

Episode 33

The Trouble with Robots

Research and script: Dr. Arvind Dubey

Translation: Sukanya Datta

Concept and Coordination : Dr. B.K. Tyagi

Narrator: Friends! In the last episode of the radio serial Aany Vala Kal you heard about (short summary of the last episode). Today we will talk about robots with general intelligence...that is, robots with artificial intelligence that can reiterate actions based on specific instructions fed to them. Such robots can serve as receptionists, domestic servants, time-keepers or guards. When using the services of such robots we have to keep in mind their intrinsic limitations. This is because these robots are programmed to behave in a specific manner when given a specific instruction. Thus it is necessary to use a standard and uniform language when issuing the command. Even a slight change in the language may mean that the robot does not interpret it as intended and its response is totally altered. Such altered responses may have terrible consequences. Thus it is necessary that when commanding a smart robot, the user has to be smart too! This is because notwithstanding how intelligent, robots are, at the end of the day these are mere machines after all. Machines simply react. Machines only respond to commands. Machines cannot take decisions on their own. These cannot take corrective actions on their own. In this episode we will scrutinize the situations that arise due to incorrect commands given to such machines. So, let's get ready to think, smile and laugh.

Scene-change music

Location: A.I Robotics....Retail outlet for Robots with artificial intelligence (A.I)

(This is the outlet for the sale of robots that can carry out domestic duties. Vijaya and Nakul are looking to buy a Companion cum House servant. Both are elderly so their voices should be chosen with care to reflect their age. All robots speak with a mechanical-sounding voice.)

Nakul: Vijaya, we have come to the intelligent robot mall. Have you got the list we made at home enumerating the features we want in the robot we plan to buy?

Vijaya: What are you saying, Nakul. Of course I have the list with me. So, are we going to stand on the streets and talk or are we going to enter?

Nakul: Let's go.

Vijaya and Nakul proceed. They meet a robot at the door.

Robot (mechanical-sounding voice): Welcome to A.I. Robotics mall. How may I help you?

Nakul: We want a domestic robot with artificial intelligence.

Vijaya: Yes, so that it can carry out our household chores.

Robot: And what are the household chores in your home?

Nakul: **(angrily):** We peel the layers of the onions.

Robot: I am sorry but we do not have any robot empowered with A.I that can peel all the layers of an onion.

(Sounds of men and women laughing)

Vijaya: Oh! Household chores means just that...domestic work done at home...the same sort of work done in every home. Domestic chores are nothing novel, you know.

Robot: I am sorry, our robots cannot carry out novel work.

Vijaya **(irritably):** Ufff! I mean commonly carried out chores...the stuff that is carried out in every home...like...opening doors, making tea, cooking meals, heating water, cleaning the rooms etc., etc.,

Nakul: Yeah...and maybe massaging my limbs...sometimes.

Robot: Ok. So, do you want an Android machine or a Gynoid machine?

Nakul: What do you mean?

Robot: Appearance wise do you want it to look like a male or a female?

Nakul **(excitedly):** Female is Ok...Female. Vijaya, what do you say?

Vijaya **(tauntingly):** Hmm, You are up to your tricks again! Male. We want a male model.

Nakul: Whatever you say.

Robot: Gynoid-6, Escort Sir to counter number 336.

Female mechanized voice: This way, Sir.

Vijaya **(sarcastically):** And me?

Female mechanized voice: Please join us, Ma'am.

Scene-change music

Scene 2

Male voice: So...you are looking for an A.I robot for domestic work.

Nakul (irritated): YES!!! And how many more people are going to ask me questions?

Male voice: Look Sir, all these robots are custom-made.

Vijaya: Oh!

Male voice: Yes. These machines are designed and programmed in accordance to the needs of the users. A few things are pre-installed in all robots but the main programming and designing depends on your specific requirements.

Nakul: Ok

Male voice: We will give you a Form that you will need to fill out. Kindly tick the boxes against the duties you want your robot to perform.

