

Supervisor's notes on Nirav Prajapati's BA thesis

Nirav finishes his long journey of studying abroad with a bachelor's thesis called *Anecdotal Body Transformations*. In the *Introduction*, he confesses that he had 'worked hard' throughout his life, since his childhood, and that it is thanks to his will power and perseverance that he has been able to achieve becoming a conscious man and performer. From the point of view of his supervisor, the words 'will power' and 'perseverance' are very appropriate even when it comes to assessing Nirav's process of writing this thesis. I find his choice of exploration – his body and its transformations seen through a reflection and recollection of his past experiences – very fitting, too, because it has always been evident throughout his studies that this is what he is interested in most.

Nirav presents us with a journey of self-realisation and self-discovery. It is clear he made such a reflection of his past experience for the first time (it was difficult for him to cut from the 70 pages of the first draft he sent me). It was exciting and surprising to watch him during this process of writing and trying to freely associate and find references from the Western and Indian culture to understand his position and how he can 'connect the dots'. This process took him almost two years and I am glad he took his time.

In Chapter 1 and 2, Nirav takes the reader to his childhood experiences in India, explains the context of his upbringing (some of that he shared also in his final presentation) and where his will power and eagerness to learn and explore, furthermore, his passion for theatre, movement and acting comes from. Reading the thesis is like sitting with Nirav in a café or a pub and listening to anecdotes from his life. It is both entertaining and quite breath-taking sometimes. Not only is it interesting to learn about his experience with (for us) different approaches to movement and training (in the Chapter 2: Indian Culture's Heritage of Movement and Transformation: Indian Folk Dance and Kalaripayattu) where the training was based on severe discipline, but Nirav also attempts in the passages in Chapter 3 (Western Cultural Movement Transformation) to make a connection with the principles of Dialogical Acting taught at KATaP (DACP) with Natyashastra, a Sanskrit work on drama, performing arts, dance, music and various other topics related to the ancient Indian tradition to dramatic performance that dates as far as at least the 1st millennium BCE. When Nirav looks back at his experience and studies, he associates and finds references to this 'dramaturgy book', as he calls it, provides his own translation and understanding of the text and relates and connects it with his experience with DA and movement and acting disciplines at KATaP. It is really quite fascinating to understand the context and conditions Nirav was born into and how he was able to grow despite all the challenges.

When Nirav describes his experience and understanding (that also changed during the years of his studies which he admits and reflects upon) of the movement discipline and how it is taught at this department, he actually creates a dialogue not only with his younger self but also with the pedagogue in him (his brief pedagogical attempts are roughly shared in the Chapter 3/4). That is a moment that needs some distance from oneself.

In the Conclusion, Nirav observes that he perceives himself as another Nirav. Which is something, as he realises, he is able to do thanks to the self-reflective nature of the studies and thank to Dialogical Acting – which he also focuses on in the chapter 3 where he gives his understanding of it complemented by his reflections from the studies.

Nirav's thesis is a recollection of experiences, anecdotes, thoughts on theatre, self-reflective documentary, notes on drama and life. It is a genuine exploration, an attempt to understand oneself by looking back. That takes courage and, in Nirav's particular case, persistence. I am happy I could be present to observe his process and included in the dialogue.

The thesis meets the formal requirements of the BA thesis, and I am happy to recommend it for defence.

I suggest grade C – partly because of the language (Nirav first wrote the thesis in his native language, Gujarati, and had his friend translated it into English. The thesis was then edited by an English native speaker, however, sometimes it is evident that some things were lost in translation and the text is sometimes an enigma.) and also because I think the author could have gone deeper in his search for references.

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