Inviting Weakness, DAY 1

A broadcast by Surfatial, the collective of Satya Gummuluri, Malavika Rajnarayan and me, 20 June 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.

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00:04 PRAYAS (?) .. I'll just preface the first question with.. with an introduction of sorts to the, to the title. So it's not inviting weakness, the idea is not just to.. invert..

00:29 It's larger than that, at least for me. I mean we, let's see how, what it becomes for all of us. But for me it's starting you know, with actually there are some points of correlation to what we were talking in the earlier two groups, where, when we were talking about.. defense mechanisms and our..

00:58 Need to hold on to some, you know.. we feel vulnerable or whatever, right? So we need to hold on to some basic self-perceptual facts. so I've just been curious about what if we actually, you know, in doing so, in building up on all these defenses and in being so strong and all that, in being in such a, in such a way, are we also blocking what we need to hear from what weakness can only tell us, right? So, strength will only give you a particular kind of narrative. But so the Inviting Weakness text essentially, it's, what it said was we know, we need to know what can be displaced.

02:04 So if something is weak and it's going to be swept away and it's going to lose its ground, then we need to know that can lose ground and we can, we need not consider that a essential part of the construct of ourselves, right? So that's where I'm coming from. So I'll, I mean, we'll just start instead of this becoming a monologue, so... The first.. Yeah.

02:34 SATYA Prayas, you just talked about letting go of the weak parts?

02:40 PRAYAS No, letting go that which can break.

02:45 SATYA Or, maybe letting go of the idea of the self.

02:49 PRAYAS No, letting go—

02:50 SATYA Because that's what we want to defend, right?

02:53 There are parts, there are parts to the self and there are some parts which are strong, some which are weak.

02:57 SATYA (?) Yeah, so the weak parts are going to collapse. Right?

03:02 And the— Right. Yeah.

03:05 PRAYAS And it's just my thought is that do we need, do we need that which we know will collapse?

03:14 SATYA Exactly. Yeah.

03:18 PRAYAS So the first question, I mean today we're just going to do a marathon, I mean just going to be snappy about it, we'll just try to be try to spend ten minutes per question.

03:30 Okay.

03:31 So why do we defend ourselves?

03:41 MALAVIKA (?) Because, like we discussed in the last conversation, that we feel a sense of threat. So you want to.. re- reiterate that perception that others may have about you, and you want to —

04:04 PRAYAS I mean, you feel—

04:04 MALAVIKA —rather clarify. You know, you clarify to them what you want them to see about you. And so if it's very different from, or if it seems to have a conflict with the idea you have of yourself, then we feel that—

04:23 Need to defend.

04:23 —we feel vulnerable. Yeah, we feel threatened and we need to defend it. And that's because we care. If we didn't care about that person... And I think this also happens with who we defend ourselves with. If it's just anybody, if it's somebody we don't know at all, I don't know up to what extent we would defend ourselves, unless it's life-threatening.

04:47 PRAYAS I mean, at a, at a basic level we put up a general defense, right? So it's like, at a, at a general level, be you— whether you're my friend or you're a stranger, at a general level there will be a certain guard, that this is that this line is not being crossed, right? I mean, there is a general defense.

05:12 SATYA Right. So if there is a threat perception based on the inputs that are coming, then if that threshold is crossed, then there is a need to put up that defense.

05:23 Yeah. So I mean that is just because that is just following the pattern of behavior that is kind of seems common sense to us. But—

05:31 I mean, there is a self-image, there is a self that we have constructed which we use as the machine to go through our life. And if suddenly now a stone has been thrown or a wrench has been thrown into my wheel, then it's not going to move. I'm not going to be able to function.

05:49 PRAYAS (?) No, if— if it's— if we look at the other extreme...

05:53 SATYA -huh. Which is?

05:55 PRAYAS So if you're going to be very strong, right? So very strong. We're like, we're really hard-skinned, nobody can touch us, right? And we're, our fortress is, so to say, impenetrable. So, I mean, don't we lose a lot in that situation? So I mean, I'm just trying to position these extremes that okay, so if we are trying to be strong all the time and then we actually become strong, and we become like really, we actually have evidence from the world to back up our narrative of being strong also, we have, so you know, everything's worked out.

06:38 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

06:39 SATYA (?) But then...

06:39 SATYA (?) I mean I do think there is something lost.