Nakul: Is this a form or a dictionary? We have come here to buy a robot...not to appear in an examination.

Male voice: Heh...heh...that is a good joke! However, this is indeed just a form. It will interest you to see just how many options we give you. The separate sections are dedicated to lists of different functions. For example, under Cooking you will find a question asking if you are vegetarian or non-vegetarian. It will ask about your favorite vegetarian menu. If you are non-vegetarian, it will ask if you prefer mutton, chicken or pork. It will ask how you like eggs to be cooked...that is, half-boiled, full-boiled...fried or cooked in a curry. Do you prefer heavy seasoning or do you want it to go easy on the salt? What about the amount of chilli you want in your food? And how about the spices you like? If you want pulses to be cooked...which would you prefer...Arhar or Moong? And do you want it tempered or plain? How would you like it served? In a bowl or on a plate?

Vijaya: Please stop! You have simply covered pulses and eggs...if you go on to include all items we will be here till evening.

Male voice: Heh..heh...heh. I suggest you take the form and go to that cabin over there. You can sit comfortably and tick the options given in the form. The applicable charges are mentioned against every option chosen. Once you have completed filling in the form, kindly just leave it on the machine there. It will calculate the cost of your robot according to the options chosen.

Nakul: OK. Anything else?

Male voice: What would you like to drink...something hot or something cold?

Nakul: (Sotto voce): Meaning you have the option to feed the sacrificial goat too?

Male voice: Sorry...what did you say?

Nakul: no...no...nothing.

Scene-change music

Scene 3

Location: A.I Robotics Mall

Vijaya and Nakul have come to collect the robot they had ordered

Male voice: Here is your robot. What will you call him?

Nakul: Is it necessary to name it?

Male voice: Yes. This is because it is not really a name but a command that activates it.

Vijaya: I see. So, shall we name it Vinay?

Nakul: Name it anything...as long as it works, I am OK with it.

Male voice: Of course it will work...we guarantee it. We will take care of its maintenance for the first year. After that you will have to renew the maintenance contract annually.

Nakul: Ok.

Vijaya: Vinay!

(Choose a Sound effect. This Sound-effect will continue throughout this episode)

Vijaya: Will you come with us?

Vinay: **(mechanized voice):** Yes Ma'am.

Nakul: Ok...load it into the car.

Vinay: Not Load...master, sit.

Nakul: Hmm.

Vinay: Please lead the way and I will follow.

Vijaya: **(Happy tone):** Very good! It is smart too.

Male voice: It comes with a user-manual You can avoid small problems and troubleshoot issues if you follow the instructions. And of course, we are always here to help you out...here is our phone number.

Scene-change music

Scene 4

Location: House

Vijaya: **(Voice approaches from far):** Vinay.

Vinay in mechanical tone of voice: Yes, Ma'am.

Vijaya: Just see who is at the door.

Vinay: **(Voice becomes distant):** Yes, Ma'am.

Vinay moves towards the door. Select a sound for this which will be used for the entire episode. Sound of door opening. The visitor is a lady.

Vinay: Namaste Ma'am. Kindly introduce yourself.

Lady: Oh! You! Really Vijaya and her new antics everyday.

Vinay: You are wrong. Not antics...I am Vinay.

Lady: Alright. Alright. Go and tell her Mrs. Srivastav has come.

Vinay: Please wait here. I will go and tell her.

Sound of door closing.

Lady: How odd...he has shut the door in my face.

Sound of Vinay moving.

Vinay: Ma'am!

Vijaya: What is it?

Vinay: Mrs. Srivastav is waiting outside.

Vijaya: **(Mumbling):** Good Lord...she is here...it is as if she has no other work but to carry tales from here to there. She has so much time on her hands. **(Pauses)**. Well...invite her in and ask her to take a seat.

Vinay: Where should I seat her?

Vijaya **(angrily):** On my head...where else?

