

# BEYOND THE NEWS

WELCOME TO OUR

## Weekly Newsletter

### NOTE FROM THE TEAM

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Beyond the News is a platform where diverse perspectives unite to fuel change. We, the media minds representing the youth of India, are eager for transformation in various fields. Believing in the power of typing leadership, we see Beyond the News as an ideal platform for deep dives into social issues. We strive to illuminate the unexplored topics. Our mission is to create awareness, ignite passion, and empower the younger generation. We aim to explore not just news but also entertainment, fashion, and trending topics. Our news seeks to instill empathy, a vital need for this generation.

↓ In this newsletter you will find:

Stories that needed to be uncovered. Join us and Keep Reading!

# THE INTERNET FREEDOM FOUNDATION!

The Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) is an organization dedicated to safeguarding digital rights in uncharted territories. We sat down to interview Prateek Waghre, the Executive Director of IFF about his life at IFF and the work they do!

## PRATEEK WAGHRE : A PROFILE



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Prateek brings a wealth of engineering expertise, backed by a decade of valuable experience gained from diverse roles in various organizations. Beyond his professional journey, Prateek is not just a solo force; he has a sprawling family that adds richness to his life. He loves to play with his lovely dog. While he's immersed in the world of organizational leadership, he finds solace and joy in the simple pleasures of reading, listening to music, and sharing moments with his beloved canine companion. Behind Prateek's success, there stands a robust support system – his family and the dedicated team he collaborates with. Their unwavering support has been instrumental in propelling Prateek to new heights. It's a testament to the idea that success is often a collective achievement, shaped by the encouragement and dedication of those who stand beside us.

Prateek aspires to cultivate an inclusive environment where openness and safety prevail. As a technologically-driven engineer, the profound impact of technology on people's lives has not only inspired him but also become a focal point of his keen interest.

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Over time, this interest has metamorphosed into a fervent passion, evolving into a compelling necessity. The ignited flame within him serves as the sole driving force, motivating Prateek to relentlessly pursue his goals. The team finds joy in small achievements, fostering happiness within their dynamic. However, what genuinely warms their hearts, especially Prateek, is sincere appreciation for their work and the acknowledgment of its practical utility.

The pinnacle of their happiness is reached when they hear sentiments like, "Because of you, I taught my mother about this." Such instances evoke a profound sense of fulfillment, marking not just a moment of happiness but a genuine measure of success for Prateek and the team. Navigating the intricacies of digital rights proves challenging for them, yet they persistently forge ahead. Prateek, alongside the dedicated IFF team, undertakes the formidable task of safeguarding net neutrality. Despite the complexity of articulating the essence of digital rights, their unwavering commitment propels them forward in this crucial mission. Maintaining a harmonious team balance is often a formidable challenge, but Prateek holds firm in the belief that acknowledging and respecting each other's boundaries serves as the optimal solution.

Embracing this approach not only fosters a healthier work environment but also nurtures robust and positive relationships among team members.

Prateek emphasizes, *"While immersed in your passion or supporting others, it's crucial not to withhold the enjoyment of life."*

This mindset significantly contributes to fostering a vibrant and healthy environment within IFF.

The encouragement to embrace life's experiences not only fuels individual well-being but also enriches the collective spirit, creating a positive atmosphere for the entire team.

He describes IFF as 'Dynamic'. He says 'when there is organization there is community'. This dedication drives them to work harder for their community's improvement. Their main aim is to stand up for and amplify the voices of regular people, making sure those voices aren't drowned out by other opinions.

Prateek, without a moment's hesitation, attributes all credits to his team and workers, showcasing exemplary leadership. He advocates for the need for more organizations akin to IFF to safeguard the internet. In a final note, he imparts the wisdom, "Be open, be receptive, and be thoughtful for every experience," encapsulating a philosophy that extends beyond work, fostering personal growth and collective success.