06:40 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

06:41 SATYA I mean I do think that by not— because the full range of potential of experience is not being experienced, if only a certain calcified structure is being employed and the rest, which we think is weak or we think is useless or fluff, if we don't experience that, then the whole range of living is lost.

07:02 PRAYAS Yeah, so I mean that's basically what, where I'm— I mean I'm thinking might— the interesting material might lie. in the sense that which can bear an impression of the environment we are in, only that will tell us it'll tell us of these impressions, right? If we are really strong, if we are, in that sense, opaque, then how do we even know you know, so like when you were talking about the other...

07:43 SATYA -huh.

07:43 PRAYAS ...what kind of empathy will be possible is— or is possible between essentially very strong people?

07:51 MALAVIKA No, that's true. You won't— very strong people or very successful people often I mean I don't want to generalize, but their levels of identification with struggle might, can sometimes be less than what it is with people who share the same struggle or the weakness, or if you want to put it as strength and weakness. Which is why people in power often huddle together and people who are in lesser positions of power will get together.

08:32 PRAYAS No, but the paradox here is— the paradox here clearly is that even if we, if we can think of this, we can think of this, that people in positions of power or whatever, they can't, let's say, empathize with someone who is, you know, going through some existential struggle or whatever kind of struggle.

08:52 We can think of this. But even then we are, we consciously place ourselves on the narrative of...

08:59 ...wanting this power, right? So... I mean—

09:03 In terms of achieving something.

09:06 Yeah, I mean, so do we essentially want to become— do we want to become stony? Do we want to stop being able to empathize?

09:17 MALAVIKA No, I don't think... See, our where we position ourselves in the narrative is, in terms of achievement, we have an ideal in our heads. And we want to be good people, we want to be empathetic and we want to be successful—

09:35 SATYA And powerful.

09:36 MALAVIKA —and, you know, yeah, and rise up the ladder, etcetera. but I think everybody, in whatever degree we have our ambition, in whatever context it is, we— it's an ideal. We strive towards the ideal, but I really wonder how many people achieve or come close to achieving it.

09:58 SATYA Both you mean.

09:59 MALAVIKA Yeah.

10:00 Achieving both.

10:02 SATYA I mean, if there is a trade-off being made between, okay, do you want power, or do you want to be able to listen to the sob stories of all your friends?

10:11 Mm.

10:12 I don't know, it seems it's [unclear]—

10:14 That gives you power, actually.

10:17 PRAYAS It's what? I didn't catch that.

10:19 SATYA Listening to the sob stories of all your friends gives you a lot of power because you have so much ammunition.

10:24 PRAYAS Right.

10:25 *[laughter]*

10:26 I mean, ammunition to manip—manipulate them back, with that, right?

10:31 SATYA Yeah.

10:32 PRAYAS Nahin, but that—that is a simple trade-off. I—I mean, I'm sure one can assume what choice people would be making, yeah. Because I don't know of anyone who is—who has a strong narrative, but a weak exterior.

10:48 SATYA I think in fact, I would know a lot of people like that who have a strong narrative and a weak exterior. Because I think a lot of people are very strong people, but they don't care to construct any kind of exterior. They just don't care to give off any kinds of airs.

11:05 PRAYAS Okay. So, I nee—I know the wrong people.

11:08 *[laughter]*

11:09 MALAVIKA Oh no.

11:11 MALAVIKA (?) No, I mean seriously, because for me ju—of course, I mean my template of what I understand people do is only from people I know, and from people, I mean I know, have cl—seem to clearly have this bias where, you know y—where even—even in, there'll be a method to even deal with vulnerable situations, you know? So—

11:38 PRAYAS There'll be there'll be strategies, tactics, there'll be coping mechanisms to deal with whatever life will bring to your shore.

11:47 SATYA Okay.

11:48 PRAYAS So in that sense, you are fully figured out, or resolved, so you'll never be left at a loss. So — I mean, events or circumstances won't take you by surprise in that sense. And—

12:03 That means strength for me.

12:06 SATYA Okay. I was—

12:09 KRITTIKA But again, that's just our perception of them, right? Like we think—

12:13 PRAYAS Yeah.

12:14 KRITTIKA They have it all sorted out and they're prepared for every situation, but it just could be that they react to it in a different way, or we are not aware of how they are reacting to it. Behind the scenes, so to say.

