INFECTIVE STUDIES - DAY 1

A broadcast by Surfatial, the collective of Satya Gummuluri, Malavika Rajnarayan and me, 6 March 2015. Watch on YouTube

---

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

00:02 PRAYAS Hi everyone. Welcome to Infective Studies, the day one.

00:11 MALAVIKA Hi.

00:13 PRAYAS Hi. So the first question for us today is that if infection cannot be desired, then how do we make sure we are open to it?

00:32 MALAVIKA Okay, if in- infection cannot be desired, how do we make sure we remain open to it?

00:44 PRAYAS Yeah, so we are thinking of infection as this thing that is emergent.

00:53 MALAVIKA From where?

00:55 PRAYAS So it's.. So because of proximity

01:01 Because of access

01:04 PRAYAS (?) Infection can leap out.

01:10 MALAVIKA Okay.

01:13 PRAYAS So how do we kind of make sure this infection that leaps out is not something that we are closed to, and that's not something that we have kind of vaccinated against?

01:33 MALAVIKA What is the purpose? What is the purpose of the infection?

01:40 PRAYAS So, infection is something that happens on its own.

01:47 Right? And so, infection actually has its own purpose, it has its own agenda, which is maybe to as simple as to further the infection.

02:01 To spread the infection. Which is not our desire.

02:11 MALAVIKA Is it because we are taking a stand that something is bad? If we take it as any stimulus and we are saying we do- we are closed to it, and we don't want to be exposed to any particular stimuli, and..

02:28 PRAYAS Yeah, so if we- if we say that we want to be insulated, you know?

02:35 MALAVIKA But why are we taking that as a hypothesis in the first place?

02:39 PRAYAS So, that's okay. We can also decide not to be insulated.

02:44 But I mean the thing is infection is something that happens outside the narrative demands of the script.

02:56 So, how do we make sure that we are open to it when we don't even know what it is going to be?

03:13 MALAVIKA I don't know.

03:16 PRAYAS Right, because...

03:17 MALAVIKA You just- you just stay open.

03:20 PRAYAS Yeah, but then we also need to protect ourselves from known pathogens in that sense. So, we also need to kind of filter out experience to make sure that we have a grip. So, how do we balance the both? So, you know, remaining open to emergence, and remaining clued in to, you know, our own desire for direction?

03:55 MALAVIKA If we take the if we just take the whole scene with the media as an example, or news we try to remain open to it and we try to filter out what we don't want. but if you see that as an infection where, you know, something that enters the stream can just spread in no time.

04:24 PRAYAS Yeah, so I'm saying that when you filter out what you don't want, you know, if- if in that filtrate

04:34 PRAYAS (?) Resides the infectant

04:39 Which- which because of its own qualities

04:46 Is capable of inspiring you, or, you know, triggering some triggering you or pointing you in some other direction.

04:59 MALAVIKA I would imagine it happens in some sort of trial and error. So you- you have- you expose yourself to certain things and after a point you- you figure what is useful and what is not. And when something is not of course, I think the problem, the way I see it, comes when the pattern becomes too rigid, and...

05:23 PRAYAS Yeah, when we become...

05:23 MALAVIKA ...when you don't stay open to the idea that sometimes you can revisit and re- structure that pattern.

05:35 PRAYAS Yeah.

05:35 SATYA Or sometimes- or if the infection is so chaotic that you are unable to have any [unclear] it. So it carries you along, so there is no question of becoming rigid.

05:50 PRAYAS No so when we become creatures of habit, when we start having a delusion about who- who we are, right?

06:01 PRAYAS (?) So if we start believing in that story

06:05 Then how do we at the same time not believe in it? So, in that sense, remain exposed?

06:19 SATYA (?) That's a balance actually, because if you're aware of being exposed, you are already... So you have to not be aware.

06:32 PRAYAS (?) Yeah, so how do we trick ourselves?

06:41 SATYA And that's a very fine balance.

06:48 PRAYAS Yeah, so I mean I'll just repeat the puzzle we are trying to deal with. Which is that if you're thinking of infection as an emergent process

07:10 Then how do we... how do we desire and make sure we remain open to it? So it's not something which is a known.

07:39 SATYA So that's what I feel like, it's some kind of a practice. It is some kind of a zone that one puts oneself into, where you- [unclear] you're very consciously choosing not to be aware.

07:55 PRAYAS You're consciously choosing not to be aware?

07:58 SATYA Yeah. It's like you have to find a way to deny consciousness, while being fully conscious.

08:11 PRAYAS You have to be fully conscious and deny that you are fully conscious?

08:17 SATYA Somehow, yeah. See, because it's like if you're... it's like walking on a tightrope.

08:27 PRAYAS Right.

08:27 SATYA I don't- I don't know what it means to walk on a tightrope, but I could kind of try to put it into a performance situation where you know what you're doing, there will be some- a lot of

flux and a lot of chaos that could- anything could go wrong with the performance, but you still have to balance somehow. And when you're balancing, if you focus on the balancing act, then you lose your balance.

08:52 MALAVIKA That's true.

08:57 PRAYAS Right, so you are- but are we not assuming here that the falling off is the infection?

09:06 SATYA (?) Yeah, that's one type of infection, yes. I mean, depends on what the goal is. That could be an infection, yes.

09:12 PRAYAS No, but I mean, I'm saying that, okay, so that is a known variable, right? So, falling off the rope when you're walking a tightrope

09:22 SATYA Right.

09:23 PRAYAS That is a known variable. So, that is still, you know, perceivably you can deal with it within the script, within the, you know, how will you respond and how will you not, within the dynamics of the script.

