

D:

Reference  
Only

Ref label

41 0640327 7



ProQuest Number: 10183221

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10183221

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

321958

TRENT	TRENT
17/15	17/15
Short Loan	PHD/ACC/03
	GOL

**An analysis of the circumstances and factors that have  
influenced the development of Animation Industry in Iran  
in the 1960-2002 period**

**Nasser Golmohammadi**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of**

**The Nottingham Trent University**

**For the degree of doctor of philosophy**

**July 2003**

## **Abstract**

In the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century animation emerged as a revolutionary way of making art. It evolved into a powerful means of expression and creativity of artists who could merge all art genres into one art form. The subsequent developments of animation have opened its diverse uses in entertainment business, education and political propaganda.

This thesis attempts to examine the factors that have influenced and shaped the development of animation industry in Iran. It takes a historical view and investigates the impacts of changing socio-economic and political forces that have determined the functions of animation in the Iranian society. The study traces the establishment of the industry to the government-run centres, describing the pioneering role of artists who gave rise to the 'golden age' of animation in the pre-revolutionary Iran. Especial attention is throughout paid to the long and rich cultural and artistic heritages, as the thematic basis for indigenously produced animated films in Iran. The growth of the industry is considered in conjuncture with the expansion of feature films cinema and expansion of television networks. The latter is particularly important for the fact that it provides a secured market for a sizeable audience of children and young people in Iran.

The thesis analyses the impact of the 1979 Islamic Revolution on the animation industry from a period of stagnation to a highly promoted and government sponsored artistic and industrial activity. In the post-revolutionary period, the industry was transformed from one reflecting the Iranian history and culture to the one that

emphasises the Islamic-Iranian values and Islamic traditions; hence animation has become an ideological means in propagating the cultural policy of the state. Thus, animation has increasingly become a cultural industry assigned to supply growing needs of television and artistic works reserved for international festivals.

This research is largely based on extensive interviews with animation artists and those who are working in the industry complemented with a sample of questionnaires addressed to both Iranian artists and foreign observers and participants in the Iranian International festivals on animation. The research methodology is also supplemented with the research on printed materials – very few and often descriptive- and personal experience of working over twenty years in the industry.

**To the memory of my beloved mother  
Amy Rahmani (1312 - 1381)**

## Acknowledgement

I am grateful to many people for their help and encouragement in the writing of this thesis. First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Ali Mohammadi and Professor Roger Bromley, whose constant guidance and support clarified many of theoretical and methodological shortcomings of the original idea. Their intellectual assistance and comments greatly improved the final draft of the thesis.

I like to express my deepest gratitude to many friends who encouraged and inspired me throughout the writing of the thesis, especially Eric Egan, Nuala Crow, Mohammad-Reza karimi Saremi, Nosrattollah Karimi, Esfandiar Ahmaddieh, Mohammad Masoud-Shahie, Nouredin Zarrinkelk. Ali-Reza Golpaygani, Esmail Sharie, Edic Melikian and Mohammad-Hassan Zorag. I am immensely indebted to all of them for their intellectual stimulation and supports without which I could not have completed this work.

I like also to thank the members of the Faculty of Humanities of the Nottingham Trent University for their helps and kindness throughout years I carried out my research there. Especial thanks are due to Terry Mcwiney, Parvaty Raghuram, and in particular Richard Johnson who gave me sound advice and suggestions ironing out some of inherent problems of doing research.

This research was made possible by a scholarship from the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). I would like to thank the Art Faculty of the IRIB for giving me the opportunity to carry out this research work.

The last not the least, I like to express my sincere thanks to my family, my brother and mother-in-law for their selfless and unfailing moral support, to my wife Zahra and my son Koushan without whose patience, love and continuous encouragement, this thesis could have never completed. We like to save our special thanks to Diane Schmitt who kindly helped us through difficult times and the completion of the work.



## TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Chapter1: A Historical View of Animation and Research Methodology</b>	
<b>1.1-Animation: An International Perspective.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2- The Context of the Thesis.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1.2.1-Cultural continuity and change.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1.2.2- About Islamic Ideology.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.2.3- Islamic television and hegemonic ideology.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>1.2.4- The underlying Premises of the Thesis.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>1.2.5- Research Methodologies.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>1.2.6- Research Sources.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>1.2.7- The Plan of the Thesis.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Chapter 2: National Identity and Iranian Animation</b>	
<b>2.1- The Characteristic Feature of National Culture/Art in Iran.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>2.2- Cultural Traits and Artistic Identity.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>2.2.1- Cultural Traits .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>2.2.2- Artistic Identity.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>2.3- The concept of national animation: A Discussion.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>2.4- Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>74</b>

### **Chapter 3: An Overview of The Development of Cinema in Iran**

<b>3.1- Introduction.....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>3.1.1 - Cinema in Iran as a modern media.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>3.2- The Development of Iranian Cinema from 1900 to 1960.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>3.2.1- Emergence of motion picture camera in Iran (1900-1905).....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>3.2.2- Advent and development of the first c-houses (1905- 1928).....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>3.2.3- The problems of production (1929-1937).....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>3.3.4- A decade of stagnation (1937-1947).....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>3.2.5- The substantive beginnings of a film industry (1948-1960).....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>3.3- The emergence of New Wave (1960-1979).....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>3.4- Continued innovations (1979 to Present) .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>3.4.1- Priority of content over cinematic narration and structure (1979-89)...</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>3.4.2- Revival of neo-realism (1989 to present).....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>3.5- Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>103</b>

### **Chapter 4: The Development of animation in Iran**

<b>4.1- Introduction.....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>4.2- Founding an animation centre in the Ministry of Culture and Art.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>4.2.1- Evaluation of the demise of the Animation Centre in MCA.....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>4.3- The first animation centre in Iranian Radio and Television.....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>4.3.1- The Animation Department in Channel One.....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>4.3.2- Animation Department in the Channel Two.....</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>4.4- The first Animation Centre in the I.I.D.C.Y.A.....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>4.5- Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>150</b>

## **Chapter 5: A Golden Age of Animation in Iran**

<b>5.1- Introduction.....</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>5.2- Factors contributing to a Golden Age.....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>5.2.1- Economic development and oil income.....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>5.2.2- Manufacturing, urban life and consumer demand.....</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>5.2.3- Necessity of attention to education for the new generation.....</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>5.2.4- Animation as a means of presentation of modern face of Iran..</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>5.2.5- Political imperatives and freedom of artistic expression.....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>5.2.6- First International artistic festival in Iran.....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>5.2.6.1- <i>The Mad, Mad, Mad World</i>.....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>5.2.6.2- <i>The Flower Storm</i>.....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>5.2.7- Quality painting as illustration or animation.....</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>5.3- Five Masters of Iranian animation.....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>5.3.1- Esfandiar Ahmadih.....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>5.3.2- Nosratollah Karimi.....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>5.3.3- Nouredin Zarrinkelk.....</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>5.3.4- Ali Akbar Sadeqi.....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>5.3.5- Abdollah Alimorad.....</b>	<b>192</b>
<b>5.3.4.1- Jewel Mountain, a journey to the word of wishes.....</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>5.4- Conclusion remarks.....</b>	<b>202</b>

## **Chapter 6: The Islamic revolution and its impact on animation**

<b>6.1- Islamisation of education and media.....</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>6.2- The role of animation in the post-revolutionary Iran.....</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>6.3-The impact of the Islamic revolution on animation .....</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>6.3.1- Reconstruction of economy and Arts under Rafsanjani (1988-1996) .....</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>6.3.2- Animation under Khatami (1996 – 2000): dialogue between civilizations .....</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>6.4- The state of animation in Iran – political and international focus.....</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>6.4.1-Cultural and artistic development.....</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>6.4.2- Educational Animation .....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>6.4.3- Industrial Animation .....</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>6.4.3.1- Private studios.....</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>6.5- Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>246</b>

## **Chapter 7: The relationship between international developments and dominant local values**

<b>7.1- Culture and Media at the service of the Islamic .....</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>7.2- Islamic Rituals and values and Narrative Arts (animation).....</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>7.2.1- The paternalistic perspective and the female.....</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>7.2.2- Martyrdom (<i>shahadat</i>), highest model for humanity.....</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>7.2.3- Islamic stereotype life .....</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>7.2.4- Love and Sex taboos.....</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>7.2.5- Sadness, joys and prays.....</b>	<b>259</b>

7.3- The Mode of Address in Animation Films.....	262
7.4- Concluding remarks .....	272

## **Chapter 8: International and Indigenous Views on the Iranian**

### **Animation: A Questionnaire Analysis**

8.1- Section one: International views on Iranian animation.....	275
8.1.1- Questionnaire Results and Discussion.....	276
8.1.2- National TV channels as a key domestic market.....	278
8.1.3- Overseas production as an industrial force in animation.....	279
8.1.4- Academic qualifications or apprenticeship.....	279
8.1.4.1- Academic qualifications are recommended because:..	281
8.1.4.2- The apprenticeship system is recommended because:	282
8.2- Section two: Indigenous views on Iranian animation.....	288
8.2.1- The place of women in the animation work force.....	289
8.2.2- Indigenous filmmakers and the professional market.....	295
8.3- Concluding remarks.....	303

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion**

9.1- Globalization: an overview.....	306
9.1.2- Cultural imperialism and Globalization in Iranian context.....	311

<b>9.2- Originality of research.....</b>	<b>319</b>
<b>9.3- Hybridisation of culture and art-forms.....</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>9.4- Integral parts of the Iranian animation .....</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>9.4.1- At the service of children entertainment.....</b>	<b>322</b>
<b>9.4.2- At the service education enhancement.....</b>	<b>323</b>
<b>9.4.3- At the service of politics.....</b>	<b>324</b>
<b>9.5- The Proposal of reorganizing animation centres.....</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>9.6- The history of animation in Iran is a living history.....</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>Appendixes.....</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>Abbreviation appendix.....</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>357</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 2.1:</b> Aliqapu Palace, Esfahan, Safavid period (left picture is a view of music room).....	48
<b>Figure 2.2:</b> Kudabandea, Sultaniya, beginning of fourteenth century (Zanjan province).....	49
<b>Figure 2.3:</b> Fath Ali Shah hunting with two mounted attendants and two on foot: he is pursuing two very small gazelles, one of which he has shot through the neck. Delicate landscape background.....	52
<b>Figure 2.4:</b> Zandegy (Life) by Nosratollah Karimi (1929) .....	72
<b>Figure 2.5:</b> Shangoul-o-Mangoul by Farkhondeh Torabi and Morteza Ahadi (2000) .....	73
<b>Figure 3.1:</b> Abi va Robi by Ovaness Oganian (1929).....	84
<b>Figure 3.2:</b> a poster for White Even by Samuel Khachekian, the name of director highlighted on the right top of the poster.....	89
<b>Figure 3.3:</b> Cow by Dariush Mehrjui (1960), Ezzatollah Entezami actor of film in the picture.....	97
<b>Figure 4.1:</b> Persian officer on the way to a perception given by the Achaemenid sovereign, bas-relief on the main stair way of the Apadana Persepolis.....	107
<b>Figure 4.2:</b> Taq-Bustan (Kermanshah, Iran) the king in the boar hunt scene.....	108
<b>Figure 4.3:</b> Coffee House Painting, story of Karbala (religious subject) the style that developed under the Qajar dynasty.....	109
<b>Figure 4.4:</b> Nagali in the Coffee House.....	110
<b>Figure 4.5:</b> Coffee House Painting from Shahnameh.....	111
<b>Figure 4.6:</b> Kheymehshab – bazi, the 9th International Puppet Theatre Festival Tehran 2002, traditional Iranian puppet show, technique Marionette, based on folktales, Mobarak and Morshed are two main character in this show.....	111
<b>Figure 4.7:</b> Mollah Nasreddin, first Iranian animation by Esfandiar Ahmadeih 1957.....	114
<b>Figure 5.1:</b> the Mad Mad Mad World by Nouredin Zarrinkelk 1974.....	159
<b>Figure 5.2:</b> the Flower Storm by Ali Akbar Sadeqi 1973.....	163

<b>Figure 5.3:</b> Malek Jamshid by Nosratollah Karimi.....	177
<b>Figure 5.4:</b> Jewel Mountain by Abdollah Alimorad 1994.....	198
<b>Figure 5.5:</b> Bahador by Abdollah Alimorad 2000.....	201
<b>Figure 6.1:</b> Rostam and Esfandiar by Esfandiar Ahmahieh under production .....	208
<b>Figure 6.2:</b> Amir Hamzeh by Nouredin Zarrinkelk 1977.....	209
<b>Figure 8.1:</b> Animation Department, Ministry of Art June 1966, (back standing right) Esfandiar Ahmadeih, (middle row second and third) Nosratollah Karimi and Nafish Riahi and first group of Iranian women animator during production of "life" .....	293
<b>Figure 8.2:</b> Saba Animation Company (2000), many of new generations women animators at work in the studio.....	293
<b>Figure 9.1:</b> present situation of animation organizers in Iran.....	331
<b>Figure 9.2:</b> proposal diagram for further unity, centralize and reorganizing for animation activity in Iran.....	332
<b>Figure App.1:</b> (left) design for Sindbad in Iran, (top right) design for Sindbad in Finland, (down right) design for Sindbad in Hollywood.....	349
<b>Figure App.2:</b> Islamic Republic of Iran is a Middle East country consisting of 28 provinces.....	355



## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 4.1:</b> Animated films produced by animation centre of MAC from 1957 to 1972.....	120
<b>Table 4.2:</b> Annual production of Animation by Saba Company.....	122
<b>Table 4.3:</b> Result of cultural and research committee selection process, 1994, 1997.....	124
<b>Table 5.1:</b> Four aspect for masters.....	171
<b>Table 5.2:</b> Animations produced by Nurreddin Zarrinkelk listed by year, 1970-1998.....	184
<b>Table 5.3:</b> Animations produced by Ali Akbar Sadeqi listed by year, 1970- 1998....	190
<b>Table 5.4:</b> Animations produced by Abdullah Alimorad listed by year, 1987-2000.....	195
<b>Table 8.1:</b> Women taking further and Higher education degrees in different fields of study (%).....	290
<b>Table 8.2:</b> Orthodox animation and Experimental animation.....	328

# Chapter One

## A Historical View of Animation and Research Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First it provides a brief overview of the international animation industry with special references to Walt Disney' production. Second, it explains the context in which the thesis is located, underlining the premises, research methodology and plan structure of the thesis. .

### 1.1- Animation: An International Perspective

In the early 1900's, animation<sup>1</sup> emerged as a revolutionary new way of art marking. Built upon many technical and artistic inventions in the previous decades, animation evolved into a powerful means of expression and creativity of artists who were [are] able to merge all art genres into one art form. Initially a group of artists, in particular Dadaists, tried to introduce movement to their paintings and graphic designs. Winsor McCay's first animated cartoon (*little nemo, 1911*) is credited to be the one who produced a full-length story. In Paris, Leopold Survage created sequences of abstract paintings (*coloured rhythms, 1914*) and influenced artist like Max Fleischer (*Koko the Clown*) in America. Artistic works of Walter Ruttmann, Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling are often taken as showing the potentiality that exists in this artform.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The term 'animation' is driven from the Latin word, anima, "The breath of life", and refers to the recording of individually created phases of imagined action in such a way as to achieve the illusion of motion when shown at a constant, predetermined rate, exceeding that of human persistence of vision.

<sup>2</sup> Bendazzi, Giannalberto, *Cartoons: one hundred years of cinema animation*, London: John Libbey, 1994, section 1.

In the 1920s, a new group of artists - Oskar Fischinger, Len Lye, Norman McLaren, Alexander Alexeieff and Claire Parker in Europe, and Mary Ellen Bute in the United States- shown that the development art of animation is boundless and depends on the imagination and artery of the artist. In Christine Panushka words "The ability [of artists] to deconstruct a movement and reassemble it in a new or convincing way is the animator's territory. ... [Artists have] realised their visions using animation as a means to externalise their inner thoughts and unique points of view. Animation gives the viewer the opportunity to gaze at a frozen moment of thought and to experience another person's rhythms." <sup>3</sup>

They were uncompromising and highly experimentalists and work on their own, or with a small team, rarely seeking or finding popular success. However, despite this initial interest and enthusiasm, animation, in America, come to be widely considered an element of mass culture industry, rather than the powerful means of artistic expression. The overall drive shifted away from the individual artist and into the hands of large industrial studios, such as the Warner Brothers Studio and most notably, the Walt Disney Studio.

By the 1950s, Disney, despite its humble beginnings, emerged as "the most recognized name in animation throughout both America and the world. The company has maximized its consumer appeal by careful production and marketing strategies"<sup>4</sup> Disney produced classically-rooted films centring on ideas of unity, closure, and

---

<sup>3</sup> Panushka , Christine, 'Absolute Panushka', 1999, <http://panushka.absolutvodka.com/panushka/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Benschhoff, H.M, 'Heigh-ho, Heigh-ho, Is Disney High or Low? From Silly Cartoons to Postmodern Politics', *Animation Journal*, 1992, p. 62.

practices of realistic representation.<sup>5</sup> However, over time, Disney turned more toward a standard of pictorial and choreographic realism in his work. This "Disney style" became the measure of quality by which popular American animation has been evaluated ever since.

However, Disney's influences had far more important consequences for the future of this art form. He set narrative standards and anthropomorphic style, which targeted a juvenile audience creating the fallacy that animation is only a children's medium. Disney also made sure to place their films securely within the mass-market venue. By association with commercial media, Disney films came to be viewed as a degraded form of 'low art'. This perception presented a great danger to the animation community at large, given Disney's overpowering influence on the world's view of the medium. The problem was further reinforced by the endeavours of other animation studios attempting to emulate the Disney style, which had become so popular. The "animated musical feature film" formula was all that animation could be to the majority of Americans. As a result, many important aesthetic and narrative alternatives were neglected and animation lost much of its credibility as an artform.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to note that Disney did make one major attempt at combining "high art" with their established film animation style. In 1940, Disney produced (*Fantasia*) combining a more experimental animation style with abstract narrative and a classical music score. However, despite all of Disney's artistic intentions, this film was ultimately a financial failure. One might speculate that this was due to American audience unprepared intellectually for such a shift in style and content. Regardless of

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.63

why it occurred, however, this set-back led Disney abandoning the idea of high art in his major releases. This is not to say that artistic expression has not been evident in his studio's work since. However, the main thrust has been toward commercial rather than artistic endeavour. At the same time, the artistic reputation of animation continued to drop in the public eye, and fine arts animators found it even harder to get noticed for their work. Many important ideas have been overlooked under the shadow of Disney.<sup>7</sup>

The anthropomorphic themes of animation were not new narrative strategy but has been widely used throughout of human history and rooted deeply in classic fables and myths. Animation presents the unique ability to portray the impossible, including animals with human characteristics. Animals have always been used to create strong associations with ideas and values, in a way that human characters cannot. They are powerful age-old symbols, whether it be the low, slithering snake as a symbol of evil, the gentle, white dove as symbol of peace, or the quick, sly fox as a symbol of cunning or deceit. This coupled with the ability to engage in storytelling has elevated animation to a powerful medium, especially utilising a language that can be read and understood by even the least educated.<sup>8</sup>

One other thing that should be emphasised is that animation is a result of collaborative efforts. There is a persistent view that more than one contributor lessens the artistic value of a project. While this is an understandable sentiment in regard to traditional art forms such as painting and sculpture, it is important to realize that every second of fluid animation takes between twenty and thirty 'paintings' to make, or between twenty and

---

<sup>6</sup> Adinolfi, Anthony. 'Animation: A Lost Art Form' *Leonardo*, 1999, vol. 32 no 2, p.18

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Mayer, G., Film as text, North Ryde NSW: Jacaranda Press. 1991, chapter two.

thirty 'sculptures' for stop motion. Animated film has always been a grand undertaking, and the development of teams of artists has been a natural progression as the technical and aesthetic scope of projects continues to increase. It is a credit to Walt Disney who formally established organisational structures based upon proficiency of division of labour, which greatly improved the quality and consistence of the production.<sup>9</sup>

Walt Disney animated films are greatly admired for their art and quality but audiences often failed to notice Disney's manipulation of their own fairy tales. The Disney versions taught different moral lessons than those taught in most of the original versions. Indeed, the preponderance of repetitious stories, the absence of other stories, and the bending of truth contribute to the process of cultural distortion. Disney's studios created and perpetuated a mythical culture, borrowing from original texts of various cultures, both written and oral, and revising them to fit values and images that they find attractive. The subversion of the original texts, which are foundations of the culture, changes the nuance and meaning of the story.<sup>10</sup> The replaced, or rewritten, elements of a story reflects the ideology of the invading Disney culture.<sup>11</sup> As the new version of the story replaces the old version, the original culture becomes annihilated. Furthermore, alteration to the texts reflects changes in values of the dominating

---

<sup>9</sup> Cox, D., 'Caricature, ready-mades and metamorphosis: visual mathematics in the context of art. (commentary on high versus low art seen in context of the computer-animation work, Venus & Milo)', Leonardo, 1992, vol. 25 no3/4, p.298 (295-302).

<sup>10</sup> For example, in one of its earlier versions, Snow White is a story about two sisters, Snow White and Rose Red, who exhibit qualities of good and evil, respectively. No romance is necessary for Snow White to prevail, and she does not need a prince to reap her reward. The reader learns that good will eventually be rewarded, and that evil will be punished. Disney, however, turns the tale into a romance that dictates that Snow White must obtain a prince to be connected to and accepted by the outside world.

<sup>11</sup> Trites, R.. Disney's subversion of Andersen's 'The Little Mermaid.' Journal of Popular Film and Television, 1991, vol 18, no. 4, pp. 145-152.

ideologies, either because they have shifted philosophically, or because they have been subjected to some form of imperialism.<sup>12</sup> New texts legitimise the new ideologies.

Disney texts borrow stories that are culturally specific, and then impose white, male-dominated ideologies in their revisionist constructions of those stories. As the stories shift to a white perspective, their meanings change. But more importantly, the native cultures that contribute the original texts become distorted. In imposing values through the images in the productions, Disney portrays Western culture as the normalizing force in the film, while the depictions of the native cultures are shown to be exotic, backwards, and merely entertaining.<sup>13</sup> Such depictions perpetuate stereotypes about foreign cultures, and as the original text is lost to a new text, the members of the original culture have no point of reference as to the foundations of their culture, and in turn, their identity. They are forced to adapt to Disney ideals in the film, and then become assimilated into the mainstream culture.