12:28 PRAYAS (?) Yeah, I mean or is it like the template of the strong person's exterior, that template we have not figured out how to retain your strength and still retain—I mean, we're actually, I mean I—I'm saying that we actually don't know what good is being weak, right?

12:57 SATYA No, but—but Prayas, there's two things. There's being strong, and there is having templates to appear strong.

13:03 PRAYAS Yeah.

13:04 SATYA Right? And I don't know if all these people who appear to be strong are really—maybe they are really strong, maybe some people are weak, but they're having a figured-out sort of put-together appearance.

13:17 PRAYAS Yeah, we can ignore them. I mean in the sense, if—because we're trying to talk about an idea, we can just try to talk about things which appear to be what they are.

13:31 SATYA Okay, so we are going with those that could be weak inherently, but seem to have the appearance of strength?

13:39 PRAYAS No, who are strong inherently and strong— who appear to be strong as well.

13:44 MALAVIKA (?) Okay.

13:46 PRAYAS Just to keep it simple, because, you know, otherwise we just have too many things to deal with.

13:52 Yeah.

13:54 So, I mean, our second question is related to that. If we—if you do not def—defend yourself, what will happen?

14:04 MALAVIKA Nothing will happen.

14:07 SATYA Your image will crumble.

14:09 SURAJ (?) You'll crumble.

14:11 Your image, your image.

14:13 Yeah.

14:14 Or crumble means—crumble's a negative word. I mean, your image will shift.

14:20 And that will be traumatic, right?

14:22 It could be.

14:25 MALAVIKA No, but if you go through that a couple of times, then you have nothing to lose.

14:30 Yeah.

14:31 You won't care anymore. So it—it—if it happens a couple of times, and it takes me to this idea of —there're—there're many stories, in fact, of people in positions of power who f— are brought down to their knees and crumble, and it—it's a humbling experience. And yeah, once you reach that, then you're—you're kind of set. Even if you do regain your position of power, you don't forget that experience.

15:05 PRAYAS I mean, I—I'll just share something which I have experienced you know, just to—just for—just to make it specific what we're talking about. if we don't defend ourselves, what will happen?

15:17 So, w—when I think about not defending myself, let's say. So, let's say I have a—I have had this fear of not being able to complete the curve, let's say, right? So, that you start talking about something and in the middle you'll not be able to really carry it through.

15:42 Right.

15:43 Now at some point in my life. So if you have this fear and then you really over-invest in the—in the strength to—for this to not happen.

15:58 SATYA Mm-

15:59 PRAYAS (?) So, you know, you really become you really try to become opaque to this fear and s—by giving evidence of not succumbing to it, right? And—and then when you pull it away—so now when I'm trying to pull it away, that—that—those—those defenses. Then again—yeah, again I can sense that, you know, okay, so—so yeah, I've started kind of rehearsing for lectures, which I've never done for a long time. And I've been wondering about, you know, so I didn't need to do this last week, why do I need to do this now?

16:39 SATYA Yeah.

16:40 PRAYAS But—I mean, that's basically that is where I'm coming from, because what—why—

16:53 Those defenses was because in a way I was becoming opaque or, you know, to audience feedback. You can just think about it simply as, okay, you know, I'm not really be—I'm not able to tune in to what the listener is going through so much. So I need to pull away these defenses, I just need to be more vulnerable. And when you do that—

17:20 SATYA Right.

17:21 PRAYAS Then you are again facing that, okay, now I don't know if I'm going to be able to perform at all or not.

17:26 SATYA Correct.

17:27 PRAYAS Mm.

17:29 Yeah.

17:31 SATYA It's like an experiment. You—if you—if one looks at it like an experiment of—one doesn't have to attribute color to it in the sense of crumble or, you know, defend. It's just a different way of being, where I am in a particular way, which is supposed to be strong, and now I'm doing something different where I am inviting weakness. And weakness is not a positive or negative, it's just a different way of being.

17:58 Mm.

17:59 PRAYAS Yeah, it's just all the, you know, all—all the things that happen in you as a response to fear. So, let's say, there's so many things that you're afraid of, and actually what you've been suppressing all this while are all these triggers inside you

18:16 SATYA (?) Yeah.

18:17 PRAYAS Which respond to that fear. And I've just been thinking about how that resource could be used instead of being, you know, just squashed.

18:28 SATYA I agree. I mean, the thing—the key there is the fear. To—to not—to just keep the fear aside, and just look at it—I personally would look at it as a rational experiment, like, what if? If it were like this, what would happen? And see what happens.