# INTERNET FREEDOM FOUNDATION: PROTECTING OUR DIGITAL RIGHTS

## THE PROBLEM

In India's fast-paced digital world, where smartphones are becoming indispensable, ***an astounding 75% of users are unaware of the privacy settings on their social media accounts. 42% of internet users enter the virtual world without fully understanding the terms and conditions they unintentionally agree to, demonstrating an even greater lack of awareness.*** Many people are unaware of the complex world of cookies, which makes them susceptible to invasive settings that surreptitiously monitor their online activities. Profiting from this informational vacuum, advertisers use complex algorithms to examine user data and bombard people with relevant advertisements—often without getting their permission. An organization such as the Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) becomes indispensable in this context.

A typical internet user's situation is similar to the larger problem. One concerned citizen put it this way:

*"Many Indians are unaware of their legal rights, and this ignorance serves as a breeding ground for cybercrime. As we navigate the digital world, our personal information is like an open book, licked by curious eyes."*

This attitude reflects the general custom of accepting cookies without reading the confusing terms and conditions.

As a result of companies using their data without their express consent, users are put in the unsettling position of receiving advertisements from brands they occasionally mention. Our data is easily accessible to tech giants like Facebook and WhatsApp, thanks to the manipulative power of algorithms that operate invisibly.



“ Into the digital mist comes the Internet Freedom Foundation, a guiding light.

*IFF aims to close the information gap and raise citizens' awareness of their rights and the consequences of their digital footprint by educating, advocating for, and empowering people.*

# THE RESPONSE

IFF protects online privacy by demystifying cookies, clarifying the cryptic language of terms and conditions, and opposing the intrusive practices of tech giants and advertisers. The organization works to empower users against algorithms designed to deceive and manipulate them, giving them back control over their digital identities and a life free from the shadows of unjustified surveillance.

To put it simply - **IFF's (Internet Freedom Foundation) mission is to promote and protect people's digital rights in India.** They're trying to do it through an array of strategic litigation, arguing before the court to create a solution that benefits both policy and parliamentary involvement and civic literacy. They're a young organization, filled with people passionate about working on the cause. Organizations with a consistent focus on these issues independently shall be key to highlighting this long-term, sustained impact. In an interview, **Prateek Waghre - Executive Director of IFF** says

*“We are committed to advancing freedom through policy engagement, civic literacy, and strategic litigation. Currently, only a few organizations champion these crucial efforts. We must expand our collective impact to enhance advocacy by fostering new organizations dedicated to these principles. Our ongoing collaboration with the union government is a positive step, and we must extend this engagement to include state governments for more comprehensive solutions. By broadening our scope and partnerships, we can create a more robust framework for advocating and safeguarding freedom.”*



Source: Instagram, IFF

In addition, they have been conducting an ongoing community survey to identify common dark patterns in our daily experiences, currently active and accepting responses. The compiled results have been presented to the ministry, which demonstrates a broad and dynamic environment of such deceptive design practices.

Using the Dark Patterns Guidelines as an example Prateek explained that the ministry has put forward a robust interim framework for the oversight and control of irregular patterns. However, in the area of stakeholder consultation about guidelines on dark patterns, there is a potential for improvement. To do so, IFF has prepared observations that identify the five main areas of concern.



## LIMITATIONS/LEARNINGS

While the Internet Freedom Foundation's mission has aimed to promote and protect people's digital rights in India, it has met with its significant limitations along the way. As a young organization, there are a number of limitations in the form of legal and social barriers, Prateek says they have encountered. First of all, it was of utmost importance that people were aware of the difference between the privacy they desire and the privacy they seemingly get. In order to tackle this, Prateek and his team at IIF had to break through socio-cultural barriers.



**INTERNET  
FREEDOM  
FOUNDATION**

Another limitation that Prateek encountered during his early years with the organization was that of the lack of solutions for the Dark Patterns resulting in a violation of an individual's consumer rights. It was not till 2023 that the Ministry of Consumer Affairs decided to regulate them in consumer interest, for which they released the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns for public consultation that there was some form of solution that Prateek and his team could adopt. He also explains that it was due to the government measures and the intensive effort of the team at IFF that they were able to combat the limitations facing them.