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R6

SAVING THE INTERNET

Net neutrality is one of the most talked about and debated issues in the year gone by. Apparently, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Mr. Tom Wheeler did not anticipate such massive response to his proposal, released in May 2014, violating the Net neutrality and allowing companies to discriminate online content. Net neutrality, in simple terms, means that all the content or data on the internet should be treated equally and that the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and governments ensure that there is no discrimination or differential charging of the content on internet on any basis. Even though the term 'Net Neutrality' was coined in 2003, by Law Professor Tim Wu, net neutrality has been in existence, ever since the birth of internet and despite few glitches on its way, it had come so far. In such a scenario, many questions arise. Who would want to attack net neutrality? Why would they want to do it? What would be the Internet like without net neutrality? The answers are almost as obvious as the questions themselves.

The proposal released by the FCC in May 2014 was definitely the initial step that brought great attention to the attack that net neutrality was facing. And it would not be wrong to say that the high-end cable and mobile companies are lobbying the FCC into making legislations that would favour them.

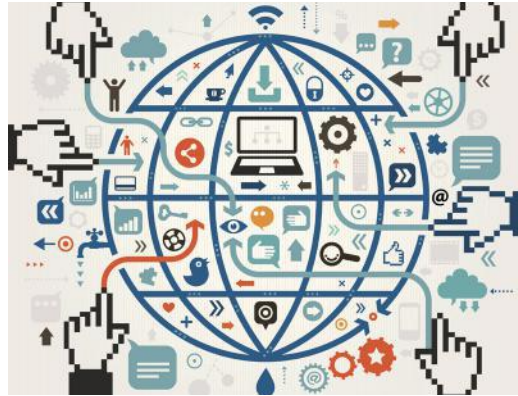
According to the proposal, the internet could be carved into fast and slow lanes by the ISPs. The access networks would have tremendous control over the data that is being transmitted over the internet and they would even be able to determine at what speed a page loads at the user's end. When endorsed with such powers, the ISPs can play kings and create pay-to-play fast lanes with financial interests. Eventually the internet would be filled with special deals that are potential sources of new revenue to the ISP and there would be no questions asked. For an ordinary netizen too, the consequences of this proposal are in plenty.

As far as an ordinary netizen is concerned, in the absence of net neutrality, the internet would not be the open space that he/she used to enjoy. The different contents on the internet would be available at differential charges and the netizen will have to choose from the services that he/she requires and pay for them separately. Most importantly, the ISPs may even hike their charges, as price controls or regulations of such kind are absent. Moreover, the content on the internet will narrow down to what the ISPs want the users you to see, they may easily increase the load time or even block the contents which are against their interest. The outcome of this would be even brutal - the ISPs would foster the interests of the wealthy

expecting to enhance their financial assets. This would create a social imbalance over the internet and what would follow is beyond predictions. Only time will tell what such communities that lost their voice in the cyberspace, will turn to.

Net neutrality is an inevitable principle in the cyberspace for yet another group - budding entrepreneurs and startups. The Open Internet is what gives them an opportunity to launch their businesses and create a market for their products and services. With the absence of net neutrality, the barriers of entry for the entrepreneurs are made even higher. The startups may not be able to afford the prices that ISPs might demand to make their content more accessible and they would end up with no audience for their content on the web. Moreover the ISPs may even be lobbied to discourage startups that raise threats to the established companies in the same field. The loss may not just be for them, but even to the cyberspace too because, with net neutrality gone, the next Google or Facebook would never be able to stand on its feet.

The debates and discussions on the issue have captured great public attention and the response to the FCC's proposal has been tremendous. The huge public outcry brought in political intervention and the original proposal was shoved into the bin and Mr. Wheeler revised the plan to incorporate new Net



Neutrality rules on Title II of the Communications Act. He emphasized that the new rules would provide the strongest protection possible to the internet users. The new proposal was approved in February 2015. According to this, the ISPs were reclassified from 'information service' to 'common carriers', which would help FCC to keep watch of the gatekeeper power of the ISPs. The new proposal gave the agency tremendous power to prevent the sabotaging of net neutrality. This has been a much awaited victory for the activists who had been engaged in protecting the open internet. Now that the battle over net neutrality is over – they still remain vigilant in saving the internet from net neutrality opponents who would do anything to dismantle the victory of the FCC.

dRift

They parted ways because they wanted different things from life.

She wanted someone to call her back when she left, and he wanted someone who would never leave.

Chitra .V
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monoliths

