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Right to Privacy as a Fundamental Right

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ABSTRACT

Right to privacy is the most discussed topic in recent years. A definite legal definition on privacy is quite not possible but there are several judgements of Supreme Court of India regarding this topic. Some countries adapted right to privacy as their fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution. In India and America, there is no such provision of right to privacy. Article 21of Indian constitution states "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to a procedure established by law" It is interpreted liberally because right to life means not only a mere existence like animals but also live a life with some privacy and dignity so that human can progress towards new era. Alan



Westin, Professor of Law in Colombia University in his book 'Privacy and Freedom 'said "Each individual is continually engaged in a personal adjustment process in which he balances the desire for privacy with the desire for disclosure and communication of himself to others, in light of the environmental conditions and social norms set by the society in which he lives".

A right to privacy is explicitly stated under Article 12 of the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights':

"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attack upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks". This study try to analyse right to privacy and to what extent any reasonable restriction can be imposed to this right.

Introduction

Before we know what is right to privacy we need to know what privacy is and what is right to privacy. According to dictionary privacy is the state of being apart from other people or concealed from their view. According to Cambridge English dictionary privacy is the state of being free from unwanted or undue intrusion or disturbance in one's private life or affairs or freedom to be let alone. According to Wikipedia privacy is the ability of an individual or group to seclude themselves, or information about themselves, and thereby express themselves selectively. In 1890 the United States jurists Samuel D. Warren and Louis Brandeis wrote The Right to Privacy, an article in which they argued for the "right to be let alone", using that phrase as a definition of privacy. Edwin Lawrence Godkin, a famous American journalist wrote in the late 19th century that "nothing is better worthy of legal protection than private life, or, in other words, the right of every man to keep his affairs to himself, and to decide for himself to what extent they shall be the subject of public observation and discussion." Legal scholar Arthur Miller has declared that privacy is "difficult to define because it is exasperatingly vague and evanescent." Legal scholar Lillian BeVier writes, "Privacy is a chameleon-like word, used denotatively to designate a wide range of wildly disparate interests—from confidentiality of personal information to reproductive autonomy—and connotatively to generate goodwill on behalf of whatever interest is being asserted in its name."

In 2008 Daniel J. Solove, eminent Professor of Law in George Washington University law school in his book 'Understanding Privacy' says, "Privacy, however, is a concept in disarray. Nobody can articulate what it means. Currently, privacy is a sweeping concept, encompassing (among other things) freedom of thought, control over one's body, solitude in one's home, control over personal information, freedom from surveillance, protection of one's reputation, and protection from searches and interrogations. Privacy is an issue of profound importance around the world. In nearly every nation, numerous statutes, constitutional rights, and judicial decisions seek to protect privacy". U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis pronounced 'Privacy' as "the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men." According to legal theorist, Robert Post who is dean and Professor of law at Yale Law School describes, "Privacy is a value so complex, so entangled in competing and contradictory dimensions, so engorged with various and distinct meanings, that I sometimes despair whether it can be usefully addressed at all."

Right to Privacy in India

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Though right to privacy is not included in our Constitution but Article 21, which says, "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to a procedure established by law" usually interpreted liberally. Human needs not only food, clothes, house for existence but also several ingredients (Example-right to bathroom, right to have healthy environment, right to have electricity supply, right to have pure and clean drinking water, right to move freely and settle in the territory of India with certain reasonable restrictio right to have education at least up to 14 years of age, right to have hygienic food etc). Right to life include right to live a life with privacy and dignity without which the purpose of article 21 will be meaningless. In Shanti Parva of Mahabharata Bhisma in his bed of arrow specially gave advice towould be King Yudhisthir "King should look upon into his subject to ensure that its subjects whoever its class or caste should have right to lead a life with dignity. It will be a step to enter into a peaceful and progressive era. Peace is beautiful and no progress means no civilised society".