In this respect, perhaps, best known example is Disney's 'Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp'. In the original story, Aladdin learns about greed as he cashes in on the three wishes he acquires from the genie in the lamp. The Disney version neglects to teach any moral lesson, and retells the love story of a princess in distress saved by a worthy prince. Disney portrays the Arab culture as a dangerous place, where the natives are predominantly violent, thieving, and uneducated. The evil characters have dark complexions and exaggerated features, such as moustaches and goatees, while the hero

---

<sup>12</sup> Mayer, G., *Film as text*, North Ryde NSW: Jacaranda Press. 1991, chapter two.

<sup>13</sup> Edgerton, G. Redesigning Pocahontas: Disney, the 'white man's Indian,' and the marketing of dreams. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 1996 vol.24, no .2, pp.90-98.

and heroine are highly anglicised.<sup>14</sup> This covert racism legitimises Western culture and denigrates Arabic culture.

In general, one can argue that Disney's animated films advocate traditional family values, and draw a distinguishing line between an illusionary American society and 'other [non-white] worlds' whose inhabitants are viewed as backwards, barbarians and savages. . Disney's brand of family values are based on middle-class virtues and political conservatism defined as 'the American way of life'. Disney's role can be seen as part of the 'information elite', which transmits a preferred system of beliefs and relies on the image of a happy, kindly, paternal" figure that project America as the "magic kingdom," based on a rewritten historical identity of the past.<sup>15</sup>

The above analysis of Disney animated films is intended to show the power of animation in transiting an ideologically constructed images which often serve to perpetuate the existing socio-economic and gender relationships justifying by highly distorted images of other cultures and societies. However, European animator artists have retained, to a large degree, the original concept of animation and resisted the commodification of this art form. Richard Williams<sup>16</sup> makes an interesting comparison between American and English animated films. He draws attention to an English stylish and highly experimentalist animation compares with traditional and low-culture American animation. .

"We went to see the Beatles' feature cartoon *The Yellow Submarine*.  
Though I liked the designer Heinz Edelman's styling, the start - stop, stop -

---

<sup>14</sup> Shaheen, J. Aladdin: Animated racisms, *Cineaste*, 1993, vol. 30, no. 1, p.49.

<sup>15</sup> Giroux, Henry. Beyond the Politics of Innocence: Memory and Pedagogy in the 'Wonderful World of Disney.' In eds Bell, Elizabeth, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender and Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. p.45 .

<sup>16</sup> Richard Williams was the creative mind behind the animation and he designed and directed the characters of Roger Rabbit, Jessica and Baby Herman, all of which won him an Oscar in 1988.



start' jerky quality of most of the animation meant that after half an hour much of the audience went to the lobby. No matter how stylish or inventive- jerky or bumpy animation seems only to be able to hold the audience for about twenty-five minutes. While the *Yellow Submarine* had an enthusiastic cult following from the advertising agencies and university crowd, the general public avoided the film. It killed the non-Disney features market for years. A top United Artists executive who distributed *The Yellow Submarine* told me, this is the Beatles at the height of their popularity and still people stay away from non-Disney animation. Film executives at that time always said of animation, 'if it doesn't have the Disney name on it, no one will go see it'. But the real point is, it was not just the Disney name - it was the Disney expertise that captivated the audience and held them for eighty minutes. Almost the same week Disney's *The Jungle Book* came out and was an instant hit. I went along to see it reluctantly, thinking (as I still considered myself an innovator) that though there might be something interesting, it was probably predictable stuff'.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to Walt Disney's studios that rely on complex financial backing and shareholder's pressure to produce a marketable and profitable products, European animators are often shielded from market forces through various forms of financial support provided either by the state or supported by a system of patronages. Other factor that contributed to the success of Disney's animated films is the type of stories, which are universally recognisable elaborated to the point of perfection and deceptively giving a sense of authenticity and creativity. Under Walt Disney's directorship animated films in American has become an industrial activity where animators are transformed into skilled workers supervised by master animators to produce high quality and marketable commodities. Indeed, Disney provides a proven model for those countries aiming at entering into global animation market.

---

<sup>17</sup> Williams, Richard, the Animator's Survival Kit, published in the United States by Faber and Faber Inc,

Until recently, the Canadian animation industry had followed the artistic conception of animation giving opportunity to animators to experiment on new ideas and styles. The Canadian government in 1940s organised a national office for film production (NFBC) headed by Johan Grierson who invited Norman McLaren to organise a separate department devoted to the production of animated films. Mc Laren invited most promising young animators, students of art schools and amateurs- George Dunning (the author of *The Yellow Submarine*), Jean – Paul Ladouceur, Rene Jodoin, Jim McKay and Grant Munro to join the NFBC. Soon a complete animation film department arose, which enabled filmmakers from all over the world to make personal films they could not make in their own countries<sup>18</sup>. However, after more than fifty years of creative activity the NFBC began to experience severe financial constraints that necessitated a re-evaluation of its initial aims and the establishment of a new strategy more in tune with changed circumstances. According to Robinson,<sup>19</sup> the 1990s are viewed as the decade that would eventually lead to the demise of Canadian animation. The financial problems and dwindling budgets, combined with the erosion of a creative vision, turned the NFBC from a stimulating, creative environment into “a formless, impossible labyrinth”<sup>20</sup>.

The development of animation in Western Europe is more complex given the varied cultural forms emanating from a diverse number of nations. This last point is

---

2001,p.5.

<sup>18</sup> Glassman, Marc, Ton Gloudemans, Paul Driessen, images and reflections, publisher Holland Animation Film Festival (Utrecht) & centre international du cinema d' animation (CICA Annecy), 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Chris Robinson is executive director of the Ottawa International Animation Festival and the founder and director of SAFO, the International Student Animation Festival of Ottawa.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, Chris, *Whose Golden Age?: Canadian Animation in the 1990S*, Animation world Wide Magazine, June 1998, p.2.

particularly relevant in that productions and animators are primarily defined and denoted by their country of origin. In Britain the golden years of animation, both in the artistic and commercial sense, occurred in the 1960's when she entered the realm of feature animated film production with works such as Halas' adaptation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Furthermore, works by Richard Taylor, Bob Godfrey, and later on Channel Four, supplied the domestic market, whilst commercial company's such as Aardman Animation brought British animation onto the international stage. According to Bendazzi,

At the end of the post - war age, European animators no longer had much in common. When Disney ceased to be a model and animation became an autonomous discipline drawing inspiration from all cinema and all experiments in graphics, the animators made full use of their creative freedom, even though they had to compromise with the expectation of audiences, market demand and lack of financing. While no single country nor genial artist took the lead in the field, Western European animators contributed dramatically to developing and promoting animation. It was in Europe that frame by frame cinema became theorised as a cultural phenomenon<sup>21</sup>.

An early significant contributor to the development of animation, a 'cultural phenomenon' was the German animator Lotte Reiniger<sup>22</sup>. More than a decade before Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, she began work on what was to become one of the first feature length animation films, '*The adventures of Prince Achmed*'. The film contains many semi-abstract and experimental techniques, such as the use of wax and backlit – glass, which were revolutionary at the time. Her inventive technique also

---

<sup>21</sup> Bendazzi, Giannalberto, *Cartoons, One hundred years of cinema animation*, Translated by Anna Taraboletti Segre, Published by Johan Libbey & Company Ltd, 1994,p.273.

<sup>22</sup> Charlotte Reiniger, born in Berlin. She moved in avant-garde circles in the heady period of the 20s. Her work has fundamentally little in common with that of experimental filmmakers likes Walter Ruttmann, Eggeling, Hans Richter or German Expressionism. Most of her films were inspired by fables or music, and notable for their extreme delicacy, ironic humour and fantasy.

extended to the design of an early form of the multiplane camera (which separates foregrounds and backgrounds into layers to give a three dimensional effect). This was once again several years before Disney had built his admittedly more complex camera.<sup>23</sup> In later years animators such as Nick Park from Great Britain, Jean Francois Laguinie from France, Bruno Bozzetto from Italy, Raoul Servais from Belgium, were to embrace this experimental tradition and expand on the work of pioneers such Reiniger, in promoting and developing animation as an important and culturally relevant artform.

Similarly, albeit under different social and political circumstances, animation in Eastern Europe emerged as a unique and distinctive means of artist expression. This original form of cultural expression arose from the twin concepts of a rich artistic heritage (e.g. model animation inspired by the traditional puppet shows in countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic) as well as the attempts by art to communicate and operate under a system of government that sought to control the media for the purpose of promoting ideological propaganda. For the first 15 years following World War II, animation in Eastern Europe exhibited many of the characteristics of 1930s Soviet animation: created specifically for children, oriented towards moral and civic teaching, and resistant to stylistic changes. In subsequent years, this situation was to change with the emergence of new and experimental works. However, the cultural and ideological differences that existed on both sides of the Iron Curtain were to see the visual arts, as a whole, develop along different and contrasting lines. In the West the emphasis was placed on live action cinema supported by private finance whereas in the East

---

<sup>23</sup> Pilling, Jayne (Edited), *Women & animation a compendium*, published, the exhibition & distribution Division of the British film, 1992, p.103.

government investment supported animation, (and almost all other artistic production) as a cultural rather than a commercial entity.<sup>24</sup>

It should be noted that despite these differences the visual culture of East Europe and West Europe, Asia and Latin America was, and continues to be, heavily influenced by its roots in painting, sculpture, folklore, poster art, and a long history of iconic and religious representation<sup>25</sup>. However, in many instances these traditions were under utilised or bore little influence on the animation output of many countries. Roger Noake<sup>26</sup> criticises the Russian animation by highlighting the mediums' disregard for indigenous cultural influences when he states that "an interrogation of the Russian literary tradition will show important intellectuals meditating on the state of the nation, dreaming nostalgically of the past, resistant to all attempts to move from lethargy to action. Images of Church and State, of peasant life and superstition of industrialisation, all fail to move the sleeping figure who longs for sweet entropy"<sup>27</sup>. Such factors are rarely exhibited in Russian animation films which, as Chris Robinson states, were more heavily influenced by Disney; "Soyuzmultfilm<sup>28</sup>, Eisenstein and Chitruk loved Walt and his tender tales of innocents wandering through a harsh, evil world towards maturity and heterosexual love. Not surprisingly, the Russians spent the century trying to simulate Walt and his workers"<sup>29</sup>.

---

<sup>24</sup> Bendazzi, Giannalberto, Cartoons. One hundred years of cinema animation. Translated by Anna Taraboletti Segre, Published by Johan Libbey & Company Ltd, 1994, p.151.

<sup>25</sup> Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman, An American Century, ASIFA news special magazine, 2001, Vol. 14, No.2.

<sup>26</sup> Is course leader on the animation degree course at West Surrey Collage of Art and Design, Farnham, Surrey. He has written numerous articles and published the book animation.

<sup>27</sup> Pilling, Jayne (Edited), Women & animation a compendium, published, the exhibition & distribution Division of the British film, 1992, p.103.

<sup>28</sup> Well known animation centre in Russia.

<sup>29</sup> Robinson, Chris, Peeling Limes, various persons named Priit Parn, ASIFA News (Special Magazine), Vol. 14, - N0.1, 2001, p.19.

Moreover, such a state of affairs was in no ways unique to Russia. In Yugoslavia Walt Disney's style can be clearly seen on the first period work of the Zagreb Circle in the early 1950's. Indeed, the country's first independent animation film *The Big Meeting*, produced by Duga Film, and which caused a cultural sensation throughout Yugoslavia, was very much in a commercial Disney style. The pioneering Yugoslav animator Borivoj Dovnikovic Bordo, makes the point that the overarching influence on *The Big Meeting*, and most of the films produced by Duga Film from 1950 – 52, was the Disney formula. However, 1952 marked the end of this period as the government shut down Duga Film, because they considered cartoon films to be an expensive luxury for a poor state in difficult economic circumstances.<sup>30</sup>

By comparison, animation in Estonia has been predominantly state-run, which in conjunction with the country's geo-strategic position and exposure to outside influences have combined to produce an artform that was, and continues to be, original and experimental in nature. The Estonian studio Tallinnfilm opened in September 1957 under the direction of puppet animator, Elbert Tuganov (Baku, 1920) In 1976 the Estonian State studio, Tallinnfilm invited Priit Parn (Tallinn, 1946) a talented animator and illustrator whose works are often bitingly funny, complex, self-reflexive explorations into the effects of social, political and economic systems on human being, to be a director in the Joonisfilm division (cell animation). In 1988, he won the grand prize at the Zagreb festival with *Picnic on the Grass*. Parn's films have been well received by both audiences and critics at a variety of festivals and have been instrumental in creating an awareness of Estonian animation on the international stage.

---

<sup>30</sup> Dovnikovic Bordo, Borivoj, Zagreb, [a paper about Zagreb](#), International Jury Programme 2, FAN

Prior to Parn's arrival, Estonian animation was dominated by puppets, folklore, myths and metaphorical works aimed at children and self-righteous 'intellectuals'.<sup>31</sup> The geo-historical and artistic situation of some Eastern European countries such as Estonia placed them in the position of being a link to transfer animation knowledge between the West and East.

In the more culturally liberal post-Stalin Estonia of the late 1950s, foreign literature began to filter through to the country. Translations of Beckett,<sup>32</sup> Kafka,<sup>33</sup> Brecht<sup>34</sup> and other influential writers became available by 1957 and by the late 1960s it was possible to buy Polish and Czech art magazines. This artistic explosion extended beyond art into literature, film, theatre, music and eventually animation. The influx of Western thought in Estonia was accelerated primarily because of its fortuitous location as a bridge between Western and Eastern cultures. Owing to Estonia's proximity to Finland, access to western culture (mostly through Finnish television) was easier to come by than for other Soviet republics.<sup>35</sup> This enthusiastic exposure to, and assimilation of, outside influences and the high quality of productions has continued in the post-independence era despite the discontinuation of state support and the problems and difficulties of adapting to a capitalist economic system.

However, in looking at the historical development of animation perhaps the most significant and influential development to occur recently has been the impact of the

---

International Animation Festival, Norwich, Oct 2001.

<sup>31</sup> Robinson, Chris, Peeling Limes, various persons named Prit Parn, ASIFA News (Special Magazine), Vol. 14, - N0.1, 2001, , p.20

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* p.21

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Robinson, Chris, Peeling Limes, various persons named Prit Parn, ASIFA News (Special Magazine), Vol. 14, - N0.1, 2001, p.20.

“new animation” emerging from the recently industrialised countries of the Far East, Japan and Korea. This explosion of animation in the Far East was also reflected in the proliferation of literature such as *Asia Pacific Broadcasting*, *Animation World Magazine* (online), *Animation Magazine*, and *New Film* (China), which appeared to analyse and critique the emergence of this new cultural phenomenon. However, it must be noted that despite the long filmic history of most Asian countries, animation was somewhat marginalised and not taken seriously by audiences, cultural policy makers and scholars alike.<sup>36</sup> In this respect the case of Japan is instructive as it perhaps has the most developed animation tradition in the region. According to John Halas,<sup>37</sup> “Before the Second World War there was only a few artists interested in the medium and most of them, such as Ofuji, worked in three-dimensional puppetry with primitive cameras. The situation today (1986) is very different. Japan has become the top nation in the production of commercial television animation for children and there are around 25000 individuals engaged in the Japanese animation industry”.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Japan has been the template for almost all the other countries in the region both in the style of animation produced and in the structural organisation of the industry.

In a similar vein the film rich industry of India has also only recently began to turn its attention to animation. India is now an important player in international animation circles as can be seen by the increase in productions and the emergence of journals such as *Animation Reporter*, which exposes Indian animators and their work to international

---

<sup>36</sup> A. Lent, John (Edited), *Animation in Asia and the Pacific*, Johan Libbey publishing, p.1, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> John Halas born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1912 and came to England in 1936. In 1940, he found the production company Halas & Batchelor (Joy Batchelor his wife a British animator). They produced *Animal Farm*, the first British animated feature film.

<sup>38</sup> Halas, John, *Masters of Animation*, published by BBC Books, London, 1987, p.41.



audiences.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, this publication is also instrumental in targeting Western countries for offshore production, presenting the work of India's animation studios to as wide an audience as possible and promoting their work on the international animation market in an attempt to develop an integrated animation policy. In the past, most animation used to be undertaken in an ad hoc manner by the government sponsored Film Division cartoon film unit established in 1956. Most of the work produced by this unit was educational in focus with films being produced for government departments such as the Ministry of Health. Presently, despite the increase in animation production in India, from both private and studios, greatest challenge in developing the industry lies in changing the attitudes of those involved with the medium, from policy makers to artists, who still see animation as a time consuming and costly enterprise with small and uncertain returns.<sup>40</sup>

There is a general consensus by animation historians that the history of animation in the last century can be categorised according to a heritage of political, cultural and scientific facts. These include the influences of two world wars, the division of the world into East and West, the hegemony of communist ideology in some parts of the world, the Cold War, the domination of television net works by national services, the individual efforts of some masters and the lack of international communication networks particularly for the Third World countries. At present we are entering a new technological era where social, political and cultural issues are played out, influenced by events on a global scale.

---

<sup>39</sup> Rekha (Editor – in – Chief), animation Reporter, Magazine, publisher Ajay, May 2002, V. Shah, Vol.1, India.

<sup>40</sup> A. Lent, John (Edited), Animation in Asia and the Pacific, (Kenyon, Heather, Animation for Development in South Asia), Johan Libbey publishing, 2001, p.225.

Marshall McLuhan<sup>41</sup> theorised that “the new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a Global Village.”<sup>42</sup> Globalisation is primarily driven by the advent of new technologies such as the Internet and satellite communication. It is these new technologies along with socio-political implications arising from them that determine the future of development of the animation industry. This point was made by Thibaut Camdessus, the executive producer for Britannica.com, at the animation technology programme in Annecy when he stated:

In the autumn of 2002, the high-speed Internet distribution market should reach a peak in growth, with new technology being customary. The public will be introduced to new innovative, more entertaining and faster services, often with a more-easy-to-use style”.<sup>43</sup>

## **1.2- The context of analysis**

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an analysis of various factors that have influenced and shaped the development of animated films in Iran. Before proceeding to this, it is necessary to explore certain theoretical concepts which will help to situate the specific focus of the study.

It is commonly agreed that theory of hegemonic ideology is a powerful tool in explaining the relative stability of political authority and control in advanced capitalist societies. Writing in the 1920s and 1930s, Antonio Gramsci postulated that political power in liberal democracies is exercised not through coercive force but through a

---

<sup>41</sup> Canadian academic and commentator on communications technology, who developed theories about the role of the electronic media in mass popular culture. He is best known for the studies institutionalized as the University of Toronto's Centre for Culture and Technology, where he was director from 1963. McLuhan's works include *UNDERSTANDING MEDIA* (1964) and *MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE* (1967), in which he argued that the form of media has more significant effect on society and knowledge than the contents carried. McLuhan prophesied that printed books would become obsolete, killed off by television and other electronic information technology.

dominant world-view, or ideology. The dominant ideology legitimates existing rulers, helping them to win the citizens' consent and acquiescence.<sup>44</sup> In understanding some of the major shifts in Iranian governance were the past two decades, theories of hegemony may also be of value.

Ideology refers to the values and cultural norms that sustain the privileges of the powerful within the dominant culture. Those who are able to transmit their preferred system of beliefs often reinforce the ideological messages inherent in the dominant culture. Stuart Hall defines ideology as "those images, concepts and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and 'make sense' of some aspect of social existence."<sup>45, 46</sup>

According to David Sallach, Gramsci perceives hegemony as the process by which the dominant classes or class fractions, through their privileged access to social institutions propagate values that reinforce their control over politics and the economy. These values form a dominant ideology. The dominant ideology in any society is a set of common-sense assumptions that legitimates the existing distribution of power.<sup>47</sup> Ideology makes this structure of power seem "natural," "normal," or "inevitable," and therefore beyond challenge.

---

<sup>42</sup> McLuhan, Marshall,

<sup>43</sup> Camdessus, Thibaut, Professional Meetings, conference bulletin, Annecy 2002, p.21.

<sup>44</sup> Gramsci, A, Antonio. (1971) Selections from the Prison Notebooks: (London: Lawrence and Wishart)

<sup>45</sup> Hall, Stuart. (1977) 'Culture, the Media and the 'Ideological Effect.' in Mass Communication and Society, Ed. James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janice Woollacott.(London: Arnold) p.18

<sup>46</sup> Ben fine reminds us that all ideologies have both elements of true and false and are not coherent systems of thought, free of inconsistencies. See Fine Ben. 1980, Economic theory and Ideology: (Great Britain: Edward Arnold), p. 1

<sup>47</sup> Sallach, David. (1974). Class domination and ideological hegemony. In The TV Establishment: Programming for Profit and Power, Gaye Tuchman. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. p.166

Through ideology, ruling groups attempt to universalise their own interests as the interests of all. Gramsci argues that it is by these ideational means, rather than through the coercive force of the state, that ruling groups maintain their power. And power is most effectively exercised not through overt inculcation and censorship, but "also and especially (by) the ability to define the parameters of legitimate discussion and debate over alternative beliefs, values and world-views."<sup>48</sup>

The creation and spread of ideology is a complex process. Cultural institutions play a key role in perpetuating aspects of the dominant worldview. These include the family, religious organizations, and the mass media, among others. Hegemonic ideology is often justified as a kind of social glue that holds together the diverse people in liberal democracies and ensures other's consent to be ruled. For example, hegemonic ideology bolsters support for the market economy and the state by marginalizing discussion of viable alternatives and lowering people's expectations for achieving greater equality, or job security. As David Sallach puts it, "The hegemonic process does not create a value consensus but confusion, fragmentation, inconsistency in belief systems."<sup>49</sup>

Hegemonic theory posits that the main role of media is not to act as a watchdog on government, or intervene in policy-making debate, but it seems simply shore up the capitalist state by disseminating the worldview of ruling classes. According to Todd Gitlin the media both shape and are shaped by the legitimating ideology of those who really rule liberal democracies<sup>50</sup>— like, top political leaders, executives of corporations and media Monguls. He emphasises the ways that media marginalise important social

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 166-7

and economic issues and discourage public sympathy with those who challenge the established orthodoxies.

