Excavating Texts, DAY 1

A broadcast by Surfatial, the collective of Satya Gummuluri, Malavika Rajnarayan and me, 1 May 2015. Watch on YouTube

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I made this transcript by machine from the recording and corrected it against the recording's description and my own records. I have not checked the words by ear. I checked a sample of the speaker names by ear, and corrected those I heard differently. [?] marks a word still in doubt and [unclear] a passage that could not be made out. A speaker is named only where the broadcast's screen or the recording's own words say who is speaking. Fillers such as "uh" and "um" are left out. Times are from the start of the recording.

A name followed by (?) was read from the screen at a moment when it changed from one speaker to the next, so the turn may belong partly or wholly to the speaker before or after.

Prayas Abhinav · prayasabhinav.net/videos

00:16 PRAYAS Hello. Welcome to day one of Excavating Texts.

00:30 The first question for today is how can we speak sharply without effort?

00:48 I'll expand that a bit.

00:55 So when we use language naturally as in we— if we— when we use it as we are trained to do so, by default it doesn't inherently have any sharpness. It's up to the individual practitioner, the one who's using the language, to know how to use the language sharply. So we're trying to think of ways how can we— ways of speaking sharply without effort. So how do we think of a language which by the means of its syntax, by the means of it— its own— its rules of application, the rules in which it can be employed, would be sharp to begin with, without needing individual training and effort?

02:07 SATYA Okay, so when you say sharpness, I'm taking it as the meaning as being able to convey what one wants to convey.

02:18 PRAYAS (?) Yeah. So —

02:20 SATYA Okay.

02:21 PRAYAS Moving away from let's say, the noise. Now, the noise could be seen as the— in a very simple way, noise could be seen as something which prevents the meaning from emerging, so just interference.

02:41 SATYA Yeah.

02:42 PRAYAS But it could also be seen as the— the artifact of effort from the individual that we are unable to parse. So a— a particular individual might be actually only trying out different ways of you know, communicating, but not all those ways are clear to me, are not— to— to— to the listener, that is, right?

03:19 SATYA Right.

03:20 PRAYAS So as a listener, I'm not able to parse each of those ways.

03:26 SATYA (?) Okay.

03:28 PRAYAS So it becomes noise in that sense, right?

03:31 SATYA Sure. Sure, but then maybe the two have to be separated, because one is the listener and the other is the speaker.

03:41 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

03:42 SATYA The speaker might actually be sharp

03:45 SATYA (?) But the— depending on the listener, it may not convey information.

03:50 PRAYAS Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So, because the— I mean in the— in our current you know use of all these words— sharpness

04:03 SATYA Right.

04:04 PRAYAS And language— it becomes a very individually variable set of notions.

04:12 SATYA Right. And what I'm also feeling is the sharpness gets defined by the environment, because the listener is the environment.

04:23 PRAYAS Right. So the way lawyers talk, for example, will be— is a specific kind of— in the sense, it's even like a code.

04:33 SATYA Right.

04:34 PRAYAS So they can figure if another lawyer is sharp or not, but they might not be able to figure if a poet is sharp or not.

04:42 SATYA Right, that's right. And they have also—

04:46 PRAYAS Yeah.

04:47 SATYA Sorry. They have, you know, they have shaped their speech or their communication based on what inputs they are getting from around them also, was what I was saying, in the sense of environment. Like, if you are in the courtroom, that's how you speak. That's how you're expected to speak.

05:08 PRAYAS Right. So those are the— I mean actually these lang— I would say dialects of language defined by their communities of use, like—

05:21 SATYA Right.

05:22 PRAYAS Like law. Now those become almost they become simple to parse, right?

05:28 SATYA Okay.

05:29 PRAYAS So, I mean like— like we're saying, people can read each other's symbols and keys and flags, and they know who is sharp and who is not. So, because the use of language in such a community indicates

05:46 SATYA Right.

05:47 PRAYAS Ability to think or imagination and all of those things. So the question is— I mean, I'm basically thinking and inviting us to think that if— in Excavating Text, right?

06:05 SATYA Mm-

06:06 PRAYAS So text is as opposed to imagery, is supposed to be, you know, this— this whole— it doesn't— it's not supposed to be immediate.

06:19 SATYA Okay.

06:21 PRAYAS In its— so unlike, let's say if we just have a very offhand comparison, you know, with other media. So maybe with the way music or speech

06:36 SATYA Mm-

06:36 PRAYAS (?) Or pictures are thought to affect people in a very immediate way

06:43 SATYA (?) Okay.

06:45 PRAYAS Text is actually supposed— just understood to be trapped in its own syntax.

06:51 SATYA Sure. I mean, there's a certain passivity to it. I mean, there's a certain extra amount of processing that goes on. You have a piece of text in front of you; unless you read it may not affect you by just looking at it.

07:04 PRAYAS Yeah, and the scope of literature is so vast that

07:08 Each individual is suppo— is, you know in a sense can have their own personal set of—

07:16 SATYA Engagement.

07:17 PRAYAS Yeah, authors whom they can say are really brilliant practitioners or whatever, right? So it's like—

07:24 SATYA (?) Yeah, I mean, and—

07:25 PRAYAS Their own reading.

07:26 SATYA But that might— that might be the same with any medium.

07:32 PRAYAS Yeah, but— yeah, of course.

07:35 SATYA Mm-

07:35 PRAYAS But I mean just— the analogy doesn't hold, of course, but just as a immediate— I mean just as a—

07:40 SATYA Sure.

07:42 PRAYAS Offhand kind of thing. But so yeah, so then can we think of ways of making— of— of using language, of— essentially in text, we are speaking essentially of text in— in ways that can transcend this kind of —

08:04 SATYA (?) Yeah.