18:45 PRAYAS Haan, because I—I'm finding it valuable to be able to understand the listener more.

18:52 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

18:53 SATYA Yeah.

18:53 PRAYAS But I'm not really able to make sense of, you know, what good it does to me to not be sure that I can perform.

19:07 Which is a sort of vulnerability again. Which is also interesting—

19:09 Yeah.
19:10 Because—sorry, Vidisha, you were saying?
19:13 VIDISHA No, what I'm saying is that we are just looking at fear as if or at least how Prayas mentions it right now, that fear is coming from— I mean, sorry, weakness is coming from fear of something. Which means that it's happening in the mind, but I actually think that weakness, even if it happens from the mind, it is more physical than it is psychological weakness. And weakness doesn't necessarily also have to come from something—of course, it also comes from something not knowing. And—and—and that not knowing, or the fear of unknown, or the fear of something you also know, but that something that's been told to you that you need to
20:00 Be scared of, which is then that you become weak. so the other, the other part, which is that something which is about to come and you need to be scared of it's, it might not actually be a production of the interior, like it might not be a production of myself, but it might be a production of other stimulis, like in the previous one you were talking about how are we talking because it's mediated talking, like through advertisements, which was in the previous session that happened.
20:34 But so that's the second kind of weakness. But what I'm talking about is the first kind of weakness, that weakness in general is produce, is produced physically, not, I don't think it's mental.
20:46 PRAYAS Physical in which sense?
20:50 VIDISHA Physical in the sense like even if you think that, oh, I need to like go, like you know, you know this kind of this so let's say the idea of performing. So
21:02 PRAYAS Yeah.
21:03 VIDISHA When you're just like being, you're just being, and then there is a moment where you have to go and become this performer. And so that kind of in-between space that happens, and that space is physical, it's not mental. And you might actually be confident, but still that kind of change that is going to happen or whatever, or sometimes, you know, when you're like getting a doctor's report and it's actually supposed to be like some kind of a big issue or whatever, you're just like crossing your fingers. So those crossing your fingers, these are all like physical things, like something is happening to your stomach.
21:36 Right.
21:37 So all kind of like phrases that are also—
21:40 PRAYAS You are saying that physical in the sense like stamina. You think, you are saying that it's about things like stamina.
21:47 VIDISHA Yeah, like restlessness, or like the butterfly in my stomach. Like all those kind of things are physical expressions to what weakness is.
21:55 SATYA It's like instinctual.
21:58 MALAVIKA No, I'm wondering if she, what Vidisha is saying, is she's narrowing it down to the act. That weakness lies in the act of performing, and when we are not able to do something that we would like to do, it's about also a physical inadequacy. Or we feel that inadequacy both physically—
22:18 VIDISHA [unclear] involuntary.
22:21 MALAVIKA Yeah.
22:22 It's an instinct.
22:23 SATYA (?) And it's happening to you bodily.
22:25 Yeah, like it's like the butterfly in the stomach thing is like, it's adrenaline or whatever that's flowing because of the anticipation of something happening, which is not normal to us.
22:32 Right.
22:34 Yeah.
22:37 Yeah.
22:39 MALAVIKA That's interesting, I never thought of it that way.

22:45 PRAYAS So how would you consider the, your physical model of weakness with the third question? How would you match it with that? Which is, I'm really trying to think if legacy is weakness. Is your legacy your weakness? So what you have done before, your history, is that in fact what pulls you down and becomes your, you know, weakness?

23:11 SATYA Just now my mother had something to say which was, we, relating to the earlier question, we defend ourselves because we need to prove something. And to prove something, that means it's like leaving a legacy. I'm proving myself, and that remains as me, which I need to show to the others. This is me, this is what I'm leaving behind. I'm proving to you all that this is what I am. So, to your question of what was your question just now?

23:41 PRAYAS Yeah so is your legacy in fact your weakness? So, it's because I want to leave something behind, it's because I want to actually demonstrate conclusively or prove whatever, that I am in fact this it's because I have that axe to grind that I'm actually vulnerable.

24:08 VIDISHA Legacy is a construct.

24:10 Yeah.

24:11 But it's also a need. It's a motivation for living.

24:18 PRAYAS Yeah, but you are constructing history, right? And—

24:22 SATYA Yeah.