09:39 SATYA I mean, unless you're walking on top of the Niagara [unclear] and then there's nothing more to it.

09:47 PRAYAS Haan, but infection as I am kind of imagining it to be, is totally outside the frame. So in the sense, while you're... walking the tightrope, somebody sings a song which you overhear, and you start thinking of something. You know? So, this is totally something which is... you didn't know, you didn't— you were not expecting

10:20 SATYA Right, yeah. Yeah.

10:23 SATYA (?) And it happens.

10:24 PRAYAS Yeah.

10:25 So, if we have trained ourselves to not respond to overheard kind of material—

10:36 SATYA (?) I'm sorry, I missed you there. "We have trained ourselves to not"?

10:40 PRAYAS Respond to overheard material. If we don't— if we don't overhear, if we try not to, you know? And then how would that infection even manage to really reach us?

10:58 MALAVIKA See, I think there are levels of response also. If— if you're only con— taking into consideration what is understood as a conscious response in terms of action then you can say that, you know, s— this hasn't affected at all. But I think there are other levels of response where you— you absorb what has happened.

11:28 Yeah.

11:29 And it may not manifest itself as a visible or tangible response, and it may manifest itself in terms of a transformative action that one may only see over a longer period of time.

11:49 SATYA (?) Yeah, I can— I can agree with that, yeah.

11:53 PRAYAS (?) But does it operate that way? For— so, for ex—

12:00 MALAVIKA I think it does. There's a lot that I think we actually perceive that we're not conscious about. For— for instance—

12:08 PRAYAS Right.

12:09 MALAVIKA — when we— when we read a book there's so much of it that we absorb and we may — we may only remember certain paragraphs and phrases that we may want to quote later on. But years later, suddenly there's something else that triggers a memory of something else that we hadn't consciously remembered from this book. And then we build that connection. So, tha — that's what I'm saying, that it— it— it's absorbed, there is a perception of it. so to assume that there is no openness for any kind of stimulus is I think becomes— it— it's a little absolutist, that — that assumption.

12:57 SATYA You know, I have a question, and [unclear] you guys discussed about what is the framework here. Prayas, you mentioned a script. So if there is a script, there is a certain— but then if there is no script, like example, reading a book and you're absorbing it, and what is this infec-

tion? Are we saying that there is a framework and there are certain external stimuli which— but— oh, sorry.

13:21 PRAYAS So — Yeah. So I'm— okay. So, I'll start from the start in that sense. how do sentiments travel, right? How do... how does you know, how do— how do we get affected by anything, which is... So, in the sense, if we assu— if we understand for a moment, I mean without really going into it, that for us to be— for us to be affected, int— intimacy is necessary. So, reading, in that sense, as Malavika suggested, reading is a kind of window of intimacy with a text.

14:08 So, you know, materials come into our kind of being and all of that. S— but so intimacy is still a given, right? But so through intimacy things travel

14:27 And that's the infection. So s— the script is what I'm considering the script to be, is the— is what— what sets of rules or conditions we allow ourselves to be intimate through, or in.

14:44 SATYA Okay. Cuz I was kind of thinking of a situation also, when [unclear] tightrope, I was sort of thinking of a very set situation where you have to finish this particular goal and then you're having these external infections coming in. But I can see that what you're saying is much larger than that.

15:02 PRAYAS Yeah, just a set of rules that we allow ourselves to be intimate you know, within. So we just— I mean, just that. So, and that is— so, let's say if— if we are open to letting our guard down—

15:17 Right.

15:18 —when we are reading, then that is a possibility through which infection can happen.

15:27 SATYA Right.

15:29 SATYA (?) So, but— so that is not problematic at all.

15:32 Then what is the question? The question is, yes, infections do happen, whether we are conscious of it or not, things will happen. And—

15:40 PRAYAS No, so— so the question the first question was, which we have another five minutes to deal with, is if the— if infection cannot be desired, how do we make sure we remain open to it?

15:55 SATYA Ah, okay.

15:59 But whether we like it or not, it's going to happen.

16:04 PRAYAS I'm wondering if that is true.

16:07 SATYA (?) I— I think it is. I mean, whether we like it or not, the— you know, the wind is gonna blow and the tree will fall on my house and, you know, I can't help it. It's going to happen.

16:18 PRAYAS So then you know, in— in the same landscape, if the wind is blowing, there are multiple, in that sense, individuals.

16:31 SATYA Right.

16:33 PRAYAS So why does infection only— why do I only get infected, if I do and why— or does everyone get infected, and that's it? So everyone does get infected.

16:47 SATYA Like Malavika said, I— if— with the book example, I think everyone does get infected by whatever they are swimming in at the moment. And it depends on... you know, you could be receptive to it consciously or you could not be receptive to it, but it somehow gets in.

17:11 PRAYAS So okay. So then we have you know, we're moving in to a second question now, which is—

17:19 — you know, the— So, in the sense, there are two parts of this question. One is... mm, so can we rely on this infection to always happen, and so essentially we don't need to do anything, and—

17:38 SATYA Yeah.

17:39 PRAYAS —we know that we will be moved when we need to be moved? Right? we—

17:44 SATYA Yes

17:46 PRAYAS And the other question is that what is the— you know, so if you're thinking of infection as a mode of dispersion—

18:00 MALAVIKA Okay.

18:02 PRAYAS You know, so if it were true that everyone gets infected—
18:07 —then wouldn't dispersion be really easy? So in the sense that I put something out there and everyone immediately gets captivated.