08:05 PRAYAS Stasis, right?

08:06 SATYA Yeah.

08:06 PRAYAS This inability to overcome itself.

08:11 SATYA Right. And sort of the immediate sort of thought that comes is to make it as sharp as possible— the— to use— to distill the text into soundbites of some kind.

08:27 PRAYAS Yeah, and there we go into then the whole you know, no notion of sharpness is universal, because

08:36 SATYA (?) Yeah.

08:36 PRAYAS As individuals learn—

08:39 SATYA Mm-

08:39 PRAYAS Learn to use language sharply, they also learn to read sharply in that sense. So it's a— it's a matter of education performed through experience.

08:51 SATYA Right.

08:52 PRAYAS So it's not something that happens spontaneously in a flash.

08:57 SATYA That is true, that's true. Unless— unless in the course of education, sharp texts are presented as the baseline where the students are starting, so that's the example where you're starting with of what is a—

09:12 PRAYAS Right.

09:13 SATYA Right? You remove the redundancy right from the beginning. But then maybe that marination doesn't occur and therefore it's a learned way, it's not a realized way of sharpness.

09:27 PRAYAS Yeah, because then like if we think back about our own process of, you know, getting educated

09:35 SATYA Mm-

09:36 PRAYAS If— if someone were to do that to us

09:40 You know, it will— it would have seemed just pedantic or just some, you know, just something which we could not have enjoyed.

09:50 As— as an imposition, at the very minimum.

09:53 SATYA Right. There isn't enough choice to make your own decision about what is sharp or—

10:00 Or at least to realize what sharpness is.

10:04 PRAYAS Yeah, so I mean, and so this made me this problem made makes me think and is, it's making me think like numerous people have done with you know, with other media. So in the, in the case of films at least that I'm aware of, or code actually, programming.

10:26 SATYA Mhm.

10:28 PRAYAS So, it's possible, is it possible to can kind of develop a, develop a set of agreed-upon codes or agreed-upon, you know attributes

10:49 SATYA Mhm.

10:50 PRAYAS In associating sharpness with language. So in the sense it will be possible to switch from speaking casually or speaking as we speak

11:07 SATYA Right.

11:08 PRAYAS And then also speak in this very codified, concentrated way which would immediately

11:16 SATYA (?) Yeah.

11:17 PRAYAS Kind of rend- make our meaning apparent.

11:20 SATYA Yeah. I mean, if we take, for me when I hear the word "sharp text", for me that is like an aphorism. So, you know, if you have, like you know, sometimes you have these stories, a old a- old jungle saying or there is this old Chinese saying where a piece of, just one sentence is spoken and the hear- listener realizes the meaning based on just that one sentence. If you listen to the sentence itself, it doesn't sound sharp from a normal perspective, but it has a deeper meaning. It's a very dense it's got, it's very deep. So...

12:06 PRAYAS Right. So but then with, you know, so I mean that's a, that's a actually a useful specific example because it helps us go into the problem further, you know, like because I mean I ca- this problem is of, you know, quoting, of

12:24 SATYA -huh.

12:25 PRAYAS Of making these you know, make- citing material from here and there

12:31 SATYA Yeah.

12:32 PRAYAS And leading us to this almost a kind of daze of bland profoundness, right? In the environment. So if you will see hundreds of kind of graphics with one-liners which are supposed to be inspirational on Facebook or on, or anywhere else

12:50 SATYA (?) Right.

12:54 Right. Mhm.

12:57 PRAYAS And but then they're without context of any kind which is what they're supposed to be because they're supposed to just work as a line.

13:05 SATYA (?) Yeah.

13:06 PRAYAS But they operate within this agreed-upon idea of what it is to be profound.

13:17 SATYA I see what you're saying. Actually, this is a problem that I have with some of the so-called minimalist posters or whatever. I mean, you are actually presenting the punchline and saying

13:28 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

13:29 SATYA That this is it, you know. This is a, this is something very deep. But the whole processing doesn't happen with the reader. The reader is already reading the answer.

13:40 PRAYAS Right. So I mean like, you know, yesterday, last night after being you know after reading the trigger that you sent my way, I was actually trying to arrive at what it means

14:03 SATYA Mhm.

14:04 PRAYAS (?) Wha- what a surface actually means, right?

14:08 SATYA (?) Okay.

14:10 PRAYAS And because, I mean, also we have I mean I have of course I mean thought about that before

14:18 SATYA Mhm.

14:19 PRAYAS But to think about it again

14:21 SATYA Right.

14:22 PRAYAS Because after a point you know

14:25 SATYA Yeah.

14:26 PRAYAS When you equate a word with a with something that you want to say, then the word becomes almost like jargon which you can end up repeating as many times as you want and

14:36 SATYA Yeah.

14:37 PRAYAS You can forget what it linked to.

14:38 SATYA Correct.

14:39 PRAYAS So I remembered that the surface for me was a, was alluding to an experience.

14:47 SATYA (?) Okay.

14:48 PRAYAS So the encounter with an experience, right?

14:53 SATYA Okay, the envelope of that experience.

14:56 PRAYAS Yeah, so when you encounter the experience, when you first become aware of the experience.

15:02 SATYA Mhm. Okay.

15:03 SATYA (?) So that would be the surface.

15:05 I see. Okay.

15:09 PRAYAS So..

15:12 SATYA Interesting. 'Cause I was looking at it in a slightly different way which is quite the obvious surface, just the surface, but the surface is made, is constructed in that particular way because it has something underneath it. The reason the surface is like that is because there's something underneath it. So there are certain there is a, like a construction that brings about the surface.

