Is your signal weak or strong? DAY 2

A broadcast by Surfatial, the collective of Satya Gummuluri, Malavika Rajnarayan and me, 21 June 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 ART-PHIL (?) Hi everybody.

00:04 MALAVIKA Hi.

00:04 We are going to—

00:06 Yeah, we can begin our second day of conversation now. You can all unmute your microphones.

00:18 So welcome to the second day of discussions on "Is your signal weak or strong?" and we can find that out based on our internet connections as well today. I think a couple of more people will be joining us in a little while. I'm going to pick up from where we left off yesterday. I have put in a few questions. I think Ritika [?] mentioned something about every act of communication creating a language. And so I thought we can begin with that, whether every act of living can potentially generate different kinds of languages. So would anybody like to begin?

01:15 PRAYAS If every act of living can potentially...

01:20 MALAVIKA (?) Create a language.

01:23 PRAYAS (?) So how open do we want this construct of language to be?

01:33 I mean, isn't language a word that is you know useful in a particular— in a particular situation? That is, that we understand that words are — symbols are going to be used in a way that they can be understood to mean a uniform set of meaning.

01:59 MALAVIKA Yeah, but you can— what becomes a symbol can be open, because that's how languages are born.

02:08 SATYA (?) I think it does not— Yeah, exactly, it need— it can be open because we are only talking about communicating, and communicating can be done in any format. And when a channel has been opened and there's a person who wants to com— or a being that wants to communicate, and a certain set of symbols are used, whatever they are, for that purpose.

02:33 SONIA (?) I'm interested in the idea of even silence being a language. Sometimes devoid symbols, devoid vocabulary, what happens then?

02:41 Yeah.

02:45 PRAYAS (?) Yeah, no we spoke about that for — I think we hinted about that yesterday maybe.

02:51 MALAVIKA Yeah, and we can— I would like to continue with that also today, which is why one of the other questions I am looking at is, if language is something that harbors familiarity, what does the unarticulated hold? in terms of how we look at— and that I'm looking at language as being something that is spoken or heard or written, something that is spelt out in any form. And when it is not spelt out is what I'm looking as what I am terming to be unarticulated.

03:27 Unarticulated. Okay.

03:29 MALAVIKA (?) So that could also be addressed...

03:33 PRAYAS No but I am not entirely satisfied by— where— but in terms of closing the symbol being open and still being— still working as you know, still working as a language. Because, I mean, I understand that what a symbol is can be open and that's how languages are formed and how they grow, like you said.

04:01 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

04:02 But the role that a symbol plays, you know? So eventually no matter which symbol you bring in to be— to play—

04:08 MALAVIKA Right. Right. Yeah.

04:10 PRAYAS Eventually a symbol is going to be a pattern that's going to be understood in a similar kind of way.

04:17 MALAVIKA Yes.

04:18 MALAVIKA (?) And that's how you build up on the language.

04:19 PRAYAS Okay.

04:19 So how— how is it that you imagine that our life itself would be a language, or how is it that you imagine that silence would be a language? Because how would standard symbol— standard interpretations of symbols stick? You know, how would they stick?

04:40 SATYA You know, Prayas, I'm not able to go with the idea that language has to be fixed. Like, that every symbol has to have a repetition and then it becomes a symbol. I'm not able to.. Like, the thing is, if there is something that wants to express or wants to communicate, it does it in some form. And it may not— it may be doing it in a new form every time, or it might use a new symbol which has not yet become a language in terms of the standard definition of a language. So if you're living, there are things that you're doing, and they have not yet been interpreted as a, you know, as a language in the standard form.

05:20 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean, I can understand that your intent your intent that you want to communicate, that's—

05:26 SATYA (?) No, not intent. Intent is already— we are not talking about intent because we are doing what comes after intent.

05:34 PRAYAS Yeah, so, I mean, I can only imagine that your intent can vary, but I can't I can't imagine how symbols which are already symbols—

05:44 SATYA If you have a new concept that you want to articulate and you don't already have a symbol for it, then a new symbol comes.

05:52 SPEAKER 3 But then the repetitive use of the signal would eventually become the language of what you're trying to explain through the symbol itself.

06:01 SATYA Right. And the first time you use it has not yet been repeated, but it could possibly be repeated. So the first time—

06:02 Yeah.