24:22 PRAYAS History, you can attempt to construct history, but you will never be constructing your own history.

24:32 SATYA True.

24:35 But you think you are, you are. It's again like creating that image for yourself. I mean, you think that if you say your story in your own way, then others won't say it for you.

24:51 VIDISHA I think it's but I mean then one is looking at it that the weakness or the, which is produced by a fear, is coming because one is scared of losing or like failing.

25:07 VIDISHA (?) Because if like, but it's so stra— now then I was thinking that what if the legacy is basically construct, constructed on the, on the fact that I'm going to fail? Like, that, oh, this person always fails. So then the fear is the, it's like the fear of then succeeding, because then it's like, oh, now he's not challenging enough and now he's not cool enough, because what he did was successful. So I think, so I mean I'm just looking at fear not just of winning, but also fear of sorry, not the fear of not losing, but also fear of winning.

25:43 MALAVIKA (?) Also the lack of a legacy. Supposing you don't have a legacy, you haven't done anything that creates this idea of a legacy, then that itself is, in some way going to be an obstacle in wanting to create one. Because you, it's about self-belief. You haven't done anything, so how, why do you think you're going to do it now?

26:05 SATYA Or you have done so much, but you haven't been able to tell the world that you have done it.

26:09 MALAVIKA That's another thing. Or if you, the other end is you've done something fantastic at one point and you're just not able to do it again. And so you're like, what did I do then that made it click, that I'm not able to do now?

26:27 I mean, which brings me to Alexander, right? So, I mean if you really make your milestone or your, what you're setting out to do, if you really peg that on the, on the making history, on the act of making history.

26:49 PRAYAS So in the sense, so like Alexander, so he really made it like, okay, I'll conquer the whole world. And then he set about to do that. And

26:58 He, that's the only reason principally, that's the only principal reason why people, why history even remembers him, that he conquered the whole world.

27:09 His goal was to create a his—, a legacy.

27:12 Yeah, so...

27:14 Or was it? Anyway, that's beside the—

27:16 I mean, that's a narrative, that's a narrative that he wanted to create this legacy.

27:20 MALAVIKA So what is Alexander's weakness?

27:22 VIDISHA No, but what happened with Alexander was also when he actually didn't conquer the whole world. And there is this kind of, this now the act of like mythology and the act of imagining. So, and this is like where the idea of mythology of the East meets West, especially in the story of Alexander. Because when Alexander came to like on the Indian subcontinent, and then he met, forgot the story entirely...

27:55 PRAYAS Porus. Porus.

27:57 VIDISHA And then he, then Alexander, and that person was just like very saintly and sitting. And then Alexander's like, oh, I need to achieve this. And because of the idea that in the Eastern philosophy there is just one life, and so whatever you want to achieve or whatever you want to do, you kind of do it in that one life that you have. But when it comes to the Eastern, I'm so sorry, I just confused the two, but when you come to Eastern or Indian mythology, where it says that you have seven lives, so which means I can sit on my ass and I will just do something next life. So, the idea of legacy and, you know winning within that field, I mean, all those things are, I mean, the ambition is also defined by those things. I mean that's—

28:50 PRAYAS No, but... Yeah, and what Malavika was asking, so in that sense what was his weakness when he wanted to construct this legacy? But so that's what I perceive as, that's what really exposed him in the sense you know, for anyone to, I mean, so actually, yeah, he just died when he was returning from India. So, you can either conquer the whole world, or you can enjoy that empire, but you can't really do, I mean, so if you construct your legacy, will you be there to enjoy it?

29:27 MALAVIKA Well, it depends on the ambition. See, in terms of Alexander, maybe, I think the strength that one sees in his weakness is in his ambition. That, so, if somebody says, oh, I want to conquer the whole world, in all likelihood people will laugh at them and say, don't be silly. And—

29:49 SATYA And that itself is the weakness. The strength—

29:50 MALAVIKA That is the weakness, and yeah, and I think it, maybe we should look at a weakness in terms of a dream, you know? Where—

30:00 PRAYAS Yeah. You can have a dream.

30:00 I mean, it's a— I mean, for real actually, we are when we're talking about weakness, we are correlating it to our— what we have spoken about in Infective Studies about the trickster and the trickster's desire, which—

30:16 MALAVIKA Yeah.

30:16 PRAYAS — lays you know, lays him— the trickster vulnerable to being tricked again.