UpendraBaxi opined- "Everyday experiences in the Indian setting (from the manifestation of good neighbourliness through constant surveillance by next-door neighbours, to unabated curiosity at other people's illness or personality vicissitudes) suggest otherwise". Right to Privacy is not explicit in the Constitution of India, so it is a subject of judicial interpretation. The judicial interpretations of fundamental right bring it within the purview of fundamental right. In 1954, just four years after the constitution of India came into force Supreme Court had to deal the issue of Privacy in M.P. Sharma v Satish Chandra case. In this case Supreme Court observed that there is no right to privacy located in article 20(3) of the constitution; it did not extinguish a general right to privacy. This arose in the context of searches in a criminal investigation. Supreme Court said in this case:-

".... A power of search and seizure is in any system of jurisprudence an overriding power of the State for the protection of social security and that power is necessarily regulated by law. When the Constitution makers have thought fit not to subject such regulation to constitutional limitations by recognition of a fundamental right to privacy, analogous to the Fourth Amendment, we have no justification to import it, into a totally different fundamental right, by some process of strained construction. Nor is it legitimate to assume that the constitutional protection under Article 20(3) would be defeated by the statutory provisions for searches. It is to be remembered that searches of the kind we are concerned with are under the authority of a Magistrate (excepting in the limited class of cases falling under Section 165 of the Criminal Procedure Code). Therefore, issue of a search warrant is normally the judicial function of the Magistrate. When such judicial function is interposed between the individual and the officer's authority for search, no circumvention thereby of the fundamental right is to be assumed. We are not unaware that in the present set up of the Magistracy in this country, it is not infrequently that the exercise of this judicial function is liable to serious error, as is alleged in the present case. But the existence of scope for such occasional error is no ground to assume circumvention of the constitutional guarantee."

In 1962, while deciding the Kharak Singh vs State of UP, the court examined the power of police surveillance with respect to history-sheeters and it ruled in favour of the police, saying that the right of privacy is not a guaranteed right under the constitution. In fact, Justice Subba Rao in the same case delivered a separate opinion and said-

- "a. The question was, in the absence of any law, what was the fundamental right of the Petitioner that was infringed?
- b. Clauses (a) to (f) of Regulation 236 contained in Chapter 22 of the UP Police Regulations were measures adopted for the purpose of supervision or close observation of his movements and therefore parts of surveillance. The question was whether such a surveillance infringed any of the Petitioner's fundamental rights.
- c. Even though fundamental rights may be distinct, they could yet be overlapping. The fundamental right of life and personal liberties have many attributes and some of them are part of Article 19.
- d. If an action violated Article 19(1) of the Constitution, it could be argued that there was a law to sustain that action "but that cannot be a complete answer unless the said law satisfies the test laid down in Article 19(2) so far as the attributes covered by Article 19(1) are concerned".
- e. The expression 'life' in Article 21 meant more than mere 'animal existence'. The expression 'liberty' is given a very wide meaning in the USA. It takes in all the freedoms." In the same Kharak Singh case Justice Rajagopala Ayyangar observed:-"The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated; and no warrants shall issue but upon probable cause, supported by oath or

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affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.....We feel unable to hold that the term [personal liberty] was intended to bear only this narrow interpretation but on the other hand consider that "personal liberty" is used in the Article as a compendious term to include within itself all the varieties of rights which go to make up the "personal liberties" of man other than those deal with in the several clauses of Art. 19 (1)."Majority of the Hon'ble Justice held that-"The right of privacy is not a guaranteed right under our Constitution, and therefore the attempt to ascertain the movements of an individual is merely a manner in which privacy is invaded and is not an infringement of a fundamental right guaranteed in Part III..."

