

Interestingly, Smt Kamashi shared about a 20 years' research on 'neuroplasticity', in various international institutes. She explained that in the case of an affected part of the brain as in autism, if consistent training is imparted, the other unaffected parts of the brain can take up that task. For example, if a school student forgets his lunch box, his other friends could pool in and give part of their lunch to him to satiate his hunger. Similarly, the other parts of the brain can participate so that the deficiency in one part of the brain is made up by the other parts. This is neuroplasticity in simple terms. This is based on the theory of habit-forming, explained by Malcom Gladwell in his bestseller, '*Outliers: The Story of Success*'.

This theory and research, is a hopeful move forward for parents of autistic children.



Technology

Beware! Domain-Spoofing – Another Phishing Attack!

A WhatsApp message was doing the rounds, reading as under:

*"Important... Spot the Difference? **gtbank.com** is not the same as **gtbank.com**, **ecobank.com** is not the same as **ecobank.com**.*

The first one is correct, the second one is from hackers.

The "a" in the second URL is a letter of the Cyrillic alphabet.

An average internet user can still fall for this.

Be careful for every mail requiring you to click on a link.

Please Stay Alert. Cyber-attacks have gone steps higher."

Only by careful scrutiny, will you observe the difference in the letter 'a' in both the cases. That is to say, a different font of 'a' has been used. This is an emerging *modus operandi* in phishing attack, called Unicode Domain Spoofing or Domain Name Homograph Attack or Script Spoofing.

We normally create websites, giving our names in conventional, standard and popular fonts. Thus, when we type the URL in any font, it will go to the website. On the other hand, we can also create websites (domain names) in Unicode itself in which case, at the time of creation, we will give the Unicode16 expression of our domain name and deliberately use the letters say 'a' or 'o' or 'u' or 'w' (in fact most of the letters) which are available and accepted in non-conventional format/font itself, just as we create a domain name or register a URL in Tamil or Telugu or Devanagiri-Hindi or any vernacular language.



Technologically, we use a virtual keyboard (fonts) with our normal keyboard! After creating such a website, you cannot type the URL and go to the site. You have to copy paste the URL and reach the site. For phishing type of frauds, this is quite handy. They deliberately register a domain in the name of a popular website, using a Unicode font (like creating a Tamil or other vernacular language website), and will only send you the link (and not allow or expect you to type the URL) to reach the URL. You will land on this fake website. When you actually type the URL, you may land in the original. When you paste the URL or click the link, you will land in the fake website!

Therefore, it is worth repeating a hundred times:

- Never click a link!
- Remember, malicious users and fraudsters can register fake domains that look like real website domains.
- Take pains to read the website name and type it.
- Beware!

by V. Rajendran, Editor



Guest Column

Net4India Stops Services to More Than 3 Lakh Domains in India

Recently, Digital India got a jolt when one of the premier service providers of Internet services, suddenly stopped its services to more than 3 lakh active customers without any prior notice to these customers. The customers include some public sector organisations too. The incident arose as NCLT (National Company Law Board Tribunal) decided to place Net4India, a premier internet service provider on trial for insolvency. Before declaring the company as insolvent, NCLT failed to take into account, the value of various domain names and related business contracts, the company had with more than 3 lakh customers.



Naavi

Once the insolvency proceedings commenced, the activities of the company stopped and all the services were frozen. This was a digital shutdown for many of the customers of Net4India. When the problem was brought to the notice of NCLT, no relief was provided. The Ministry of IT (MeitY), gave a limited relief to customers, who had registered ".dot in" domain names, by some proactive measures taken by NIXI (National Internet Exchange of India).

However, ICANN (Internet Commission on Assigned Names and Numbers), which is the regulatory body for the entire Internet system and controlled '.dot com' type of domain names, failed to act and ensure that the services were transferred to another operating registrar of domain names. As a result, many customers of Net4India have lost their digital assets temporarily or permanently. ICANN and MeitY could have moved the Supreme Court and obtained an interim order to restrain NCLT from blocking the services of Net4India. However, they remained mute spectators.

It is time that both the Government of India and ICANN recognise that ensuring continuity of domain name and related services is their responsibility, and they need to put in place adequate steps to prevent such incidents occurring again in future.

One option for ICANN to consider is to ensure that all the registrar's records are backed up under its trusted control so that in the event of any failure of a registrar, the services can be shifted to another service provider as a "Disaster Response".

Secondly, when incidents such as the failure of Internet service providers threaten to derail the internet-based services, MeitY must intervene and shift the Internet service contracts to another registrar through appropriate legal enablement. Such powers are already available under Section 79 of Information Technology Act 2000. In the meantime, accountants need to ensure that "Data Assets" must be represented at "Provisional Value" or "Contra Entry" in the Balance Sheet so that the presence of such assets does not go unnoticed, when insolvency petitions are heard.

(Update: At the time of release of PreSense, we understand that the issue is now resolved, thanks to the efforts taken by ICANN, the US agency for coordinating the procedures for databases related to Internet domain names – Editor)

by Naavi, Bengaluru

(Naavi is a pioneer in the field of Cyber Law and Data Protection in India, and is the founder of www.naavi.org, and Chairman of FDPPI)





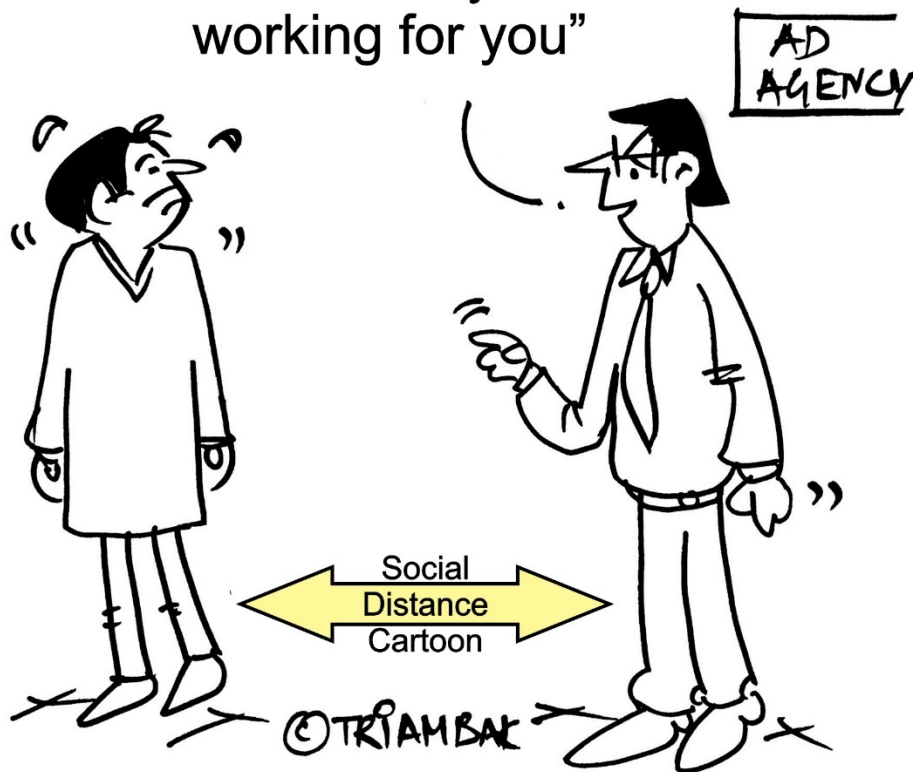
PPrince

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