15:40 PRAYAS Right. you know, but the whole point of excavating text in that sense would be to

15:47 SATYA -huh.

15:48 PRAYAS Focus and to in a sense remain committed to and obsess about, let's say

15:55 SATYA Yeah.

15:56 PRAYAS Just the encounter with the surface, and not actually go into what lies beneath.

16:03 SATYA What's underneath. Okay.

16:06 SATYA (?) Because..

16:07 Okay, and that's very interesting because what that, what that tells me is just to look at the surface sorry, the insight that I just had was to engage with the surface actually, if you're interested in what lies beneath, then you can divine that from the surface.

16:28 PRAYAS Yeah. And also you know, if the interest in what lies beneath becomes a distraction in actually trivializing the surface.

16:40 SATYA Yeah, because you're not looking at the surface anymore. You are...

16:43 PRAYAS Yeah, and the depth is actually infinite. So that's something

16:47 SATYA Yeah.

16:48 PRAYAS Which we I mean started going into when in the first, in the study group, the Perspective

16:53 SATYA Right.

16:54 PRAYAS Studies thing. But

16:55 SATYA Right.

16:56 PRAYAS So, you know, there is never going to be any point of actually

17:01 SATYA Yeah, I hear you.

17:02 PRAYAS (?) Arriving at anything once you

17:04 SATYA Yeah, I hear you.

17:05 PRAYAS Go within.

17:06 SATYA Yeah.

17:07 PRAYAS So the surface you know, just so in the sense just to draw some parallels you know, what we call our how we often, let's say, understand if

17:24 SATYA (?) Mhm.

17:25 PRAYAS If someone, some person is going to be, if it's going to be possible for us to be friends with them or not.

17:31 SATYA Right.

17:32 PRAYAS So we often take a call like that based on their presence.

17:39 SATYA Yeah, which I have a lot of trouble with that method actually, but go, but go on.

17:47 PRAYAS No, so I mean that presence you know, in s- in spite of, you know, all of the other metadata of

17:55 SATYA Right.

17:56 PRAYAS Where you're from, what do you do

17:57 SATYA Right.

17:58 PRAYAS How much you earn, whatever. It's the presence that you can actually rely on the most.

18:05 SATYA Those are, that's what's giving you the data points to make any conclusions for yourself.

18:08 PRAYAS The most because it's unconscious. I mean, you can't really

18:11 SATYA Yeah.

18:12 PRAYAS Mold your presence.

18:13 SATYA No. Yeah, and that's true, and they, there is statistics or studies that say that people make their impressions right in the first half second or something, so.

18:23 PRAYAS Yeah. So you know, that is this, that would be this a surface of...

18:30 SATYA Right, absolutely. Yep. I see.

18:33 PRAYAS So the, in excavating text we're actually going towards something like that in terms of text, where, wherein, you know, instead of relying on individual skill and

18:54 SATYA (?) Mhm.

18:55 PRAYAS Experience of using language in a specific way which communicates something to someone else, which becomes a community of exclusion basically, right?

19:05 SATYA Right.

19:06 PRAYAS (?) So after a point, you can't talk to people who are unlike you.

19:11 SATYA Right.

19:12 PRAYAS Because you have just become, you've trained yourself to speak so specifically that no one else can understand you.

19:22 SATYA Correct.

19:24 So..

19:27 I'm trying to get the excavating text part though, I mean...

19:31 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean in the sense...

19:31 Excavation...

19:32 PRAYAS (?) So what you're trying to excavate is

19:35 SATYA (?) Mhm.

19:36 PRAYAS The possibility of encoding, of codifying the

19:41 SATYA Okay.

19:42 PRAYAS Attribute, the aspect, whatever, the sharp, the sharpness inherent, the possibility in language, you know, inherent possibility in language to be sharp.

19:55 SATYA Okay.

19:56 PRAYAS If we, if we want to codify that just so that it becomes

20:18 SATYA Okay. And you're saying that this is a general enough set of rules that doesn't because any set of rules again sounds like a box, right?

20:30 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean it'll be a box but you know in the in our current frame of operation

20:37 SATYA Mm-

20:37 PRAYAS These rules are not even possible to articulate. Like I mean, where would you start? If you want to say that I want to codify the language that musicians use, for example, where would you start from?

20:52 SATYA So, I mean, there are ways of thinking in that direction. I mean, it depends on the genre of music again, which makes it a box again. And there are some rules that go with that. But there is at least in my subjective opinion, there is a feeling that there is something which transcends genre which makes a piece of music to me as a good piece of music, which is meaningful.

21:17 PRAYAS Yeah, which is after you listen to it, right?

21:20 SATYA (?) Yeah.

21:21 PRAYAS But so but I'm saying we just if you just stay with talking about it or writing about it, not let's say we d we don't it's not possible for us to listen to it at all.

21:33 SATYA Okay.

21:35 PRAYAS If you just stick to how we are going to talk about it or write about it.

21:39 SATYA All right.

21:40 PRAYAS So you know, then I mean especially I mean I know of this

21:47 Difficulty in the context of art that the moment we are trying to describe the experience which can't be had.

21:57 SATYA Right.

21:58 PRAYAS You know, we fumble around. We definitely

22:01 SATYA Absolutely.

22:01 PRAYAS Actually struggle in trying to and in scholarship of course we hide that struggle by using jargon.

22:13 SATYA Right, and we have very explicit language and it's all laid out and there is a very explicit way of engaging by the reader. Like you are supposed to read it critically in a particular way.