06:08 MALAVIKA So I think for the sake of structuring this conversation, it may benefit to go with this idea of giving language some sort of boundary, and not say— not— well, yeah, if you keep it completely open then anything can become a language, that we do understand it has that potential. But I'm wondering if we can go in the direction of what Prayas said in terms of patterns. And even if it is— and I was thinking about what Sonia said, even if something is silence I think silence can also form a pattern because the silence is not endless.

06:51 SONIA Silence could— I'm wondering if silence can be a symbol.

06:55 SONIA (?) It can. It can.

06:56 SONIA (?) And it could— and that could be repeated in a pattern within a structure where there are other patterns

07:03 MALAVIKA Yes.

07:03 SONIA That could be symbols, other kinds of symbols. But then silence would also be symbolic.

07:09 And I think with—

07:10 PRAYAS (?) But silence itself would have a symbolic value, but what would how silence would otherwise be— being a symbol would be durations of silence. But how would silence—

07:24 SPEAKER 3 And also the situation in which the silence exists.

07:28 MALAVIKA Yeah, it's contextual.

07:31 MALAVIKA (?) Yeah.

07:32 VEERANGANA (?) Yeah.

07:33 PRAYAS And the context is not contained within, right? So the— within— so in the sense, silence wouldn't contain the context that it operates in within itself.

07:43 SATYA Is silence the absence of symbol?

07:50 VEERANGANA (?) I...

07:53 MALAVIKA (?) I..

07:56 SATYA Is silence—

07:56 'Cause if it is.. I mean, I can see how silence can be a symbol and that's where Prayas talks about having durations or it is punctuated with other you know, sounds or symbols. But what if there is— what if we define silence as no symbol at all?

08:16 SONIA I'm also interested in this idea of context. So you understand silence within a context.

08:24 But and lots of times when there are symbols you need to look at them within the context. Is there some way in which language can exist without context? I don't know if that— this is getting too vague, but...

08:40 PRAYAS So I wish there was— I wish Marcus was here today because in computer science there is a whole branch of languages called the— called context-free languages. And these are—

08:52 MALAVIKA Okay.

08:54 PRAYAS Exactly what you're talking about. And— but what those languages are about, as far as I understand, is how context is learnt within each scope of its use, right? So there is no universal legacy context, but there is context that's learnt within the scope of the use.

09:16 SONIA Its use. Okay.

09:19 MALAVIKA (?) Sorry, say that again? within the scope of?

09:22 PRAYAS So let's say if we, if we make it a rule that every time we are going to talk—

09:26 MALAVIKA Yeah.

09:26 PRAYAS (?) We'll behave like strangers.

09:28 MALAVIKA (?) Okay.

09:30 PRAYAS So that's like a context-free language. So, you know, so there is nothing that— nothing from a prior conversation that can creep into this.

09:39 SATYA So this is a language being developed. It is not existing, but it develops itself.

09:45 SATYA (?) Yeah.

09:46 MALAVIKA (?) But it already— the rule gives it a context, doesn't it? You're already giving it a framework that it's not going to use a ref—

09:54 PRAYAS (?) Yeah, no, but rules help you—

10:00 PRAYAS (?) Help you estimate or maybe guess—

10:04 What kind of—

10:05 SATYA Or structure.

10:06 PRAYAS Yeah, what kind of expression will come out of the whole thing. But you can't— you can't— in context-free languages, you are not able to frame languages in a very pakka form, like you can't do it in a very fixed form. You have to—

10:23 You can only interpret, hint, and poke, like you can't really cast it.

10:31 SATYA And so it's like everything you say it's the first time

10:34 PRAYAS Yeah.

10:34 SATYA And then if it repeats again then it adds to the lexicon also.

10:39 PRAYAS (?) Yeah, and there's no— I mean the lexicon doesn't grow. So in the sense only as far as the scope of the program. The—

10:47 Right.

10:48 PRAYAS (?) You can—

10:49 MALAVIKA (?) So what if you—

10:50 SATYA But the lexicon has to grow though.

10:52 PRAYAS (?) Not universally. only in the scope of—

10:54 SATYA (?) Not universally, but in the context of that language, and that's how the context itself is being defined.

11:00 PRAYAS In the context of that program, not the language.