30:23 MALAVIKA (?) Mm

30:25 SATYA So... but if you don't go into that loop, that oh—

30:32 PRAYAS (?) No, there's no loop here. So, it's— it's just about having what's— somebody else may not see as your strength, they may see as your weakness. So, what may appear as a foolish idea to somebody else, or to most people, is actually what I— Alexander might have capitalized on and went ahead in trying to conquer the whole world. Now, it's a different story that he didn't manage to do it, or he didn't manage to complete it. But what he did achieve while he achieved it, I think gave him power.

31:05 No, but actually for me, what stands out is exactly that when you construct legacy—

31:11 MALAVIKA Yeah.

31:12 PRAYAS —can you ever do it? And when— if you do try, then in that construction of the— of your legacy itself—

31:19 —there will you know, so what you end up achieving— so, if it's really history, then you can't have written it. And if you did write it, then is that history?

31:32 MALAVIKA Why isn't it history if you did write it?

31:35 PRAYAS Because there is no author, right? History, there— I mean, history is in a way the empirical record of time, which a few— I mean, which is, in that sense, the victors— history belongs to the victor, right?

31:50 VIDISHA Yeah, you create a legacy. So—

31:52 You did something.

31:54 Yeah.

31:55 And that's history.

31:58 Right.

31:59 SATYA I mean, living— living itself, you're creating a— a legacy, whether what— regardless of what you do.

32:02 Yeah. That [unclear].

32:05 Yeah.

32:06 But how history remembers you is something that depends on which side you fall. I mean—

32:13 MALAVIKA But— but then history doesn't remember people singularly either. I mean, it's— it's a — it's a pity that history books tend to portray a singular story, but in actual fact, there are many stories to each version of history.

32:29 And the— whichever is the strongest perception at any context, that one wins in that context. So, is there really a weakness here?

32:35 Yeah, and—

32:39 And then something that's unheard of will pop up and that will become very strong, simply for the fact that it's been unheard of.

32:48 PRAYAS So your— your attempt to construct a legacy will not hold you back. I mean that's what you're saying?

32:54 SATYA I mean, that could drive you, right? Like, it could drive you to do something.

32:58 PRAYAS Yeah, but it won't hold you back?

33:02 SATYA It could hold you back in the sense—

33:02 PRAYAS From doing— from doing something that, for example, that doesn't fit the narrative of the legacy you're constructing.

33:07 SATYA Yes. I mean, you might intend to construct a certain type of legacy, but because of your need to construct a certain type of legacy is driving you instead of actually constructing, you are constructing something else.

33:23 PRAYAS Yeah, constructing a jail for yourself.

33:27 SATYA Yeah, it could be. I mean, it could be a matter of habit then. You're constructing habit, and it became a habit for Alexander to just wander about trying to conquer.

33:38 PRAYAS So, our concluding question for this session is what I came up with first actually, but I kept it for the last, is: so, weakness is a tool. Whom you atta— whom will you attack and whom will you surrender to? So—

33:57 MALAVIKA If— if weakness is a tool.

34:00 PRAYAS Yeah. So, I've just taken the "if" out. But if weakness is a tool, yes, then whom will you attack and whom will you surrender to? In the sense yeah, so whom do you extend your strength to, and...

34:16 Using weakness.

34:20 MALAVIKA Why— why should you choose whom you attack and whom you surrender to? You surrender to weakness.

34:25 PRAYAS I mean, we are— yeah. So, in the sense being— projecting ourselves as vulnerable in situations is also very profitable, right?

34:40 SATYA Yes. Yes, it is.

34:42 MALAVIKA (?) So, it's just whom we are weak— whom do we surrender to, and whom do we, you know, put up a defense with? Whom do we— whom do we fight and whom do we surrender to? That's a— that's the only choice. It's not— I mean, the choice is not that we are going to be, you know, we're not going to surrender to anyone, or that we are going to fight everyone. It's just choosing one way or the other.

35:16 SATYA It depends on the narrative that's going on, I think. I mean, there is a narrative I've constructed for myself: this is who I am, this is what I do, this is who will help me— I mean, this is who I can open up to, this is whom I can surrender to, and this is who I cannot surrender to. Whom can I be— whom should I appear to as strong, whom can I appear as weak. It depends on the narrative of my legacy or, you know, if I'm trying to construct a legacy, or on the other hand, just my being of what I'm doing. Could also depend on my identity, who I am.