Sound of Vinay moving. Sound of door being opened.

Lady: Where is Vijaya? What did she say? Oh...let me come in at least..

Vinay: She said, Good Lord...she is here...it is as if she has no other work but to carry tales from here to there. She has so much time on her hands. **(Pauses)**. Well...please come in and take your seat on my employer's head.

Lady: What! Why should I enter? I carry tales? I am worthless, am I?

Vijaya overhears.

Vijaya: Now what new trouble has Vinay created! (**Vijaya advances towards the door...pay attention to ambiance here. Vijaya's voice should indicate she is moving towards the door.**)

Vijaya: Oh! Mrs. Srivastav...whatever is the matter? Do come in.

Lady: (**Shouting in anger**): Why should I? I carry tales from here to there...I'll have you know I have a home too...I am not worthless. I am a respectable person.

Vijaya: (**In abashed tone**): Mrs. Srivastav...I never said anything like this...it is a misunderstanding...Vinay's naughtiness.

Vinay: It is exactly what you said.

Vijaya: Shut up. Just shut up!

Vinay: I will shut up.

Vijaya: Please Mrs. Srivastav...do come in.

Lady: (**Shouting in anger**): Come in? Absolutely NOT! I am a tell-tale, aren't I?

She stomps her shoes and leaves in a huff.

Vijaya: (**scolding tone**): It is all the result of your misbehavior, Vinay.

Vinay: But this is exactly what you said.

Vijaya: So what? You should not have repeated my words.

Vinay: What should I have done?

Vijaya: You should have said...Welcome, welcome. Do come in. Then you should have seated her on the sofa and got her a glass of water.

Vinay: Water...should that be hot or cold?

Vijaya: Oh dear! Cold. Cold water to drink.

Vinay: OK...I have fed in the information.

Scene-change music

Scene 5

Vijaya is humming a song. Doorbell rings.

Vinay: Coming.

Sound of Vinay moving. Sound of door being opened.

A beggar woman is standing outside.

Vinay: Namaste. Dear Madam, kindly introduce yourself.

Beggar Woman: I am hungry for two days. I haven't eaten anything for two days. Please give me Ten rupees... I will buy something to eat with your alms. God will bless you.

Vinay: Do come in please. Welcome, Madam hungry for two days.

Beggar Woman: Me? No...no...I am quite alright here outside.

Vinay: No, please do come in.

Sound of Vinay moving and the beggar woman's footsteps.

Vinay: Please take your seat on the sofa, Madam hungry for two days.

Beggar Woman: (Surprised): Me?

Vinay: I will get some water for you...what would you like to drink? Tea or Coffee?

Beggar Woman: (Stammering): Me? Me?

Vijaya: (voice approaches from far): Who is it, Vinay?

Vinay: It is Madam hungry for two days. I have welcomed her and seated her on the sofa.

(Sounds of men and women laughing)

Vijaya: (Voice comes nearer and nearer): Eh? Who is it?

Vijaya enters the room and catches sight of the Beggar woman.

Vijaya: Who are you? How dare you enter the house and actually sit on the sofa...you, a beggar!

Beggar Woman: (Stammering): No...No...Madam...I did not want to enter...He...he made me enter the house and sit on the sofa.

Vijaya: (Angrily): What is all this, Vinay? How did she enter the house?

Vinay: I invited her in and seated her on the sofa.

Vijaya: **(Angrily):** But why? Why did you do this?

Vinay: You instructed me to do so, the last time. So, Madam Hungry for two days...what will you take? Tea or Coffee?

(Sounds of men and women laughing)

Vijaya: She is not going to take anything...**(Turns to the Beggar Woman)** And why are you still standing here? Leave! Leave at once, I say.

Scene change music

Scene 6

Vijaya: Vinay.

Vinay: **Voice approaches.** Yes, Ma'am.

Vijaya: Nakul's shirt is on the table. Iron it please.