11:05 MALAVIKA So what if you use something that is related to a context? The reason I'm bringing this up is one of the posts I put up today with— when I shared the link to come live for this broadcast is something by David Ives one to— one to eight, the numbers one to eight, but instead of saying one, two, three, four, he says when, you, free, for, which sounds like one, two, three, four. —

11:40 MALAVIKA (?) That should be the phonetical understanding of—

11:42 Exactly, that's a word— yeah, so there's a wordplay, and let's— I'm— I'm just imagining if the context can be something that is related, but you're not— like a surrogate context. It isn't the real context, but you're using something.

12:00 VEERANGANA But I think again over there you have to know the language to be able to understand that reference. I mean if you're not that familiar with the language, you may not be able to pick it up because you're only used to listening to those words in a very particular manner that you're still learning.

12:16 So then—

12:17 MALAVIKA All these languages are learnt when you don't know it at all, you just start understanding over time, because you understanding with— with other contexts also.

12:30 VEERANGANA But I think as you get more familiar with it, you start getting more familiar with the nuances of the language, and that's when you are okay with allowing other experiments to come within the realm of your understanding of that language.

12:45 MALAVIKA So yes, I— I get what you're saying. I'm— I'm just imagining if that if you don't take that experiment for what it is, and if you imagine hypothetically that the reference of the one, two, three, four language was like a ghost, you don't know it exists.

13:07 And you start learning this weird alien language and that's what you will start learning. And then it still provides a context, and you don't know that a context— it— it has its own context also.

13:27 SATYA You— and there's also the context of you yourself knowing a different language and you're desperately trying to make associations of those sounds that you're hearing.

13:38 So you don't know that language, but you know some other language and you have your own—

13:41 MALAVIKA Yes. That's also possible.

13:44 SATYA Yeah.

13:45 PRAYAS Yeah. And also I think making sense of something is depends more on our desperate need to make sense than on what we are trying to make sense of, right? So—

14:01 SATYA Right.

14:01 That is true, that is true. and— and therefore there could be some errors in that place where you're probably going to miss something which, if you weren't that desperate, you— maybe there was no meaning and you attributed it some meaning.

14:16 SONIA So does understanding or making sense have to do with recognizing the symbol and then the pattern probably in a context?

14:25 Yeah.

14:26 So I'm just wondering if you don't understand or you cannot identify the symbol

14:33 SATYA Yeah.

14:34 SONIA And you do not identify the pattern, then can you not know what it's

14:41 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean like—

14:41 SONIA (?) Being communicated?

14:43 SATYA I agree with that, yeah.

14:44 PRAYAS I always — I always thought— I've always thought that misunderstanding the symbols had more scope as far as the poet is concerned, right? So I mean, if— if I'm writing something, there is— there might be a— a set number of ways it can be understood, but the— there'll be a vast number of ways in which it can be misunderstood, and that's where the play lies, actually.

15:11 SATYA Definitely, and that's how the poem becomes personal to the reader, whoever.

15:16 SATYA (?) Right.

15:17 PRAYAS Yeah. And misunderstanding somehow doesn't really come in the framework of communication. I think while it should.

15:29 SATYA I mean if you're looking for a certain type of communication, misunderstanding may or may not help. But see, in a poetic communication it's different. I mean there's a sort of— you're — there's an imagistic sort of journey that the reader is expected to be going through by the writer.

15:45 SONIA (?) So also you give the poet and the poem some sort of license.

15:49 Yeah.

15:50 Similarly, how do— I guess it requires some kind of understanding to know how much of a license you can give a form that I mean you cannot understand the articulation, the license—

16:05 Yeah, like—

16:06 PRAYAS But the fact is that something is getting communicated, and that— that means that poetry is a good tool for communicating some kind of things, let's say, you know?

16:16 SATYA (?) Right, exactly.

16:18 PRAYAS So I mean, but that is— that is not factored in, it's not given to you as a tool set in your communication strategies, like one of your communication tools, that okay, one of the things you can do is try to be misunderstood. That's not—

16:35 SATYA But the unfortunate thing is the way things are structured, like if you have legalese, for example, you have no scope for having any misunderstandings there, and yet there is so much grey area. So...

16:48 PRAYAS (?) Right.

16:50 MALAVIKA So there is— misunderstanding is also something that can be— that can occur from things that have not been said.

17:01 PRAYAS Yeah.

17:02 MALAVIKA (?) So silence can also be a misunderstanding

17:04 PRAYAS Yeah.

17:07 SATYA Yes.