35:51 MALAVIKA Yeah, what if you don't think of the people you're surrounded by, your environment, but simply to the idea itself? Like, you surrender to the idea of weakness. Then what happens?

36:05 SATYA And that— yeah. And that's another way actually of building strength in my opinion, which is like doing something different than normal. I deliberately throw—

36:13 MALAVIKA You break your own— yeah.

36:15 SATYA Yeah.

36:17 PRAYAS (?) So you have to, in that sense, get over the immediate fear, right? You—

36:24 SATYA Yeah.

36:24 MALAVIKA Yeah.

36:24 PRAYAS (?) —sort of thing, yeah.

36:26 Yeah.

36:27 But Malavika, so when you do that, when you give in to the idea of weakness—

36:29 MALAVIKA Yeah.

36:33 Yeah.

36:34 PRAYAS —what does that— when you surrender to that, then doesn't it change everything?

36:42 MALAVIKA Not everything, but I think it's for the moment—

36:44 PRAYAS I mean, fundamentally, the operating rules. I mean, I just—

36:48 SATYA But you want it to change, that's why you did that.

36:52 PRAYAS Yes.

36:53 SATYA (?) You know that it's going to change. You know that, you know, you— you want something to happen. You want an event, you want a trigger, and you— you give the trigger. But the intent is you want it to change.

37:13 So, you are inviting weakness in that sense because maybe you want to build strength.

37:21 MALAVIKA Or you want to see— for me, I think it's I— I— I can't look at these things in terms of polarities anymore because —

37:33 SATYA Yeah, what is strength, what is weakness?

37:35 MALAVIKA Exactly. So, I think if you look at weakness, if you surrender and you say, "Yes, I'm going to be vulnerable," it may open up you know, windows to something that you hadn't seen before.

37:51 SATYA Exactly.

37:52 MALAVIKA Or it may give you a different idea— understanding of what power is, or what strength is in itself. And you may think— you may come to a realization that what you were fearing is not— is after all not so bad. Maybe you understand fear better.

38:11 SATYA Right. And also you could understand the perspective of the weak better. So, if you deliberately become weak, you are going into a new place, and that can help you either to help the other person or manipulate the other person.

38:26 Yeah.

38:27 PRAYAS (?) I mean, yeah, at least it will re— take away one of the filters, or let's say it will— it will unmute your existence to a certain degree. So, where you think that all was sorted, you will realize that there is another hell to deal with.

38:48 SATYA Or there is another heaven to experience. Like I was saying earlier, to live fully. you are only living through a certain lens and a framework, and you might just decide to break some parts of it. Something else comes in, you never know.

39:02 MALAVIKA Yeah.

39:03 MALAVIKA (?) But you can never live fully.

39:05 SATYA That is true. I mean, whatever to your capacity, your potential.

39:08 MALAVIKA Yeah.

39:09 SATYA If that is your— if that is your goal.

39:15 MALAVIKA It's also probably just identifying that you are weak is also a big strength in itself, I suppose.

39:23 Yeah.

39:24 Yeah.

39:26 You know, if you have—

39:27 PRAYAS I mean, in the— in the sense that you will— you will guard your— yourself, or—

39:33 MALAVIKA No, that you're more aware of yourself, you know, so you know you're weak.

39:37 Right.

39:38 Okay.

39:38 So— and it's also an assertive position, and the moment you get into an assertive position, it gives you a sense of strength. You say, "I am weak." And the very fact that you can say that means that y— you already know wha— what you are, and it puts you— it— it's better than saying, "I don't know what I am."

39:58 PRAYAS No, but not letting that—

40:00 ...moment switch into strength, like you just said, right? So when you are aware of it'll switch into some kind of strength. But I mean at least for now, I'm—I mean, I think what I'm trying to hold together as a thought is it at all possible to just stay with what you identify as weakness and just stay there, but not necessarily, you know, guard it or counter it with some, something that you know, consider—

40:42 That would be a very good state to be in, actually.

40:45 SATYA Yeah, I mean, or at least you can then decide a course of action, or, you know, it's your choice. At least you're aware of what is going on.

40:56 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean you are at least getting the enhanced input then.

41:01 SATYA Yes.

41:02 PRAYAS And whether that input destroys you or makes you something else, I think it's, yeah, I mean, that is a matter—

41:10 SATYA I mean, having the—sorry, even having the awareness could destroy you.