22:23 PRAYAS Yeah. So but these are all communities of professional practice in a way. Right. Right scholarship and

22:34 PRAYAS (?) Like that.

22:35 PRAYAS (?) Yeah, we cannot actually I mean, even someone who is a expert practitioner of any of these professions might not be able to sit down and codify. I mean actually

22:47 Pass this into a set of rules that okay, if you do this, then you are going to be able to speak this way, this way, right?

22:57 SATYA Okay. But here's the thing, what is again, what is the goal? Like is the goal to c come up with a way to convey that is it a is it a goal to come up with a way for anyone to be able to read? And

23:16 PRAYAS So I mean that actually the second question for us clarifies this more. It's so the second question is it possible to make the individual rules of using specific language common?

23:30 SATYA (?) Common, right.

23:32 PRAYAS So the g this I mean the goal that you're you know, so I mean I would just say the goal would be to be able to hold a conversation with anyone, right?

23:44 SATYA (?) Makes sense, makes sense.

23:46 PRAYAS So if it's if I you know, before I am able to become friends with someone, if we are just random like it's a random you know, meeting, you just meet someone randomly and but if they're familiar with the rules

24:06 SATYA Yeah.

24:07 PRAYAS Then it's possible to actually communicate and

24:14 SATYA And do there are certain rules which do exist at a human level probably, right?

24:22 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean I think this act of codifying will just be that. So code is not about actually creating the set of rules.

24:31 SATYA (?) Okay. Okay.

24:31 PRAYAS Rules exist amongst us, we actually

24:34 SATYA Yes.

24:34 PRAYAS How we manage to communicate at all anyway yeah. But it would be it would mean maybe compiling these down

24:46 SATYA (?) Right, makes sense.

24:47 PRAYAS Them through a filter which ones are truly universal and which ones are not in that sense.

24:54 SATYA Yeah.

25:01 So is it possible to make individual rules of using specific language common?

25:11 I mean generally there is something like finding common ground, for example.

25:16 PRAYAS Yeah.

25:20 SATYA So I'm meeting with this surface and how do I engage with it? Though I have already probably engaged in the first half second and finished my entire processing, but if I want to be more explicit than that and I'm not aware of it, I'm not able to articulate it yet. But I'm trying to engage with this other surface.

25:44 PRAYAS Right. I mean that is the I mean okay, so that is the specific point of I mean that would be the value of such a common set of rules.

26:01 SATYA Yeah.

26:01 PRAYAS So the value would be that, you know, your experience would become communicable to me and my experience would become communicable to you.

26:09 SATYA Makes sense.

26:10 PRAYAS Instead of let's say, you know, my communic my experience filtered through you know, some f format, let's say literature, something

26:23 SATYA Or even social

26:26 PRAYAS Social technical social behaviour. So those are all filters which will

26:33 Which are which make it very easy for us to

26:36 SATYA Yeah.

26:37 PRAYAS Hide and hide and delude and masquerade and all of that.

26:42 SATYA Misjudge.

26:44 PRAYAS Yeah. So which is yeah fine, but I mean I think so this is the way let's say a lot of virtual communities also exist. They through a set of very codified set of rules of you know like in IRC chat or in some other

27:12 SATYA Yeah, board.

27:13 PRAYAS Way IRC chat to be used by a specific community which is trying to collaborate on something without knowing all the collaborators very well.

27:23 SATYA (?) Correct.

27:24 PRAYAS They would rely on such a code of conduct in that sense in using language.

27:31 SATYA Yeah, and but again there are jargon that goes with it. I mean if you take a 4chan or some board like that, there is a certain lingo that goes with it.

27:44 PRAYAS Yeah I mean that I think in such open communities but this lingo is often mimicry or a or it's actually something that is learned by the users.

28:01 SATYA That is true.

28:02 PRAYAS (?) Or participating.

28:04 SATYA (?) Right.

28:06 PRAYAS I mean the they have a common purpose so and they want to I mean join the gang in that sense.

28:12 SATYA Sorry, the hive mind.

28:14 PRAYAS Yeah. So how do we I mean I think it's not so much of a yes or no question that is possible but it's actually what zooming into let's say our own specific uses of how we use you know language which we consider sharp for our for ourselves and for our use.

28:44 SATYA Yeah.

28:45 PRAYAS And thinking about how we can look into those and open them up and make them common.

28:51 SATYA I see. I mean yeah, I see that. Like so I sh if I want to be able to communicate with one set and another set and be able to communicate at different levels or whatever.

29:05 PRAYAS Yeah so if for example

29:13 If so

29:16 SATYA I mean the first thing I can think of a as I said was common ground, the other thing is sorry for jumping in, but the other thing was learning the other person's jargon.

29:29 PRAYAS Right. And th that will become easier if they're already speaking or using common jargon.

29:37 SATYA Or if they are not, for example, because if we want to build something that's a meta set of communication, because there will exist different sets so there are lawyers and there are poets. How do I talk to lawyers and how do I talk to poets also?

29:52 PRAYAS Right.

29:53 SATYA So then if I need to have some kind of a meta set of rules that enable

30:00 SATYA (?) And if I am a lawyer and that's I speak lawyers speak, how do I speak with a poet?

30:10 PRAYAS Z [?]

30:18 So the common ground in this sense would be

30:24 The

30:28 What you would imagine to be let's say the of common interest to

30:35 SATYA (?) Right.

30:37 PRAYAS As wide a set of people as possible, right?

30:40 SATYA Yeah, that's true. That's true.

30:45 So I suppose we can talk about the weather.

30:48 PRAYAS Right. You know, because when you when you end up like using such a set of rules before you meet them in the classroom, for example.