17:07 MALAVIKA Because it doesn't say anything and you can misunderstand it to be anything.

17:11 MALAVIKA (?) Yeah.

17:12 PRAYAS Yeah, but what is misunderstood is still— you're still blamed for it.

17:19 MALAVIKA (?) What do you mean?

17:21 PRAYAS I mean, you will still be blamed for what was misunderstood—

17:24 MALAVIKA Misunderstanding, okay.

17:25 PRAYAS From you.

17:26 SATYA (?) Because you did not articulate it?

17:28 SONIA (?) Because the person you were having the communication with... I don't know if it works that way.

17:35 MALAVIKA But there is— I mean, understanding is not absolute, no? nobody ever comprehends any communication completely. There's always going to be something that is not— and I would say the same for what is uttered, for what is articulated.

17:54 SATYA I agree, I agree. Because you could say something which is construed— I mean, silence is equivalent to saying something also.

18:03 SATYA (?) Yeah.

18:04 MALAVIKA It's on the listener.

18:05 And especially with things like art and poetry, half of the communication lies in these blurred areas where things are not really fully uttered.

18:18 Yeah.

18:19 And that's where different people— I mean, that's where the whole— a whole diversity of interpretation starts.

18:31 VEERANGANA And I think that's where you could in some way refer to an understanding of an unspoken language.

18:38 MALAVIKA (?) Right.

18:44 Which is what brings me to another question for today although I haven't actually put it up. I was wondering if we— how we put ourselves in— into the languages we utter or articulate, whether we are embedding our personas into it in some way.

19:12 SONIA In context to this, I'm thinking of an art— the artist statement.

19:17 MALAVIKA -huh.

19:18 SONIA (?) How much— how much do you say, how much do you spell out? Do you actually need to say when you already have one form

19:23 MALAVIKA Right.

19:26 SONIA You need something in support? So you're saying something in one form and then you have another form to support what you're saying.

19:35 MALAVIKA Right.

19:36 SONIA (?) So how much do you say and how do you say it? Which is again—

19:43 Another— yeah, playing with two different forms. So it's always been a complexity. So it would be interesting to know what Veerangana, Prayas, or any of the others— even Satya.

19:54 *[laughter]*

19:56 Especially if you go to a gallery and you see an artist's work

20:00 And then you see this artist statement.

20:03 SONIA (?) Yeah, [unclear].

20:04 VEERANGANA (?) I think when there's too much said, you feel like— and that's— it also depends, I think, from artist to artist or from the person who's reading it— that too much said in some way leaves very little for interpretation. You want that room where you can also explore things and allow yourself to reflect on something, but at the same time have just enough to maybe channelize your thoughts through that statement towards where the artist wants you to think. I mean, that's what I feel an artist statement should do.

20:34 PRAYAS (?) I mean, I think in— in this year, in this time if anyone is seriously trying to self-contextualize— like, which is what an artist statement tries to do— if anyone is still trying to do that, then it should also account for the environment of cynicism within which that is going to happen.

20:56 SATYA Right.

20:56 That's exactly right, because I was just thinking, I can project whatever I want very explicitly in a statement, but actually my intention is altogether different. It might be to mislead the— the reader. So, there's a cynicism embedded—

21:10 PRAYAS Yeah, because in a— in a time when in a time when the— the keywords that hold value are so well known

21:17 SATYA (?) Yeah.

21:19 PRAYAS You know how— how difficult would it be to— to back up a sprinkling of words with sincerity

21:30 SATYA Absolutely.

21:31 PRAYAS Just to make it believable? So I think — I mean, I don't mind being manipulated, but just— I mean, when you manipulate me, just think through that there is already some— some layer of cynicism which is going to be automatically assigned to whatever you say. And outthink that. I mean, just penetrate that— that layer of cynicism, and I'm happy to be manipulated.

21:58 MALAVIKA But the creation of an artist statement is also in another way like Sonia says, it's a completely different form. It— it may have nothing to do with your artwork sometimes because you are also approaching the artist statement in terms of what it has to be.

22:24 And what it has to do, its function.

22:27 MALAVIKA (?) So there's a self-consciousness in creating the—

22:30 Yeah, and you're never approaching your artwork in— in that kind of functional way. it's — so it's—

22:37 SATYA (?) I think many people do. The intent is to sell it.

22:43 MALAVIKA No, that— that's— I'm not saying that kind of a function, but what you create, the content of the artwork.