In studying media, Hall identifies three important concepts to understand ideologies. First, ideologies are not separate and distinct concepts. Rather, they articulate different concepts together into set of meanings. Second, ideologies are not formed by individuals, individuals function within ideologies. Finally, ideologies "work" by allowing subjects "positions of identification and knowledge" that help them to construct their thoughts within ideological frameworks<sup>51</sup> Because the media help to produce culture, they are part of the dominant mode of ideological production, and are therefore important sites in which the "production, reproduction and transformation of ideologies"<sup>52</sup> take place.

The role of the media in the transmission of ideologies is documented by media and cultural scholars who study cultural aspects of the media. For example, cultural theorists point to the role of television in demonstrating how society works through the dramatization of its norms and values. Moreover, commercial filmmakers are bound by the constraints of the system in which they are working (especially financially) and unconsciously by the limitations the dominant ideologies place on their thoughts.<sup>53</sup>

Hegemonic theory is sometimes criticised for overstating the power of the ruled in affecting the ideological constructs. Critics argue that the theory often sees political

---

<sup>50</sup> Gitlin, Todd. (1980). *The Whole World is Watching*. Berkeley (University of California Press. P.290

<sup>51</sup> Hall, Stuart. (1977), op.cit. pp.18-19

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 19

<sup>53</sup> Comolli, Jean-Luc, and Jean Narboni (1972) *Cinema/Ideology/Criticism* (Mast, Cohen and Braudy) pp. 682-89.

groups that challenge state and corporate power as either simply co-opted or marginalized by the media. These groups must either learn to frame their demands in ways that accommodate the power of capital and government, or be excluded from public discourse. Todd Gitlin, for example, maintains that "an opposition movement is caught in a fundamental, an inescapable dilemma" between remaining outside the rules of mainstream political discourse, and thus being rendered irrelevant or trivialized, and observing media conventions, and thus being assimilated".<sup>54</sup>

Critics of hegemony reject a closed vision of the political system, questioning its assumed split between "reform" and "revolution". They remind us that the relationship of reform and revolutionary movements is dialectical and their rise and fall complex. Barker-Plummer argues that the theory of hegemony seems to "deny the reflexivity or strategic agency on the part of social movement actors themselves to learn about and strategically use dominant systems and discourses -- in this case journalistic routines and practices -- as resources in themselves".<sup>55</sup>

In this section, a brief analysis is presented of three important areas which have direct bearing on the further development of animation in Iran.

### **1.2.1-Cultural continuity and change**

The Iranian revolution brought into power an Islamic regime determined to eliminate all elements of the Iranian culture that it viewed as un-Islamic or threat to Islam's prominent role in Iran. It instigated a set of integrated policies aimed at reversing the

---

<sup>54</sup> Barker-Plummer, Bernadette (1995). News as a Political Resource: Media Strategies and Political Identity in the U.S. Women's Movement. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* vol. 12, pp. 306-324.

previous regime's secularising policies in culture, education and judicial systems and imposed a strict Islamic/moral codes on the population. Moreover, the regime tried to instil a revolutionary spirit merged with Islamic principles into the country's cultural and artistic life. A defining tenet of the regime's cultural philosophy was that "art must be at the service of Islam and revolution". This meant that artistic expressions were permitted insofar as they advanced the goals of the revolution, while all forms of art that encourage western-inspired ideas and anti-Islamic spirit were strictly prohibited.<sup>56</sup>

Since the mid-1990s, a subtle change has occurred in the government's cultural policies, particularly in respect of pre-Islamic Iranian culture. Excessive Islamisation of culture has come up against deeply felt Iranian identity and nationalism, and the regime has felt sufficiently confident to revert to its traditional attitude toward Iran's pre-Islamic culture and its relationship to Islam. This policy change has come about as the result of the realization of the fact that in order to rally popular support for the (Iran-Iraq) war, the government had to appeal to Iranian nationalism rather than solely to Islam. Furthermore, the regime has felt that there is much to gain by emphasising Iranian culture in terms of prestige and influence in the community of nations. It has realized that Iran's historic and cultural legacy was an asset that could have material payoffs.

The most important change has been the legitimization of Iranian-ness that sees Islam as a component of Iranian cultural identity<sup>57</sup>. The regime has accepted the notion of an

---

<sup>56</sup> Theodoulou, Michael, Iran's culture and Art, The Christian Science Monitor, 2001, pp. 16-19

<sup>57</sup> Iranian-ness is that unique amalgam of shared history, religion(s), language(s), myths, artistic expression, sentiments, and traditions that has provided them with an enduring and resilient cultural identity as members of one of the world's oldest civilizations

'Iranian nation' and that the nature of Iranian culture is Iranian-Islamic. The regime has also realized that one without the other would be much poorer culturally and spiritually and would not represent the true feelings of the people.

The reemergence of Iranian-ness has rehabilitated many leading literary figures whose poetry and works had been banned. The regime has also taken more relaxed attitude towards artistic expression. Classical music has received a new lease of life and more locally-inspired singing and melodies have improved in quality. Despite Islam's prohibition of portrait painting, the arts of the poster and calligraphy have flourished and painting that has traditionally been a strong component of pre- and post-Islamic Persian culture has not suffered in Iran.

Similarly, the indigenous film industry has significantly expanded improving on the quality of content by posing more controversial social issues in films. Although filmmakers are restrained both by political considerations and by the imperatives of Islamic morality, nevertheless, in the last few years the government's attitude in both respects has relaxed. Likewise, the government has liberalized its attitude with regard to importing quality foreign films, and it encourages contact between Iranian filmmakers and those around the world. The most important vehicle for such contact is the Fajr International Film Festival, and Tehran International Animation held in Tehran. In addition, Iranian filmmakers and animators participate in international film festivals.



The government has paid great attention to expanding the electronic communication networks mostly for political and ideological reasons (i.e., to assert its ideological hegemony and influence among the masses). Radio and television have assumed crucial role in propagating an Islamic version of Iranian culture and history. Ideological and political restrictions, however, have severely limited Iran's cultural scene, although some of the developments referred to earlier, especially a gradual but steady rehabilitation of Iranian-ness and relative flexibility, have improved the environment for Iran's cultural life. The on-going political debate about reform of the Islamic governance will enhance the freer social environment and help to develop a true and indigenous cultural and artistic renaissance in Iran.<sup>58</sup>

### **1.2.2-About Islamic Ideology**

It is important to note that Islamic ideology has emerged as a response to a threat: the threat of secularisation, of the West and from nationalism. These threats give impetus to Islam as a religion to be used as a means of sharpened understanding and a tool for mass mobilization. The underlying ideological logic is the identification of a set of authoritative texts within the tradition, and the development of sophisticated interpretations of what was once a multivalent canopy of meaning.

The advantages of revolutionary Islamic ideology over secular ideologies are enormous. Instead of the break between the revolutionary elite and the masses that characterizes modern ideologies, there is a natural community of sympathy between the mass of believers and the ideological leadership- through cross-root organisations such as mosque and seminaries. Further, the problem of recruitment becomes entirely

---

<sup>58</sup> Abootalebi, Ali.R., 'Civil society and Iran's quest for democracy', *Iran Analysis Quarterly*, Vol.1 No.

different: no longer are the ignorant masses attached to an ideology they barely understand; now recruitment can be based on the solidarity of the religious community- deeply rooted in past history. Therefore, conflicting interests do not necessarily divide; at least until a point is reached when Islamic regime makes political choices. In fact, the whole category of interest is underplayed. For example, in the 1980s, the leadership of the Islamic Republic played down all conflicting class interests in Iranian society and emphasised the broad revolutionary ideas in constructing an Islamic society. While, in the 1990s, the regime was forced to made choices in the terms of policy which tended to favour a coalition of interest group advocating a capitalist development.

Ideological Islam feeds on other critical advantages of religion itself. It does not need to transform consciousness, for there is already considerable shared religious sensibility. Further, motivation based on faith is probably less falsifiable, particularly to the extent that it relies upon the words of God.

### **1.2.3-Islamic Television and hegemonic ideology<sup>59</sup>**

Islamic television has increasingly assumed the most important ideological role in propagating an ideal Islamic society. TV has also been the main market for all forms of artistic endeavours- including animation, a brief analysis is presented on the function of the Islamic TV in Iranian society.

Despite notable improvement in freer cultural and artistic expressions, Islamic television has remained the bastion of conservative forces determined to maintain an

---

1, Summer 2003

<sup>59</sup> The term 'ideology' is taken to mean a coherent and comprehensive set of idea which explains and evaluates social and political conditions and is a means of organised social and political action.

Islamic ideological hegemony over the population. The Islamic TV (VVIR)<sup>60</sup> was founded as a 'public service' and to function as a means of Islamisation of the Iranian society. It is a highly centralised government-owned organ which relies on the traditional sources of religio-political authority in society and asserts itself as a medium of public service. It attempts to combine the rich indigenous written and oral forms of communication into a unified framework. Islamic television strives (1) to Islamicise the medium, (2) to integrate television within the existing traditional channels of communication, (3) to create a state-community system of public broadcasting, (4) to incorporate this institution with in the principles of Islamic ethics, and (5) to be self reliant in the wake of globalisation.<sup>61</sup>

In this endeavour, the director of Islamic television appointed by Leader (Ayatollah Khamenie in 1990) has undertaken major restructuring of the organisation dismissing employees who were seen as lacking total commitment to Islamic ideology and replacing them with the hard-core of revolutionaries and seminarian students. Presenters of programmes were required to consult with religious scholars, and particularly with the cleric of Qum (the main religious centre of Shi'i seminaries) rather than relying on personal readings of religious sources. Special attention was given to the language used in programmes, which would reflect Islamic nature (use of rituals and symbols) in broadcasting.

New departments have been set up and staffed with appointees on the basis of their socio-ideological affinities with little experience in cinematic or cultural programme

---

<sup>60</sup> known as Voice and Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran (VVIR).

making. The appointees came mostly from Islamic centres known to be the site of extreme conservative views on social matters, whose graduates were often promoted to high positions of decision-making in the organisation. Furthermore, the management rehabilitated those who were previously dismissed for having controversial views on social and judiciary matters, and recruited ex-MPs and officials who failed to be re-elected, appointing them to controlling and supervisory positions in the organisation.<sup>62</sup>

This strategy was intended to create a coherent television genre that unites all diverse specialities into a comprehensive language well understood by programme makers—they should have a clear idea about the ideological framework in which their contributions are consistently integrated into a whole. The strategy is to provide a compact idea and semiotic framework where researchers, policy makers and supervisors have focus points in propagating Islamic ideology.

In the late 1990s, Islamic TV has begun to use the private sector for the growing needs of its programming. The authorities were initially concerned that the influence of market forces might undermine the standard of Islamic codes of programming and dilute the content's consistency of production. However, this concern proved to be groundless, because the state has retained total monopoly of transmission of all programmes and any privately produced programme has no chance of being broadcast without prior authorisation. In fact, the monopoly of transmission has created a closed market defined by the Islamic TV's rules and codes. Private producers have soon

---

<sup>61</sup> Entezari, Ardeshir, Imam Khomeini's Expressions About The Islamic Media and the Structural Obstacles in Iranian press, University of Allameh Tabatabaai, Tehran, presented at IAMCR General Assembly Barcelona, 2002.

<sup>62</sup> Bahonar, Nasser, Television Religious Program and Audience Reception: A Comparative Study on Iranian TV Islamic Programs And Electronic Church, Tehran: Imam Sadigh University, memo, 2002.

learned, if they are to maintain an amiable relationship with Islamic TV and obtain further contracts, they have to follow specifically defined codes of programme making. In effect, production is not privatised but rather Islamic TV has created a 'putting system' where private companies have accepted to follow the specified codes of television, and exert the same control and supervision over their employees as that of the Islamic TV.

The need to adapt the productions to (the) ideological imperatives has created strong supervision and censorship bodies for monitoring both pre-and post broadcasting. Programme makers follow set unwritten codes specifying the nature of issues concerning subject matter, language, relationships between sexes and religiosity of the programmes. Foreign programmes are often subjected to extensive editing so as to create a version that is in accordance with the Islamic codes. Apart from censoring sexual and violent scenes, many changes will be made at the dialogic level. Throughout, Islamic TV has strived to deepen the process of learning from past experiences by instituting more effective control over the performance of the organisation.<sup>63</sup>

Research centres and researchers are given greater importance in the conception of new programmes. The focus of the research has been on issues related to cultural artefacts, the selected historically and religiously significant figures, and an officially endorsed reading of Iranian history and generation of ideas that can be used in making programmes that would deepen Islamic ideological hegemony on the Iranian society. Researchers and consultants are seen as the major source of generation and re-write of

---

ideas, who are to be intermediaries transmitting and communicating specialised knowledge on significant religious thinkers and asked to conduct research with a view of the applicability of their works. Thus, the function of the research centres has been to conduct applied studies and to structure research findings in such ways that they can be exploited in improving the quality of programmes, and ultimately in serving to propagate Islamic ideology.

It should be noted that unlike Western countries, where television viewing has become a single person or nuclear family entertainment, group listening and viewing of broadcasting is a common occurrence in Iran. Extended families, beyond immediate relatives, and their interactions in the form of home visits all play a crucial role in social communication, making television viewing in Iran a group activity. Indeed, television in Iranian society has been a source of major debate among the people and a platform for discourse on major socio-political issues propagated by the leadership concerning national and international affairs.

The importance attached to social communication within the changing political and cultural public space in Iran; in particular relation to television is based on two principles. In the first place, a principle guiding the ethical boundaries of social and public communication in Islam is the doctrine of "commanding to the right and prohibiting from the wrong." Implicit in this principle is the notion of individual and group responsibility for preparing the succeeding generations to accept Islamic precepts and to make use of them. The second principle, which has a direct bearing on the

---

<sup>63</sup> Brown, David, Islamization of Television in Iran, *International Herald Tribune*, Asia-special edition, July 2002.

notion of public space, particularly as it might relate to the political life of the individuals, is *ummah* or community. The notion of community in Islam makes no sharp distinction between public and private, as what is required of the community at large is likewise required of every individual member. These two principles have become the guiding doctrines of Islamic television. Today, the modern systems of mass media in Iran have, to a large extent, been well integrated within the classical and traditional systems of social communication.<sup>64</sup>

Having provided a brief theoretical background to the study, we will seek and examine the institutional setting and the contribution of master animators who helped to lay down the foundation of an indigenous animation industry in Iran. The issues that are tackled in this study involve the examination of interrelationships such factors as expansion of now a century-old film industry, a long and highly developed cultural and artistic heritage, the importance of the state-run institutions in fostering indigenous culture and art and socio-political changes, in particular the establishment of Islamic regime on the process of development of animation industry in Iran.

Modern animation in Iran is often traced back to long history of artistic activity in calligraphy, miniature painting, ceramics and alike which are highly individualistic and require training, acquisition of skills, patience and imagination, all necessary elements of animation making. However, animation is essentially a teamwork involving different skills and expertise, akin to cottage industry rather than capitalist industrial production.

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Historically, animation industry has been supported and maintained by the state-run agencies or some forms of patronage system. Under pressure of market forces and financial constraints over government expenditures the animation industry has increasingly become vulnerable either to total extinction or full-fledged transformation into an industrial activity. The latter option means to forego the basic feature of this art-form, and adapt to the market demand. In many countries, including Iran there is already steps taken to industrialise the animation through exposing it to market forces. However, the Iranian government is reluctant to total privatisation partly for the importance of animation as a powerful means of education as well as a means of propaganda. Hence, attempts are made to restructure the industry into more efficient organisation cutting down waste and duplication and adopt international standards and norms helping the industry to withstand competition both at home and abroad.

Moreover, the government is keen to encourage the development of animation in Iran. With expansion of television channels and the growing needs of programming especially for growing younger audiences<sup>65</sup>, animation is best type of programmes, which can be easily manipulated stories to convey ideas that support the ruling ideology. Yet Iran depends on import of animated films to satisfy domestic demand.

Currently, Iran has five domestic TV channels which serve as platforms for animation broadcasts in the country and along the borders. However, the industry's level of development is clearly illustrated by the fact that of the ten thousand minutes of animation<sup>66</sup> currently broadcast only 300 minutes are locally produced<sup>67</sup>. This exposure

---

<sup>65</sup> Sreberny – Mohammadi, Annabelle, Mohammadi, Ali, Small Media, Big Revolution, Published by the University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

<sup>66</sup> Bedokhty, Saeid, Sharei, Esmacil, representing Saba Animation Company, open interview in Iranian stand in MIFA, Annecy, 2002.



to Iranian animation has been further diluted by the popularity of satellite broadcasting. Iranian animation has a long way to go before it realises its full potential in influencing the cultural landscape of the country.

Furthermore, an efficient industrial/production system requires a long-term technical training and recognised educational qualifications that establishes a demarcation between amateur and professional productions. The early days of animation in Iran (1960), were characterised by generous governmental benefits and large budgets, which insulated artists from the market forces and led to a situation where animators did not seriously recognise or consider the concepts of customer, producer, market and audiences. Consequently, when the animation pioneers entered the education field as teachers they were not able to acquaint new generations with these concepts. Such a lack of knowledge has led to a gap in the understanding the different needs and attributes of commercial, experimental, industrial, TV series and feature animation. To alter such a state of affairs requires animators, researchers and cultural pioneers to come together to discuss their mutual problems and proposed solutions so that a coherent development programme with specific aims and targets can be fully implemented.

It follows that it is necessary to locate Iranian animation in a wider global context and comparing the developing process of art and culture in Iran with that of the other countries in the world. It is also necessary to take account of the fact that many Iranian animators are foreign graduates, who communicate internationally through participation in festivals and study the works and styles of overseas filmmakers. This

---

<sup>67</sup> Larigani, Mohammad, Iranian Animation News, (online) [www.irananimation.com](http://www.irananimation.com), 2002.

implies that the development in this artform is simultaneously affected by both direct and indirect international influences. Thus, it is necessary to recognise and understand these international influences in critically analysing, and assessing the future development of animation in Iran.

Having pointed out the context, I wish to assess the role of Iranian animation by looking at the work of the small number of animators who have sustained the art of animation and the industry over the past forty years. Through a systematic mode of analysis certain important theoretical aspects will be critically examined and pertinent questions will be answered:

How has the development of animation been shaped by political change in Iran?

How has animation reflected/ constructed/ helped to reflect national identity?

And finally, what effect will the above factors have on the future development of the animation industry in Iran?

#### **1.2.4- The underlying premises of the thesis**

- The development of animation in Iran has been the product of indigenous art and culture and heavily influenced by socio-economic and political changes taken place over the past forty years.
- The advent of modern animation in Iran is closely associated with major socio-political changes, initiated under banner of capitalist economic development in the 1960s, which necessitated adopting appropriate cultural and mass media policies and the establishment of artistic institutions in Iran. The 1960s was a crucial period in the evolution of animation industry, not only for laying down the foundation of this art-form and an educational centre for training new

generation of talented Iranian animators but also for the commitment shown by the authorities to promote documentary and children cinema/animation, both of which were to become a defining features, both thematically and stylistically, of the industry.

- Animation industry in Iran is not sufficiently developed or well-integrated to respond to the growing domestic demand. The industry lacks a broad structure in which knowledge and experiences of earlier animators can be effectively utilised. People who enter into this industry are often self-taught or college graduates motivated not by high rewards but rather for the artistic inclination and job satisfaction.
- As the result of the 1979 Islamic revolution, animation industry in Iran underwent a period of stagnation and neglect. The new political elite showed little interest in the importance of cultural and artistic activities. The Iran-Iraq (1980-1988) war necessitated cuts in the subsidies given to all art-forms including animation. In 1989, the Iranian government began a process of restructuring economy and recognised that the mass media has an important function in political stabilisation and moulding of public opinion. The 1989 was beginning of a policy reflected in trimming down much of the Islamic rhetoric and return to Iranian cultural and artistic heritage where animation assumed an important means in promoting cultural and religious values, a recognition of the fact that growing youth population requires a well-thought cultural policy which would be responsive to the social and intellectual needs of the people.
- Development of animation in Iran is not systematically linked to the well-thought education syllabuses, hence giving rise to excessive experimentation, innovation and artistic imagination. The promotion of highly individualistic

endeavour may be considered beneficial for those few talented animators aiming at major international animation festivals, however, this may have detrimental effects on creating an industrial base viable economically to sustain itself in long-term. The on-going technological revolution in computer industry has created ever-expanding markets for high-valued animation and generating employment for newly college graduates in Iran.

- Animation market in Iran suffers from a duality and hidden rivalry between two major centre, the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Youth Adult (I.I.D.C.Y.A) and television stations. The lack of cooperation and conflict of interests between them have tended to hinder the growth of animation in Iran.
- Animation industry in Iran needs financial support and encouragement for many years in future. The industry's products tend to suffer from inconsistency and low quality and incapable to compete with imported foreign animated products. Emphasis on individualistic and experimental productions has greatly reduced their economic viability in market place; hence the survival of the industry depends on its re-orientation away from festival exhibition and towards exposition of market forces. The government support is essential, if the industry is to survive in highly competitive animation marketplace. It should embark upon a medium-term policy of purchase of domestically produced animation in preference to foreign imported ones.

### **1.2.5- Research Methodologies**

The main part of this thesis concerns with the language of the moving images and the meanings (ideologies) that they convey to audiences. A comparison of Iranian animation with Western animations provides a measure of evaluation of the quality and

technical expertises that Iranian animators have attended. For this purpose I have selected a number of visual texts, from both the pre-and-post revolutionary eras, which provide a representational basis for critically examining the thematic, stylistic and technical development of Iranian animation from its inception to the present.