18:18 SATYA So let's address— I'm very interested in addressing the earlier part of the question where you talked about infection happening when we want it to happen or something like that you said, right?

18:30 PRAYAS Yeah, so, I mean, can we rely on emergence, in the sense do we need to do anything at all or nothing at all?

18:37 SATYA Right. And that's a— that's something which is again, I don't think... it's like statistics, you never know, like which part— you might be in a [unclear] in calm waters, you might be in a situation where nothing really is happening. And then if you're waiting for something to happen, maybe it won't.

19:00 MALAVIKA Or if you know your target very clearly, and you have decided to put something out there then you can ensure that whatever you put out is ye— i— it's— it— it's almost like a— a need basis. So if the— if there's a short— shortage of tomatoes in the market, then you know that people will need the tomatoes. You can just find the tomatoes from somewhere and just kind of —

19:35 SATYA So basically you're preparing—

19:36 MALAVIKA —put it in. Yeah.

19:37 SATYA —you're planning and you're deliberately doing certain actions. You're not waiting for luck to strike, but you're trying to make your own fortune.

19:46 MALAVIKA Yeah, if you're— if you are causing it, if— if you are deciding to control the direction of the flow of whatever it is, whether it's in a discipline or —
19:57 Right.

20:00 PRAYAS No, but when we look around us
20:02 Yeah.
20:03 PRAYAS (?) Do we— do we find that happening?

20:05 MALAVIKA Of course! All the time.
20:06 MALAVIKA (?) Yeah. Yeah.

20:08 PRAYAS No, so okay. So where I'm coming from is, okay, so dispersion as in, you know in— modes of dispersion triggered by individual players
20:21 You know, individual elements. So, is the— is the landscape oriented towards— does the landscape— is the landscape actually interested in really seeking out that which is being propagated and ensure that is— it is efficiently distributed to have a— whoever is looking for it?

20:43 SATYA (?) That sounds like —

20:47 PRAYAS Like too good to be true.

20:48 SATYA Free market— It sounds like free market economics, actually.
20:51 *[soft laughter]*
20:52 SATYA (?) But —

20:54 MALAVIKA (?) It doesn't work, right? I mean, because—

20:56 SATYA No, I— I don't know, though. I mean, where water has to flow, it will flow. So it's not that you can exactly control. I mean, you— you can send something out into the ether, and those who will receive will receive it. But [unclear] control you have, or how much absorption happens, even that, I don't think anyone can predict that.

21:17 PRAYAS No, I'm saying even the range of dispersion, right? As a— as a mode of—

21:22 SATYA Yeah, you never know because it might actually get amplified, you never know, or— or just get lost, you never know.

21:27 PRAYAS Yeah, because— because the system as we know it is manipulable, right?

21:32 SATYA Yeah.

21:33 SATYA (?) I mean, in a good as well as bad way.

21:36 PRAYAS Yeah.

21:37 So instead of actually being oriented towards infection passing through, it is oriented towards making sure that not infec— all infection passes through, but they can control and prioritize what passes through and what doesn't.

21:57 SATYA I think both are true. What you just said, both happen. Those who are more man— those who are more aware of how the system works, and the system is within a bigger system, and those who are maneuvering or who are playing, creating the smaller system where, you know, for— why do things go [unclear] do go viral.

22:22 SATYA (?) But there are other things which are beyond that system's, because, for example, like we spoke again, to bring the book example, we don't know, some things get inside us which we can't control.

22:34 PRAYAS Yeah, but I mean what will go viral at a point is culturally determined, right? So we know what are the parameters of pop. And if you're working within those parameters

22:47 SATYA Right.

22:49 PRAYAS You know that it can— it could happen, but if you're not really interested in that

22:54 Yeah.

22:55 And you're making your own quaint, obscure format

22:58 SATYA (?) Right.

23:00 PRAYAS Then you know that— you absolutely know that it won't work for your format.

23:04 SATYA (?) That's true. That's true. And like, that's what I was saying, both happen.

23:09 PRAYAS Yeah, so if you—

23:10 SATYA But it depends on which you want to work in. What is your form— I mean, what's your format? Are you interested in one thing or another thing? And that again [unclear] back the imperative, like we were talking about making things happen. So if we want to make those tomatoes viral, it's we— we make it happen.

23:28 If we are good— good enough manipulators.

23:31 PRAYAS Right. So if we want to think a bit outside you know, these very tangible layers of you know, the system, which is, you know, the media, whatever, you know, the system as it operates. So, which is actually not really worth talking about too much. But so if— but if you want to talk about what's beyond that, in the sense that— Okay, so I think what you are also hinting at, when you said that the system exists within a system

24:07 Yeah.

24:08 I think maybe what you're hinting at is that at a very absolute level, in the— at maybe at the in the universe, or at some other macro scale

24:18 SATYA Mhm.

24:19 PRAYAS Everything is being registered.

24:22 SATYA Yeah, somewhere or the other.

24:25 PRAYAS So how do we use— how do we use that? Because the micro thing that we find not worth talking about is ex— existing within that macro, so we can pull those strings as well. But, yeah.

24:49 SATYA Does— does it— It's sounding to me like you have to be tuned towards something. Or you have to tune certain things out, then you become— you create space for other things to enter. So, for example, if you tune out the majority, then maybe you'll hear— the— the major signals, then maybe you'll hear the softer frequencies or something.

25:13 PRAYAS Right.