Vinay: Yes Ma'am.

Sound of Vinay moving.

Vinay: **(speaking to himself):** Shirt. Shirt? But there is no shirt here. **(Vijaya's words echo)** Nakul's shirt is on the table. Iron it please. Shirt? OK! **(Sound of a cloth being torn).** Alright...ironed!

Sound of Vinay moving.

Vinay: Here it is...Ma'am.

Vijaya: Yes...give it to me...**(Change in tone...surprised...taken aback)** **What is this?** Why have you torn Nakul's pants? I told you to iron a shirt and you have brought me his trousers after tearing it!

Vinay: This was the only item on the table. It was not a shirt. You told me to iron a shirt...so I tore what I found and made it look like a shirt. I have ironed it too. Right?

(Sounds of men and women laughing)

Vijaya: Right my foot! You tore Nakul's most favorite trousers...Dear Lord, what am I to do with this fool?

Scene change music.

Scene 7

Doorbell rings. Sound of Vinay moving. Door opens. Nakul enters

Nakul: Hi Vinay, How are you?

Vinay: Fine. Battery charge 58b per cent. Surface temperature 38 degree Celsius. All connections OK. Memory 63 per cent full. Speed...

Nakul: I simply asked how you are...I did not ask about your configuration.

Vijaya: **(Voice comes closer):** Nakul are you back?

Nakul: **(Teasing tone):** Looks like it. Vinay, why are you just standing here...I need to drink a cup of nice hot tea? You know piping hot. Garma garam, as they say in Hindi.

Vinay: Certainly, Sir.

Sound of Vinay moving.

Vinay: Nice hot tea. Piping hot. Garma garam. OK. Drink. OK.

Nakul: What is taking you so long, Vinay?

Vinay: **(Sound approaches):** Coming Sir.

Sound of Vinay moving. Vinay places the cup of boiling hot tea against Nakul's lips.

Nakul screams.

Nakul: Vinay you burnt me. You also spilled hot tea on my shirt. Place the cup on the table, idiot!

Sound of Vijaya rushing to Nakul. Nakul keeps screaming in pain...sound diminishes to a constant background whimper of pain. Vijaya and Vinay's words become clearer.

Vijay: **(Worried tone):** What happened Nakul?

Nakul: He spilled hot tea on my shirt...he spilled hot tea on my lips...see I am scalded...it hurts...it hurts.

Vijaya: **(Worried tone):** Indeed you are badly scalded. How did this happen? Who?

Nakul: He did...Vinay that is. He placed the cup of hot tea against my lips and poured it down my shirt as well.

Vijaya: **(Angrily):** Vinay did this...why?

Vinay: Sir wanted to drink hot tea.

Vijaya: Is this how tea is served...see how badly he is scalded...could you not have placed the cup on the table?

Vinay: He did not instruct me to place it on the table...he said he would drink it. He wanted it Hot. Piping hot. Garma garam.

Nakul: **(Whimpering):** God knows in which evil hour we decided to bring it home. Vijaya, get some ointment...it is hurting...my face ...my lips are scalded. It is burning.

Vijaya: Not just your face...your brain will catch fire too when you will see what it has done to your trousers.

Nakul: Never mind my trousers...get me some medication...my face is hurting so much...get some soothing balm.

(Sounds of men and women laughing)

Scene-change music

Scene -8

Sounds of TV in the background.

Vijaya: Looks like the TV has been left On. (Loudly) vinay. Vinay.

Vinay: **(Voice comes closer):** Yes Ma'am.

Vijaya: Shut the TV, Vinay.

Vinay: **(Voice comes closer):** Yes Ma'am.

TV stops. Vijaya is busy on the phone. This shows the time lapse. Vinay lays a big box at Vijaya's feet.

Vinay: The job is done. The TV has been Shut up.

Vijaya: OK...(Surprised tone) but what in in this big box?

Vinay: TV.