In analyzing the visual images, I have tried first to locate them within a narrative frame of reference before dissecting them into their constituent elements. The analysis is then focused on two main aspects of imageries, namely technical and symbolic elements. The former includes, camera angles, camera movement, shot duration, lighting, depth of field, editing, sound effects, music, special effects, and framing; and the latter include the use of colour, costume, objects, stars, performance, setting, location and the various meanings that they connote.<sup>68</sup> A specific animation is also examined at two distinctly, but overlapping categories. The first category, formal analysis, involving movements, colours, drawings, photography, lay out, etc., and the second category, thematic analysis, involving the use and influence of folk tales, myths, national literature, cosmopolitan on the narrative as well as the messages articulated in the animated film. In essence, thematic analysis pays especial attention to the construction of story, plot and narrative. In the words of John Hansen thematic analysis involves:

All the events, both inferred and presented in the narrative, are referred to as the story. The plot is part of the narrative, the substance of the story told in visual and audio presentation, as well as added material such as music, graphics and credits.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, I have applied both formal and thematic modes of analysis to the Iranian animated films within the context of the unique Iranian culture. These modes of

---

<sup>68</sup> Hansen, anders; Cottle, Simon; Negrine, Ralph; Newbold,Chris; Mass Communication Reaserach Methods. Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998, p.132.

analysis provides a dynamic means not only to locate and understand the animated films within Persian cultural and artistic heritages – literature, poetry, folk, music, etc. but also as a reflector of the socio-cultural changes and political influences that the industry has been subjected since its inception.

#### **1.2.6- Research Sources**

Contrary to cinema, animation in Iran has been subject to little systematic and academic analysis, and much of written materials scattered over wide areas of social and art studies. A major problem that these sources of information share is that they were written in isolation from socio-economic changes that the Iranian society had experienced over the four decades. The first task of this research was to put some order on the available data and place them in a wider societal change. Animation as an art form displays cultural ingredients of a nation and cannot be properly understood without reference to the socio-political forces that help to shape the specific characteristics of the industry over times.

For the purpose of this study I have used a variety of sources comprising both textual and non-textual as well as primary and secondary sources of information. I have utilized primary sources that have not been previously used in this area of research and have also revisited the references given in the secondary sources so as to review them from a different theoretical position and hence arriving at a different reading.<sup>70</sup>

In general, textual sources fall into two categories, published and unpublished resources. Published textual materials include books, journals and unpublished materials in both the English and Persian languages. A particular feature of most of books on animation is that they are written purely from technical standpoint describing

---

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* p.132.

the aspects of technological advances made in the industry. They often lack theoretical framework grounded in social sciences and analytical concepts that can be used to uncover the hidden aspects of cultural and ideological values embedded in the animated films. I found these books of little value for my research, while I benefited much from animation books written from an international perspective emphasizing cultural and historical events as determinant factors in shaping national animation industry.

Throughout my research work, I have tried to develop upon theoretical arguments presented in these books and adapted them to the particularities of the Iranian situation. This has enabled me to re-read much of cultural and sociological writings on Iran from a different perspective. The information extracted from these sources formed the basis of the theoretical approach to the analysis of the Iranian animation. In short, methodological approach adopted with regard to the use of books comprises review of relevant English literature on animation combining with Persian resources, and then utilizing various theoretical models offered in literature, from international perspective, in order to construct a theoretical model for the analysis of the development of animation in Iran. The model embraces the impact of continuous socio-political and cultural changes in the evolving characteristics of animation industry in Iran.

Besides books, I have also used three other textual sources.

1) Journals and magazines are important sources of information; they often reflect new developments in the industry, views and comments of artists regarding new animated films. I have extensively consulted the ASIFA magazine, Animation UK Directory, Animation UK Magazine as well as Iranian film magazines and daily newspapers such as Iran, Ettelaat, Soroush and Film.

---

<sup>70</sup> Blaxter, Loraine, Hughes Christina, Tigt Malcolm, How to Research, Open University Press,

2) Unpublished conference and seminar papers and theses can be useful sources of information. I have made use of papers delivered in international conferences and consulted a few theses written in the British universities and Iranian universities. These theses gave me some pertinent information regarding social and cultural changes that Iranian society has undergone through, and helped to bridge the informational gaps in my research work. Equally important was the papers I read and discussions I held with the participants of seminars on animation. I learned much about evolving new challenges and opportunities and the need for rethinking on theoretical models that could accommodate both technological changes and globalisation of animated films.

3) Internet is becoming an important research facilitator, allows to creating a library, achieve on specific subject-matter, capable of instant updating and reflecting the changing our physical and mental achievements in a global scale.<sup>71</sup> I found it a useful means particularly in filling the gaps, when one cannot easily found relevant information in the printed materials. However, effective use of Internet requires some experiences in finding wanted sites. I have visited the sites with strong academic content, such as AWN (Animation World Network), [irananimation.com](http://irananimation.com), [clutureofiran.com](http://clutureofiran.com), [netiran.com](http://netiran.com), [webmemo.com](http://webmemo.com) (cinema Iran – Persian article and information), [iranian.com](http://iranian.com), giving me the access to a whole host of current and archive articles on all aspects of animation throughout the world. AWN with a catalogue of some 1,200 articles, stretching back some five years, is an extremely useful site. While, [irananimation.com](http://irananimation.com) is a newly created Iranian animation site, which provides information regarding studios, upcoming events, filmmaker's profiles, as well as a database of articles written by Iranian authors on all aspects of the industry. Other

---

Buckingham, Philadelphia, 2001, p. 153-157.

<sup>71</sup> Flick Uwe, An introduction to Qualitative Research, SAGE Production Ltd, London, 1998, p.252.



Internet sites provide partial information on the animation and tend to follow broader cultural and artistic remits.

In addition to the textual sources, I have used three categories of non-textual sources. They are primary sources and used to compensate for the lack of the required information in an area of research, that was, until quite recently, totally neglected.

1) Questionnaires: questionnaires is perhaps best method for collecting specific information that one cannot find in published forms, in particular on those practitioners with long experience in making animated films in Iran.<sup>72</sup> In my previous research on the works of animator, Paul Driessen, I was delightfully surprised to collect a wide range of individual viewpoints working actively in the industry (see appendix 1).

Having done a thorough research on existing sources of information, I designed questionnaires to reflect the views of expert Iranian animators who have been instrumental in setting up animation industry in Iran. I have also taken advantage to distribute questionnaires to selected non-Iranian animator artists. During my fieldwork in Iran, extending from September to December 2001, I met and distributed questionnaires to selected Iranian animator experts. Further, I participated in international conferences and festivals – Norway 2000/2001 and Annecy 2002- where I held discussion (and delivered questionnaires to) with artist animators from the participated nations in the conferences. To those to whom I did not have personal access, I posted or e-mailed questionnaires, in particular to a selected members of ASIFA (International Animated Film Association) and ASA (Society for Animation Studies).

The content of questionnaires was slightly different whether they were addressed to Iranian or non-Iranian animators. For Iranian animators, the posed

questions were related to the issues and influences that have either helped or hindered the development of animation in Iran, the impact of the 1979 Islamic revolution on the industry, and whether it has caused a re-orientation and discontinuity in the structure and conduct of the industry or it has rather strengthened the existed pre-revolutionary organisational structure of the industry. Other questions were related to the extent and nature of financial support and control exerted by various governmental agencies in pre-and-post revolutionary eras. While, questions intended for non-Iranian animators were related to the globalisation of the animation industry, and in particular all-pervasive impact of the American animation industry on the indigenous animation of other nations, and other issues such as animation as a educational means to revitalises cultural values and as means of ideological indoctrination and the ways by which national animation industry can encounter the global forces of homogenisation of cultural values.

The problems associated with the use of questionnaires are well known and need not to be repeated here. It is suffice to say that majority of respondents (58 percent of total) sent back the completed form with additional comments on various questions, and 18 percent of questionnaires were incomplete, in particular from non-Iranian respondents who did not have adequate knowledge of the animation industry in Iran. The quality of questionnaires varied some 56 percent respondents provided detailed answers and the remaining 44 percent were either medium or low quality.<sup>73</sup>As a whole, I was pleased both for the quantity of respondents and the quality of answers given to questionnaires. The questionnaires has highlighted some of salient features of the

---

<sup>72</sup> Blaxter, Loraine, Hughes Christiana, Thight Malcolm, *How to Research*, Open University press, Buckingham, Philadelphia, 2001, p.179.

<sup>73</sup> Sudman, Seymoun, M. Bradburn, *Asking Questions (A Practical Guide to Questionnaire Design)*, Jossey- Bass Inc., California, 1982,p218.

industry and helped me to formulate right questions in investigating particularities of the Iranian animation industry.

2) As a complementary to questionnaires I have conducted an intensive interview with a number of people who had either worked in pre-1979 period and those who are now working in the animation industry.<sup>74</sup> I chose the method of unstructured personal interviews<sup>75</sup>, where interview is carried on the basis of one-to-one and is usually conducted in an office or in the respondent's home. This method allows a great deal of control over the data collection process on both sides. The interviewee has the right to rearrange the sequence of questions in order to develop the discussion and the interviewer is able to probe for more information. I tried first to use the pre-designed questionnaire as the basis of the interview, however, if the response was poor, then, I reverted to formal and standard method of interviewing. Moreover, I found the use of articles written on the interviews conducted with filmmakers and animation experts extremely helpful, in a sense that they provide context for opening up discussion and to challenge long held beliefs often propagated by the leading companies in the industry.

3) In addition to all above-mentioned sources of information, I have utilized my own personal knowledge and experiences working as artist animator, filmmaker and lecturer over past two decades. I have also taken part in the development of animation in Iran and witnessed the upheavals that the industry has gone through in the post-revolution era. I have also kept a close contact with those filmmakers and experts who are currently working in the field. It is this intimate relationship to, and familiarity with, the research subject matter that has provided me a personally inflected narrative that has structured the construction and direction of my thesis.

---

<sup>74</sup> Blaxter, Loraine, Hughes Christiana, Thight Malcolm, *How to Research*, Open University press, Buckingham, Philadelphia, 2001, p.172.

<sup>75</sup> Gunter, Barrie, *Media Research Methods (Measuring Audiences, Reactions and Impact)*, SAGE Publications London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 2000,p26.

### **1.2.7- The Plan of the Thesis**

Having outlined the premises of the thesis and research methodology used in this study, chapter two discusses the constituent elements of Iranian culture which define the national identity/consciousness – a complex combination of old Persian civilisation and a branch of Islam, Twelver Shi'ism. Furthermore, Iran is home to a heterogeneous linguistic and ethnic mosaic that combines a multitude of languages and subcultures with differing beliefs and practices. The chapter examines how these factors have interacted and influenced the development of culture and art in the country. It explains what extent animation reflects the Iranian cultural values and speculates its effects on a large segment of (under 16-year-old) audiences.

Chapter three explores, within a historical context, the influences of socio-political and cultural factors in the development of cinema in Iran. It emphasises the major policy shift in the 1960s that opened up the Iranian economy/society to international market forces, which brought not only modern production technologies but also western cultural values and consumption. The 1960s marked by a high artistic innovation in the Iranian cinema. Cinema and animation with later television have come to reflect and articulate the immense socio-political changes that the country has gone through. It examines the issues of significance- like censorship, the experimental tradition in visual art-, which developed in relation to the cinema and then played a central role in the development of animation. The chapter also gives a descriptive analysis of the institutional organisations that were responsible for the establishment and promotion of animation in the country, and draws a comparison between the westernised nationalist culture of the Pahlavi era and the Islamic cultural policy of the post revolutionary Iran,

showing that, despite the differences in ideology, both states have exhibited a similar institutionalised and propagandist approach to the use of the media. This similarity of difference is developed further in subsequent chapters.

Chapter four links the historical formation of animation industry to the analysis of the factors that have influenced the development of cinema in Iran- discussed in chapter three. The foundation of the animation industry is examined through a socio-historic and artistic analysis of the activities of the three main state-run animation centres; 1) the Ministry of Art and Cultural Institute, 2) Iranian Radio and Television and 3) The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (I.I.D.C.Y.A.). Each had an important role in the development of the visual arts as they were the first centres in the country to invest in and encourage an experimental and intellectual cinema.

Chapter five focuses on the development of animation in the I.I.D.C.Y.A. during the (1960-1979) period which give rise to the 'golden age' of animation in Iran. It analyses briefly the factors behind the founding and work practices of I.I.D.C.Y.A. and assess the role and influence of five master animator artists as the representative of this era. It concludes with a discussion of the academic endeavour to establish two animation schools; one in the I.I.D.C.Y.A. and another at the University of Farabi.

Chapter six explores the effects of the 1979 Islamic revolution on animation industry in Iran. Being essentially a religious /cultural Revolution, the new state has strived to reshape the political and cultural institutions with an Islamic ideology and practice. . I will examine, through surveys and interviews the impact of the revolution on the

animation industry and in particular its effect on the I.I.D.C.Y.A. The chapter discusses briefly on the effects of the Cultural Revolution, which sought to bring all sectors of society into line with official Islamic ideology and effect of which on new generation of animators. Finally, the chapter will look at the new governmental and private animation institutions that have emerged since 1979 and the extent to which they have co-opted with Islamic ideology and cultural guidelines.

Chapter seven looks at the Iranian animation from an international perspective as an art form and tries to locate its place within global animation community. It explores the ways by international animation community influences the works of Iranian animators and assesses the contributions that the Iranian animators make on the Middle Eastern countries.

Chapter eight builds upon the analysis developed in chapter six. It elaborates further on the prevailing cultural and artistic environment, political imperatives and economic exigencies, and utilises the results of questionnaire and interviews so as to develop an appropriate model for the Iranian animation industry. The policy implications arising of the model are discussed in terms of integrative system bringing together publishing activities, schools, studios and international festivals. Finally, through analysis of questionnaire data, the chapter takes a comparative look at the indigenous characteristics of animation relative to corresponding global ones.

Chapter Nine provides a detailed summary of the previous chapters emphasising the originality of the research – lack of published materials in the subjects. It emphasises the role of three state-run animation centres, which open up opportunities for the

commercial sector. The chapter ends with some recommendations with regard to the organisational restructuring of the state-run centres and rationalisation of their activities.

## **Chapter Two**

### **National Identity and Iranian Animation**

This chapter examines the notion of the Iranian cultural identity so as to provide the basis for an understanding of animation as an artform in Iran. It is divided into three sections. The first explores briefly the constituent elements of the Iranian culture/art underlining the forces that have influenced and shaped its characteristics over time. The second analyses the Iranian cultural traits that underlay artistic (including animation) activities, which embody the attributes and identities of the Iranian arts. The third discusses the inspirational sources of animation and various issues related to the development of an indigenous animation industry in Iran. The chapter ends with a few concluding remarks.

#### **2.1- The Characteristic Feature of National Culture/Art in Iran**

The essence of each nation is traditionally seen as a combination of social and political life, technological innovations and cultural and artistic traits. These factors are in constant evolution and development throughout the progression of history. For Iran the essence of its identity can be seen to lie in the combination of an ancient Persian cultural heritage with an Islam tradition, brought to the country by invading Arabs in the seventh century. It is the tension between these two contrasting elements in conjunction with Iran's geographical position as the meeting point between East and West that has contributed to the unique and cultural heterogeneity of its cultural national essence.



Historically Iran is, and most likely has always been a place of immense ethnic and linguistic diversity, a continental crossroad open to influences from a wide variety of cultural sources.<sup>1</sup>

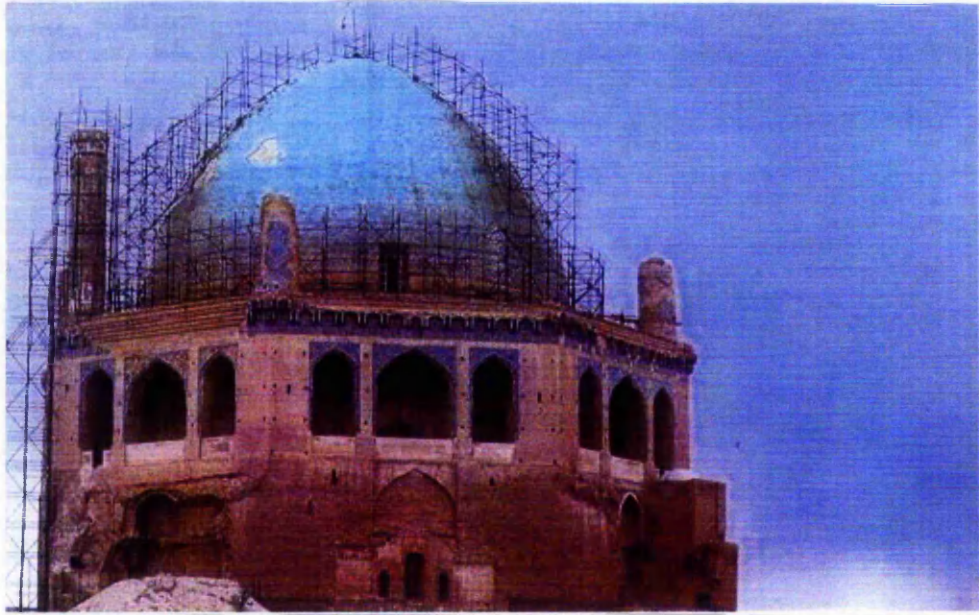
It is this position as a geographical crossroads that has resulted in Iran's exposure to a multitude of different cultural forms, which, given the Iranian tradition of assimilating outside influences and making them uniquely Iranian, has resulted in some of the most original forms of artistic expression e.g. the Persian-Islamic style architecture of the 16-17<sup>th</sup> century Safavid period, such as Ali-Gapoo in Esfahan, Sultaniya in Zanjan or the literature and poetry of such notables as Ferdosi (d.c.1020), Hafez (d.c.1390) and Sadie (d.c.1290). Indeed, it is this combination of elements and the interplay of Persian and Islamic elements that gives Iranian identity its strength and uniqueness.



**Figure 2. 1: Aliqapu Palace, Esfahan, Safavid period, (1501-1786), (left picture is a view of music room), Photo by N.Kasraian, copyright@1998 K. Kianush, Art Arena**

---

<sup>1</sup> V.Shay, Anthony, International Encyclopaedia Of Dance, Oxford University Press, 1988, volume 3 p. 513.



**Figure 2. 2: Kudabanda, Sultaniya, beginning of fourteenth century (Zanzibar province), source Iranclik.com.**

This point is emphasised by the French geographer Professor Bernard Hocard<sup>2</sup> (2000) when he states that “being an Iranian per se, relations with the West, and being Muslim are the three pillars of the Iranian culture. An immensely stable and strong structure can be built on these three pillars<sup>3</sup>.” Iranian culture is at its most vibrant when these elements are allowed to coexist freely. However, historically this has not been the case as many of those in power have sought to legitimise their right to rule by emphasising one particular element as representative of Iranian national identity. The most startling example of this cultural selectiveness was clearly demonstrated during the Pahlavi era (1923-1979) when the Persian element of Iranian culture was emphasised above all else:

---

<sup>2</sup> He is a geographer at the French Scientific Research Center. He has been carrying out research on Iran for the past 30 years and he lived in Iran from 1978 to 1983.

<sup>3</sup> An international conference on ‘cultural aspect of geography’ was held at the Ferdosi University of Mashad, in eastern Iran May 15 - 17 - 2000. The participants, including Iranian and foreign geographers presented their findings and research studies on the cultural aspects of geography and the importance of the science as a ground for ‘dialogue among civilizations’.

Reza Shah's nationalism, too, differed from much earlier Iranian nationalism in that it was cast in secular rather than Islamic terms and focused on the might and glory of the state and shah. The only variety of nationalism permitted was what Keddie designates as "official nationalism stressing national homogeneity, anticlericalism, and a modernity and strength that were read into the pre - Islamic past." Tellingly, at the inauguration of the Iranian embassy in Nazi Germany, the Shah decreed in 1934 that the name of the country in the west should be "Iran" and not "Persia"; the new name "invoked ancient glory and signified the birthplace of the Aryan race."<sup>4</sup>

The second pillar referred to by Hocard (2000) in defining Iranian national identity relates to relations with the West. He refers to these relations, not as the Westernisation of Iranian culture or its economic dependence on the West, but rather as being defined by Iran's acquisition of science and technology from the West and the many ways in which they have impacted upon the country. However perhaps the most influential element to leave an indelible mark upon Iranian consciousness was the coming of Islam<sup>5</sup>

Historically, and from the early days of its inception as religious force, many nations and countries came under the control and protection of crusading Islamic armies spreading the word of God.<sup>6</sup> Most of those nations, including Egypt the heir to several thousand years of Pharonic civilization, all the nations of North Africa and Syria in the Middle East, which were all more or less independent nations before Islam, failed to preserve their cultural identities in the face of this new invading force. Today all of

---

<sup>4</sup> Foran, Johan, Fragile Resistance - Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution, Westview Press Boulder. San Francisco. Oxford, 1993, p. 225.

<sup>5</sup> Sharifi, Alireza, Three Pillars of Iranian Culture: An Interview with Bernard Hocard, Khorassan (Morning Daily, No. 14714, June 7, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Pop, Masterpieces of Persian art, United State of America, Green Wood Press, 1970.

them are considered to be Arabic nations, with an Arabic culture and language. However, Iran was not subsumed into this Arab culture because of its geo-political position on the Iranian Plateau, the ever-evolving Persian language, and the non-isolationist governments and dynasties that encouraged communication with other nations. Indeed this independence was reflected in the fact that the Islam that developed in Iran was a unique Iranian manifestation of the religion, Twelver Shiism, which stood in contradistinction to the rest of the Muslim world who were predominantly Sunni. However, having said that, Iranians did embrace the new religion and made significant contributions to its cultural, artistic and intellectual development. Iranian scholars such as al-Ghazali, Ibn-Sina, al-Khwarizmi, usually referred to by western researchers as Islamic rather than Iranian scholars, made immense contributions in locating Iran as the intellectual centre of the Muslim world by combining the spirit of Persian art and literature with the spiritual dimension of Islam in producing new and unique cultural forms.

The Muslim conquerors of the seventh century AD were amazed by the numerous fire-temples, and some of these building were converted into mosques, which became the most distinctive architectural aspect of later Iranian architecture.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the influence of Iranian Islamic arts and science went beyond the Muslim world itself and was seen as one of the most important factors in shaping the Renaissance:

The Latin translations of Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd, between the middle of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth, introduced the Christian scholastic theologians to Greek learning, which had remained unknown in Western Europe from the time of Boethius. The discovery of Aristotle by

---

<sup>7</sup> Keall, E. J, Revised by Marx, Irma, Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Toronto, 1968, p.13

St. Thomas Aquinas and his master, Albert the Great – which was due primarily to these translations – wrought a major intellectual revolution in scholastic circles.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the key to this vibrancy and influence lies in the ability to combine the aforementioned ‘pillars of culture’ with assimilated influences in unique, challenging and constantly changing forms. It is the recognition of these factors that forms the key to the production and understanding of Iranian art. If due attention is not paid to these elements then the rich tapestry of Iranian Islamic culture is lost with cultural products becoming merely second rate copies of foreign forms e.g. the Europeanised painting and architecture of the Qajar period is instructive in this case<sup>9</sup>.