22:52 SATYA Even the content, right? Like, it might be tailored according to what is being what is sellable or whatever.

22:58 MALAVIKA (?) Well, if— if that intention is clear and the person's doing it, then— then that's fine. But is the artist statement reflecting what the artwork is doing?

23:10 PRAYAS But I mean, would an artist really want to do that? Would— would anyone really want to reveal what something is truly doing, because then what is left, you know, if you reveal that?

23:23 PRAYAS (?) You can't. I'm saying you can't do it.

23:24 SATYA But these are degrees of art, right? These are different degrees of art, like where there might be a whole bunch of people who prefer to be very explicit and who want to see explicitly spelt-out stuff. You know, this round blob means this, therefore its value is this, therefore you need to pay me this much.

23:45 PRAYAS (?) I mean, I can only think of that as a joke.

23:48 VEERANGANA (?) Sorry?

23:49 PRAYAS I can only think of someone doing that as a joke.

23:52 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

23:53 SATYA Yeah, but that's because y'all are in a different space here. I mean, if you look at a Gajendra Chauhan or something, I mean, their space is different.

24:06 SONIA Right.

24:07 SATYA (?) Anyway, it's a digression perhaps.

24:10 MALAVIKA Well... I was just wondering if we can move to another question that I had for today, which is to do with physical presence, and how in terms of how performance, or what we perform— and this I'm relating to what we began with, whether every act of living can potentially be a language— then if we talk of making art or writing this artist statement, it— it's a performance. We— we are performing something for an end goal. So we are creating a language for it, through our personas. So—

24:57 PRAYAS Yeah, but— but— but what you are saying, is that a— is that a commonly accepted framework? Because I mean, what I am troubled most about with, for example, artist statements, or— or with living as language or whatever, is— is how it— a sincerity is attempted. So it's more troubling to see someone trying to be sincere about an artist statement than someone trying to be flippant about it.

25:31 MALAVIKA (?) It's more troubling? Why— I don't understand. Why do you say it's more troubling?

25:35 PRAYAS I mean, it is troubling. I mean, it's like if— if someone is really trying to be sincere about an artist statement I don't know, it makes me sad.

25:42 SONIA (?) Why?

25:43 PRAYAS (?) I mean how can you do it?

25:47 MALAVIKA (?) So are you saying that an artist statement has to be approached in a more —

25:52 PRAYAS As a performance, like— like you said, right? So if it is being approached as a performance, so it's being approached as a conscious construction, and not as a sincere construction.

26:04 MALAVIKA (?) I don't know how you see this idea of sincerity. I think performance is also sincere. I mean, every—

26:13 PRAYAS No performance is sincere only in the sense that you want to work with a— with— with the effect of, let's say, whatever you perform and then whatever is received. but you don't want to— you're not trying to work with the— I mean, what I mean by sincerity is that you actually believe that there is something absolutely real. So, in—

26:37 VEERANGANA Open-endedness in some way probably.

26:40 VEERANGANA (?) I feel like you're talking about self-awareness.

26:43 SATYA (?) Yeah.

26:44 SATYA (?) What you're doing, you're able to, at a meta level, say that in a constructed artist statement, whereas those who don't do it, there's a certain level of naiveté that goes with it, and that— that's sort of, in a way, that's sincere, but at the same time it's not what might appeal to a certain kind of viewer.

27:05 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean, it's like if we all know that we are actors here, then I would like you to address yourself as an actor, and— and like, you know, and construct your part, rather than getting into the business of, you know, "This is my story and this is where I come from and this is what I— what I stand for."

27:23 SATYA But I think a lot of the lang— nowadays at least, I feel like the structures are such that where you have to, like you yourself said earlier, use certain language in artist statements also to be projected as an artist, in quotes. There's— there's a lot of mixture. Like, there's sophistication is at various levels, and I feel like there's a lot of noise where a whole bunch of actors are in the sphere where people are trying to be an artist or acting like an artist. But not acting in the way that you meant, Prayas, earlier.

28:03 PRAYAS Yeah. I mean, I'm just saying that, yeah, if we all— if I think in— in the environment we exist in, if there is a more pragmatic association with conscious construction, then it'll just be better for all of us. That just accept it, that you are trying to project an image, and let's just get on with it.

28:22 Yeah.

