





## A Variable Science

POOL

# Hoja Asli

*talks to*

# Malavika Rajnarayan

12th June 1966

2:50 PM in Dharamsala, India

## Who are you when you listen to the door-bell?

I am an ear-drum. I sense presence and I present sensitivity. I wring a beat that beats the ring. I am alerted of a visitation and I feast on exchange. You will have to bring me something though, a little air perhaps; fresher the better- to cook up a storm. Ask for water and it shall rain!

## How do you smell colour?

Like I smell the rain- wet, brown mud. Droplets for a dud. Allowing dust to settle longer enhances the flavour, for a better after-taste.

## Can you sit comfortably on a chair?

It's a two-way transaction. The chair should seat me well. The chair should give me room and support. An embrace is more acceptable than a brace. Uplifting is essential and rest must be temporary.

## How do you forget your dreams and see with your eyes everyday?

I use art to enhance my vision; unifying the eye's mind and the mind's eye. It also opens up my eyes to the world and the world to my vision. Loss is felt the most when I can see very clearly the shape, form and structure of an idea without vision.

## Habits rule you or you rule habits?

I give habit as much of a chance as it gives me. We don't have the best of equations but are committed to remain as each other's health keepers.

## Is the view from your window constructed?

A view is imagined, even without the construct of a window. Windows demarcate spaces and channelise viewing into specific perspectives, which are equally necessary to understand the unrestricted view. Windows ventilate and create room for different points of view.

## Is music a product or a sum?

I see mathematics as being essentially abstract and so is music. A harmony of numbers can produce a number of harmonies. Fine-tuning is infinite.

## In the absence of flight how did you learn to swim in the sky?

I imagine the rain, grow fins and wade through heavy clouds; clear skies are sparse and deep waters can be dense.

## Are animals self-aware?

I don't know, are they?

## Are you a reflection of me? Or am I reflection of you? Are we both the reflection of consciousness?

Reflection is essential for learning. Ideally, reflection gives us a space of objectivity, an opportunity to step outside of ourselves to examine any circumstance. We can choose to be anybody when we step outside of ourselves, we can adopt views and opinions to suit the context of objectivity. However, I imagine no escape from our own consciousness being a filter, shaping our perceptions of even what we imagine another to be.

# Parkha Dutt

*interviews*

## Malavika Rajnarayan

14 January 2014

06:30 PM in Ahmedabad, India

## What is the central construct of your practice? Where does the image that you produce come from?

The human figure is central to my painting as much as people are central to my life. I am enriched by the communication I share with my friends and family and I believe this feeds the ideas I deal with in my paintings. At another level, art is a space of contemplation, where I ponder over issues that demand deeper comprehension. More often than not, we encounter circumstances that make us feel unresponsive and therefore compelled to seek better comprehension and clarity. Linear drawing demands sharpness in my articulation, keen observation and keeps my intellect nimble.

The human figures I draw reflect this attempt for nimbleness and strength. My language and aesthetics are closely aligned to Indian and Asian cultural traditions, where the poignancy of ideas are conveyed through beauty, grace and poetry. Regardless of the subject or narrative represented in the artwork, the preoccupation with evoking the ethereal and ephemeral spans across disciplines and philosophies. My narratives are fed by everyday experiences but removed from references, offering a multitude of meanings to be extracted by each viewer.

## Why do we refer to history?

History is important to contextualize our own lives and the time we are conscious about. Every new day is a mark of history in each of our lifetimes. Evolution, invention and information are all generated with reference to history. I view history as a record of time; every moment counts.



## Why don't you feel comfortable doing the same thing over and over again?

For the same reason that I struggle with discipline. However, discipline does not necessarily imply repetition, it creates a framework. Methodologies and conducive structures are very important for me. It does two things: One, it challenges me to push my ideas to achieve the maximum potential from limited contexts. Looking at this within social structures is relevant, as it trains us to work within systems- bureaucracies, patriarchies, institutions and so on. Secondly, repetition can become stagnating and I remain a little wary of that tendency. Patterning, on the other hand can imply growth and subtle change. A lot of Indian art and music relies on canons, modes and ragas with intricate rules, formulae and structures, but I find it fascinating that they have infinite possibilities for interpretation and continue to be tirelessly explored for centuries.

## Do you have a message?

When it comes to art, I find it difficult to narrow it down to singular messages or limited interpretations. Art invites us to return to it, revisit spaces within our minds and makes us aware of the changing nature of values, mechanisms and our own engagement with the world.

## Can doing be the same as not-doing?

Let us look at dissent. Action is absolutely necessary to express dissent and something like non-cooperation is proactive expression. Conscious thought is the key to any action. Whether we choose to act or not act, making the choice is imperative; else we would become passive and liable to manipulation. We define our identities through choice and action

## Which are the most valuable keywords in the media construction of artists?

Value is relative, and words never seem to suffice. That's perhaps why I choose to communicate through visuals; but even there one cannot be sure of conveying thoughts with completeness. Picking keywords in an already jaded environment of information further devalues individual endeavors and the potential to imagine alternative constructs- of art, artists and ideas.

## If a kite is flying and if it is not, how does it change the story that it is a part of?

It would entirely depend on the story-teller. Conviction can work wonders in triggering our imagination. The presence and absence of a kite is conveyed through the narrator; even more potent when there is no reference to it but for a mere suggestion of a flutter in flight.

## Will the world ever be able to move beyond meta-data?

Information can be disseminated in various ways. There is a certain pleasure in creating complex narratives. We read epics, tales within tales; fractals with infinite generation of itself to the point of disorientation. But we are also able to perceive the world without these filters. Our instinctive sensory responses to physical reality is devoid of meta-data. It defines the core of every experience and shapes individuals differently.

## If words had no meaning, and you could say anything, what would you say?

I would like to call my lawyer.

## Do you want to amplify your transmission?

Not necessarily. Sensitization is the need of the hour. We don't spend enough time listening carefully, observing keenly and reflecting deeply. Communication relies on sensitive and open reception.