**Figure2.3: Fath Ali Shah hunting with two mounted attendants and two on foot: he is pursuing two very small gazelles, one of which he has shot through the neck, Delicate landscape background, source B.W, Robinson1976.<sup>10</sup>**

<sup>8</sup> Badeau, Johan Stothoff, *The Genius of Arab Civilization (the Arab Role in Islamic culture)*, Phaidon Press Limited, Oxford, Great Britain, 1975, P.66.

<sup>9</sup> Pak - baz, Roesin, *Persian Painting (Ancient times till Present)*, Publisher Narestan, Tehran, p. 131 – 185,2000.

<sup>10</sup> Robinson, B W, *Persian Painting (in the India Office Library)*, London, Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1976, p. XIV.

## 2.2- Cultural Traits and Artistic Identity

### 2.2.1- Cultural Traits

Iranian art has been traditionally influenced by the twin cultural traits of the belief in the individual as the sole creator of a work of art combined with an adherence to an Islamic morality. The former has meant that Iranian artists have historically produced meticulous works that have required time and perseverance<sup>11</sup>, whilst the latter has infused the creative ethos with a sense of selflessness and an effacement of the individual, which has seen most Iranian art adhere to a particular stylistic code with the identity of their creator remaining unknown. However, in recent years, primarily due to the influence of Western artist traditions, these traits have become less and less noticeable. Whilst some of these developments, such as artists now signing their work, are less than welcome, others, such as the establishment of a co-operative team work ethic are more beneficial in establishing a comprehensive and proficient form of artistic production. The establishment of such work practices are particularly essential in the media and plastic arts, which rely on a co-operative division of labour.<sup>12</sup>

Another positive cultural trait evident in much Iranian artistic traditions is the idea of respect for the teacher and the establishment of a master apprentice hierarchy governed by respect and humility. However, this element has negatively metamorphosed into a situation whereby a heavy emphasis was placed on the portrayal of adult themes, usually patriarchal in nature, to the detriment of all other topics. Indeed the patriarchal influence is one that is extremely pronounced throughout all levels of Iranian society. According to Micheal Hillmann, "in Iranian culture, male elders have a special place

---

<sup>11</sup> Fray, Richard Nelson, The Golden Age of Persia, Translated by M. Rajabnia, Souroush Press Tehran - 1984.

<sup>12</sup> Madad Pour, ...,

relinquished only in death. Sons are not named after fathers to preserve the father's uniqueness. In his own domain as head of the household or khan of the tribe or monarch of the nation, the male elder or father figure need answer to no one. He has proved his worth by becoming an elder in a world where it is not easy to live long enough to be old".<sup>13</sup> This historical cultural factor has also crystallised within the family unit with children having less rights than adults to state their opinions. This is a situation that strongly persisted for many years throughout all levels of society and was particularly evident in the absence of any cultural formats directed towards the needs of children. Indeed, one noticeable example of this deficiency can be seen from the fact that fifty years after the advent of cinema in Iran there was no children's cinema. However, this shortfall was redressed in the 1960's with the establishment of the Institute of Children and Young Adults, which was charged with the responsibility of producing a variety of cultural forms, films, animation, book publishing, directing specifically at children

In the period from 1961 to 1965, because of changes in social conditions prevailing in Iran, we witnessed the birth and serious activity of three organisations engaged in literature for children and young adults. These activities included the formation of children's Book Council (1962), publishing of Peik (message) magazines for children (1963) and coming to existence of Centre for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (1965). The centre stood out among the three organisations for its establishment of a publishing house, a cinematic centre and a library (until 1979). Among the major activities of the centre, references can be made to training of technical staff, finding proper indigenous patterns for its cultural products, establishment of mobile libraries in rural areas and the

---

<sup>13</sup> C. Hillman, Micheal, Iranian Culture. A Persianist View, University Press of America, 1900, p.37.

establishment of close co-operation among great contemporary poets and authors in the field of children and young adults' literature.<sup>14</sup>

One of the main issues to be considered in attending to the educational and cultural needs of the young is the desire to promote national values and modes of behaviour that offset the influence of foreign cultural forms. In Iran, this issue is especially relevant given the large youth population in the country and the desire of the government to infuse them with an Islamic ethos and offset what they see as a "foreign cultural onslaught". However, this is not a situation that is unique to Iran:

Europeans feel themselves to be light years away from the Japanese universe, from its culture and its life style. And yet, quite apart from the undoubted narrative quality of certain productions, Japanese cartoons have portrayed situations in which children from other cultures have recognised and continue to recognise themselves.<sup>15</sup>

Historically within the Iranian context, one of the main factors that help to offset foreign cultural influence has been the prevalence of the Persian language. It was the richness and deeply ingrained feeling for the language that were sufficient to preserve it from domination by Arabic when Islam became the religion of Iran. However, Arabic has continued to maintain a place within Iran as the holy language of the Koran and religious study. It is the existence of this dual linguistic system that is given as one of the most important factors in amalgamating the different ethnic groups in the country.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Sharifi, Saeed, Centre for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (1965 – 1996), *Goftego (Dialogue) – Cultural & Social Quarterly*, 1998, NO. 19,2000, p.1.

<sup>15</sup> Pilling, Jayne (Ed), *A reader in Animation Studies*, Sydney Australia: Johan Libbey & company Pty Ltd., 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Nouri - Zadeh, Sheida, Persian Carpet, the beautiful picture of art in history, Namey - e otaqe – Bazargani (news letter of the Chamber of Commerce, Mines and Industries of the Islamic republic of Iran,1998,No.3, p.46 – 48.



Iranian languages are applied to a group of inter-related languages which only from linguistic point of view, share common characteristics, and not in terms of geographical and political borders. In totality these languages along with the Indo-Aryan languages, the Indo-Aryan or Indo-Iranian branches, encompass the extended family of Indian and European languages.

In the ancient period, Iranian languages encompassed a broad geographical area: From the Caucasus in the north-west (Assi language) to the Persian Gulf (Baluchi language), to Mosandom Peninsula in the Gulf of Oman (the Kumzari language); from the North of the Euphrates in the West (Kurdish language –Zaza) to the Hindokesh and Pamir in the East (Serikuli language).

Prior to migration of the Turkish tribes to the eastern regions, the Iranian languages covered on even greater geographical area, extending westward to the northern and western shores of the Black Sea where they spoke the Sakaee language, and stretching to the north as far as northern Mongolia and the Chinese border, where the Soghdi language was spoken.<sup>17</sup>

However, despite this proliferation of languages it is the Persian language, due to its richness and adaptability, which acts as a linguistic unifier. One of the reasons given for the Iranian preference for dubbing and its development as a large and essential part of the indigenous film industry is the domestic audiences desire to hear Persian dialogue with its varied cultural nuances of dialect, phrasing and play on words.

As Shahrohk Golstan (2000) says about dubbing in Iranian cinema: “ in Farsi film (on the style of film making in the Iranian cinema, see chapter 3) in fact there was a belief that when a movie had been produced but still had not past the dubbing process the movie remained a dead creature. Truly this belief was correct, because after passing through the dubbing process a movie became a movie, however in the dubbing system the voice is a narrator’s voice not those of the actors”. The dubbing industry in Iranian cinema became so well established and the voices so well known that even a famous actor such as Behruz Vosughi, more often than not did not use his own voice.<sup>18</sup>

One other issue which the question of dubbing showed is the means by which a foreign medium is imported, assimilated and adopted to indigenous circumstances. The essential point is that whilst foreign technology may be imported into a particular country it is subjected to specific cultural contexts that result in the production of different cultural forms. In not so very distant past, people used to ask us, as Iranian animators; can you produce animation like Walt Disney? Our response was that no we cannot, because our technical expertise and artistic developments have not reached to the level that is prerequisite for producing the quality of animation of Disney. Today, people ask; can you produce computer animation? This time our answer is yes, because we know that the development of the animation industry rests on the ability of animators to lean and use technological innovations pertinent to animation and integrating them into well-connected production systems. However, the main problem is that the country lacks sufficiently developed infrastructure both in terms of trained

---

<sup>17</sup> Kaviri, Suzan, Iranian Language, Chista: Political, Social, Scientific, Literary & Artistic (Monthly), Oct 2000, No. 171, p.2.

<sup>18</sup> Golstan, Shahrohk, Imagination Lantern – Iran cinema’s adventure from initial until victory of the Islamic Revolution by narrative of BBC, publisher Kavir, Tehran, 1995, p. 59.

animators and required investment, which tend to hinder the implementation of new technologies and the overall development of the industry.<sup>19</sup> In this respect, one exceptional development has been the experience of Far-Eastern countries such as the Philippines and Hong Kong. They have received the technological infrastructure from American companies to produce, at much lower cost, animations for the US market. However, despite this investment the domestic animation industry in these countries remains underdeveloped with all innovations being directed towards foreign production.

... Hong Kong animation has been 'performing' this unique role. It is not an idolised space nor is it a grandiose position. In actuality, it lacks an original national style of high artistic value; neither does it have any *auteur* animators known in the international arena.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, this raises the question of the importance of and the need to preserve indigenous cultural traits. In the Iranian context reference has already been made of the important influence and contribution of unique cultural forms such as 1) the ancient history of Persia, the influence of the Islamic religion 2) the unifying influence and richness of the Persian language, the diverse ethnic make-up of the country 3) culturally innovative forms such as the Ferdowsi's integration of Persian and Islamic culture in his *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), or Kamal-Ol-Molk's undertakings in integrating Iranian and Western styles in painting. It is these influences and traditions of experimentation that form the cultural contexts that provide the basis for an understanding of the development of animation in Iran.

---

<sup>19</sup> Hourcade, J. Charles, Professional Meetings, Conference Bulletin, p.14, Annecy, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> T.Y.Hu,Lent, Johan A.(Edited), Animation in Asia and the Pacific, Johan Libbey Publisheg, 2001,105.

The recognition of the influence of cultural forms and the attempts to explore them can be clearly seen in some of the promising developments that have taken place within the Iranian cinema. It is a technically simple cinema that realizes how it can target elements of national identity and how it can respond to the cultural and artistic exigencies of Iranian society by opening up a unique space and voice for itself within the international market. With this aim in mind, chapters three and four provide an analytical survey of the one hundred year development of Iranian cinema as a possible model for the animation industry.

### **2.2.2- Artistic Identity**

In pre- modern Iranian art from the Achaemenid period (559-330 BCE) to the Qajar (1796-1925), both the media of artistic expression and their vocabulary stress the decorative, formal, ceremonial, and ritual aspects of the Iranian arts. The most widespread and best known Iranian art form is the Persian pile carpet whose varied patterns during the four centuries from the early Safavid period (1501-1736) to the present time seem expressive above all of the beauty of patterns as decoration item.<sup>21</sup>

This decorative instinct is also expressed in the continued development of calligraphy as an esteemed ancient artform and, perhaps most strikingly, in the visual beauty of much Iranian architecture. The religious architectural decoration in Islamic Iran, from the early Saljuq period (1055-1157) to the Qajars, strikes many observers as decorative more than any thing else, with its glazed tile facades, scalloped archways, arcades, domes, minarets, courtyard pools, and the like. Furthermore, the visual imagery adorning such architectural surfaces is also

decorative in nature: symmetrically arranged floral motifs, patterns of rectilinear shapes, arabesque systems, combinations of bright colours, with little narrative or figural didactic content.<sup>22</sup>

Allied to this artistic development is the fact that Iranian cultural identity is linked to and defined by an ancient set of beliefs, stories, myths and arts, which characterize the development and ethos of the nation. Most arts have, sometimes in conjunction with, and other times in challenge to the ethnic/historical conditions, either directly as narrative or indirectly as symbol, attempted to record and document the historical cultural experience that have enabled a stable unified cultural identity to be transferred to future generations. Iranian arts and literature in terms of national forms and concepts are manifestations of the cultural identity of the country that bring into view the creativity of the nation in different periods<sup>23</sup>, a creativity marked by continuity in expression and the mutual influence of context influencing form and vice versa.

Iranian culture is manifested and experienced by educated, shi'i Moslem Iranians who are thus considered both a national and a cultural group, and the dominant cultural force on the Iranian plateau. That historical records and literature in the Persian language are essential features of this Iranian culture deems them suitable subjects of study and reflection by a specialist in Persian literature. In fact, the Persianist could hardly study any Iranian culture and artefacts beside this "Persian" culture with much confidence.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Nouri - Zadeh, Sheida, Persian Carpet, the beautiful picture of art in history, Namey - e otaqe – Bazargani (news letter of the Chamber of Commerce, Mines and Industries of the Islamic republic of Iran, 1998, No.3, p.46 – 48.

<sup>22</sup> Yahaqqi, M.Jafar, A Dictionary of Myths and Narrative Symbols in Persian Literature, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studios and Soroush Press, Tehran, 1996, p.3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.5 – 11

<sup>24</sup> C. Hillman, Micheal, Iranian Culture. A Persianist View, University Press of America, 1990, p.4.

Art and literature serve as the cultural language of a country, both defining and being defined by the country's sense of self. It is a document that stands as a reflection, and an attempt to reflect and define, the social, cultural and political historical development of a people.

Iranians still turn to Hafez's Divan, open it to a random page, and chose a verse, couplet, or whole *ghazal* poem at random as an augury. They quote Hafez in everyday conversation, allude to him in writing of all sorts, and recite his verse in social situations. .... For many Iranian readers the poetry of Sadi is the most typical of Persian poets of the first rank and the most respected stylist ever. A peripatetic court poet and born survivor, whose cleverness and understanding of human nature served him in good stead during and after the cataclysm of successive waves of Mongol invasions and in the context of service in various courts of capricious rulers.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, it is the unique and epic nature of Iran's history, from Persian empire to Arab invasion to monarchical despotism, which has contributed to the shaping of its cultural traditions and identity which are reflected in myths, mourning rituals, and customs, and given expression in literature, arts, poems and architecture.

### **2.3- The concept of national animation: A Discussion**

We have so far discussed the issue of national identity and the constituent elements of Iranian culture that constitute the basis on which an investigation of the concept of an indigenous animation artform can be undertaken. This undertaking is intended to shift the discussions and debates concerning animation from its technical preoccupation to

---

<sup>25</sup> C. Hillman, Micheal, Iranian Culture, A Persianist View, University Press of America, 1990, p.67.

an exploration of more substantive issues that take into consideration the cultural origins, direction and purpose of the artform. The over-emphasis on minute details of technological innovations has been to the detriment of all other issues. This was clearly evident during the course of my fieldwork when I attended an Iranian ASIFA (International Animated Film Association) meeting in the summer of 2001.

During meeting ASIFA showed the film "Shrek<sup>26</sup>" and held a discussion after its screening. A young Iranian animator, Ravanbakhsh Sadeqi, chaired the meeting. The emphasis of Sadeqi's discussion was on the complicated and unique computer techniques of the work e.g. how the use of computer programs in this film has progressed to higher levels than that shown in previous films; how the emotions of the characters now co-ordinate more closely to live nature. At the end of the meeting, a highly-experienced artist spoke critically to me about how the young people (the speaker and some of the participants) were enamoured and astonished to learn how the producers of the film had developed a separate program for the movement of each single hair belonging to the multitude of different characters. This clearly shows that the fascination with and emphasis on the medium's technical aspects and innovations has led to a paucity discussion on issues such as cultural representation or visual language and seemed to be blinding young animators to other possibilities and means of expression.

This point was expanded upon by Alimorad, a very experienced animator and referee for the 2000 Tehran International Film Festival, when he was asked, in an interview, to comment on the overall quality of the material submitted to the festival:

---

<sup>26</sup> Dream Work's 2001 animated feature "Shrek" uses PDI's 3-D technology to tell William Steig's story about a monster who is forced to become a heroic creature. Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy, John Lithgow and Linda Hunt are part of the pic's voice cast (Mallory, ppA1, 2000).

“The use of the computer in animation production has changed everything to the extent that now there is an abundance of productions of little value. Previously the equipment for animation was not widely available, but the currently wide availability of the computer means that everybody has access to an animation studio. This is, in fact, not a negative point but it is very worrying that many people have begun to draw some lines, which they call animation without sufficient recognition of the knowledge behind animation. There is a feeling that if this situation continues the field of animation is in danger”<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Ali Reza Golpaygani’s concerns with regard to the increased use of computers within the animation industry raises a number of pertinent points. On the one hand he has pointed to the benefits that the new technology has brought to the industry, such as increased speed and access and reduced costs, in what is an expensive and time consuming art. However he has also highlighted the fact that these benefits can in fact prove detrimental in the long run if the intellectual and educational aspect of the artform, i.e. the cultural and thematic content, becomes compromised as a result of the ability to produce films quickly and cheaply.<sup>28</sup>

The triumph of form over content leads to a situation where issues such the uniqueness and specific nature of a country’s culture, art and history are jettisoned and ignored, resulting in productions that are bland, formless and lack identifiable or distinguishable cultural and artistic traits. The example of the Iranian cinema is instructive in this case. Traditionally, Iranian cinema has been very much an artistic and vanguard rather than a commercial cinema. Both the pre-and-post-revolutionary ‘quality’ cinemas have been

---

<sup>27</sup> Afshari, Behzad, Technique rules the content, An interview with Abdollah Alimorad, a festival jury member, daily bulletin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran international Animation Festival 2001, No.3, 21Feb, p.3.

<sup>28</sup> Golpaygani, Ali Reza, Missing Link in Education of Animation, A Discussion, Daily Bulletin, No.3, 21Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran international Animation Festival, 2001, p.5.



marked by an identifiable identity and focus that is uniquely Iranian in nature. This has arisen from the fact that the cinema has been, and continues to be, intimately aware of and seeks to reflect, analyse and critique the elements that constitute the notion of 'Iranianness' and the issues that have direct relevancy to peoples lives. This is the lesson that the animation industry in Iran must be aware of, for effective communication with audiences depends more on content and intimacy with indigenous social and cultural factors than on up-to-date technological innovation. For instance, the Iranian *Rouhozi plays* has continued to attract large audiences in Iran, despite their simple styles and formats used in plays. This is due to the fact that it has emerged from, responds to, and has enmeshed itself within the emotional and cultural fabric of the people. (see Appendix 3)

An Iranian cinema critic, Ahmad Talebi-Nejad,<sup>29</sup> believes that the main audiences for the animated films are children. Children, on the whole, have much more shared traits in common with one another due to the fact that, unlike adults, their identities have not yet been fully formed and influenced by issues of ethnicity, nationality, language, colour or race. Children from around the world are joined together by the gags of Tom and Jerry. Therefore in a way we can say that the language of animation is an international language. In this sense, concept takes precedence over structure and form. At this level, issues concerning ethnicity, continental and indigenous differences are meaningless and irrelevant. However, such an analysis is operating at a purely simplistic level and as has been argued throughout this chapter. It is, indeed, the unique cultural traits that contribute to the national identity of each country that impinge upon

---

<sup>29</sup> Ahmad Talebi - Nejad, wrote three books, hundreds articles, reports and research in cinema magazines especially in the Film Magazine (monthly).

and manifest themselves in their different and unique cultural productions. How else can we differentiate between the complex and masterful works of Czech animators such as Karel Zeman, Hermína Týrlová, Jiří Trnka from the American commercial cultural values epitomised by Walt Disney's creations? How then do we set about analysing the essential elements that combine to form the notion of a national animation cinema?<sup>30</sup>

Iranian animators have hotly debated the concept of 'national animation'. Nouredin Zarrinkelk, who has long been active in the design and illustration of books and films for children and been one of the key figures in the debate on issues concerning Iranian artistic heritage and the idea of a national animation movement, believes the concept is a subtle issue that must be seriously engaged with fully.

"I neither believe in nor disbelieve in this concept. National animation both exists and is nonexistent. Because when an Iranian produces animation, it is automatically a national animation and in the work as a stereotype we don't need to use Iranian elements such as *Goal va Botah* (flower design), *Ghalam-zany* (Engraving) (see Appendix 4) or Miniature. When an Iranian artist takes a brush and begins to work, he will transfer the culture that is in his blood. However, it is not a national animation, because now the world is without borders, also culture is without borders as a result of this fact we cannot stay far away from the influences of global culture or avoid being influenced. We are multi-laterally under the influences of other cultures and influence other cultures. Therefore we both have a national and indigenous art and we do not. Any Iranian in any region of the world, even if he just grows up in Iran and arrives at a rational age, even if he works in

---

<sup>30</sup> Talebi - Nejad, Ahmad, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussions and writings about animation cinema). Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999.

Casablanca or Costa Rica his work is Iranian, Therefore that is the subtle issue which we must understand here".<sup>31</sup>

His argument reflects reservations and concerns that arose after the revolution when Persian and Islamic cultural elements came into conflict with one another. In the midst of religious revolutionary zeal many of the ideologues in the new regime felt that Persian cultural elements were incongruous and unnecessary with their attempts to promote a monotheistic Islamic message. Under the new ideological system artists have been placed under huge restrictions and forced to make their work confirm to the religious revolutionary ideology of the new regime. This situation was responsible in discouraging any sort of experimentation or innovation and reduced cultural production in the country to the level of stereotypical and superficial renditions of official rhetoric.

However, it must be noted that by simply using techniques such as *Goal va Botah* (flower design) or *Ghalam-zany* (engraving) would not automatically result in an artwork being deemed nationally representative, but there are certain cultural elements in each nation that, if used correctly, can comprehensively portray the cultural essence and identity of a nation. Therefore, we must seek to understand which kinds of elements are best combined in attempting to create a representative national animation. Secondly, the elements that we use as symbols of an Iranian national identity must be attractive, influential and meaningful to audiences around the world. In other words they must exhibit a universal significance beyond their national meaning.