25:14 MALAVIKA Yeah, it depends on where the focus lies. So even if you don't want to talk about the existing systems you have to still talk of your own existence. If you— if you— if you take that and decide to, for instance, just— just take the body itself, and talk of the body as a system, and how it can operate, or how we can manipulate it, there will still be a— a very conscious choice of what we bring in and what we remove for the functioning of this system.

25:55 PRAYAS Yeah, so I mean, for— just for a short, brief moment, if I put forward a prototype, you know, just so that we can conc— talk more concretely

26:11 PRAYAS (?) I mean, and then we can dismiss this prototype altogether. It's not really that this prototype is something that we want to do.

26:19 But if we take Surfatial

26:22 And if we understand that, you know, we want to be able to include many more in the conversation.

26:33 PRAYAS (?) So we want to infect at that scale.

26:36 PRAYAS (?) Right.

26:37 But it is— yeah, so you know, this is the prototype. So now what would you how would you orient what we have been talking about towards this prototype and really—

26:55 I mean, it's just a prototype. I mean, as we—

26:58 SATYA (?) No, it makes sense. I mean, it can be taken as— it— it can be taken as an abstraction. It makes sense what you're saying.

27:05 PRAYAS Yeah, so I mean, here we have we have something which is not oriented towards being in a format that is pop, which is suitable to mass access in that way.

27:20 But still because of its own internal dynamics, it— it needs to let's say bring in conversations from diverse sources to remain sharp.

27:36 SATYA Yeah.

27:37 PRAYAS (?) So how do you balance these two contradictions?

27:42 SATYA You know, one thing I want to say is to take away this— I don't know— see, the content of [unclear] inside is [unclear] how it works. So, the [unclear] viral, or the process of engaging more in conversation is separate from what the conversation is about. So in that sense, I don't want to diminish anything, but I feel like the processes of including more voices is actually the same even if it's pop or anything.

28:13 PRAYAS So what would that be in the case of this prototype? how can we move outside the pattern of whatever, we don't understand this kind of obscurity that we have been kind of slotted into?

28:36 SATYA Well, you could have some item numbers.

28:39 *[laughter]*

28:45 PRAYAS Right. So, but then when we do that, won't we — I mean, so in the sense, the mode of infection that we want to carry

28:56 Yeah.

28:57 So is— is that in— is when we appropriate you know, methods of let's say, okay, item numbers, we can include item numbers, that's fine. But then wouldn't that in some way I mean, would that remain in re— remain coherent to what we are otherwise interested in doing?

29:22 MALAVIKA Yeah, that's my question too. I mean there's always going to be a compromise. and—

29:29 SATYA (?) I mean, what is the goal, right? What— what is— is it to remain sharp? If it is to remain sharp, is it to remain sharp?

29:37 PRAYAS Yeah, the goal is to manage a kind of platform of conversation which is available

29:47 Yeah.

29:48 For some time where, you know, the— the— the noise of sociality and the—

29:56 SATYA Yeah.

29:57 PRAYAS And the you know, and the— committed schools of vocabulary are not really in play, and you can find a way of talking which is designed to sharpen the ideas that you're talking about. So it is to remain sharp, but not personally. So that's not my personal ambition that, okay, so this is something I'm doing for myself to remain sharp. But it's something which you're designing as a mode of conversation which can sharpen the ideas that you're talking about. So...

30:36 I mean, that's the goal. And the thing is, if you are sharpening a knife with another knife

30:44 SATYA Mhm. Yeah.

30:45 PRAYAS You can only do it that many number of times, and then you have to, you know, you have to sharpen the knife that you used to sharpen this knife.

30:55 SATYA That's going to happen, though.

31:00 PRAYAS No, so what I'm sa- saying with this knife example is that we need to inherently be available and open

31:10 Yeah.

31:11 To multiple voices, you know, who find their own way of finding this, so that this doesn't become another cave in another mountain, which is what we were trying to, you know, not become.

31:32 MALAVIKA I don't know. I think sometimes being another cave in another mountain also talks of a self-sustainability. And I'm wondering if there is a problem with that. If you can have a system that is self-sustaining, it is able to feed itself and survive and sustain yes, you can— as long as you're open to the idea of trying to sharpen it, trying to make it better, optimize the way it functions it— you're always on the lookout. But if it doesn't happen, or if what you find doesn't adapt or suit your needs, so you automatically revert to continuing your mode of operation. So..

32:28 PRAYAS No, I mean, the question is that we are putting to this prototype

32:32 MALAVIKA Yeah.

32:32 PRAYAS Is not, is not really of.. So the infection actually doesn't have this choice. So the infection doesn't have the choice of existing. You know? So either the infection—

32:45 MALAVIKA It becomes more of a medium.

32:47 PRAYAS It becomes a meme, in that sense. I mean it— I mean, okay, so meme might be the might be a word from somewhere else which we, which might, which might dis- misdirect us. But me- in the sense that it wants to travel. So the infection wants to travel.

33:07 Being static is not a choice.

33:11 Because the infection, every time is— it infects new bodies, it figures out how to defeat constitutions, it figures out how to beat immune systems, and in that sense, it becomes more robust as a infection.

33:33 So you are talking about a very strong virus.

33:37 Yeah. So the virus needs to be remain and become strong, right? The virus doesn't have an option of becoming benign.

33:46 SATYA Right. And that's a— that sounds like a very...

33:51 Well, then you will need a, you will need you then, you would need a very attractive host.

34:01 MALAVIKA (?) Wha—

34:02 SATYA Or even the sub— the transmitter.