28:23 VEERANGANA I think that's why it's important— I mean, when you look at what we're right now calling an artist statement or an artist's language— it's the open-endedness where the artist is okay with somebody else stepping into what their thoughts are and still being able to deal with it, which is where I think the genuineness of it would also come in, as opposed to something that they're trying to be.

28:46 MALAVIKA (?) Right.

28:48 PRAYAS (?) Right. So something they're offering as a perspective and not as a model of the self.

28:52 VEERANGANA Yeah.

28:56 SONIA If we have to— I'm trying to compare— I'm not disregarding— okay. No, I have to think this before I say something.

29:09 PRAYAS (?) No, you can use it— use us as your whiteboards, it's okay.

29:14 SONIA (?) Yeah, we'll— we— you can wipe what you say.

29:16 I guess— I guess when you paint, or you sculpt, or you write, you leave some kind of a mark, and in that sense performance is a little more ephemeral. So I was — I mean, I wonder how much— of course, and you're also acting, sometimes you get into a role— but how much can the body lie? Because you don't... lie— how much can the body tell a lie? Because you don't leave anything behind then, as a mark.

29:50 But—

29:51 But when you—

29:51 It's something within a particular time, and in terms of the gestures that you make, do you—

30:00 We construct—of course you can construct the language, you can construct an act, and you can construct what you're trying to say. But then sometimes there are spaces in between where there is no conscious construction, when you don't make a particular mark. Am I—I'm okay, I think I should—

30:19 MALAVIKA (?) Yeah, but why is —

30:21 SONIA Very sketchy.

30:22 MALAVIKA —acting—why is acting why does acting have to be a lie?

30:30 MALAVIKA (?) Why does performance have to be thought of as—like if you're playing a role, you're playing that role sincerely. And I would again get back to Prayas about this thing of sincerity. You—whatever role you choose to play, your—your intention to play that role is still sincere. So if you're playing the role of writing an artist statement, you're—you're going to do that with sincerity.

30:51 PRAYAS No, I mean, sincerity is not commitment, right? Sincerity is not equal to commitment. What I mean by sincerity is that you—you are actually thinking that what you are going to do is going to happen, when you very well know that what's going to happen will have most probably no relation to what you will do.

31:13 SATYA (?) But you know, Prayas, I feel—

31:13 SATYA (?) Are you sure about that?

31:16 I feel like this—this discussion's from the perspective of the viewer. I mean, as a—as a viewer of the art, you expect this of the artist. And this is very personal.

31:30 RAHUL Viewer expects sincerity from an artist?

31:33 MALAVIKA No. So we were talking of Rahul, we're talking of whether language can extend itself to become to every act becoming a certain can—can generate a language, every act of living. And in—in that sense, whether we are all in a role of performance.

31:58 Okay.

31:58 And I think Sonia brought up something about how the language—there are two parallel languages used when you make an artwork and when you write an artist statement.

32:11 MALAVIKA (?) Yeah.

32:11 MALAVIKA (?) Because the artwork has a lot that is unsaid, and the artist statement is trying to te—say what the artwork is about, so you have to be careful about what you're articulating.

32:21 RAHUL (?) Yeah, very much.

32:22 MALAVIKA And, so Prayas made this st—statement that he would feel very sad if somebody wrote an artist statement with sincerity.

32:32 *[laughter]*

32:34 So that's—that's the background of this discussion right now.

32:39 And I—I was saying that even if you choose to perform, even if writing an artist statement is a role, that choice is sincere—is—is sincere.

32:49 PRAYAS No I mean, it's ju— it's just it's just acknowledging how complex a system you envision yourself to be existing in. Because if you really accept that you are in this complex system where close to everything is an accident, then you won't— then you won't identify with any output as being created by you know? You set off—you triggered something in motion. Now, that might have been entirely of surplus value, usse kuch farak hi nahin pada. And then, how can you how can you be sincere about it? You can only be—you can only be, I don't know, you can—you can commit—

33:36 SATYA Again, this is again higher awareness. I mean, I—I can't see how many people are actually aware that things are really quite random. You know, most people think they are in control and they are making things happen.

33:49 PRAYAS So that's something wrong with the schooling.

33:51 *[laughter]*

33:54 SATYA (?) I mean, it's a question of like—like, we, you know, free will, right? Like—

33:58 SONIA Yeah.