Vijaya: What!

Vinay: TV

Vijaya: But why is the TV in this box?

Vinay: You said Shut the TV. I wrenched it from the wall and shut it in the box. Right?

Vijaya: I meant shut it down...switch it off!

Vinay: I followed orders to shut it...I shut in in the box.

(Sounds of men and women laughing)

Vijaya: O dear...shut...shut down...I meant the sound...how to explain...To switch it off!

Vinay: You did not say switch off. Shut the TV means switch off the TV. Fed the information. Right?

Scene change music

Scene 9

Nakul: Vinay.

Vinay: Yes Sir.

Nakul: What is all this...all the lights are On...go inside the rooms and put out all the lights.

Vinay: Yes Sir.

Sound retreats into the house Vinay: Put out the lights. Ok...put out lights.

Vinay picks up the Fire extinguisher. Hissing sound of gas escaping.

Vijaya: Nakul...what is that sound?

Nakul: What sound?

Vijaya: Listen carefully.

Loud sound of gas escaping.

Nakul: Yes...yes I hear it.

Vijaya: Where is Vinay?

Nakul: I sent him inside to put out the lights.

Vijaya: **(In loud and panicked tone):** It must be something that he is up to...Let's go quickly and see. Come on.

They swiftly exit. Sounds of running.

Vijaya: **(In astonished tones):** Vinay...what is all this? What are you doing with the fire extinguisher?

Vinay: I am putting out the lights.

(Sounds of men and women laughing)

Vijaya: Good Lord...what have you done? There is foam all over the place. You were told to put out the lights and look what you have done.

Vinay: That is what I am trying to do...to put out the lights but the lights have not yet been extinguished.

Loud sound of gas escaping.

Vijaya: Nakul...Nakul...come and see what he has done.

Nakul: **(Voice approaches):** Why...what has he done?

Vijaya: Just see...there is foam all over the room.

Nakul: **(Angrily):** What is the meaning of all this?

Vinay: Just putting out the light...extinguishing them with the extinguisher.

(Sounds of men and women laughing)

Nakul: Put out the light. Extinguish the light...it just means switch them off. Switch the electricity off!

Vinay: OK. Putting out the light means to switch them off. To switch the electricity off! Feeding in the instructions. Right?

Scene change music.

Scene 10

Sound of flowing water. Washing machine is on. Vijaya is humming a song.

Vijaya: Ah! The wash cycle is over. It means the clothes have been washed. Vinay. Where are you? Come here.

Vinay: **(Voice approaches):** I am here, Ma'am.

Vijaya: The clothes have been washed. Now dry them in the Sun. You remember, don't you what I taught you about drying clothes in the sun?

Vinay: Yes Ma'am.

Vijaya: Dry them in that way...no mischief.

Vinay: Yes Ma'am.

Sound of Vinay moving. Cat mews. Vijaya picks it up.

Vijaya: Kitty...Kitty...Kitty...come come..

The mewling sound gets closer.

Vijaya: Kitty, Kitty. My baby. It's bad baby...you have dirtied yourself...but never mind...let me clean you up. Let me give you a bath.

Vijaya keeps talking lovingly to the cat. Cat keeps mewling. Vijaya bathes the cat.

Vijaya: Ah! See how lovely and clean you are now. Very good Kitty. (Loudly) Vinay!

Vinay: (Sound from afar coming close): Yes Ma'am?

Faint sounds of Vinay moving. The sound becomes louder as Vinay approaches.

Vijaya: Hold the cat with a loose grip. It is wet...and shivering with cold. Take it outside and dry it out...while you do this, I will take a bath myself.

Vinay: Yes Ma'am.

Vinay picks up the cat. The mewling sound becomes louder. Sounds of Vinay moving.

Vinay: (Speaking to himself): Shivering. Dry in the Sun. Right?

Water running from tap. Vijaya humming a song. She is bathing. The mewling sound becomes louder and louder.