34:06 MALAVIKA Yeah, I mean, the virus should really want to you know colonize its host. If the virus is strong and it says, "Well, I don't care about this host. It doesn't, you know it's not going to give me very much."

34:26 PRAYAS (?) Or should the virus be attractive?

34:29 MALAVIKA (?) I think it's a bit of both.

34:31 Yeah.

34:32 MALAVIKA (?) If you have an attractive host, like how some mosquitoes decide to only bite certain people.
34:37 MALAVIKA (?) Yeah. Yeah.
34:39 MALAVIKA (?) It's like yeah.
34:41 PRAYAS So you are saying that we need to invite Kareena Kapoor to be the anchor, and we need to infect—
34:47 SATYA No, not— I mean, maybe it's not Kareena Kapoor, but Noam Chomsky.
34:53 MALAVIKA (?) Well, it could be Spock for all I care.
34:55 SATYA (?) Yeah.
34:57 SATYA (?) Right. So I mean—
35:00 So, are we talking about packaging and selling now?
35:03 Yeah, that's the thing.
35:04 *[laughter]*
35:07 PRAYAS I mean, so don't— doesn't that become a mechanism of pop again? Which is—
35:13 SATYA That's what I'm saying, and I don't want to— see, that's what the word "pop", right? Like, we— I think we should divorce from it, because these are mechanisms which happen whether, you know, whatever the content is, there are certain mechanisms separate from the content.
35:27 MALAVIKA (?) Yeah. So what are we selling? so Sam has— Sam is in the room. So...
35:34 Why are all the other people muted? I'm not sure if —
35:38 PRAYAS I don't know. Vinay, why are you muted? Supriya, why are you muted? do you need help with your connections? I can try and unmute everyone.
35:52 Okay. Yeah, I tried to unmute everyone, so is everyone unmuted?
35:58 MALAVIKA Vinay is not unmuted.
36:00 PRAYAS (?) Yeah. Yeah, Vinay has, I think, muted himself, so I can't un—
36:04 MALAVIKA Okay.
36:05 MALAVIKA (?) Yeah.
36:06 So you can't infect him.
36:08 PRAYAS Yeah, he doesn't have the control panel app, so I can't infect him.
36:12 Okay.
36:14 So Sam, what we have been talking about is the infection as something that emerges, you know, out of some construct of intimacy. But, so we first were— have been talk— we got talking about how do we remain open.
36:36 Okay.
36:36 If we can't, if we can't desire the infection, how do we remain open to the possibility of infection? And then we have moved on to talking about infection as a mode of dispersion.
36:53 MOSES SAM Okay.
36:55 So —
36:56 MOSES SAM (?) You're selling infection, is it?
36:58 PRAYAS Yeah, spreading infections. How do we spread infection? So, in the sense, how do we so how do we think around the— and how do we, in that sense, remain clued to biological infectants actually? Because that's a model that actually works. We have an epidemic right now of swine flu here, and we have something or the other every year. So, you know, these people are doing the business and they know how to do their business.
37:29 MOSES SAM (?) First you have to rename infection as vaccine.
37:39 PRAYAS (?) So vaccines stop the flow of infection, right?
37:44 MOSES SAM Yeah. No, I'm saying like if you have to sell an infection, you just say that this is a cure for infection, right?
37:50 MOSES SAM (?) Right. Right.

37:52 SATYA (?) Yeah. Like, that's how godmen operate.

37:56 MOSES SAM (?) Right. That's how people sell religion, yeah.

37:58 Yeah.

38:00 PRAYAS So is the— is the only way of infecting

38:04 Mhm.

38:05 A kind of deluding the host? So if we delude the host, if we confuse the host, we can infect them. Is that the only way of infection being spreading?

38:18 MOSES SAM (?) Mmm.

38:22 SATYA See, I feel like— I personally would be interested in more of a discussion around the process of infection, because I feel like being open to infection, the possibility of infection occurring, all these things are very interesting. See, it's like, it's like—

38:37 Right.

38:37 New ideas taking root. Why do ideas not take root? Why is somebody having a writer's block, for example? How do we— how does that person get over the writer's block? That sounds like a— that person has to be infected again.

38:52 PRAYAS Yeah. So you are proposing another prototype. So prototype situation, so we can actually you know, take that and work with that. So what Satya is suggesting is we actually zoom back in and go back to the individual actor in that sense, and really instead— so we had momentarily gone into this mass operation, so how does infection, how do infections expand. But we will zoom back in, and you know, we will—

39:34 NAVEEN Did you guys talk about the advantages or the merits of infection? Did I miss it?

39:41 PRAYAS (?) No, we actually didn't—

39:43 I mean, we did. We kind of talked about it because we talked about staying sharp, right? And staying sharp—

39:47 Yeah.

39:48 Yeah.

39:49 So staying sharp is one, and then like probably what you mentioned, right? Like getting out of your block

39:56 Exactly.

39:56 Or like writer's block or something. So that's another

39:58 Yeah.

39:58 Advantage.

40:00 'Kay.

40:01 But that is I mean so Satya, isn't that about remaining sharp as well?

40:05 SATYA Yeah. Yeah, it is true. You're right. I mean, well, not necessarily. It could be that... Well, maybe, I guess it could be seen that way.

40:16 PRAYAS No, so—

40:17 The point is to keep moving, basically, or if you want to keep moving.

40:19 Yeah. So keep moving without following a mode of replication. So, you know, without—

40:25 Correct.

40:26 So in the sense you've figured out something at some point and not just to keep using that, what you've figured out—

40:32 Correct.

40:33 —but to keep figuring out.