33:59 RAHUL (?) Prayas, is it sincerity opposed to like playfulness and that kind of thing? Or roleplay or—

34:08 PRAYAS No, it's —I mean, essentially what I'm saying is very simple. It's like if you are if you're constructing, then you need to essentially accept that you are a construct as well.

34:21 SATYA Yeah.

34:22 SATYA (?) If—if you're constructing and saying that "I am authentic," then it doesn't work.

34:31 RAHUL (?) Yeah, for me authentic doesn't work, but—

34:35 PRAYAS I mean, you—you'll have to be a part of the same model that you're creating for what you're doing, right? So if you're constructing and you're saying that we're all part of this construct and all of that, then you are a construct as well. Then, I mean, it doesn't—for me, it doesn't lessen the value of what you might be doing in any way. I mean to me—for me to think of someone as a— as a sincere practitioner who is brilliant, and someone who is just a good construct—construction agent, doesn't take away anything.

35:11 MALAVIKA I think this is a perfect example of not really understanding this word "sincere," because I—I think each of us is understanding—

35:20 Yeah.

35:20 —how we're articulating sincerity very differently. I don't know if Atsuma-san [?] try—was trying to say something in between.

35:33 MALAVIKA (?) I don't know.

35:37 RAHUL (?) Hey, maybe —can you hear us? Hi —

35:40 Yeah.

35:41 Yeah, hey.

35:44 MALAVIKA No, that was Rahul. Okay.

35:45 MALAVIKA (?) Okay. Okay.

35:47 S—so this thing of —see, something else came up when you spoke of being sincere, and—

36:05 MALAVIKA (?) —it doesn't necessarily have to be that the role you're playing th—this idea of being authentic—

36:18 —is—is not I mean, what—I'm—I'm kind of getting lost in how you're relating it to this thing of being sincere and how—

36:27 PRAYAS No I mean, I'm just saying that if you are—if you're—if you're constructing something for me, let's say an experience, you know?

36:36 MALAVIKA Right.

36:37 PRAYAS Then I can very well say that you know, just as your experience is a construction and it is very believable for me, in the same way, you must be a construction, and because you're be—very believable for me, so you must be a construction as well. So how does that take away anything from—from anything—

36:58 RAHUL Prayas, what has got that got to do with artist statement?

37:01 PRAYAS Because the artist statement needs to I think, needs to feel comfortable with the fact that it is a conscious construction and not an earnest sincere communication of what their artistic objectives might be or might not be, you know?

37:19 RAHUL Yeah, I—I think I can agree to that in a way, yeah.

37:20 SATYA (?) Prayas, are you—

37:24 Sorry, Prayas, are you dismissing altogether any kind of expression that has not stemmed from a pre-thought-out, constructed manner?

37:33 PRAYAS A—at a—at a very basic level, yes. So, I mean, you might have an urge to communicate or express something.

37:41 SATYA -huh.

37:42 PRAYAS But —but that urge gets processed through many languages, and maybe, you know, and through many of the things that we have spoken about collectively here—through context, through all of these things. and at the end of which it doesn't remain doesn't remain without the artifact of construction. The artifact of construction creeps in.

38:07 MALAVIKA But isn't our behavior also an artifact of construction? Each of us behave in certain way in, you know, we have—we all have our own patterns of you know, doing things.

38:21 RAHUL I think—are you referring to some kind of a self-reflexivity? Constant self-ref—reflexivity, so like you constantly know, mirrored [unclear]—

38:34 VEERANGANA I think that we could probably go back to what you mentioned earlier: once you've let something out beyond your control—I mean, the moment it's out there in the public or you've shared it with somebody, you're immediately opening it up to other people in some way reflecting to that.

38:52 RAHUL See, what I—

38:52 VEERANGANA And then I think it's about how they reflect—I mean, whether they—sorry, one minute—about sincerity, bringing that in, of the way they refer to the way you've actually tried to communicate that thought or the statement. And depending on whether that's the way you wanted them to refer to it or the way you thought you'd be able to control that, is, I think, in some way achievement and failure of your sincerity, if you can take it to that.

39:21 MALAVIKA But then I'll have to go back to what Sonia said: you're using two different languages to say something, and I don't think either of them is going to really fulfill what you really want to say.

