Is Online Privacy a Myth?

My opinion is 'Yes, online privacy a myth'. People who believe otherwise are simply unaware.

The more personal information you make available online, the more vulnerable you become. Each and every step you take in the web is recorded, like your texts, calls, video chats, your browsing history, your bank details and a lot more than you imagine. You have almost no privacy at all. Giant companies like Facebook, Google, Microsoft all collect data on what you do on your browser. What you are searching for, what kind of person you are etc. What do they do after that? they indirectly sell YOU! They sell all your personal data to the marketing companies.

Major websites use a variety of techniques to accomplish this, including tracking (and geo-locating) your IP address, making Session Traversal Utilities for NAT (STUN) requests to obtain the actual IP address of people using a virtual private network (a VPN), browser fingerprinting, tracking pixels and a host of other techniques designed to identify the user.

This is even worse on mobile devices, almost all of which have built-in GPS sensors that Apps (and the operating system) can use to obtain your minute-to-minute physical location.

A prime example of this is the case with Facebook and Cambridge Analytica in 2018. As you know, almost 300,000 Facebook users took the psychological test via the "thisisyourdigitallife" App in year 2013. This application had access to the personal data of not only of those who passed the test but also to some data of their Facebook friends. According to the final analysis, data from 87 million Facebook profiles became available to Cambridge Analytica. Even worse, Cambridge Analytica used Facebook user's personal data without permission, possibly affecting 2016 election results in the USA. Certainly, it is unfair that social media would use your personal data against you.

What has changed? Fining the multi-billion dollar company is not going to change anything, damage has been done.

It is better to understand that anything present online can be used against you but definitely you don't have to go paranoid try saving yourself. There are always safe tips that you can follow and minimize private details of yourself over online platforms.

Do not make peace with your data providing online. Ask questions, **'Why you need this data?', 'From where have you got my number' etc.** Every time you provide your details or receive a call claiming you have won a lottery, ask such questions. You may need to make extra efforts but that's better than falling prey to some online scam. Spread awareness and read about cyber security latest trends.

There are techniques you can apply to constrain this, but most people don't bother, or find it too technically challenging to install and configure correctly. These include using a high-quality (paid) *VPN service*, turning off something called *WebRTC* in your browser, using ad blockers, installing *Privacy Badger*, and using something called *NoScript*. How do you maintain your online privacy?

- Latest updates from browsers like Firefox quantum, Safari provides option of "Tracking Protection". Enable it to prevent companies from tracking your behavior online.
- Use Safari/Internet explorer for Internet banking.
- Avoid logging in using Facebook/Google for untrusted websites/apps.
- Even if you login using Facebook/Google, make sure you check what all information are being taken.

It is also important to note that, if you give away your personal information, you would get personalized ads/emails/messages. However, it's completely upto you to decide whether you want to give away your personal information data to enjoy personalized reaches or keep your online privacy and don't give away any information.

Unless you do at least these things, yes, online privacy is a complete myth.

Colonel Inderjeet Singh

Chief Cyber Security officer, Vara Technology Pvt Ltd

Colonel Inderjeet Singh is the Chief Cyber Security Officer and Head of the Cyber Security Center of Excellence at Vara Technology. In this role, he is instrumental in building the Cyber Security Business Unit for the Group. He is working on the disruptive technologies in the Cyber Security Space for securing IT networks, Smart cities and Critical Information Infrastructure.

He served in the Indian Defence Forces, is Alumnus of IIT Kharagpur and Symbiosis Institute of Management, Pune. He is an experienced Information Systems professional with experience of more than 27+ year across wide spectrum of areas spanning Information Security, Risk Management, Cyber Security, Cyber Forensics, Cyber Warfare, Cyber Terrorism, Expertise in SOC and CERT, Internet of Things (IoT) including IoT Security, Blockchain and Cryptonomics, Machine Learning and artificial Intelligence and Smart Cities.

He has held prestigious appointments while in Indian Army and has been CIO of E-Commerce Company. He has also served in United Nation Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo.

He is visionary for Start-Up Incubation, Entrepreneurship Development, Strategic Consulting and New Technology Evaluation for commercial viability. He is a Subject Matter Expert on latest innovative Technological domains and effectively managed mission critical projects

He has consistently delivered mission-critical results in the field of in Information Security Management, Cyber Security, Cyber Warfare and Cyber Risk Management.

He is a Council Member of CET (I) and fellow of IETE, IE, Member CSI and Executive Council Member Society for Data Science, Member Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA), IEE, ISOC,IOT for Smart Cities Task Force (IoT4SCTF),Cloud Computing Innovation Council of India (CCICI), Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), USI and many other professional bodies.

He has been consistently been awarded while in Army and was awarded **"Magnificent CIO of the Year "Award in year 2016 and Excellence Award in Cyber Security by International Police Commission in 2019.**

Colonel Inderjeet Singh
Chief Cyber Security officer, Vara Technology Pvt Ltd