40:35 And to keep doing, you know?

40:41 So, how do we constantly get infected by— because what we have to take for granted is that things are happening all the time.

40:57 Yeah.

41:00 But are we tuned into that? I mean, am I—

41:03 Participating in that?

41:05 Yeah, or if I want to participate, am I able to participate? Is it affecting me? Even if I might put myself into the solution and drink a vial of virus, does it infect me?
41:19 No, so that actually connects back to the first question, right? So can we desire— if we can't desire infection.
41:25 Yeah.
41:27 Yes.
41:28 So, participation is indicating a desire.
41:32 Correct.
41:33 So infection doesn't require participation.
41:37 I think travel is a bit like that. I mean, you desire to travel, so you desire to expose yourself to other things.
41:45 But can you travel if you wanted to? If you— what if you can't?
41:51 Can you travel if you don't want to? That's a better question.
41:54 Yeah. So if you don't want to travel... I mean, okay, let's say you don't have money to travel.
42:00 Yeah.
42:01 And you want to get infected.
42:06 Yeah, I— I have a different question, but let's—
42:07 But you can't— but you can't... No, actually your question you should put in, because actually you can't want to get infected, right? So that defeats the whole—
42:16 No, but that's what I'm saying. I want to get infected, but I am so immune to it. What do I do now?
42:23 *[Malavika and Satya laugh]*
42:25 Lose your consciousness.
42:27 Right. That's a good answer.
42:32 That's a good—
42:33 So I mean, remaining sharp in that sense, is that about learning how to deal with newer— I mean, new situations all the time? So in that sense if you have a static pool of, you know, your target, your application area, then it's not superhuman to think that after some time of dealing with that pool, you're going to be very good at dealing with that pool.
43:08 Right.
43:09 So, but— but then what? So how do you what— so in that sense sharpness gets blunted by narrowing its application area. You know, so it's so let's—
43:26 Ah, okay. So the fish has grown too big for its pond.
43:31 Yeah, and developed a criteria that we can only survive in big ponds where we are the big fish.
43:39 So now if you pluck out these fish and put them in an ocean...
43:48 ...wouldn't that push them to figure out how to survive with bigger fish?
43:53 Oh yeah.
43:54 Definitely. Definitely.
43:58 So that's like kind of deliberately making a choice of losing one's—
44:04 Comfort.
44:04 —comfort zone. Yeah.
44:05 Yeah. But then how do you even know what you're comfortable with? I mean, is that difficult or is that really simple?
44:18 To know what you're comfortable with? Is that the question?
44:20 Yeah. Yeah.
44:22 I think if you are uncomfortable, you will know it.
44:29 Okay. So then we have something here—
44:32 But you also get comfortable with discomfort after a point, you know? You— that— that's— that's the—
44:36 That's a good point.
44:37 —that's the immunity sometimes I think is..
44:44 Yeah.

44:45 ...kind of detrimental, you know, or— or you can look at, look at it as a strength of, you know, you just do it because you need to survive.
44:52 But then again you're falling into a pattern where you are not exactly able to break out of it.
44:57 Yeah.
44:58 That makes—
44:59 But it's like, that's a good thing also, right? Like...
45:02 Yeah.
45:02 ...how gems are being formed, right? Oh, no, pearls.
45:08 So that's because some dust gets into the seashell and it creates this serum around it, and that's its way of converting its discomfort into a comfort zone.
45:19 Yeah.
45:20 Right, but what if you're bored with the white pearls and now you want pink pearls, right?
45:26 Like the thing is get— like what I think from Malavika said was getting used to the discomfort and producing, but then—
45:33 Yeah, but— so in that sense—
45:34 —you're stuck with producing pearls all the time.
45:37 *[another voice and Satya laugh]*
45:38 No like victims of like, you know, essentially if you are being subjected to torture—
45:45 Yeah.
45:45 —and if you don't have an option of really stopping that or moving out of that, then I mean if you— basically if you look into how I mean people respond to torture, over time they actually get used to it.
46:00 Right.
46:06 So then what it means is to take one's temperature. To monitor one's you know, health. And there's a conscious way of doing it, is to tell yourself to change again now.
46:24 SATYA Wait, what's wrong with someone getting used to a torture? Because like the outcome so even in the case of a pearl, right? So if the outcome is what is known, then you react to it accordingly. So if you know you're gonna produce a pearl, then you create this serum and you get comfortable with the discomfort. And that's the same with torture, right? So if you know the outcome is nothing good, then obviously you get comfortable with the torture and you don't give in to that, which is again a good thing.
46:56 But I think the goal that was stated was to remain sharp, and to remain sharp means to not keep producing the same thing again and again, right?
47:04 Yeah, I— I'd agree with Satya there, because we're also trying not to get into repetitive modes of behavior.
47:16 And anything that becomes that repetitive, where you stop being conscious of what is really going on—
47:26 Yes.
47:26 — becomes a problem.
47:29 Okay, but repetition also makes you good at something really good, like smooth—
47:34 MOSES SAM (?) That's true. I— but I think— I think that's where the difference lies between kind of progressive repetition—
47:41 MALAVIKA Yeah.
47:42 —where it keeps generating itself and regenerating through the repetition, and just mechanical repetition.
47:50 So you're talking about spirals and circles, but spirals look like circles in 2D, and—
47:57 Yeah.
48:00 Well, I— I don't really know about that, but..
48:03 *[Malavika and another voice laugh]*
48:06 Spirals are spheres.
48:08 Nahin, if you flatten them out—