31:04 Then

31:07 It usually becomes about

31:13 Teaching others what you do.

31:18 SATYA (?) True.

31:20 PRAYAS (?) Right.

31:21 And that is so I mean so when I got thinking about this, I got thinking about it also from that.

31:31 SATYA Yeah.

31:31 PRAYAS Perspective and that doesn't feel very right in the sense or useful.

31:42 SATYA But then i it comes back to what you said right in the beginning about you know, we talked about directly teaching the rules themselves.

31:51 PRAYAS Yeah.

31:53 SATYA But then again

31:56 It's like

31:59 I mean the analogy that I can think of is exposing a listener who is who wants to learn to listen to music, exposing them to good music right off of the bat, rather than exposing them to whole bunch of junk plus good stuff.

32:20 PRAYAS Right. No, so

32:24 I mean I'm thinking in this direction that wouldn't these set of rules be sh w shouldn't these set of rules be about a set of mechanisms that help you figure out your own notion of sharpness.

32:44 SATYA (?) Okay, that makes sense.

32:47 PRAYAS (?) That does

32:48 SATYA Yeah.

32:48 PRAYAS Yeah. So then in the in the classroom then what you're doing is not teaching them the rules what you do.

32:56 SATYA Yeah. You're actually giving aids for discovery then.

33:00 PRAYAS Yeah, so you are giving facilitative rules which

33:03 SATYA Right. Right.

33:04 PRAYAS Which because of the way the rules are shaped, I mean or whatever because of that they will retain a sense of being universal but at the same time they would actually lead the individual towards something specific of their own.

33:22 SATYA Agreed. That makes sense, yeah. So in that sense there's I don't see why that would be wrong because the i journey is individual. It's not like the teacher is prescribing the journey itself.

33:36 PRAYAS Right. I mean and also it will mean that the teacher is actually able to understand what the what the student does.

33:49 SATYA (?) Yeah.

33:50 PRAYAS Because you might end up triggering someone's imagination in such a tangential way that you don't know what this guy's doing anymore.

34:00 SATYA I understand, yeah, I see that, I see that. And yet you have a slight handle on it as the teacher because you gave a particular trigger and this is what came out of it.

34:12 From that student. So there is a new way of approaching that same trigger and yet it is within a framework of sorts.

34:22 PRAYAS Yeah, so we so the set of rules become like you know tools for translation back and forth without needing without requiring the student to remain within the scope of what the teacher is familiar to.

34:40 SATYA Yes, very much, very much. Because each of the things is going to be individual anyway because teacher is different from the student.

34:48 PRAYAS Yeah, so they could actually, you know, retain a very in the ability to actually explore as far and wide as they want and still the teacher would still have a way of translating whatever they come up with.

35:04 SATYA Correct.

35:10 PRAYAS So yeah, I mean

35:15 PRAYAS (?) Actually coming up with this set of rules

35:21 SATYA (?) Yeah.

35:22 PRAYAS Would be very useful. I mean very useful for me definitely in terms of what I do

35:28 SATYA (?) Makes sense, yeah.

35:29 PRAYAS Yeah, as in, you know, I essentially work with people but I we can also hope that it's useful for you know, as something which you can open out and have other people use it and

35:42 SATYA Mm- Yeah.

35:43 PRAYAS Out of that. So

35:47 SATYA Yeah.

35:50 PRAYAS I mean similar to the in the sense I think it'll remain

35:56 Consistent with the ideas expressed in the charter that I shared with you a few weeks back in the sense of you know wanting to retain the ability to talk to as many people as possible.

36:13 SATYA Makes sense, makes sense.

36:18 No, the beauty of this is the commonality I mean journey is different, but it's still a journey.

36:27 Path the details of the path are different but it's still a path. There is that commonality always.

36:37 PRAYAS Yeah, and I mean what has troubled me about education for a long time is the you know what no matter how brilliant you might be

36:47 SATYA Mm-

36:48 PRAYAS There is always a you know, a kind of military notion of education which involves training.

37:01 SATYA (?) Yeah.

37:02 PRAYAS That takes us to towards the third question which is, you know, is education only about training or is or is it also about inspiration?

37:12 SATYA (?) Makes sense.

37:14 Yeah.

37:14 Yeah, makes sense. I mean yeah, exactly. That's right.

37:17 PRAYAS So are we essentially are we only ever able to coerce people into

37:25 SATYA (?) Yeah.

37:26 PRAYAS Following a set of a knowledge pathway that we are showing them or do we have the set of tools to be able to set them to scatter their path and let them find the and still be able to understand it because

37:44 SATYA Absolutely.

37:45 PRAYAS The fundamental stumbling block that which most teachers are insecure about that yeah you know if you actually let students imagine

37:54 SATYA Yeah.

37:55 PRAYAS Yeah, then how do you make sense of it as learning outcomes?

38:03 SATYA Yeah, that's true. I mean the to me the whole thing goes back to the way the world is structured in terms of the end, you know, everything has to be productized and everything has to be commoditized. Just be you know, you have to go down the you have to get this kind of training because of the whole you know, making a living, that sort of thing, you know, the way the I mean I speak from a place of privilege obviously, but

38:31 The way the way the world is organized is such that

38:36 Unfortunately you have to fall into certain paths.

38:39 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

38:40 SATYA In that path, and if you don't have your own agency and you're not don't have your own imagination and initiative, then you're kind of not in a good place if you don't have a training of a skill or something. That's how it's viewed. And your worth, your unfortunately, value and worth is associated with degrees or whatever it is. Like, you know, if I if I have a doctor in front of my name, that has a certain worth, unfortunately. So

39:07 PRAYAS Yeah. I mean because I mean even if you lived through your entire four years of college or whatever.