In A. K. Gopalancase, liberty was described to mean liberty concerning the person or body of the individual. It was held: - "In my opinion, this line of approach is not proper and+4 indeed is misleading. As regards the American Constitution its general structure is noticed in these words in The Government of the United States by Munro (5th Edn.) at p. 53: "The architects of 1787 built only the basement. Their descendants have kept adding walls and windows, wings and gables, pillars and porches to make a rambling structure which is not yet finished. Or, to change the metaphor, it has a fabric which, to use the words of James Russell Lowell, is still being 'woven on the roaring loom of time'. That is what the framers of the original Constitution intended it to be. Never was it in their mind to work out a final scheme for the Government of the country and stereotype it for all time. They sought merely to provide a starting point". The same aspect is emphasized in Professor Willis's book on Constitutional Law and Cooley's Constitutional Limitations. In contrast to the American Constitution, the Indian Constitution is a very detailed one. The Constitution itself provides in minute details the legislative powers of Parliament and the State Legislatures. The same feature is noticeable in the case of the judiciary, finance, trade, commerce and services. It is thus quite detailed and the whole of it has to be read with the same sanctity, without giving undue weight to Part III or Article 246, except to the extent one is legitimately and clearly limited by the other." Subba Rao, J. Observed that the right to personal liberty takes in not only a right to be free from restrictions placed on his movement but also free from encroachments on his private life. He further continues to say that while it is true that our Constitution does not expressly declare right to privacy as a fundamental right, but that said right is an essential ingredient of personal liberty. Every democratic country sanctifies domestic life; it is expected to give him/her rest, physical happiness, peace of mind and security. In the last resort, a person's house where he lives with his family is 'his castle'. He observed- ".... Indeed, nothing is more deleterious to a man's physical happiness and health than a calculated interference with his privacy. We would, therefore, define the right of personal liberty in Article 21 as a right of an individual to be free from restrictions or encroachments on his person, whether those restrictions or encroachments are directly imposed or indirectly brought about by calculated measures. It so understood, all the acts of surveillance under Regulation 236 infringe the fundamental right of the petitioner under Article 21 of the Constitution."

Subba Rao, J. also noticed that privacy was a facet of Article 19(1)(d). It was held:-"The freedom of movement in clause (d) therefore must be a movement in a free country i.e. in a country where he can do whatever he likes, speak to whomsoever he wants, meet people of his own choice without any apprehension, subject of course to the law of social control. The petitioner under the shadow of surveillance is certainly deprived of this freedom. He can move physically, but he cannot do so freely, for all his activities are watched and noted. The shroud of surveillance cast upon him perforce engender inhibitions in him and he cannot act freely as he would like to do. We would, therefore, hold that the entire Regulation 236 offends also Article 19(1)(d) of the Constitution."

Eleven years later, in the RM Malkani vs State of Maharashtra AIR (1973) SC 157 case, wherein the court upheld the phone tapping of a guilty person, with the word 'guilty' putting the case in favour of the government. Supreme court held that the telephonic conversation of an innocent citizen will be protected by the court against the wrongful interference of tapping the conversation but this protection does not stands for the guilty citizen against the efforts of the police to vindicate the law and prevent corruption of the public servant.

While hearing the Gobind v. State of Madhya Pradesh (1975) 2 SCC 148 at 154 Supreme Court noticed the decision of Griswold v. Connecticut, 381 U.S. 479 at 510 and noted that:

"In an opinion by Douglas, J., expressing view of five members of the Court, it was held that the statute was invalid as an unconstitutional invasion of the right of privacy of married persons. He said that the right of freedom of speech press

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includes not only the right to utter or to print but also the right to distribute, the right to receive, the right to read and that without those peripheral rights the specific right would be less secure and that likewise, the other specific guarantees in the Bill of Rights have penumbras, formed by emanations from those guarantees that help give them life and substance, that the various guarantees create zones of privacy, and that protection against all governmental invasion "of the sanctity of a man's home and the privacies of life" was fundamental. He further said that the inquiry is whether a right involved "is of such a character that it cannot be denied without violating those 'fundamental principles of liberty and justice which lie at the base of all our civil and political institutions' and that 'privacy is a fundamental personal right, emanating from the totality of the Constitutional scheme under which we (Americans) live'."