In the establishment of a national animation cultural and artistic elements are not separated from each another, but are inextricably linked. One can only be discussed

---

<sup>31</sup> Zabhi, Ramak, A discussion with Zarrinkelk, Animation need to national support, Film Report (cinema magazine), 1996, No.82, p. 82.

with reference to the other. In addition, the geographical factors of each nation, including all of its sociological elements and customs, are also important in shaping a country's national identity. It is therefore the artist's task to take these various elements and combine them with his own preoccupations and artistic vision combining with sensibilities in presenting a unique creative artefacts, and interrogating with well known and recognisable cultural forms. According to Brian Sibley this is essentially what Disney did:

Disney was after all, a national institution. Can there have been a child who grew up in America after 1928 who didn't know Disney's name, or who couldn't have immediately identified that engaging entourage of cartoon characters led by a Mouse called Mickey?<sup>32</sup>

However, national concept of animation may not be always the sole criteria used in producing artforms, because the influences of natural culture and politics often exceed the political boundaries, where the conception used by artists tend to blend the components of other cultures, and over time metamorphosing them into an artistic identity and national style. In this regard the article of William Moritz (1997), "Narrative strategies for resistance and protest in Eastern European animation" illustrates this point:

Soviet Russia's domination of Eastern European countries for 40 years (from the fall of the "iron curtain" around 1947 until the "Glasnost" of about 1990) brought mixed blessing for animation. On the one hand, Soviet policy favored cinema as an essential, powerful popular art form and maintained busy animation studios not only for each country but also for distinct ethnic groups; animators were often tenured civil servants with guaranteed full-time employment making not only theatrical cartoons but also public service and educational animation, children's films of folk culture and special effects for features. On the other hand, Soviet policy

dictated sharp guidelines for subject matter and a strict censorship of both preliminary plans and finished films in order to guarantee that all films upheld general communist ideals and current party agendas.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, the artist must be aware of the fact that his work is embedded in, influenced by constant reshaping of the cultural landscape within unique socio-political and historical contexts. This is the formal undertaking towards establishing and developing an apparatus for an understanding of national animation art, one that pays attention to the inspiration of ancient literature, history, myths, folk stories and contemporary societal exigencies.

In a similar vein, Manochehr Karim-zadeh, an Iranian researcher and writer on children's affairs, has argued that Iran is one of leading countries with regard to the availability of a cinema specifically directed to the needs and education of children and young adults. Walt Disney is an example of a company that has fully exploited this area. Considering the numerous subjects from folk culture available in Iran, we can easily compete with them. Almost everyone knows Mickey Mouse, but there are few who have heard about the Cat and Mouse of Obayd-i Zakani<sup>34</sup>. Some would even say that the character of Mickey Mouse was influenced by Obeyed Zakani's cat and mouse. Other folk stories such as "One Thousands Night" or "Celebration Amir Arsalan" and many other narratives are very attractive for children. Indeed, the east as a whole

---

<sup>32</sup> Allen, Robin, Walt Disney and Europe, Published by Johan Libbey company Ltd., London, p.16, 1999.

<sup>33</sup> Pilling, Jayne (Ed), A Reader in Animation Studies, Sydney Australia: Johan Libbey & company Pty Ltd.,1997, p38.

<sup>34</sup> Nizam-od-Din Obayd-i Zakani (c. 1300 - 1371) is a 14<sup>th</sup> century poet and satirist. He lived in Qazvin and Shiraz and traveled to Baghdad. He held a judicial post in Qazvin for some time; however, he died in poverty. Among Persian writers, Obayd is the unequalled master of parody and social satire. His serious poetry is written in a pure and elegant style.

possesses an abundance of universally knowable tales and myths from which other art forms such as animation can easily draw on.<sup>35</sup>

My own fieldwork research on the development of culturally based animation industry in Iran<sup>36</sup> revealed that the public, in general, and animators and filmmakers in particular, spend very little time for general reading after formal education - this conclusion is also supported by a 1995 UNESCO survey on the reading habits of Iranians.<sup>37</sup> This implies that the Iranian artists should not only expand their knowledge on wider culturally related subjects but also undertake research on the topics that have been often forgotten in cultural studies. It is a task that the Iranian animators should strive for if the industry is to improve its standard of its film texts, scenarios and storyboards.

The lack of intellectual and cultural engagement of the Iranian animators is also confirmed by the result of questionnaire sent to them. Among my 30 responses, 10 did not reply to the questions concerning those cultural and historical factors that are essential to the future development of animation in Iran. Of this number, seven gave vague responses such as, "cultural aspects need more attention; we must pay attention to historical factors; the historical question requires detailed research and investigation", which indicates that they failed to engage meaningfully with the questions. The 20 respondents who provided constructive and worthwhile answers can be grouped into two categories: five of them were lecturers in animation colleges and the rest were directors and designers who were active in the animation industry. These

---

<sup>35</sup> Mojavezy, Pak-sima, The tales travelled from the East to the West, a discussion with Manochehr Karim-zadeh, *Iran (daily newspaper)*, No.1182, 1999.

<sup>36</sup> For detailed see Chapter Seven

<sup>37</sup> UNESCO, Books and Book Reading in Iran: A Statistical Viewpoint, *Iran (morning daily)*, May 24, 1995, p.9.

respondents identified the main aspects of prime importance in establishing a national animation industry. These included; a bibliography of all animation masters, greater emphasis and awareness on the origins and depiction of indigenous folk literature, customs, national tales and myths, an appreciation of and desire to incorporate influences such as varied architectural and painting styles as well as the nuances of music and religious spirituality. However, an important point was made by one of the respondents who, while believing that attention to cultural, artistic and historical aspects is important, argued that they could be a restricting factor:

“In my view we must not limit ourselves. In art we must be free so artists imagination can fly creatively. We must not over emphasize one point. However it is correct that we are Iranians with a series of Iranian customs, attitudes and traits and we must crystallize Iranian culture in our works.”

Moreover, hesitation and taking a middle way response may be an indication that there is a certain amount of uncertainty and fear among the artistic community in relation to the use of indigenous cultural forms. This arises from the fact that those in power have traditionally used culture as the legitimising force in Iran. As a result traditional cultural forms are loaded with meaning and significance that resonate throughout the centuries and artists have found hard to extricate themselves from or deviate from official cultural discourses or the ingrained level of stereotype. Morteza Momayez<sup>38</sup> (1937), a well-known Iranian graphic designer and writer/ animator, gives the following view in relation to this issue:

“There is a wealth of sources in Iran. There are untapped sources that can be good references for any art forms, but to use sources we must first establish a suitable means of access so that all who are interested will be

---

<sup>38</sup> Momayez is one of founder of graphic design course in Faculty of Art in Tehran University; art director and designer of many magazine, books inside and outside of Iran; writers of six art books and

able to use them. Unfortunately, in each phase of our society the existence of miserliness and specialized frameworks have limited the creativity and curiosity of artists. Hence this is a main issue for our people that in fact is a result of the condition of society and has occurred in various phases of the history of our country where fanaticism has limited creativity and intellectualism".<sup>39</sup>

Despite these difficulties Iranian animation has from its inception attempted to, and been at its most creative whenever it has attempted to engage with indigenous cultural forms and the concerned issues. An early example of such an undertaking can be seen in one of the first Iranian animation films, Nosratollah Karimi's, *Zendegy* (Life) (1966), which used the concepts and forms from Iranian Miniature painting. The film, produced by the Ministry of Art, narrates the story of a *Pechak* (ivy) that sneakily creeps along and destroys sapling flowers. At the end of the film the sad flowers unite to fight back against and eventually overcome the destructive ivy. Happiness returns to the meadow again. In addition to the use of Persian music and the employment of a miniature painting stylistic, its thematic of a group collectively rising up against the tyranny of oppression is one very much in keeping with an Iranian cultural sensibility. This sensibility is acutely located within the culture of Shiism (particularly evidenced in, and played out in the ritualistic mourning of, Hosseins martyrdom at the battle Karbala) with its concept of sacrifice in the face of tyranny and oppression in the search for truth and justice. These are elements that are clearly evident in the final scene of the film when the hero of story, a young flower who has suffered a hard life, dies under a big slate only for its seeds to give birth to another flower (see attached video).

---

nine articles. He has produced three animated films in his artistic life; 1) The One Who Fantasized and the One Who Acted (1971); 2) A Green Point (1972) and 3) The Black Bird (1973).

<sup>39</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, an interview with Morteza Momayez, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, p193, 1999.





Figure 2.4: *Zandegy (Life)* by Nosratollah Karimi (1967), source artist's private archive

In an interview with Nosratollah Karimi (2001), I asked him about the music that he used in the film:

“This was the first time that Iranian music was created on the basis of pictures. In fact I can say I made the music myself, without musicians watching the film or being informed about the work. Like an orchestra conductor, I used my hands and body movements to imitate the actions of characters and then requested that the musicians play the melodies following my movements”.<sup>40</sup>

Another example of the early animation that paid special attention to the indigenous cultural elements is *Shangoul-O-Mangoul*, made by Farkhondeh Torabi and Morteza Ahadi. The film was produced by using the *Pate-Duzy*<sup>41</sup> cut out technique.<sup>42</sup> Morteza Ahadi explained the reason for the use of the *Pate* technique in *Shangoul-O-Mangoul*:

<sup>40</sup> Karimi, Nosratollah, filed work interview. Tehran, August 2001.

<sup>41</sup> A kind of needle work, a hand craft art from Kerman

<sup>42</sup> Indeed it was one of the last animation films that to pay specific attention to Iranian artistic elements and folkloric literature (there is a copy of *Zandegy (Life)* and *Shangoul-O-Mangoul* on the Video attached to this thesis).

“Firstly this work was an experiment for us. This was the first time in the world that an animated film had been produced using pieces of cloth like *Pate Dozy* (needle works). As the film has an ancient story which has parallels in many countries using the *Pate* form provides familiarity with an Iranian atmosphere and gives the work a sense of location and place”.<sup>43</sup>



**Figure 2.5: Shangoul - 0 - Mangoul by Farkhondeh Torabi and Morteza Ahadi (2000), source Les Films du Preau.**

Both the above-mentioned master animators believe the desire to represent and utilise national culture is not an essentialist/nativist approach. Rather, the fundamental principle guiding such an undertaking is the simultaneous desire to speak a universal language that has meaning and is capable of speaking beyond domestic borders. The originality and creative aspects of the animated films- *Shangoul-0-Mangoul*, *Mahi-e ranguin-kaman* (The Rainbow Fish) by Farkhondeh Torabi and *Lili Hosak* by Vajioholah Fard-e-Moghadam- greatly appreciated by children audiences when they were shown in a French cinema. The French company Films du Preau, a distributor of

---

<sup>43</sup> *Simia (animation quarterly)*, Animation by Handicrafts Arts, A discussion with Farkhondeh Torabi and Morteza Ahadi, No.1, winter 2001.

children's film in French, told an Irna (the Iranian news agency) reporter that during the previous week 3500 people had watched the films. He added that the company had selected these three Iranian films as a result of their artistic uniqueness and ability to appeal to a wide audience. A Franco-Iranian resident from Antonio, a city located south of Paris that *Shangoul-0-Mangoul* had caused such a sensation in this city that all screenings were booked out. He added that most of the Iranians that attended the screenings of *Shangoul-0-Mangoul* felt themselves to be in Iran. Irna reported that in some of the screening saloons, Iranian organizers brought Persian rugs, carpets and handicrafts for sale.<sup>44</sup>

#### **2.4- Concluding remarks**

The chapter has shown that the notion of the Iranian cultural identity is centred around three main pillars: an ancient Persian culture; the religious and socio-political influence of Shi'i Islam; the country's unique geography and history as the meeting place of diverse cultures. These pillars have historically evolved and interacted over each other, hence giving rise to specific artistic and intellectual forms and a defined cultural/artistic identity to the Iranian artefacts. It has also argued that the visual heritage that has continuously generated styles, symbols, designs and ornaments reflected in architectural and calligraphy and manifested in the living historical documents of cultural development. Similarly, non-visual heritage, which include myths, folklore, tales, poems and literary resources, have helped to shape and generate a unique set of indigenous traditions, beliefs, and customs. These visual and non-visual cultural heritages have provided artistic structures upon which the basis for an indigenous

---

<sup>44</sup> IRNA (Islamic Republic News Agency), Welcome to Iranian animations in France, 12 October 2001.

Iranian animation is built. Finally, the chapter has discussed and clarified the problems faced by the Iranian animators. The views and comments expressed by a sample animators has been used to highlight some of the mute issues that has been the concern of master animators in developing an indigenious Iranian animation. Because of close connection and interrelation of animation with cinema the next chapter examines the characteristics of the development of cinema in Iran.

## **Chapter Three**

### **An Overview of The Development of Cinema in Iran**

There is a close conceptual relationship between animated films and 'artistic' cinema, both strive to display human ingenuity and imagination; both reflect societal culture and historical experience of nations. This chapter provides a broad overview of the development of cinema in Iran. It is intended to serve as a background to the evolution of visual art and to underline socio-economic and technical obstacles that the industry has encountered in various phases of its development. Since 1960s the development of animated films has been closely interwoven with the expansion of the film industry in Iran. Contrary to the experience of developed countries where animation emerged first and then branched out into cinema, the development animation in Iran has been dependent, not only on pre-requisite for socio-economic and artistic environment – development of a capitalist system and division of labour- but also on the existing sufficiently large domestic market and an fairly well developed artistic community and infra-structure exhibition theatres.

#### **3.1- Introduction**

Despite that fact that Iran is a large country with twelve large cities with over one million population and twenty five cities with over 125,000 people, she has remained a heavily centralised and highly unevenly developed country with almost all cultural, economic, and political activity concentrated in the capital city, Tehran. Even today, there are certain areas of the country that do not have a theatre or a cinema. The availability and easy access to wide variety of forms of entertainment in Tehran is believed to be one of the main reasons, which attract people from other regions and

cities. This concentration of entertainment activities really came of age in the 1970's when under the influx of petro-dollars the capital city witnessed an explosion of nightclubs, cinemas and pubs. The extent of the transformation was so rapid and out of keeping with socio-economic development in the rest of the country- Tehran was referred to by some Iranians as *Shahr-e- Farang* (foreign city).

### 3.1.1 - Cinema in Iran as a modern media

In examining the historical development of the moving image in Iran it is important to note that the medium developed differently from that of the West. In the latter, from the outset, animation and live action cinema developed hand in hand. For Iran this was not the case with animation only emerging some sixty years after the coming of cinema to the country. For this reason before turning to an analysis of animation in Iran it is necessary to look at the historical development of the Iranian cinema in order to highlight some of the main issues concerning the medium in general.

Historically, Iran has always been a place of immense ethnic and linguistic diversity, a continental crossroads open to influences from a wide variety of cultural sources<sup>1</sup>, which she has managed to harness into unique cultural forms. It is the Iranian artists' ability to Persianise foreign cultural influences that has been one of the hallmarks of cultural production in Iran. This was a situation that was to persist with the coming of cinema to the country, during the reign of Mozaffarad-Din Shah (1896-1900), and its development throughout the subsequent decades. Indeed, the beginning of cinema in Iran was marked by its use as an amusing tool of the rich and powerful. The Iranian sources have claimed that:

---

<sup>1</sup> V.Shay, Anthony, *International Encyclopaedia Of Dance*. Oxford University Press, volume 3, 1998, pp. 513.

The first film to be made in Iran was probably that of Mozafferad- Din-Shah's coronation in 1895, although it is possible that some shots of the Tazieh passion plays were taken even earlier. The cinematographer was a certain "Rusikhan, "a Russian as his name implies."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, despite a rich and varied history Iranian cinema has been traditionally divided into two categories: pre- and post revolution. This is done more for sake of convince in aligning the Iranian cinema within the context of two different ruling power structures. I feel that such a categorisation is too broad and fails to take into account the nuances and details of specific to particular periods and the development of distinct artistic movements. For this reason I have decided to focus specifically on the 1960's as an important period for cultural development and experimentation. During this period the country as a whole was experiencing immense social change, a change that was similarly reflected in the visual arts with the birth of animation and the establishment of Iranian 'New Wave' in cinema. This approach forms the basis from which I will examine and evaluate the development of cinema in Iran and its influence on animation. According to Noushabe Amiri (1999):

During the 1960s Iranian new wave movies were created. During the same period Iran's commercial cinema went through a second period of revival. Twenty-five films were produced every year, most of which were superficial and only one or two were exceptional. The Iranian art cinema, which took its first unsuccessful steps with films produced by Ebrahim Golestan and Farokh Ghafari in the 1950s, was reborn in the sixties with the films Ghaisar, directed by Masud Kimiai and the Cow, directed by Dariush Mehrjui.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.I., E London, 1989, p.58.

<sup>3</sup> Amiri, Noushabe, The Social Function of the Iranian Cinema, article, published in bulletin of the 10<sup>th</sup> Festival of Film Iran, [www.webmemo.com/Iran/article\\_view](http://www.webmemo.com/Iran/article_view), 1999, 9 – 28.

The 1960's was not just a period of artistic development for the Iranian but also marked the beginning of an increased investment in the infrastructure of the industry. Ali Issari highlights this point with reference to the increase in the number of movie theatres, in merely a decade, movies theatres increased from 110 in 1954 to 238 in the mid-1960s.<sup>4</sup> This change was a manifestation of much larger social and political changes that the Iranian society underwent during that decade. Houshang Golmakani (2000) argues:

“Political activists were in disarray as the Shah’s secret police SAVAK was established and gained power. Then, based on the Kennedy Doctrine, the Shah initiated reforms to cope with social tensions; in June 1963 however he had to forcefully confront the opponents of reform. With their suppression Iran become ostensibly, a safe haven. Yet social turmoil continued underground and they would explode into a revolution a decade later. Those were the years of increasing American cultural influence and they left their mark on cinema as well”.<sup>5</sup>

The ‘stabilised’ political situation alongside rising oil revenues allowed the government to launch the first development plan (1955 – 62) that was intended to modernise the country. This period saw a huge influx of foreign advisors and technicians charged with implementing the government’s modernisation programme. As a result Iran became exposed to and influenced by western cultural values and norms. This influence extended to the media arena, particularly the cinema, where infrastructurally and aesthetically the medium began to exhibit western traits and aesthetic norms that were markedly different from that which had appeared in the preceding sixty years. In the following discussion, I will consider how these first 60 years functioned as the

---

<sup>4</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.I., E London, 1989, p.72.

<sup>5</sup> Golmakani, Houshang, Pre-Revolution Years of Iranian Cinema, Published Film Magazine, [www.webmemo.com/iran/article view,2000](http://www.webmemo.com/iran/article_view,2000), P.3, 9 – 28.



foundations which would allow Iranian cinema to reach a level of maturation and sophistication in the 1960s.

### **3.2- The Development of Iranian Cinema from 1900 to 1960**

#### **3.2.1- Emergence of motion picture camera in Iran (1900-1905)**

The first stage of the history of cinema in Iran started with the purchase of a camera by Mozaffarad-Din Shah (an Iranian king in the Qajar Dynasty) during his trip to Europe in the summer of 1900. Mirza Ebrahim - khan *Aktas- Bashi* (photographer) accompanied the shah during the trip and in the process succeeded in becoming the first cinematographer in Iran. Ali Issari says:

Mirza Ebrahim khan (the court photographer) brought motion picture camera and projection equipment to Iran in 1900. He photographed certain events at the court scenes of *tazieh* (passion play), *rowzeh* (the custom for groups to listen to a reader with a pleasing voice) and other religious processions, and sequences from the streets and bazaars of Tehran and the Farah-Abad zoo in the capital. In this period cinema was an entertainment medium for the Qajar court and highly influential wealthy people.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, these years set a precedent for the development of cinema in Iran in that contrary to its development in the West, from vaudeville attraction to respectability, it was seen as an instrument for the sole use by and for those in power. Indeed, cinema in Iran at this time could be said to have operated under a system of medieval aristocratic patronage relying on court sponsorship for its subject matter and financial survival.

According to Farrokh Ghaffari, a leading cinema historian in Iran:

People (close to the court) on occasions such as weddings, circumcisions and other festivities brought the cinematography of the court to their

---

<sup>6</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.J., E London, 1989, p.66.

houses. During these parties comedy films from France, which came to Iran via Russia, were shown.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.3.2- Advent and development of the first cinema houses (1905- 1928)

The first pioneers outside of the court to develop cinema as a commercial enterprise accessible to the general public were either well-travelled or immigrant Iranians. The most important of these included; Ebrahim - khan Sahhaf Bashi who travelled to Europe, America and Asia, Mehdi Rusi khan, a Russian immigrant to Iran, and Ardeshir khan (an Armenian called Ardashes Batmagrian) a well- travelled Iranian who imported his films directly from Moscow and Paris. Despite the fact that these pioneers were responsible for widening the appeal and acceptance of the new medium they also faced a lot of opposition to their endeavours especially from religious leaders who were afraid of the corrupting influence of cinema on public morals. Ebrahim - khan Sahhaf - Bashi opened the first public movie theatre on *Cheragh Gas* (Amirkabir) avenue in Tehran in 1905. His cinema was almost immediately boycotted and declared illicit by Sheykh Fazlollah Nuri a leading cleric prominent in the constitutional revolution (1905 - 1911).<sup>8</sup>

These early cinemas were fairly rudimentary, consisting of a long hall where people sat on carpets and watched films which was usually projected onto a white wall. However, despite this the new medium was enthusiastically embraced by the populations of Tehran and elsewhere and soon became the most popular sort of entertainment for the majority of the populace. This new medium quickly acquired a fixed role in public life despite the opposition of traditionalists and the lack of any support from the

---

<sup>7</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.J., E London, 1989, p.60.

<sup>8</sup> Maghsoudlou, Bahman, Iranian Cinema, New York University, 1987, p.21.

government. Credit for its success must be given to the efforts of committed pioneers who were constantly striving to improve the quality and comfort of the cinema going experience:

The first successful movie theatre with proper seats opened in Tehran (1907). Soon after another cinema was opened in avenue Cheragh Gaz by a man called Agha-Yuf, and competition started between the owners. A year later Rusi khan opened another movie theatre on avenue Lalezar called cinema Farous; it had a seating capacity of about 300 people and was more nearly a proper movie theatre with its own electric generator and a restaurant.<sup>9</sup>

In the beginning, cinema theatres were an exclusively male preserve. It was not until the establishment of the female only Pari cinema in 1916 by Khan Babakhan Motazedi and Ardeshir khan that women were finally allowed to gaze at the silver screen.<sup>10</sup>

The films screened during these years were mostly silent black-and-white documentary shorts and comedies from the United States, France, Germany and Russia. By the end of the 1920s the cinema had become firmly embedded within the fabric of Iranian society and cinema theatre began to emerge all around the country.