39:18 SATYA Yeah.

39:18 PRAYAS Be f familiar at least with the framework. I mean you at least have the curriculum you're aware of what it was that you're supposed to learn. Whether you learnt it or not was

39:30 SATYA Correct.

39:31 PRAYAS Question.

39:32 SATYA Correct. And even if you had no awareness of the curriculum, just because you have this piece of paper, you are able to get into this particular line of profession, whatever, and you are able to sustain yourself, which is what is needed in this world at this point. So

39:48 PRAYAS Yeah, so I mean thinking beyond that because

39:53 I mean I don't really know what in what way or I mean in the sense of actually you know the way things stand in the world, I don't really know how it is that

40:10 You know, we can offer something which is

40:13 SATYA Mm.

40:14 PRAYAS Workable, you know, which is scalable, workable. So I mean that has that has confounded me for pretty much, you know, a long time. But

40:24 SATYA Yeah, no, I hear you. And I feel like there is a lot of I feel like a lot of people live like zombies. And my personal opinion is that a lot of innovation and technological progress, etc., happens in certain directions because people have not spent the time to figure out what really is needed. Like I remember reading some sentence somewhere that all these brilliant minds in the world right now are working towards making people click on ads.

40:57 PRAYAS Mm.

40:58 SATYA So what I'm saying is, of course, I cannot judge that clicking on ads is a bad thing or watching reality TV is a bad thing and we should be spending time trying to figure out sustainable fuels. I don't know if we can judge one is better than the other, but if we were to say that there is a agreement that there is more need to find ways to solve you know, people getting clean drinking water versus people getting better cell phones, if we say that one is better than the other, then I feel like there is a meaning towards people spending time not just learning trades but also taking the time to figure out what is meaning for them and what is meaningful for a bigger picture. And that c I believe comes through inspiration and realization, not just by reading.

41:53 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean and that inspiration will also come from that ability of the framework of education that you are a part of to that its ability to actually acknowledge your inspiration as something which is which is furthering your learning pathway, like you have just your

42:18 SATYA Yeah. Yeah.

42:19 PRAYAS That's something which you can be which can be acknowledged as something that you are learning and you can be accredited for it or whatever.

42:31 SATYA Understand. It's like for example, people who are in the engineering courses, etcetera, and they are made to take English or humanities, they don't necessarily they feel like they're wasting their time. Whereas actually I don't know if you're seeing what I'm saying, but

42:49 PRAYAS Yeah. I mean which is why they I mean most engineers are not actually able to communicate even to themselves.

42:58 SATYA (?) Correct.

42:59 PRAYAS (?) Why is it that they what they do is valuable?

43:03 SATYA (?) Correct.

43:05 PRAYAS So I mean they're not able to even think about it and so we don't even know, for example

43:10 SATYA Yeah.

43:10 PRAYAS Outside of yes say let's say doing military innovation, we don't really know where does where do these things are I mean where is this skill set actually important. So I mean linking quickly linking this what with what we what we were talking about last time, you know in when we were talking about infection.

43:35 SATYA (?) Mm-

43:37 PRAYAS So if we think of inspiration through a rule set that we follow in how we use language, if you see that as a kind of infection that we are

43:56 You know, that we are actually spreading to further not just our own needs but also

44:04 SATYA Yeah.

44:04 PRAYAS As a as a kind of defensive and offensive mechan I mean we were s we were talking about how the

44:15 How the manipulation and exploitation of towards that we are s find ourselves being subjected to

44:24 SATYA Right.

44:24 PRAYAS Actually you know, is because of our own desire, our own or our own hunger in that sense and how we can actually, you know, outmote [?] that by preempting it in some way.

44:42 So if we connect these two things

44:45 SATYA Yeah.

44:48 PRAYAS Then it might be you know possible to think of a kind of education that offers that promises a kind of value

45:02 But which is actually which is also serving our own agenda of just making it possible for us to communicate with others, right? So

45:14 SATYA I agreed, very much.

45:16 PRAYAS Yeah.

45:18 SATYA I mean I totally see that. because partly to me what it is sounding like is when communication is also about empathy. And you know, this kind of an inspirational based, realisation based education to me means that you are practising ways of seeing, you're practising

45:41 Ways of relating.

45:45 PRAYAS Yeah and I mean this can happen this practicing these ways of relating to each other actually could happen once we have set you know something out of the out of the way. For example, we should we should try and design formats of education that can work without any f form of capital exchange.

46:12 SATYA Absolutely.

46:14 PRAYAS You know, so and think about how people I mean and really not think about how people who are teaching or doing anything else are going to

46:27 Pay for it how their time is going to get paid for it. Because I mean if you

46:35 SATYA Yeah.

46:36 PRAYAS I mean because teaching is in that sense a role which has to be played if you can, right?

46:45 SATYA Yeah.

46:46 PRAYAS I mean if you have the ability to teach

46:50 SATYA (?) -huh.

46:51 PRAYAS So it's so being so being able to teach is as much of a privilege as being able to learn.

47:01 SATYA Right. Otherwise it's just a function. Somebody's just Yeah.

47:06 PRAYAS So if both of these roles are thought of

47:10 Are thought to operate.

47:13 Without any other you know way of attaching value to them.

47:22 SATYA (?) Right.

47:24 PRAYAS Then it might even be possible because you know once we pay somebody we don't actually consider it even possible for them to inspire us.

47:39 SATYA Yeah. I mean that's an unfortunate o offshoot. Yeah, that's what happens. Yeah. I mean maybe we can overcome that, but I see what you're saying. The payment is at least to me it's a it's an obstacle.