48:09 No, if you look 2D, from the top if you see a spiral, it looks like a circle, right? Or well, not really.
48:17 No?
48:18 I mean, if it's an infinite parallel, you know, that thing—
48:21 Yeah.
48:22 —which jumps on—
48:22 Then it will.
48:23 —staircases, yeah, then it looks like a circle.
48:25 Yeah.
48:25 Otherwise it looks like a thing going down.
48:27 Yeah.
48:31 So I mean, we are actually still finding our way out of the imperative to remain sharp. And that might be something we need a whole day to unpack, because but we can— we can expand that right now a bit so that we at least have our questions for tomorrow.
48:58 SATYA See, the way I was thinking was, the reason I want to go back to this is because you were talking about wanting to perpetuate the prototype. And what does it mean to perpetuate the prototype? What does it mean at a very micro level? That's why we would need to examine the why.
49:16 PRAYAS Yeah, so like the earlier prototype that I offered, so in— in order to remain sharp and available as a platform Surfatial would— might need to remain sharp. And to do that it might have— be able to— might— it might need an ability to be able to talk to multiple kinds of voices. And how does it do that if these voices can't even find their way to being in the same room?
50:01 So we know that these voices exist. I mean, that is almost a certainty. But then how do we know what is it that they are looking for that they will find this?
50:18 Why should we feel obliged to be the platform for all these voices?
50:24 MALAVIKA Yeah, there is no obligation except our own need to remain sharp.
50:32 So it's the imperative of—
50:34 So why not we—yeah, what happens if we expand the platform? So the platform does not need to be in this format, and it can kind of dissolve into normal experiences, and we take from it.
50:58 So like going and talking to people at bus stands?
51:02 Yeah, or, you know, just any other conversation we have we become bugs.
51:08 Yeah. That's actually—I like this idea very much. Like, even going to people at bus stands and starting random conversations.
51:16 Yeah, so I mean that is an exciting idea. So, in the sense we form a secret society—
51:22 *[laughter]*
51:23 —and we entrap individuals into—
51:26 Talking. Yes.
51:28 Yeah, and becoming engaged with this process.
51:32 Yeah.
51:33 So—
51:34 Because if the idea is just to remain sharp, I mean, if the mountain won't come to Mohammed, we go to the mountain.
51:42 Yeah.
51:43 No, but, so, I mean, that's something which—I mean, that's my life.
51:48 SATYA Yeah.
51:48 I mean, we all kind of—well, I don't know about all, but like I do seek out conversations. I do like have—there are people who have psychoanalyzed me on planes just because I let them, you know. So it's like we do this at a, at a certain degree.
52:02 Right.
52:06 Okay, so we form a secret society. so—
52:09 *[laughter]*

52:11 I think we already are, because we came together here, so—

52:16 MALAVIKA No, it's far from secret.

52:19 *[laughter]*

52:20 SATYA That is true.

52:22 MALAVIKA No, it's secret because it's —

52:27 It's in—

52:28 It's not —

52:28 —plain sight, therefore secret.

52:32 Yeah, I mean you—we don't see—so, okay, so I think what Malavika you're saying is this is not secret because, okay, there is a post on Facebook at the top which—with a link that if you click it, you land up here.

52:46 No, not that. In terms of agenda, it's not secret because we're not trying to carry out an operation that —we've been very open about the operations.

53:02 No, but it really seems interesting to me that to that to offer the, you know, so remaining sharp, right? That's not, that's not a publicly acceptable desire, right? I mean—

53:18 PRAYAS No, why not? What do you mean it's not—

53:19 No, you two want to remain—

53:21 Yeah, not everybody wants to remain sharp. That's not their goal.

53:25 [unclear] sharp.

53:26 Yeah, okay.

53:27 Why not just be a society and not be a secret society?

53:35 No, it doesn't matter what we are. I'm just saying that we—if we are looking to get in more —

53:44 Voices.

53:45 PRAYAS (?) —voices into the platform, it doesn't have to be in person. We can, we can be the reflectors.

53:54 SATYA Yeah. So no, but—but what I'm I was actually say—that the secrecy would be involved—

54:05 —because it might not be either—so it'll not work. So in the sense if you offer publicly a way to remain sharp, now that'll come into—that'll hit two kind of roadblocks. One is that how is it that you can say that something else is not sharp?

54:27 Right.

54:27 And how is it that you can say that—I mean, so that becomes the—

54:32 It's subjective.

54:33 No, but you know what, the other thing is not sharp because it has not yet met me. You know, it's—I'm pushing the other thing to become—I, if we, if I meet the other thing, it is going to be pushed. I've not yet met it. I am not yet sharp because I haven't met the other thing, and it has —it is not either because it hasn't met me. So every action of meeting is a pushing towards sharpness, in a way.

54:59 Yeah, I—I mean, your voice broke, yeah.

55:03 What I'm saying is every action of meeting between two individuals or whatever is a, is to push each towards sharpness.

55:15 Right, so it doesn't need to talk about the model.

55:21 Yeah, I mean, inherently, I'm saying that they're not sharp [unclear] it has not yet met me.

55:34 Yeah.

55:43 I think there's some problem.

55:45 Yeah, we are back actually, yeah.

55:46 Okay.

55:47 Okay.

55:51 No, so you were what you were suggesting is that the program doesn't need to be upfront. So, that's why it's a secret program, because you're not revealing all your intentions.

56:06 That's true. but I'm also beginning to wonder if that anyhow happens. —

56:12 That's what I'm saying, yeah. Because as lo—you know, every time I have an encounter with what—it's going to be a new input.