39:31 SONIA Also, when you use two different languages, sometimes you have different tendencies. Even though your subjectivity—you're the creator, and your subjectivities is a combination of something—but you have tendencies according to the medium. So you have two different tendencies. And when one form is in support of the other, in the case of an artist statement... I would like to throw this word in—

39:56 RAHUL (?) Yeah.

39:57 SONIA —tendencies.

39:58 SONIA (?) No, so—
39:58 SONIA (?) Prayas, how do you—
40:00 SONIA (?) ...and sincerity with these two forms, then.
40:02 RAHUL Actually, I like— I like Prayas's bringing in of sincerity, because, see, like from what I observe of so many artist statements, though the artwork itself is supposed to be this interpretable, open, ambiguous suggestion to the world that the artist is making, but somehow the artist statement written by the same artist is— is a very sincere explanation and defense of the work. That is in most of the artist statements I read, you know. And maybe yes one point is the medium, the change in medium, but and also maybe the other point is a change in context, we are writing for different audiences, or maybe the same audience, but for a different purpose. but—
40:55 PRAYAS Yeah, it's a— it's a different purpose that I want to I— I want— I would like to have more transparency about, you know? So, it's—
41:04 RAHUL Yes.
41:05 PRAYAS —it's okay if you want to make your power play. It's fine. I mean, but, you know, just— just be honest about it, that you're doing that, so that I can ignore you.
41:15 SATYA (?) You're— you're asking too much, Prayas, I think.
41:18 PRAYAS Haan, of course I am. I mean—
41:20 MALAVIKA But why are you assuming? Okay why are you assuming that somebody is want— how— how can anybody generate any sorts of power play with an artist statement?
41:33 PRAYAS I mean, of course. I mean, is an artist statement anything about anything else than trying to fabricate value around—
41:43 SATYA (?) Yeah, it's— it's a positioning of one's product.
41:45 Yeah, and positioning is—
41:46 RAHUL [unclear] authorial power of interpretation.
41:49 Yeah.
41:50 MALAVIKA Well, I've— I don't know. I— I've never seen an artist statement as something that —
41:57 PRAYAS (?) That helps.
41:59 MALAVIKA (?) No, I— I've always looked at it as something that gives— that tries to give some more insight into what could be going on.
42:08 Maybe it's also trying to [unclear] the viewer, right? As in—
42:09 RAHUL (?) I always look at an artist statement as [unclear] closes the possibility of interpretation rather than open— opens it up.
42:18 VEERANGANA Sorry? Yeah, that's true.
42:19 RAHUL I always look at most of the artist statements that— that it's something that closes the possibilities of interpretation and engagement rather than something that opens it up.
42:27 VEERANGANA (?) But ideally it should be the other way around.
42:29 VEERANGANA (?) Right.
42:30 RAHUL (?) Ideally, yeah. But I— I think the work of art—
42:33 PRAYAS Yeah, I mean— ideally people should not have the means to reverse fabricate, reverse engineer value. Ideally, it should— a value should be something that emerges and—
42:45 —then aligns itself. But we are living in a time where you can reverse engineer everything.
42:51 SATYA I mean, these days value is arising out of the free market, so really it is happening in its natural format, right? Like, whatever the free market says.
43:01 PRAYAS No, but you can— you— you're also able to reverse engineer it, like, you know, so the so value as a notion is not strictly something that emerges anymore. You could— you can very well fabricate it if you— if you know what you're doing, and just— and I— I— for me, artist

statement is exactly an attempt at that, which most often than not fails, you know. It ends up taking away any value that might have been there.

43:31 SATYA Yeah, I mean it's a cynical viewpoint and I— I agree with you on that. I mean, I think everything is—

43:36 MALAVIKA You agree to being a cynic.

43:38 SATYA Absolutely. Because I unfortunately am unable to see anything sincerely at all. That— that's where I've reached now, where I see anything and I'm like, definitely there's something else behind this.

43:50 MALAVIKA Okay I think it's time to wind up today. And those of you who want to rejoin Satya's group in fifteen minutes we'll post the link. Satya, maybe you can post the link on Facebook? You have?

44:05 SATYA Okay. Alright. Yeah.

44:06 MALAVIKA (?) Yeah. So I hope to see you all tomorrow. Thank you for coming.

44:11 Thanks.

44:12 MALAVIKA (?) Thank you.

44:12 MALAVIKA (?) Bye.

44:13 ART-PHIL (?) Bye. Okay.

44:14 VEERANGANA (?) Thanks. Bye.