

Tryst with Indian Apps



October 10, 2025

It was yesterday evening we in TheLawyerics became conscious that endorsement of Zoho made Apps by ministers in the Central Government, particularly, Amit Shah, Ashwini Vaishnaw and Dharmendra Pradhan were not without meaning. It is the outcome of realisation that dependence on USA, particularly for communications channels which are the building blocks of a nation, is risky. We can be gagged any time. China realised it much earlier. Anyway, better late than never.

This was an eyeopener for us also. Zoho's messaging App, ARATTAI is

gaining considerable popularity. Simultaneously we also realised that Zoho's second App, Vani, cannot also be overlooked. We registered the presence of Lawyerics on both these Apps. But more than that was our patriotic zeal to promote these *desi* App to maximum extent. We have sent messages to our contacts to download ARATTAI and join us on this platform. Reason is that we have been entertaining apprehension for a long time that it was not safe to depend too much on digital media platforms which are rooted in foreign territories. Our fear soared to the sky today morning when our internet got disrupted due to some technical

problem while we were sending messages to our clients to join us on ARATTAI. We felt for some time that our breath had stopped. The moment the service provider fixed the problem, and we were back to work, we felt that we are now breathing. That is the necessity of communications networks these days. We cannot escape from modern technologies. They have become a way of life. The point then is, should we leave all this to hands of foreigners?

Those who are familiar with digital technologies and their risks know that as a long term security measure, communications networks and social media platforms must have roots in our own soil, and we should have regulatory control over them. This is absolutely necessary for our sovereignty. What the foreign platforms are doing with us when we use those platforms is a matter of concern. They claim to be fully secure, end-to-end encrypted, but their algorithms need to be carefully audited. How is that if I spoke to someone on WhatsApp, say three months back, he or she appears today on my Facebook page, suggesting me to connect with him or her. Let me share with you a concrete example. My Facebook page is primarily designed for my contacts from whom I get

livelihood. But surprisingly my cousin sister, my जीजा जी, my niece, my son-in-law also appear on my page even when I do not want them to see my activities. What the hell जीजा जी is to do with my activities! Unnecessary intrusion in to my affairs!! It is because of data sharing between two platforms. This shows that someone is watching the things we do on social media. The more the AI becomes developed in future, the more exposed we shall be.

It is in the above context we in TheLawyerics have been feeling that our Government should do something. Recent data protection legislation and now endorsement of Zoho Apps by our ministers is a much awaited initiative. President Trump's tariffs has awakened us. Let us hope that our Government will not allow Zoho to slip down the way the Indian App, Koo has slipped. If Koo has failed and shut down, it is because Government did not provide it adequate protection against foreign digital giants.

We are not saying that foreign platforms should be condemned to death. We have learnt much from them but we must now stand on our own feet. They are our digital elders and they should be given some rest now.

Let us hope that reputed Indian digital and communications companies like

Airtel, Jio, and hopefully Infosys, Wipro, Tata, etc. come forward and create an Indian digital colony and where all of them can collectively ensure that foreign digital giants do not sink them down.

One more suggestion to our Government. The Indian Apps should not be completely free. The so-called freebies always come with hidden costs and risks. There should be paid service. This ensures that they come under the consumer protection law. Consumers can insist on satisfactory service and other regulatory concerns can also be taken care of. If competition is to be promoted amongst Indian players, they would be compelled to ensure that services remain affordable to all citizens.

Anyway, Zoho is a good initiative. Let us welcome, support and promote it. It is a patriotic act which will strengthen our sovereignty in the long run.



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