48:00 And to come up with these formats that's I mean that's a very interesting thing to think about, to come up with formats for this sort of exchange. Is it an exchange?

48:15 PRAYAS (?) It's the

48:20 You know, like I don't know, it's more of a

48:25 It's more of a hint. It's a it's a kind of

48:29 SATYA (?) It's a fire setting fire.

48:33 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean it's not something which I'm very sure of, but which is just have a maybe a vague sense of how it would make sense. in the yeah, so if you think of a fire setting another fire alight, then you know you have to be alight yourself to

48:54 SATYA (?) Yeah.

48:55 PRAYAS You know, set something else on fire. Yeah. So once you are on fire, then principally you don't need anything else.

49:06 SATYA (?) Correct.

49:07 PRAYAS You know, so I mean I think of it this way that, you know, most people who actually know what they're doing are not able to sell it very well.

49:21 SATYA Most people who know what they are doing are not able to sell it very well. Is that what you said?

49:27 PRAYAS Yeah, because it's so inherently pleasurable.

49:32 SATYA Right. Right. Right. Right.

49:35 PRAYAS (?) Act of doing what you know

49:37 SATYA (?) Yeah.

49:38 PRAYAS What it means to do. That it pays for itself and that demotivates the role of actually of advocating it of

49:51 SATYA (?) Yes.

49:52 PRAYAS Evangelizing it and that's a kind of a that's a short circuit in the system.

49:57 SATYA (?) Yes, very much. Very that makes sense.

50:01 PRAYAS (?) Just and that is something we could work around you know in designing this format.

50:09 So

50:12 Because yeah, these people who can teach

50:17 SATYA (?) Mm-

50:18 PRAYAS Might not want anything more than being able to teach.

50:23 SATYA Right, exactly. Exactly right. Exactly. And everything else is really a distraction.

50:34 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean so w it would be because I mean it's not some everything else is not really something that you have motivation for because

50:45 SATYA Exactly. Yeah.

50:46 PRAYAS (?) It's not really serving it's not really solving any part of the puzzle for you. It's not good to Yeah, so it's just logistics.

50:56 SATYA Yeah.

50:56 PRAYAS Yeah and that becomes only as interesting as it is to you know, just not to let things get too rough, but then beyond that it's not really so much so much of an adventure.

51:13 SATYA I agree. I mean the analogy I can see is like, you know, artistic entrepreneurs. Like it used to be that you would be an artist, but now you have this thing where the artist is also an entrepreneur and they have to have all these other skills and so I don't feel like doing it anymore, you know. I d I can't do all these other selling things. So why should I even feel like if now I if now my producing the art is contingent upon my selling it, then why would I even feel like doing it?

51:42 That's another the other side.

51:45 PRAYAS Yeah, so I mean you know so what we got talking about in the with the second question.

51:53 SATYA Mm-

51:53 PRAYAS You know, essentially thinking of this community, this whole trillion [?] of practice or whatever that operates around these set of rules of using language.

52:09 SATYA Yeah.

52:09 PRAYAS If we think of this as essentially a kind of club.

52:15 SATYA (?) Kind of.

52:16 PRAYAS That's that.

52:19 PRAYAS (?) A kind of a kind of club.

52:21 SATYA Okay, cla okay. Apparently. [?]

52:23 PRAYAS Club that you know is a kind of club to whom we are through a through a specific through a channel of content we are

52:42 You know

52:47 Creating that world for them.

52:49 SATYA Makes sense. There's an environment.

52:52 PRAYAS Yeah, so and access to this environment

52:57 SATYA (?) Mm-

52:59 PRAYAS Bordo. [?]

53:03 I mean I'm yeah, it's a kind of model which

53:09 I don't know if I even have it fully in my head, but

53:13 SATYA Sure. Sure. But it's

53:16 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean I'm just saying that if you think of

53:20 If you think of these if you think of a set of these people who do what they do well, but they and you know, so what we are just talking about, I mean people who actually get you know out who get who get

53:39 PRAYAS (?) Pleasure from their own from their act of producing.

53:42 SATYA Right.

53:43 PRAYAS (?) In a way that you don't really have motivation to do anything else with it.

53:47 SATYA (?) Correct.

53:48 PRAYAS So if you think of this as something that is essentially inspiring.

53:55 SATYA Right. So it's an ecosystem which enables those who produce to just produce.

54:02 PRAYAS Yeah, and also engage in
54:08 In teaching, but not teaching what they do.

54:12 SATYA Correct.

54:12 PRAYAS (?) Teaching this facilitative set of rules through which others can also do.

54:20 SATYA Agreed. I see that.

54:24 PRAYAS So you know, the i it could actually become a way to
54:32 To sh to spread this further.

54:35 SATYA Yeah. No, I see that, I see that. I do see that and I do see that it's needed. I mean
54:42 I can't articulate exactly but I understand that it's needed.

54:49 PRAYAS So you know, there's a small addition to the this study group that I was thinking of making every day. And you know, like I discussed with you earlier that you know next month what in June what we'll do will essentially be the first I mean it will be completing a year of doing these things these study groups as in Surfatial. So as we discussed earlier how we would try to d do these three concurrent study groups, right?

55:30 SATYA (?) Right.

55:31 PRAYAS So if you and we so what would what study group would you like to
55:38 Anchor.
55:42 So you know, so we can develop that yeah idea and talk about it, you know, so and we can develop that together. So essentially it's you know, you have a sense set of ownership of that. So yeah. It's something which you might enjoy much more.