---

<sup>9</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.I., E London, 1989, p.62.

<sup>10</sup> Maghsoudlou, Bahman, Iranian Cinema. New York University, 1987, p.22.

### 3.3.3- The problems of production (1929-1937)

In 1925 the Pahlavi dynasty emerged as the new ruling elite and was to govern the country until its overthrow by the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The early years of this regime coincided not only with the increased popularity of cinema in Iran but also marked the first tentative steps towards the beginning of indigenous film production through the efforts of filmmakers such as Khan Baba Khan Motazedi, Ovaness Oganians, and Abdol Hosein Sepanta.<sup>11</sup> The following account by a student of Ovaness Oganian of the production of the first Iranian film *Abi va Rabi* (1929) paints an evocative picture of the methods and techniques being employed at the time: "We bought a camera from Mr. Motazedi, and then we prepared many reflectors from lead that made it possible for us to shoot in the sun. In those days, negatives were very expensive and only one person, named Martin, was a negative seller. Because of that, Ovaness Oganians desired to use positives as substitutes for negatives. After shooting, we arranged primitive developing equipment in a basement. For printing, we first edited the films on negatives. At that time there was not any editing sticking-plaster. Therefore, we had to use acetone mixed with pear essence for editing. Oganians edited the film himself without an editing-machine by looking at the frames directly. Finally, this film was sent to the screen. The film was elementary from the point of theme and the level of developing was next to nothing. In fact we can say the projection copy was without any gray tones and almost invisible. But, even with all these technical problems "Abi and Rabi" was well received by audiences and became the motivation for future production activity".

---

<sup>11</sup> Golestan, Shahrokh, Imagination Lantern (Iranian Cinema's Adventure from Initial until victory of the Islamic Revolution by narrative of BBC), p.25, Publisher Kavir, Tehran, 1995.



Figure3.1: *Abi va Robi* by Ovaness Oganian (1929), source: a paper by Shahin Parhami 1999.

Ovaness was to follow his directorial debut with *Haji Agha Actor of Cinema* in 1932. These early black-and-white silent productions were mostly imitations and copies of foreign films. For example “*Abi & Rabi*” was an imitation of comedies by a Danish comic duo, Patte and Pata Chon.<sup>12</sup>

As the above examples illustrate, indigenous productions at this time were stylistically and thematically simplistic and were produced using the most rudimentary of equipment and techniques from pre to post-production. Kanbaba Khan Motazedi emphasises this point further as he recalls his own efforts at making films during this period:

On the coronation day [1926] I was again charged to photograph the ceremonies on the celluloid strip. During that historical day I made about twenty minutes of film [of the ceremony]. Immediately afterwards I returned home and processed the film with the greatest care in my hand-made laboratory.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Golmakani, Houshang, Pre-Revolution Years of Iranian Cinema, *Published Film Magazine*, [www.webmemo.com/iran/article view](http://www.webmemo.com/iran/article view), 2000, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, *Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979*, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.J., E London, 1989, p.94.

In addition to these technical difficulties, and despite the cinema rise in popularity, it must be noted that the new medium still faced enormous opposition from many sections of the society, from the clergy to government officials. The reaction to the film *Dokhtar-e Lor* (The Lor Girl) illustrates this complex mixture of fascination and opposition, which the new medium engendered. "The Lor Girl", directed by Hosein Sepanta, was the first Iranian sound film. The film proved a sensation in Iran, playing for almost seven months in Tehran, as Iranian audiences heard Farsi being spoken in a film for the first, were familiar with the indigenous setting (despite the fact that it was filmed in Bombay) and could intimately relate to the culturally specific nature of the story.<sup>14</sup> However not all reactions to the film were so positive. Roohangize Sami-Nejad, who played the lead role in *The Lor Girl*, recalled in an interview with Mohammad Tahume-Nejad, some forty years after the film had been released how she had been subjected to abuse, beaten up and had bottles thrown at her, such was the negative reaction of some people to the film.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3.4- A decade of stagnation (1937-1947)

The newly established Iranian film industry during this period survived primarily through the efforts of Oganian and Moradi in Iran and Sepanta in India. However, due to the difficulties faced in making films, from the lack of finance to poor returns and opposition from certain sections of society, it did not take long before these pioneers found their situation untenable and promptly left the industry. These difficulties were even more deeper in Sepanta's case as he had attempted to make artistic rather than commercial films. Sepanta was a meticulous director, a sincere artist and a dedicated

<sup>14</sup> Maghsoudlou, Bahman, *Iranian Cinema*, New York University, 1987, p.25.

<sup>15</sup> Golestan, Shahrokh, *Imagination Lantern (Iranian Cinema's Adventure from Initial until victory of the Islamic Revolution by narrative of BBC)*, Publisher Kavir, Tehran, 1995, p.40.

filmmaker who wished to make truly Persian films on Persian themes, more for the sake of cinematic art than for the sake of commercialism. Upon his return to Iran in 1936 Sepanta found no hoped for opportunity to start a Persian film industry.<sup>16</sup>

These years were significant in that they coincided with the outbreak of World War II. Although Iran declared itself neutral in the conflict, the country, due to its strategic position was occupied by the Allied forces who hoped to prevent Germany from opening a second front on the Soviet Unions southern border. This occupation resulted in an economic crisis that was to have a devastating effect on all aspects of Iranian industry including the newly established film industry.

However, despite these difficulties this period did see a number of developments that were to have a large influence on the film industry in the years to come. The most significant of these were the introduction of dubbing techniques by Esmail Koushan, which were to become a staple and important part of the industry, and the appearance of innovative short films and documentaries, such as "Countryside of Tehran", "Royal Palaces" and "The Private Life of the Sovereigns", which were to introduce 'realism' into the Iranian cinema.

### **3.3.5- The substantive beginnings of a film industry (1948-1960)**

The 1948-1960 period was marked by a concerted effort to establish a more substantial and professional film industry that would produce quality productions than went beyond the simplistic and primitive productions of previous decades. Towards the end of the period, a number of local film companies and independent producers set up to

---

<sup>16</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.I., E London, 1989,p.114.

produce well made commercial films. In addition, the number of cinema theatres increased so as to respond to the growing cinema going public. If previous periods of Iranian cinema history were dominated by one particular figure, such as Sepanta or Oganians, then this era did not see a major change in the quality of film production. The only exception was Esmaeil Koushan who dubbed two foreign film into Persian in Istanbul and brought them back with him; he established Mitra Film and Pars Film Studio and was later named “the Father of Iranian cinema”.<sup>17</sup>

As a result of the establishment and activities of these newly established film companies, the number of film productions increased to 20 - 30 annually. Many of the new generation of film entrepreneurs came to the industry from radio and popular music and therefore had little experience or intimate knowledge of the cinematic medium. Therefore, the films that were produced in this period usually followed a set formula and thematic stereotype such as, falling in love between members of different social classes and the desire for wealth. These films bore many similarities with Indian and Egyptian films and quickly became the staple of Iranian cinema screens. Despite the repetitive nature of most of these productions they proved to be extremely popular with audiences and came to be referred to by critics as “Film Farsi”. Examples of this genre include:

*Velgard* (vagabond), a 35 mm, black–white film, 100 minute long, written and directed by Mehdi Rais-Firuz. The story is about a happily married couple, Nasser and Parvin. Unsuitable friends drive Nasser, the husband into drinking, gambling, and philandering. Ashamed of the results of his actions, he leaves his wife and their only child. While wandering he meets

---

<sup>17</sup> Golmakani, Houshang, Pre-Revolution Years of Iranian Cinema, Published Film Magazine, [www.webmemo.com/iran/article view](http://www.webmemo.com/iran/article view), P.2, 2000.



his wife and child. His face is completely changed; he thinks that his wife will not recognize him. But Parvin, still in love with him, does recognize him, and they start a happy and simple life together.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, the majority of Persian-made films at this time did little more than narrate simple melodramatic stories that included stock elements such as comedic characters and singing and dancing, which were essential if the film was to have any success at the box office. Between the 1950 to 1965, 324 feature films produced from 102 were slapstick comedies with Persian singing and dancing, and at least one comedy character included in all remaining films.<sup>19</sup>

However, despite the commercial and repetitive nature of the majority of indigenous productions one figure stands out as a director whose films exhibited an individualistic style that set them apart from the other films of the time. Samuel Khachikian, who was active until his death in 2001, can be described as Iran's first auteur. Operating predominantly within the thriller genre his films were thematically complex and stylistically adventurous exhibiting an awareness of and willingness to explore the nuances of light, location and editing. He was a popular director and well loved by audiences who called him 'the Hitchcock of Iran'.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.I., E London, 1989,p.135.

<sup>19</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.I., E London, 1989,p.132.

<sup>20</sup> Golmakani, Houshang, Pre-Revolution Years of Iranian Cinema, Published Film Magazine, [www.webmemo.com/iran/article\\_view](http://www.webmemo.com/iran/article_view), 2000,p.3.



**Figure 3.2: a poster for White Even by Samuel Khachekian(1968), the name of director highlighted on the right top of the poster, source: the Iranian Films Encyclopedia, Djamal Omid.**

Despite the positive artistic progression that Khachikian's films seemed to herald for the Iranian cinema, his works had suffered from the fact that he was seen to rely to heavily on replicating foreign themes and styles to the detriment of indigenously-based film-making tradition. Leaning heavily towards foreign film prevented him from entering the realm of serious 'artistic' cinema and alienated younger of the cinema going population.

The 1950s also saw the beginning of a new era of intellectualism as the first generation of Iranian scholars graduated from foreign universities. Once again these developments had repercussions for all sections of society, although their immediate impacts on cinema were insignificant. Fereyduun Hoveyda and Hushang Kavusi were two significant individuals responsible for promoting the cinema as a serious artistic and academic subject of study. The former, an Iranian writer living in Paris published a number of critical articles in 'cahiers du cinema' in the 1950s and took part in the French 'New Wave Cinema' debates. The latter, the first Iranian graduate of Paris

IDHEC in 1947, was a scholar and a film critic who had a great impact and influence on the Iranian cinema, the development of scholarships, and Iranian film culture.<sup>21</sup>

The other significant development to emerge from this period was the use of cinema for overt political means in promoting the image and policies of the ruling elite. Every film screened at this time was preceded by a short documentary/newsreel that reported on the reforms and developments being introduced by the government for the benefit of the country and people. These films presented the ruling regime in a positive light and were usually accompanied by the playing of the national anthem for which the audience was made to stand. Indeed, these developments marked the beginning of greater government control over the medium and stand as a precursor to increased official interest in the media as a weapon of social policy. However, later this political function transferred to television. Although National Iranian Television was not established until 1966; the first commercial Iranian television station had been established in 1958. Iraj Sabet, a Harvard graduate "... wrote a thesis on the possibility of adopting modern television broadcasting to Persia's particular needs. When he returned, he becomes a pioneer in establishing Iran's first television station".<sup>22</sup>

### **3.3- The emergence of New Wave (1960-1979)**

The picture in Iran after 1960 and in particular during the 70s changed radically because of political and economic doctrines, which moved the country toward an American style modernisation programme. This reform programme began in 1963 with

---

<sup>21</sup> Maghsoudlou, Bahman, Iranian Cinema, New York University, 1987, p.27.

<sup>22</sup> Sreberny - Mohammadi, Annabelle, Mohammadi, Ali, Small Media, Big Revolution, Published by the University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p.62.

the launching of what was called the "White Revolution". This undertaking attempted to introduce modernisation to Iran through an emphasis on industrial investment projects and land reform. In effect what it succeeded in achieving was to change the whole structure of Iranian society from a traditional one, where the majority of people lived in villages and worked on agricultural land, to a modern one based on industrial development and the establishment of a consumer society that resulted in highly uneven growth in rural/urban areas and massive immigration to the cities. According to Golmakani, Houshang:

The White Revolution by the Shah created a new social structure. Ex-landlords became new industrialists and ex-peasants were dragged to urban slums albeit; with a piece of land. The increasing class differences resulted in increasing social tensions.<sup>23</sup>

The massive changes that were occurring in the country at the time came to be reflected in the cultural realm and can be divided into three categories of developments. First, the government established new centres and institutes for artistic and cultural activities. The most important of these with regard to the visual arts and cinema were the establishment of The Ministry of Culture and Art (previously known as The Fine Arts Administration), the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in 1965, and National Iranian Television in 1966. These three institutes were the main government centres of artistic and intellectual creativity in the country. In a heavily centralised country like Iran where all roads inevitably lead to the government, it is understandable that artistic production including filmmaking would fall under government control and its survival would be dependent on the sustained financial support of the government. Furthermore, these institutions encouraged experimentation

---

<sup>23</sup> Golmakani, Houshang, Pre-Revolution Years of Iranian Cinema, Published Film Magazine, [www.webmemo.com/iran/article view](http://www.webmemo.com/iran/article view), 2000, p.4.

and nurtured talent free from market forces. Indeed, the continued financial support provided opportunities for a group of talented filmmakers working under auspices of the Ministry of Art to initiate the Iranian 'New Wave' cinema utilising deeply rooted cultural values, traditional beliefs and religious rituals embedded in the Iranian psycho. Directors like Hazineh Daryush, Ahmad Farugi, Bahram Reypur, Hushang Shafti, Kamran Shirdel, Khosrow Sinai and Manuchehr Tayyab were instrumental in creating new cinema and whose films won prizes in major international film festivals.<sup>24</sup>

Secondly, this period was also significant in for the first time Iranian filmmakers were actively contributing to and taking advantage of the benefits arising from participating in international film festivals and educational exchange programmes. Furthermore, these years also saw many film festivals being held in Iran itself such as The First Annual Tehran International Festival of Education Films sponsored by the Ministry of Education held in Tehran in 1963. This festival is still an annual event today. Other events included The Tehran International Film Festival for Children and Young Adults in 1966; the first annual Festival of Arts in Shiraz in 1967 sponsored by Iranian National Radio and Television. In 1972 the Ministry of Culture and Arts organized an international film festival in Tehran, which helped acquaint foreign filmmakers with Iranian cinema and Iranian producers with leading world cinema personalities and their productions. The festival, officially known as the Tehran International Film Festival, was presented on an annual basis and soon became one of the six important international film festivals in the world.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Maghsoudlou, Bahman, Iranian Cinema, New York University, 1987, p.29

<sup>25</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.I., E London, 1989, p.203.

These festivals were opportunities for Iranian filmmakers to exhibit their work to a wider audience, familiarise themselves with the work of other filmmakers and learn about developments occurring within the industry. The festival environment promoted artistic values and provided a good training ground for many Iranian filmmakers in the fields of scripting, directing, photographing and editing, by which 'quality' filmmaking is judged. They became aware of the requirements needed in order to produce films of a superior artistic quality and were able to judge their own work in comparison to that of the films produced in other parts of the world. It was primarily through the festival circuit and international contacts that Iranian filmmakers found the self-confidence to produce 'quality' films, and view the cinema as a serious and important artform.

It is interesting to note, that the newly established Iranian television could have been a powerful tool in promoting and aiding the development of filmmaking techniques, the regime preferred to rely on the foreign films as Mohammadi argued that:

There was [television] an initial lack of trained domestic personnel in both the creative and technical sides of broadcasting, and the constraints of royal dictatorship and censorship meant that imported programming was less controversial than home-made materials that might be seen as critical... home-produced content was modeled on foreign formats, like consumer-oriented quiz shows.<sup>26</sup>

However, filmmakers seemed to have taken on board the lessons learnt from increased international contact and the newly established cultural infrastructure and a marked increase in the quality of many Iranian films was discernible. Many of these films succeeded in winning awards and being warmly received by critics and audiences alike. Some of the most important films of this period included Forough Farrokhzad's short

---

<sup>26</sup> Sreberny - Mohammadi, Annabelle, Mohammadi, Ali, Small Media. Big Revolution, Published by the University of Minnesota Press, p.68, 1990.

non-fiction film about leprosy called *The House is Black*, which won the special jury prize at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 1963, and the poet Ebrahim Golestan's film *The Brick and the Mirror*. Golestan succeeded in achieving much praise for his work abroad winning many awards at prominent festivals such as the Venice Film Festival for his film *Fire* in 1961, the San Francisco Film Festival in 1962 for *Wave, Coral and Rock*, and the Pesaro Film Festival in 1963 for *Marlik*. The recognition of Iranian film was not restricted to only celebrating the work of its directors. In 1971 Ezzatollah Entezami became the first Iranian actor to win a best actor award at a foreign festival, picking up the accolade at the Chicago International Film Festival for his performance in *The Cow* in 1971.<sup>27</sup>

The pioneer works of these directors paved the ground for new generation of university-graduated filmmakers who saw cinema an intellectually engaging artistic activity redefining the function cinema in a developing country. New comers were often critics and academics who began with writing about film and progressed to directing films. Just to mention a few of them, Farrokh Ghaffari, a French educated, wrote various articles on the history of the Iranian cinema in *Le cinema en Iran* magazine and was a major force in introducing the Iranian cinema to the outside world. Parviz Kimiavi, a graduate from IDHEC in Paris, wrote, directed and acted in his first feature film *The Moguls*, which received high acclaim from film critics and film scholars around the world. Sohrab Shahid-Sales, educated in Vienna and Paris, wrote and directed the highly acclaimed *Still Life*. Kamran Shirdel, who graduated from the center of experimental cinematography in Rome, received the golden winged Ibis for his short film *The Night in Rain*.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Maghsoudlou, Bahman, *Iranian Cinema*, New York University, 1987, p.25-35.

<sup>28</sup> Maghsoudlou, Bahman, *Iranian Cinema*, New York University, 1987, p.34- 35.

The works of these writers and academics was instrumental in establishing public institutions with a fully integrated approach to visual arts including cinema and animation primarily intended for educational purposes. The government financial and technical supports encouraged artists and writers to translate and write about new innovations in cinema, particularly practical 'how-to-do' books. One of the first books of this kind to be translated was Arthur Knight's "Liveliest Art" in 1961.<sup>29</sup>

Lastly, this period is marked by production of different production formats, such as documentary, short films, newsreels and experimental features, which took place under the twin influence of government sponsored institutions and a new generation of foreign-educated filmmakers and intellectuals. There was continuous tensions between these two groups; the former wished to promote the 'intellectual products' that reflected the policy initiatives of the regime (particularly in the case of newsreels), whilst the latter saw the visual medium as a means of engaging with and exploring important social and cultural issues. This last point is particularly evident in the increased influence of the documentary format, which was expanded with the advent of television in 1966 where it found a natural exhibition space. Ahmad Faroughi regarded that television as a useful medium for work in the documentary field. He states:

Documentary films had never had well-managed distribution, but with the advent of television in Iran, a vast field for the broadcasting of documentary films came into existence. We told ourselves, we must use of this opportunity. Not only me but also all of my colleagues at that time started to produce documentary films. These films would never have been produced if not for television.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979, the Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.J., E London, p.203, 1989.

<sup>30</sup> Golestan, Shahrokh, Imagination Lantern (Iranian Cinema's Adventure from Initial until victory of the Islamic Revolution by narrative of BBC), p.141, Publisher Kavir, Tehran, 1995.



Similarly, the spirit of experimentation was likewise reflected in many Iranian feature films, which began to explore new and controversial subject matters through the employment of new formal and stylistic strategies. Symptomatic of this change were three films, *Gharoon's Treasure*, *Ghaisar* and *The Cow*, which were, in their own way, to revolutionise Iranian cinema. *Gharoon's Treasure*, directed by Siamak Yesemi, was a simple story calling for class reconciliation that became the biggest profit-making film in the history of Iranian cinema. Nearly one million filmgoers in Tehran alone saw the film making the most widely viewed film ever made Iran.<sup>31</sup>

Massoud Kimiai's *Ghaisar*, and Dariush Mehrjui's *The Cow*, both were released in 1969 had significant impacts on the future development of Iranian. Employing a realist aesthetic both films attempted to engage philosophically, emotionally and meaningfully with relevant social issues. Audiences had never before seen such an attempt to articulate issues affecting their immediate environment. Furthermore, these films inspired a future generation of filmmakers who saw that cinema could be used as a means of commenting upon and reflecting the frustrations of a nation caught up between modernity and traditions.

---

<sup>31</sup> Maghsoudlou, Bahman, *Iranian Cinema*, New York University, 1987, p.30.



**Figure 3.3: Cow by Dariush Mehrjui (1969), Ezzatollah Entezami actor of film in the picture, source: the Iranian Films Encyclopedia Djamel Omod.**

From 1969 to 1974 the Iranian film industry was in a very healthy state, both artistically and financially, producing an average of about 50 films annually. However, in the mid-1970s, after this period due to the rising inflation caused by the end of the oil boom and the turmoil of social discontent this figure had fallen to 19 by 1978 forcing producers to import cheap foreign films to offset the distribution shortfall. One year later amidst the chaos of revolution the cinema industry had all but collapsed with only 3 films being produced in 1979.<sup>32</sup>

### **3.4- Continued innovations (1979 to Present)**

#### **3.4.1- Priority of content over cinematic narration and structure (1979-89)**

The 1979 Islamic Revolution has completely transformed all existed fabric of socio-political and cultural life in Iran. For cinema, it meant that it had to operate under a new environment controlled by a new ruling elite with an ideology not hospitable individual innovation. It had to adapt to the new rules and regulations and to find the ways of overcoming problems and restrictions. The immediate and most pressing problem that the industry had to face in the early years following the revolution was how to rebuild

---

<sup>32</sup> Film international, Iranian Cinema Today: 2041 feature films in the century, [www.netiran.com](http://www.netiran.com), 2000.

its shattered infrastructure and get production back to its pre-revolutionary high.