Mathew J. realized that the law relating to privacy was still in a state of evolution which is why he clearly noted that: "...28. The right to privacy in any event will necessarily have to go through a process of case-by-case development." Hon'ble Justice Krishna Iyer said: - "A thorny problem debated recurrently at the bar, turning on Article 19, demands some juristic response although avoidance of overlap persuades me to drop all other questions canvassed before us. The Gopalan verdict, with the cocooning of Article 22 into a self-contained code, has suffered suppression at the hands of R.C. Cooper [RustomCavasjee Cooper v. Union of India, (1970) 3 SCR 530: (1970) 1 SCC 248]. By way of aside, the fluctuating fortunes of fundamental rights, when the proletarist and the proprietarist have asserted them in Court, partially provoke sociological research and hesitantly project the Cardozo thesis of sub-conscious forces in judicial noesis when the cycloramic review starts from Gopalan, moves on to In re Kerala Education Bill [1959 SCR 995 : AIR 1958 SC 956] and then on to All-India Bank Employees' Association [All-India Bank Employees' Association v. National Industrial Tribunal, (1962) 3 SCR 269: AIR 1962 SC 171: 21 FJR 63: (1961) 2 LLJ 385], next to Sakal Papers [Sakal Papers (P) Ltd. v. Union of India, (1962) 3 SCR 842 : AIR 1962 SC 305 : (1962) 2 SCJ 400], crowning in Cooper and followed by Bennett Coleman [Bennett Coleman & Co. v. Union of India, (1973) 2 SCR 757: (1972) 2 SCC 788] and ShambhuNath Sarkar [ShambhuNath Sarkar v. State of W.B., (1973) 1 SCC 856: 1973 SCC (Cri) 618]. Be that as it may, the law is now settled, as I apprehend it, that no article in Part III is an island but part of a continent, and the conspectus of the whole part gives the direction and correction needed for interpretation of these basic provisions. Man is not dissectible into separate limbs and, likewise, cardinal rights in an organic constitution, which make man human have a synthesis. The proposition is indubitable that Article 21 does not, in a given situation, exclude Article 19 if both rights are breached." In 1997 in the matter of PUCL vs Union of India, commonly known as telephone tapping cases, the SC unequivocally held that individuals had a privacy interest in the content of their telephone communications. Making just exceptions to the complete cover, it said that rigorous standards are required for law that derogates privacy and that mechanism used should be targeted, based on specific suspicion of identifiable individuals and be the only means possible to fulfil the government's goals of public safety and crime prevention. Thus, through a series of cases, it can be observed that the right to privacy was being recognised, but its exceptions were also given due place.

In Rayala M. Bhuvaneshwari v. Nagaphanender Rayala AIR (2008) AP 98 case it was held that recording the conversation of wife by husband without the knowledge will also amount to infringement of her right to privacy as stated Through these cases and the judgment given by the court it is clear that right to privacy is not only a part of constitution but it also contains different aspects that deals with different types of privacies that an individual have irrespective of the status in society or relation with the person who's right has been violated. When tapping of telephonic conversation and reproductive choice can be considered as right to privacy then how giving our biometric details cannot be considered as infringement of right to privacy. The privacy based arguments have been used to support the conservative claims that neither the government nor the fellow citizens can interfere with the traditional practices merely for the sake of progressive ideas about marriage, family, social life, or citizenship. Supreme court took the ruling of State v. Rhodes, 61 N.C. 453, 459 (1868) case where it was held that "We will not inflict upon society the greater evil of raising the curtain upon domestic privacy, to punish the lesser evil of trifling violence".

In the Selvi vs State of Karnataka, which was decided in 2010, the SC gave strength to Article 20(3), that is, Right against Self-Incrimination. Closely aligned with privacy, the right to remain silent was found to be derogated by usage of narco-analysis as evidence in trials. Accordingly, the same were disallo"In M.P. Sharma [AIR 1954 SC 300: 1954]

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Cri LJ 865: 1954 SCR 1077] it had been noted that the Indian Constitution did not explicitly include a "right to privacy" in a manner akin to the Fourth Amendment of the US Constitution. In that case, this distinction was one of the reasons for upholding the validity of search warrants issued for documents required to investigate charges of misappropriation and embezzlement.... the right of privacy is not a guaranteed right under our Constitution and therefore the attempt to ascertain the movements of an individual which is merely a manner in which privacy is invaded is not an infringement of a fundamental right guaranteed by Part III."

In the case of Mohammad. Latif Bhat v. Shamima AIR (2012) J&K 10 (137) it is stated that, the right to privacy is not offended so as to attract the immunity under article 21 of the constitution where a strong prima facie case existed warranting the direction for medical examination of the petitioner for the determination of impotency.