56:00 SATYA Understand. Yeah. And I see what you're saying. Yeah.

56:05 PRAYAS So do you have like offhand would you think of some

56:12 SATYA So I have ideas. Yeah.
56:14 Very raw there was one thing which I was thinking about is self expression. so I feel like
56:25 I mean it's a pretty long subject but to boil it down very short very small self expression, like do you to have the space to explore so I've been through my own journey so far and I feel like I have a few things that I saw which I don't I nobody taught me that. I figured it out and I feel like that's something I could share because I'm going through certain struggles which I also see other people going through them and I feel like I saw this and I learned this. Maybe I can share this with you.

56:59 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

57:00 SATYA And that th that was sort of like one of the things was being able to articulate and expressing oneself through exploration. But first of all, exploring. Going through the process of exploring. And I feel like because of how the way our education systems etcetera are set up, unless we have a family environment that allows us to explore, we don't have a chance to do it. And I feel like ha you know, having that family environment is also very rare. So I am lucky enough to have that and I went through so I feel like exploration and self expression sort of very roughly.

57:36 PRAYAS So something which could we could think around let's say by using the word by prospecting prospective articulation or something like that. So you're in that sense prospecting for the means of articulating, but while you do that you articulate.

57:59 SATYA Makes sense, makes sense, makes sense, makes sense. So d learning through doing.

58:05 PRAYAS Yeah, essentially. But
58:10 Yeah, so I think that could that could also be a way for us to start working on this set of rules.

58:21 SATYA -huh.

58:22 PRAYAS You know, so Yeah, I see I see you can you are free to design the way you want, how you want to you know, navigate this one hour, how you want that to be navigated. But you can

if so if you want to at all have a set of questions that which help you structure the discussion or something else, then I mean you are free you can design your own thing.

58:48 SATYA Yeah.

58:50 PRAYAS But in those questions you could think of these rules also. if you want to use these rules which you can want to introduce through, you know, each question in a way.

59:06 And yeah, and that's also this I mean just yeah, sorry, just to you know complete the stream of thought. and so also this would be something you can think of this as something the Surfatial will be hosting. But as so what I'm saying is you should think of inviting a set of people like up to ten, twelve people who

59:43 Whom you will enjoy talking to.

59:46 SATYA Makes sense.

59:47 Right.

59:51 That makes sense, yeah.

59:54 The only thing that I think might be worth going through is and which is probably what you're doing in these three days is looking at those set of rules. At least you have a general sort of idea of where those set of rules or what they are.

01:00:11 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean I think in these three days what I would g go towards is only trying to understand what kind of rules these rules should be.

01:00:23 SATYA Correct, exactly.

01:00:24 PRAYAS And I'm

01:00:30 In a month or two. Those in those we would actually start developing these set of rules. Because yeah, it would it would need that kind of parallel processing of Yes.

01:00:47 SATYA (?) Yeah.

01:00:49 PRAYAS Things possibly developing so it will be the same one hour where I will be anchoring something, you'll be anchoring something and you know someone else will be anchoring. So Malavika is not very sure if she wants to anchor a three day study group. So we I'm still trying to figure with her she can she's saying she can do a one day study group but not three days. So we're trying to figure if not her, then maybe I mean I'm also trying to speak to Celeste and see if she would like to do it, but she doesn't have good internet, so

01:01:26 SATYA (?) Yeah.

01:01:27 PRAYAS But so yeah, we're trying to figure out the third one.

01:01:31 SATYA Okay. I mean if it is it could just be one day or you know, three days where three separate people are doing or you know, there could be different ways of doing it.

01:01:42 PRAYAS Yeah, there could be nine people.

01:01:45 SATYA (?) Yeah.

01:01:46 PRAYAS I mean I don't know if we have that kind of community yet.

01:01:50 SATYA I hear you. Yeah. Yeah, no, I know, I know. Yeah.

01:01:52 SATYA (?) I'm just trying to think.

01:01:54 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

01:01:55 Yeah.

01:01:55 You know, that yeah, that would make it easier for us to involve people who don't want to commit to too much.

01:02:02 SATYA That's true, because developing that kind of material I mean, it could be open also, like you do a one day and if really some stuff comes out and you want to discuss more, you could have a second day and a third day. That's another way of looking at it.

01:02:18 PRAYAS Yeah I mean but I mean the but the way I think about it is if you if you have to think about three days, then you will make up you know then you'll be forced to think of okay, what next?

01:02:36 SATYA Yeah, that's true.

01:02:38 PRAYAS You know, it just it just sets the format in which then you have to yes

01:02:43 SATYA That's true.

01:02:44 PRAYAS Yeah, so I'm slightly trying to draw pencil that in because it just it becomes a more I mean I think three days is a kind of minimum that I can think of because it becomes a substantial way of developing an idea.

01:03:04 You know which otherwise just become a big thing.

01:03:07 SATYA Yeah, that makes yeah.

01:03:10 Yeah. I mean that yeah, to get something out of it, yeah.

01:03:14 PRAYAS Yeah, because one day something that we just talked about for one hour is something that you can't even remember later sometimes, you know. What did I talk about? So if three hours it becomes a substantial memory that yes, I did that then. So that lives on, you know, at least in the minds of people who participate or think about it.

01:03:47 So we'll yes yeah, we'll stop the broadcast for today and

01:03:54 SATYA Yes.

01:03:55 PRAYAS Start again tomorrow at the same time at six PM in time [?] and we'll take this develop this further. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you for

01:04:09 SATYA That sounds good.

01:04:09 PRAYAS Thanks.

01:04:12 PRAYAS (?) All right, thanks. Bye. I'll drop you.