41:15 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean, yeah, okay.

41:19 SATYA Because that's already a change.

41:23 KRITTIKA I think it's so difficult to stay in this state of weakness because of the stigma attached to it, you know? So everybody is taught from childhood, do not be the [unclear] one, be the strong one, you know, or you're the eldest in the family, you're older, whatever be it. So no one has given you the freedom to think for yourself. So I suppose reaching that state of saying, "It's

fine, I'm weak, I will remain weak, and I'm happy being weak," is very difficult because of all the conditioning that's put into our heads.

41:53 SATYA (?) That's exactly right.

41:55 SATYA (?) So there's another thing that came to my mind, that it also, this assertion of weakness, it depends—if it's self-asserted, it's very different from when it is asserted by somebody else. So having someone else tell us we are weak is very different from us—

42:16 PRAYAS Because that's nobody's business to tell us, actually. I mean—

42:19 SATYA (?) No, but it may not be their business, but if you are subjected to that—

42:24 Yeah. I mean, if you are in that situation and if—

42:27 Yeah.

42:28 —if whatever, yeah. I mean—

42:31 MALAVIKA There—

42:32 SATYA Yeah.

42:33 MALAVIKA (?) —in that moment, I mean, how—is it, is it possible? For me, it brings up the question that in that moment when someone is saying you are a weak person—

42:41 PRAYAS Yeah, in that situation—

42:42 MALAVIKA —can you subvert that—

42:44 PRAYAS Yeah, because in that situation—

42:45 MALAVIKA —and say, "Yes, I'm a weak person"?

42:47 PRAYAS I mean —

42:48 MALAVIKA At that point.

42:49 PRAYAS —but wouldn't that lend your—wouldn't that open yourselves to... I mean, what are you saying? You're saying that, "Yeah, I can't defend myself from you." And—

42:59 MALAVIKA Yeah.

43:00 MALAVIKA (?) No, I'm saying you will choose not to defend, because—

43:01 PRAYAS (?) Isn't—

43:03 But isn't that, isn't that courting—isn't that courting more trauma?

43:09 MALAVIKA No, it—it may court trauma—

43:10 PRAYAS I mean, it's in fact more peaceful to accept—like, it's really more peaceful to say that, "Hey, you know what? Nothing can be done anyway, so what's the point? I'll just sit here in the sun," you know?

43:22 MALAVIKA Because I have felt personally, in situations that are a little volatile, to suddenly give in when somebody is—the other person is agitated and they're attacking you—to give in and allow them to attack, then they lose all their, they suddenly just lose air.

43:43 Yeah.

43:44 They get taken aback by the passiveness. Because I think what feeds power is power.

43:57 It's like [unclear] in nature.

43:58 Power of—

44:00 SATYA When two things are resisting each other, there's double the force.

44:03 MALAVIKA Yes, exactly. And that force is what feeds the people—

44:06 PRAYAS But then what Vidisha was saying, you know, about it being physical then.

44:11 MALAVIKA Mm-

44:12 PRAYAS So if it's really about someone intimidating you physically and then you, and you give in, what does it say about your own—

44:22 MALAVIKA Well judo has that very same principle of defense, that you use the other person's strength as their weakness. And physically, to answer your questions very literally, that's ex-

actly what judo does. You use—when somebody is pulling you go with—into them with double the force, and they're thrown off balance. You use their strength against them.

44:59 Right.

45:01 So it's an invited weakness in a different way.

45:05 Yeah.

45:12 So we'll stop here for today, and you know, it's I think we're just a few minutes over our 40 minutes, and so—but you were saying something, Satya, so do you want to just quickly conclude, I mean, what you were saying?

45:29 SATYA Yeah I was just saying, inviting weakness in order to use it as a strength.

45:35 MALAVIKA Yeah.

45:37 PRAYAS (?) Right. Without it aligning with the narrative of strength, which you might want to —I mean, you know, these narratives are—

45:47 MALAVIKA (?) Yeah, no. Yeah. Yeah.

45:48 PRAYAS Yeah.

45:52 Great. So I hope you guys can join us tomorrow. Vidisha, Krittika, I hope it's possible. And Malavika, Satya, I hope you guys are here, yeah. And see you. Thank you. Thank you for joining.

46:02 Yeah.

46:06 See you.

46:07 Bye, thanks everyone.

46:08 Bye.