In B.Madhan v. N.S. Shanthakumari, AIR (2015) Mad 78 case Supreme Court held that "Article 21 relates to protection to life and liberty which enables the wife to live with human dignity. The medical test conducted to decide whether the marriage has not been consummated owing to the impotence of the husband could not be against his privacy".

On August 11, 2015, while constitutional challenges to the Aadhaar scheme were being made before a three-judge bench, the Union of India argued that the main ground of challenge – the right to privacy – could not be raised, because the Indian Constitution did not guarantee a fundamental right to privacy. Supreme Court held:-

wed. Observation of the Court is herein below:- "We are of the opinion that the cases on hand raise far reaching questions of importance involving interpretation of the Constitution. What is at stake is the amplitude of the fundamental rights including that precious and inalienable right under Article 21. If the observations made in M.P. Sharma (supra) and Kharak Singh (supra) are to be read literally and accepted as the law of this country, the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India and more particularly right to liberty under Article 21 would be denuded of vigour and vitality. At the same time, we are also of the opinion that the institutional integrity and judicial discipline require that pronouncement made by larger Benches of this Court cannot be ignored by the smaller Benches without appropriately explaining the reasons for not following the pronouncements made by such larger Benches. With due respect to all the learned Judges who rendered the subsequent judgments – where right to privacy is asserted or referred to their Lordships concern for the liberty of human beings, we are of the humble opinion that there appears to be certain amount of apparent unresolved contradiction in the law declared by this Court. Therefore, in our opinion to give a quietus to the kind of controversy raised in this batch of cases once for all, it is better that ratio decidendi of M.P. Sharma (supra) and Kharak Singh (supra) is scrutinized andthe jurisprudential correctness of the subsequent decisions of this Court where the right to privacy is either asserted or referred be examined and authoritatively decided by a Bench of appropriate strength."

On 25th July, 2017 nine judge constitutional bench (Chief Justice JS Khehar, J Chelameswar, SA Bobde, RK Agrawal, Rohinton Fali Nariman, Abhay Manohar Sapre, DY Chandrachud, Sanjay KishanKaul and S Abdul Nazeer) was constituted to deal with the most contentious issue of this year whether right to privacy is a fundamental right or not. On July 26, the Centre told the apex court that there is a fundamental right to privacy, but is a 'wholly qualified right'. Attorney General, KK Venugopal told the apex court that "privacy, as a fundamental right, could have been mentioned in Article 21, but has been omitted. Right to life transcends right to privacy. In special circumstances, government can interfere in a matter that comes under a wholly qualified right. An absolute right cannot be reduced or amended." Additional Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta told the constitutional bench-"Nothing is private in the online era" Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for Gujarat government, said that some aspects of privacy may be traced to various fundamental rights but providing basic personal information to authorities was needed to bring more transparency in the present technological era. Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, representing states not ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party — Karnataka, West Bengal, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Puducherry — had backed the constitutionality of the right to privacy. He had told the court that these states supported the contention that the right to privacy be held as fundamental right in the age of technological advancements.

On August 1,2017 the apex court had said that there has to be "overarching" guidelines to protect an individual's private informationin public domain to ensure that it was used only for an intended purpose. The Bench also rejected plea of a