Vijaya: Why is Kitty mewling so loudly? Has Vinay been up to some mischief again! Let me see.

Sounds of Vijaya walking. As she approaches Kitty, the mewling sound picks up volume. Vijaya is not in the room but outside...so change ambiance.

Vijaya: Vinay...Oh Dear Lord...why have you strung up poor Kitty? You have even used a clothes peg to clip her to the clothesline! Poor Kitty. Kitty. My baby.

Vijaya rescues Kitty and continues to speak lovingly to the cat.

Vijaya: (Lovingly): Poor Kitty, you aren't hurt I hope. (Addresses Vinay) Vinay what is this nonsense?

Vinay: You said dry in the Sun. I carried out the task according to the instructions you gave me that day.

(Sounds of men and women laughing)

Vijaya: Good Lord! What am I to do with you? You will ruin us all. I have to clear you out...today itself!

Nakul enters.

Nakul: What is wrong Vijaya? Why are you so upset?

Vijaya: No more...no more...I cannot tolerate it any more. If Vinay remains, my head will burst.I will go mad. We thought its presence would make life easy for us...that it would be a companion for us...but it is driving us mad. Nakul do something. Do something, Nakul. Get rid of it. We will cope with the housework...but get rid of it...or else I will leave!

Nakul: **(Hastily):** I will do something.

Scene change music.

Scene 11

Doorbell rings

Nakul opens the door.

Male voice: I am from A.I. Robotics.

Nakul: I am Nakul. I had called you yesterday.

Vijaya: Oh...Come in please. We have been waiting for you.

Male voice: What seems to be the trouble with your robot?

Vijaya: We have a long list of problems with it. It does all sorts of contrary things when given instructions. Everyday there is some new drama! (Excited tone) It has ruined our lives. It will drive us mad.

Nakul. Truly! We are exasperated with its antics.

Male voice (Astonished tone): Is that so? Let me check.

Scene change music.

Scene 12

Sound of TV

Male voice: Nakul ji. Vijaya ji. I have checked the robot. There is nothing wrong with it.

Vijaya: But...

Male voice: Let me demonstrate. Vinay, Switch off the TV.

TV is switched off...sounds stop.

Male voice: Vinay. Get a glass of water. Place it on the table.

Sounds of Vinay moving. Sound of a glass being placed on the table.

Male voice: See? Can you fault Vinay's actions?

Nakul: But it behaves so erratically when we give commands.

Male voice: I have checked the commands you have given...these were saved to its memory. I have also checked its responses to your commands. The trouble is that you view Vinay as a domestic servant and not a machine. You have to agree that irrespective of how advanced it is; Vinay is a machine after all. That is why certain actions have been linked to certain specific commands. That is why if you change your commands its actions will also change.

Nakul: Oh.

Male voice: Therefore you need to standardize your commands. This is a machine. It will take your commands literally. It cannot understand figurative speech.

Vijaya: But...but...we...

Male voice (Interrupts): A machine irrespective of how sophisticated and advanced it is cannot rival a human brain. It will take your commands literally; at face value. It cannot analyze the hidden inner meaning of what you actually wish to say. Remember, if you want to command a smart machine you have to be smart in your behavior too.

Scene change music.

Narrator: Now do you understand that commanding a smart machine means you have to be smart yourself? A machine is mechanical by nature...it cannot equal the machines made by Nature...that is to say human beings.

Friends, In this episode of the radio Serial Aanay vala Kal you have heard the light-hearted and amusing skit entitled The Trouble with Robots which explained how a specific action is cued by a specific command. This is why, although empowered with intelligence a machine does not...cannot ...react like a true human. The machines made by Mother Nature...that is to say human beings are therefore superior.

In the next episode of the radio serial Aanay vala kal we will hear about (Short summary of next episode). So, remember to tune in...same time...same day...to the Radio serial Aanay vala Kal. Till then...Goodbye.