56:23 Yeah.

56:26 But the intent is—but we have all kinds of encoun— [unclear] the time which may not be intentional, but it's surfatial [?] intent. We have something which is a secret intent, then the agenda, whatever that is.

56:42 MALAVIKA There's another thing that came to my mind that we began with this whole Perspective Studies thing as being some—something that is like an experiential exchange of knowledge through conversation. And if that is—if we take that to be the essence of it, then we would need kind of personal participation by all the voices we want. We can't have proxies. What I'm essentially proposing is a proxy.

57:28 SATYA (?) What is a proxy?

57:30 MALAVIKA Proxy is I represent —

57:35 SATYA The idea?

57:36 MALAVIKA —an experience that may not you know, be accessible by somebody else. I'm representative of another voice.

57:47 SATYA But aren't we that anyway? We are, we are that anyway, but—

57:53 MALAVIKA No, kind of in a more conscious level.

57:55 SATYA (?) Right.

57:56 MALAVIKA You know?

57:57 SATYA Yeah.

57:58 MALAVIKA That so-and-so does not want to be here, but this is what they represent, or this is actually their voice, and we can take it up for consideration.

58:13 PRAYAS So are you saying that eventually the, in-the-dark kind of, you know, on-the-wild kind of conversation that happen, eventually they need to lead to inviting them here?

58:30 MALAVIKA That would be good.

58:33 SATYA (?) Oh my god, we sound like missionaries now.

58:35 Yeah.

58:35 *[laughter]*

58:37 PRAYAS No, exactly. So exactly, because, I mean, one of the —so there has been a kind of —so, I mean, we need to figure out how to not walk into that trap, in that sense, you know, evangelizing yourself?

58:53 Yeah.

58:54 Okay.

58:54 Yeah.

58:55 So what I've—what I, what I understand as what I'm, let's say, uncomfortable about evangelizing yourself is the fact that you're flaunting your access.

59:06 SATYA Right. Right, or, yeah, or the exclusivity of something, and then you have to come inside here.

59:12 PRAYAS Yeah, and we cannot flaunt our access because, you know, the how I understand, what I understand access to be is a window. You know, that window can close anytime. I might wake up some morning and I'll find that I can't think and I can't talk and I'm—I want to work in a BPO. It can happen.

59:35 So, I mean, it's not something which I do as a—that keeps me sharp. It's, I mean—I mean, in the sense it's not anything that each of us does consciously. It's not—access is not a privilege.

59:53 MALAVIKA Yeah.

59:53 PRAYAS Access I mean it's a, it's a circumstance which you're not controlling. I mean, in— It can stop anytime.

01:00:02 SATYA (?) Yeah, that's true.

01:00:04 SATYA (?) So we'd actually, I mean yeah, I don't—I don't think we can evangelize.

01:00:10 Okay. But then what that sounds like is to have trapdoors open like wormholes here and there, and close on their own. That's what it sounds like, or looks like. I mean...

01:00:23 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean that's very...

01:00:30 Remaining invisible and think specifically and let's say, strategically of how we want to be visible.

01:00:48 MALAVIKA Yeah.

01:00:50 SATYA So are you—is this like—but then this sounds like a strategizing sort of thing where this is how things look and this is how—this is the procedure for how it will happen. Is that what we're discussing?

01:01:03 PRAYAS No, I mean, you know, that's a very action-oriented approach. I mean, I think...

01:01:06 Exactly.

01:01:07 ...I mean we got lost in terms of going ba—sticking to a prototype, but I mean to s—

01:01:15 SATYA So it's—

01:01:16 PRAYAS ...to stop now and, you know, just quickly fabricate a bridge to tomorrow.

01:01:23 Yeah.

01:01:24 No, you're saying something.

01:01:27 SATYA No, I lost it. I guess my point was... No, I forgot. It's okay, go ahead.

01:01:34 PRAYAS No, so I mean I think one of the things that we have is how do we how do we remain sharp? We haven't really so wh—you know, your sec—second prototype of how do we individually figure that out besides, you know, looking at modes of dispersion and all of that. So...

01:01:55 SATYA Right.

01:01:56 PRAYAS ...I think we should stay with that longer for tomorrow. And the other thing we should talk about is maybe you know, so we'll junk the first prototype. So, you know, we are kind of, I think, you know, done with it. So, but how do we, in that sense, think of visibility and invisibility as a as a mode of infection? So if it—if we are walking in a labyrinth, and if—if we are the labyrinth...

01:02:32 Mm.

01:02:32 Right.

01:02:33 How do we offer ourselves to people to be able to find their way out, because we are a labyrinth with a solution? So in that sense...

01:02:43 SATYA Yeah.

01:02:45 PRAYAS ...access, like access need not be a, you know, in-your-face kind of advertisement, but can it be a set of clues which are planted in the landscape through which people can actually find their way? I don't know. So, if we just hold on to these two things: that okay, if not evangelize, then what?

01:03:10 And how do we personally, individually, you know, think of sharpne—remaining sharp as a imperative? Then, yeah, we could—we could stay with these things tomorrow and really expand them and yeah, and see where that takes us.

01:03:32 MALAVIKA Yeah.

01:03:35 PRAYAS Thanks everyone for being part of this session. We'll meet again tomorrow at 6:00 p.m.

01:03:41 MALAVIKA Yes. Thank you.

01:03:42 Okay.

01:03:43 See you. Thanks. Bye.

01:03:44 SPEAKER 4 Bye. See you guys.