Gujarat government lawyer that misuse of personal information could be dealt with on a "case-to-case basis" and said an allembracing guideline was needed keeping in mind the size of the population. The bench also referred to the fact that India was a signatory of a 1948 international convention, which recognised privacy as a human right. The Supreme Court reserved its judgment on whether the right to privacy can be considered a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution. The matter is being heard by the Constitution Bench in the wake of challenge to the Aadhaar scheme on the grounds of it being violative of the right to privacy. Right to privacy and my opinion from childhood days we used to learn some privacy issue from our parents. Like take bath and toilet is a private thing. In our school days we used to tell our friends after sharing any secret and request them not to disclose to anyone. I feel that what is private and privacy we used to learn step by step in our childhood. It comes to us as natural. Whoever for the purpose hurting anyone's privacy indulged in any activities is regarded as immoral, disgraceful and illegal. Eve teasing, Trying to outrage any women's modesty, Stalking (After amendment in 2013 stalking in internet also included in this list), Blackmailing or using force or threat to share any private moment in public, Any kind of sexual or psychological harassment of woman, Forcing any children to shoot pornography are one of those crime which is related to aggressive attack on privacy. It may be against man, woman, children, old age humans. Previously said offences are included in Indian Penal Code, 1872 and Information Technology Act, 2000. Usually this offences or social evil is the burning problem from time immemorial. What is private thing is easily known by us naturally from childhood. Though right to privacy is not mentioned in our constitution but after carefully observation to the definition of previously mentioned offence enshrined in the penal statutes of India it can be presumed that our penal statutes recognises right to privacy. The victims came to the court with this hope that Court will ensure punishment for those who committed a sin of breaching his or her privacy. Before some year back I was afraid to use any online service. I felt that if my bank account number or pin or any important bank documents stole by any third person while transaction that will be a disaster. All the bank documents and bank details are private and it should be kept secret by bank and me. This is the era of advance technology and internet. Everything is possible in Internet. In 28th June,2017 global cyber attack occurred. Cyber hacker stole million secret and private document and information of government, business organisation and private person. It counted as loss of trillion dollars. That means private documents are the backbone of everyone. Privacy not only means secret relating to human body or document. 'Privacy' should be interpreted more broadly. Any kind of discovery is either registered or patented. Coco Cola, KFC, McDonald, PepsiCo spend trillions of dollar for kept private its secret formula because it is the reason of their brilliant success in business. Patent law deals with protection of any discovery or government or its organisation against any third party, thief, and intruder whomever it is who tries to stole the original will protect invention, which is original if patented or registered it. Therefore, it means patented works if it is original enjoys protection of government to maintain its secrecy. Though it may be sound funny but my mother used to tell me that in my school final days no parents of my friend wants to tell the name of the coaching centre and tutors name. I do not know why they wants to keep it as secret. I feel that the knowledge of privacy usually came to us from childhood and right to privacy is a natural right derived from and against society. Irrespective of whether this right is enshrined in any statute or constitution from the first day of civilisation human enjoys right to privacy. Previously we were apes and roamed naked. After the use of cloth known to humans they used to cover their private parts with it because they can sense privacy. It is immoral and will attract the punishment from Indian Penal Code if any male tries to watch any female bathing or changing dress because it is not only the guilty of outraging women's modesty but it is also an aggressive act against her privacy. Aadhar card contains the thumb impression and all private details and usually it is, retina s linked with mobile number, bank account, other important government, and private institutions. Now Aadhar card is an essential document to get the all important government id, documents including birth/death certificate. If any cyber attack is attempted to steal information of Aadhar it will hamper public and create anarchy and hazard. So right to privacy lies here. Government is taking appropriate measure to protect all the information of public and should take necessary step and update its system time to time to protect the citizen's precious information.

Conclusion

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Nowthe question is right to privacy is absolute right or not. In my research I was trying to find answer to it. Famous British politician Lord Acton said-" Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". Definition of privacy cannot be made into a straight jacket formula. It is not possible to get the proper definition of privacy because it is the outlook of different human. For better administration any government needs reasonable but absolute power to formulate its policy. For better administration of justicespecially to punish any offender whose offence was against any woman, children, old age and country right to privacy demands violation of this right. For prevention of any terrorism, illegal trafficking, drug peddling and distribution there cannot be right to privacy. If for public heath, public welfare purpose demands any violation of privacy I think it is permissible act. But for the sake of public welfare it should not become the excuse of executives. If it is found that the act of the executive is unjust, unreasonable, unfair and arbitrary then there should be proper procedure to deal with it to prevent the violation of the right to privacy. I feel to maintain an equilibrium our constitution framers did not include separate right to privacy in the chapter of fundamental rights but encouraged broad can

interpretation of right to life and personal liberty. Supreme Court is the interpreter of the Constitution and guarantor and protector of the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution. Supreme Court and High Court of all states has Writ Jurisdiction which ensures- "Justice for all, Justice to all." I want to conclude this research work by quoting the word spoken by Pt. Nehru, First Prime Minister of our country"...There should be a certain flexibility. If you make anything rigid and permanent, you stop the Nation's growth, the growth of a living, vital organic people."

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