However the main obstacles in achieving this task included:

- The stagnation of local production. With the exception of a few high quality films the industry as a whole had reached something of an artistic impasse with the majority of films were a low technical quality repeating old traditional formats- stories.
- The discontinuance of imported commercial movies. Foreign films had been the bulk of films shown on the Iranian cinema. With the change in the dominant ideology, which advocated a return to Islam, these films were seen as symptomatic of western decadence and corruption and associated with the ills of the former regime. Therefore, they were promptly banned by the new regime as a reaction to imperialism and western cultural invasion.
- The inactivity of filmmakers. Many of those within the industry who were unsure of what was permissible under the new regime, or disagreed with the policies of and unwilling to adapt to the new social, political and cultural circumstances either fled the country or left the industry which resulted in a shortage of qualified personnel.
- The destruction of cinema theatres during the course of the revolution. This has resulted in an exhibition shortfall from which the industry has never fully recovered. Indeed, by the time the Islamic government was established in 1979, 180 cinemas nation-wide had been destroyed (Naficy, 1996).<sup>33</sup> The number of extant theatres in 1999 is a mere half of what existed in 1979.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Nowell – Smith, Geoffry (Edited), the oxford History of world cinema, Hamid Naficy, Iranian Cinema), Oxford University Press, Published in the United States, 1996, p.675.

<sup>34</sup> Golmakani, Houshang, A History of the Post - Revolutionary Iranian Cinema, Published Film Magazine, [www.webmemo.com/iran/article view](http://www.webmemo.com/iran/article_view), 2000, p.6.

Most of the confusion surrounding the position and function of cinema was finally laid to rest when the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini, declared it to be the most important media for the education and instruction of the masses. Citing the example of Mehrjui's *The Cow* as an exemplary form of art in the service of man and showing the benefits that cinema could bring to the populace he stated that "we are not against cinema, but against prostitution". It was this rather obscure statement that was to be the guiding principle in the development of cinema for years to come.

The 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran swept aside a bankrupt domestic film industry almost unanimously deemed beyond rescue. The immediate undertakings were to try and rebuild the industry and make it compatible with the changed ideological, cultural and political circumstances. This was to prove quite a task made more difficult by the fact that the first decade of the Islamic Republic was dominated by an eight-year war with Iraq, a series of major political crises, social and economic instability and the spectre of foreign and counter revolutionary threats. Under such circumstances it was perhaps understandable that very few dared to make films for what was a precarious market and audience preoccupied with more pressing socio-political tensions.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that very few films of quality were made during this period, the paltry number of exceptions being Naderi's, *Jostuju* (Search, 1982), and Baizai's two films *Cherikeh- ye Tara* (Ballad of Tara, 1980), and *Marg-e Yazd-e Gard* (Death of Yazd-e Gerd, 1982) all of which were banned.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Golmakani, Houshang, A History of the Post - Revolutionary Iranian Cinema, Published Film Magazine, [www.webmemo.com/iran/article view](http://www.webmemo.com/iran/article view), 2000, p.1.

<sup>36</sup> Nowell - Smith, Geoffrey (Edited), the oxford History of world cinema, Hamid Naficy, Iranian Cinema), Oxford University Press, Published in the United States, 1996, p.674.

However, substantial steps were taken to encourage and promote domestic production with the establishment of The FCF (Farabi Cinema Foundation). This institution formed the executive branch of the cinema department of The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and it was charged with the supervision, guidance and support of those wishing to make films. In addition, it also had sole responsibility for the distribution of film, making equipment and for facilitating investment in the industry and for insuring that all films adhered to 'Islamic values' and the ethos of the revolution.<sup>37</sup> This latter point, introduced by Mohammad Beheshti, managing director of The Farabi Cinema Foundation, who was to change the entire face of the Iranian cinema.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, it was also part of the overall drive of the new revolutionary generation of Islamists to bring all aspects of society in line with Islamic norms and to promote the propagation of 'Islamic culture'. In this respect, Akbar Aalami has argued that two distinct trends can be discerned, which reflect the government policy toward the development of cinema during this period:

First there was the period coinciding with Bazargan's government, during which a nationalist trend dominated films. However no worthwhile films were made in this period. The second period coincided with Rajaayi's government: there was self-censorship, and many prominent Iranian subjects such as love were eliminated from films. This was also the period where documentary films about the Iran -Iraq war were made.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, the subjects of most Iranian movies produced during these years can be broadly said to have fallen in five main categories; superficial and slogan-filled political films about the campaign against the Shah's regime, films about drug

---

<sup>37</sup> Golmakani, Houshang, A History of the Post - Revolutionary Iranian Cinema, Published Film Magazine, [www.webmemo.com/iran/article view](http://www.webmemo.com/iran/article_view), 2000, p.1.

<sup>38</sup> Amiri, Noushabeh, The Social Function of the Iranian Cinema, article, Published in bulletin of the 10<sup>th</sup> Festival of Film Iran, [www.webmemo.com](http://www.webmemo.com), 1999, p.1.

<sup>39</sup> Aalami, Akbar, Twenty Years of Iranian Cinema, article, Published in Donyaa-e Sokhan (scientific, social and cultural monthly), 1999, p.1.

traffickers drug addiction, films with a rural setting where peasants revolt against feudal tyranny, war films and finally the beginnings of a trend towards melodrama that was to become more pronounced as the revolution entered its second decade.

The main tendency of films during this period was to preach moral values, often via didactic slogans and aphorisms superficially woven into the characters dialogue or as shrill rhetoric orated by characters. Encouraged by film industry authorities, these moral injunctions were supposed to win popular approval for an entertainment previously seen as inherently immoral. Films were supposed to contain messages that could teach something to viewers; e.g., be kind, be friendly, don't covet other peoples belonging. An unstated law stipulated that people should not focus on the darker sides of life and dictated a happy ending. This period is one of the superiority of content (message) over cinematic narration and structure.<sup>40</sup>

#### **3.4.2- Revival of neo-realism (1989 to present)**

The ending of the war with Iraq in 1988 and the death of the spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989 marked the end of what was deemed the radical phase of the revolution.<sup>41</sup> The next decade was to be characterised as one of reconstruction, an opening up to the outside world and the displacement of revolutionary rhetoric with movements towards a more liberal economy. Within this context, we can witness some changes in the cinema reflected in the increase in the number of films made as well as raising quality and innovative nature of the films. The main reasons behind this upsurge can be attributed to the followings:

---

<sup>40</sup> Golmakani, Houshang, A History of the Post - Revolutionary Iranian Cinema, Published Film Magazine, [www.webmemo.com/iran/article view](http://www.webmemo.com/iran/article/view), P.3, 2000.

<sup>41</sup> Behdad, Sohrab, The Post-Revolutionary Iran, 1995, Chapter Four

- The increased financial support given to the cinema industry as a result of the ticket prices of domestic movies being divided into four categories where those of the highest quality were rewarded with higher ticket prices.
- The return of well-known pre-revolutionary directors, such as Dariush Mehrjui, Bahram Bayzaie, Massoud Kimiai, to the cinema industry.
- The number of women directors in Iranian cinema increased at an unprecedented rate and resulted in a whole host of hitherto unexplored issues appearing on Iranian cinema screens.
- The aggressive marketing of 'quality' Iranian productions on the international film festival circuit began to attract the attention of foreign critics and industry experts leading to the greater distribution and exhibition of Iranian films abroad.

As a critic of the Iranian cinema has recently remarked:

Since the early 1990s, Iranian films have won nearly 300 awards at international festivals, where directors such as Abbas Kiarostami and Mohsen Makhmalbaf are recognized as among the cinema's most accomplished artists. Many critics now rank Iran as the world's most important national cinema artistically with a significance that invites comparison to Italian neo-realists and similar movements in past decades.<sup>42</sup>

The changed socio-political conditions have created a widely diverse social issue that filmmakers could tackle portraying real life situation and utilising styles from the philosophical to the mystical to the poetic, to depict them. Increasing freer social environment encouraged greater experimentation and saw a greater proliferation of genres such as psychodramas and science fiction that had not previously been made in Iran. This freedom extended to exploring previously taboo subjects such as love and adult sexual relations. In essence, the tackling of such risqué subjects and issues of

---

<sup>42</sup> Cheshire, Godfrey, *The Iranian Cinema*, PBS Online, [www.pbs.org/visavis/BTVpages](http://www.pbs.org/visavis/BTVpages), p.1, 2000.

controversy were allowable as long as they did not criticise Islam or the ruling leadership. Also, the cultural authorities have increasingly come to recognise that artistic works should be judged on the basis of its overall effects rather than on the ways in which they are presented.<sup>43</sup>

### **3.5- Concluding remarks**

The examination of the history of the past one hundred years of the Iranian cinema has highlighted three distinct phases; each represents a particular stage in the development of the Iranian society. The first stage (from 1900 to 1960) involves various attempts made by individuals to introduce cinema in an underdeveloped country lacking basic social infrastructures. Moreover, the pioneering efforts of few individuals to establish an indigenous film industry were strongly opposed and disapproved by religious leaders and government officials. During this period, some 150 movies were produced, often a close imitation of the Indian and Egyptian commercial cinema, in the country. There is no evidence showing that any attempt was made in producing animated films in this stage.

The second phase, covering 1960 to 1979 period is characterised by a major transformation of the Iranian economy and establishment of a capitalist system with a ruling elite determined to industrialise the country. Thanks to the growing oil revenues occurring to the state, the Iranian government embarked upon mass investment in all sectors of economy and created institutions fostering cultural and artistic activities. The period witnessed an increased quantity and quality of films produced as well as an increase in number of the cinema theatres throughout the country. This phase also saw the beginning of official attempts to use the cinema and other media for propaganda

---

<sup>43</sup> Aalami, Akbar, Twenty Years of Iranian Cinema, article, Published in Donyaa-e Sokhan (scientific, social and cultural monthly), P.3, 1999.



purposes in promoting modernisation programme. The expansion of education coupled with some degree of freedom of expression paved the way for emergence of 'New wave' cinema in Iran. However, despite huge expansion of cinema – over 900 films produced in the period- the Iranian film industry has remained largely underdeveloped in terms of both artistic and technical as well as quality production.<sup>44</sup> The foundation of an indigenous animation industry was laid in this period. (see next chapter).

The final phase, starting from 1979 and continues to the present, the Iranian cinema has returned to rejuvenate and deepen 'New Wave cinema' under the Islamic Republic. Having rebuilt the shattered industry and adapted to ideological imperatives of new regime, cinema has become a legitimate forum for highlighting often-contradictory social issues, and consequences of the policies pursued by the government. In the post-1989 period, a number of talented directors have produced highly realistic films that moved the Iranian movies onto the international stage to universal acclaim where they have given over 300 awards over the past decade.<sup>45</sup>

However as has been emphasised throughout this chapter, the artistic success of Iranian cinema at the present time can be seen to have its roots within the economic development, intellectual and artistic endeavours, and to a certain extent, government investment and the establishment of institutions intended specifically to promote art forms including a 'quality' cinema, of the New Wave movement evolved in the 1960s and 70s.

The legacy of that period can be seen today in increased investments and supports given to the production of films that might have previously deemed too artistic/not commercial. Furthermore, the historical intimacy of the Iranian cinema going audience

---

<sup>44</sup> Film international, Iranian Cinema Today: 2041 feature films in the century, [www.netiran.com](http://www.netiran.com), 2000

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

with the 'artistic/quality' cinema has led to the development of sophisticated visual culture within the country where Kiarostami's *Taste of Cherry* (1997)- Palme d'Or winner- is seen as a part of Iranian mainstream cinema culture. This allows for a greater sense of freedom in experimenting with, approaching and depicting a wide range of thematic issues and stylistic. This remains the hallmark and strength of the Iranian cinema to this day.

The special feature of the 'New Wave' cinema in Iran was its artistic tendencies. These films were not copies of any other film and drew their structure from the film subject itself. They were new and unique both in subject and form. This is also true about other principal factors making up a film; like camera movements, music, editing, acting.<sup>46</sup> In the 1990s, The Iranian films have increasingly viewed as highly original and innovative tackling complex issues and reflecting real life situation that ordinary people faced in the society. Directors like Majid Majidi, Abbas Kiarostami and Mohsen Makhamalbaf are seen paving the way for an artistic cinema in Iran. Having provided an overall view of the development of cinema, the next chapter will examine the role of individual artists and institutions that have created the basis for an indigenous animation in Iran.

---

<sup>46</sup> Talebinejad, Ahmad, an interview, Hamshahri (daily morning), Vol.3, No.639, p.10, 7March 1995.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Development of animation in Iran**

This chapter examines the institutions and artists who have played crucial role in the laying down the foundation of animation industry in Iran. Animation is often traced to various forms of indigenous artistic activities, which are considered as a recursion to modern animation. In the 1960s, the country underwent through major structural changes reflecting the newly adopted industrialisation policy and increasing role of the state in the management of the economy. Thanks to the growing oil-revenue, the government undertook major investment in infrastructure building and import of technology and expertise, and introduction of modern media and telecommunication in Iran. The need for educated labour force, which could satisfy the growing requirements of the industry and commerce, forced the government to intensify its effort in creating conditions and means by which greater number of children and adult can be educated. Animation was found to be a suitable and effective means of education, particularly for those who could not have access to formal education. The chapter analyses three main sources, namely the Ministry of Art, the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults and the Iranian Television broadcast, which collectively created the basis upon which an embryonic animation industry gradually emerged, thanks to the dedication of a small group of pioneering artists whose influence has remained prominent and inspirational sources for new generation of animators.

#### 4.1- Introduction

Long historical experience and the desire of humans to animate can be seen from early man who drew pictures on his cave wall depicting spear – waving hunters in pursuit of a wild boar and attempted to convey the illusion of movement by showing the beast with multiple legs.<sup>1</sup> The first visual representations in Iranian history are the bas-reliefs in Persepolis (c.500 B. C), the ritual centre of the ancient kingdom of Achaemenids. "The figures at Persepolis remain bound by the rules of grammar and syntax of visual language."<sup>2</sup>



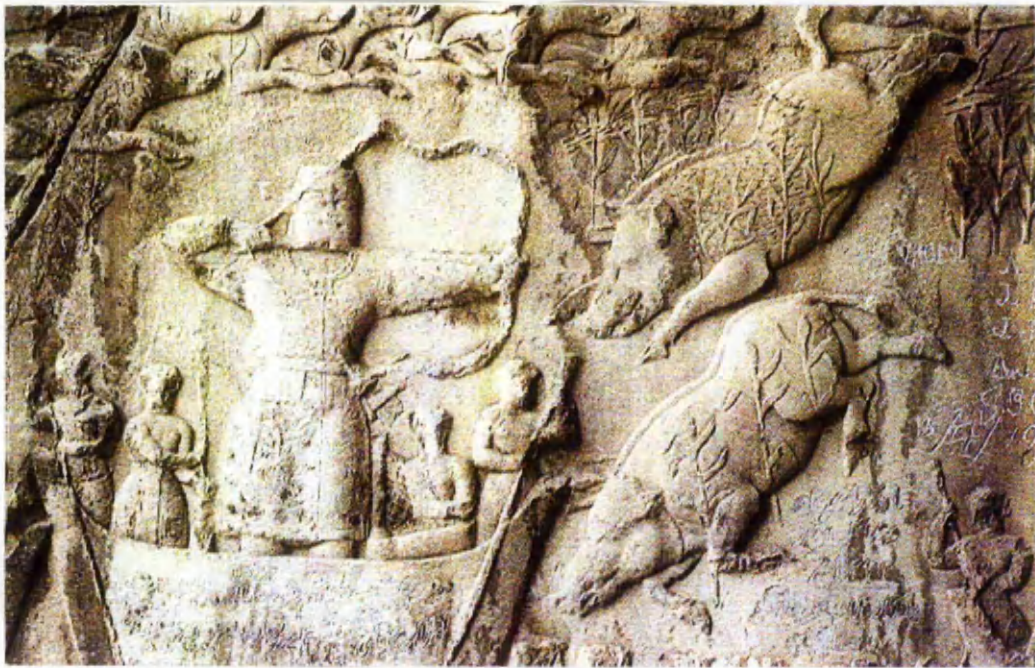
**Figure 4.1: Persian officer on their way to a reception given by the Achaemenid sovereign, Bas – relief on the main stairway of the Apadana Persepolis (500 B.C), source: the visual Arts-A history, Honour Hugh and Johan Fleming.**

This style of visual representation reached its peak about a thousand years later during the Sassanian reign. A bas-relief in Taq-e-Bostan (western Iran) depicts a complex hunting scene.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lord, Peter & Sibley, Brian, cracking animation, The Aardman Book of 3- D Animation, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, 1998, p.17.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh, Honour and Fleming, John, The Visual Arts: A History, New Jersey, Prentice Hall Inc, 1992, p.96.



**Figure 4.2: Taq - Bustan (Kermanshah, Iran, about AD224) the king in the boar hunt scene, source:the art of Persia by R.w.Ferrier.**

Movements and actions are articulated in a sophisticated manner comparable to many contemporary pioneers in Europe and America who explored ways of capturing images of real life and attempted to analyse and replicate movement.<sup>3</sup> Thus, all historical experiences worldwide indicate that cinema and animation are closely related to the same sources of inspirations, and are the subject of the prefaces of most historical books in the field of cinematography. Because of this historic relationship, the initial periods of cinema and animation have a joint history and are sometimes non-separable. Animated films have been subject to two misunderstandings: a) mistaking animation for animated drawing (like taking an aeroplane for a kite); and b) considering it simply as a sort of 'cinema'. According to Christine Panushka the potential power of animation lies in its "ability to deconstruct a movement and reassemble it in a new or convincing way is the animator's territory. Many artists have realized their visions using animation as a means to externalise their inner thoughts and unique points of

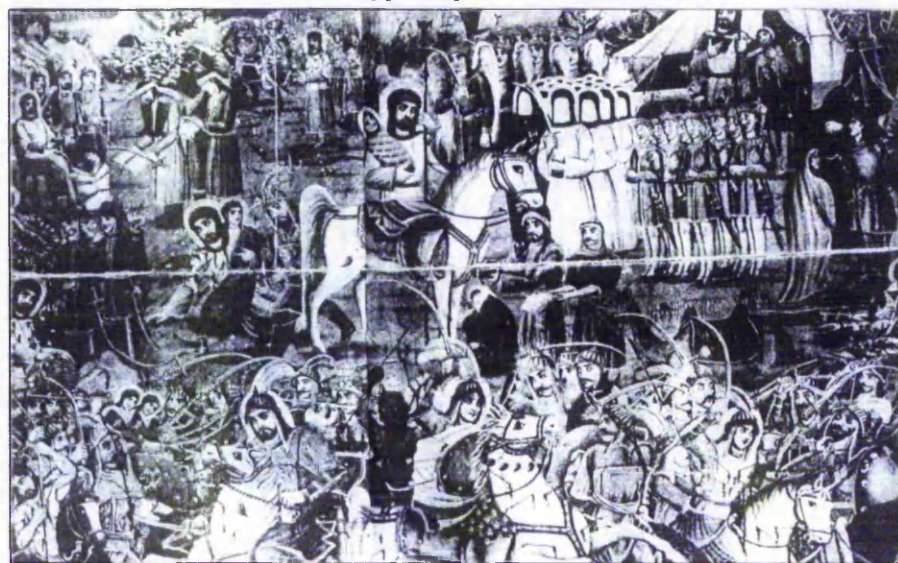
---

<sup>3</sup> Lord, Peter & Sibley, Brian, cracking animation, The Aardman Book of 3- D Animation, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, 1998, p.16.

view. Animation gives the viewer the opportunity to gaze at a frozen moment of thought and to experience another person's rhythms."<sup>4</sup>

Apart from joint technical aspects which unite cinema and animation as one genre of filmmaking, they have in common points in visual, musical and narrative aspects and benefit from the classical arts such as painting, illustration, theatre, puppet shows, music, literature, stories, poems. Therefore, from a historical perspective, both cinema and animation as audio-visual media are a new technicalized form of picture, sound and story that Iranian viewers were already familiar with through traditional artistic performances such as *Khaymeshab-bazi* (puppet show), *Saye-bazi* (shadow plays) and *Pardeh-Khani*.

*Pardeh-Khani* is similar to the *Benshi* of Japanese silent cinema, a *Pardeh-khan* (narrator) uncovers the painting as the story progresses. A frame of *Pardeh* includes many long and medium shot pictures that are illustrated horizontally. If the narrator's cane, which helps people follow the story through the pictures, is replaced by camera movement *Pardeh* could become a type of photo – animation.



**Figure 4.3: Coffee House Painting, story of Karbala (religious subject) the style that developed under the Qajar dynasty, source: Soroush (weekly cultural magazine), 2001.**

---

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in

Another type of art in the same category was *Nagali*. A *Nagal* (or storyteller) would do an entertaining performance usually in *Ghahve-khanes* (coffee-houses), which were the main forums for cultural interactions between people. As a performing artist, Nagal had to possess a good oratorical and singing voice as well as theatrical talent. Above all, the Nagal relied on his imagination a great deal, to improvise according to the audience's feedback and add to the original tales that he was reciting. He would also acquire inspiration from the images and pictures fixed on the wall of the coffeehouse - pictures of religious leaders, sport heroes, epic characters- and bring them into his narrative. The dominant themes in *Nagali* were epics depicted from *Shahnameh*<sup>5</sup> or the story of Alexander's quest for the elixir of life.

It is worth noting that there were many other dramatic performance arts that were popular before the advent of cinema in Iran including *Kheymehshab-bazi* (puppet show), and *Saye-bazi* (shadow plays).



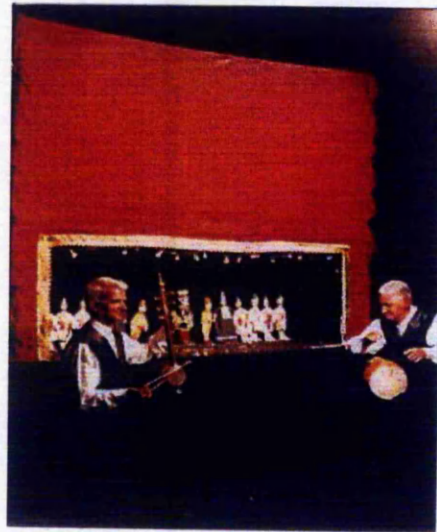
**Figure 4.4: Nagali in the coffeehouse (subject epic) the style that developed under the Qajar dynasty, source: iranculturalstudies.com, 2002.**

---

<sup>5</sup> *Shahname* (Book of kings) a vast epic based on pre-Islamic history and mythology by poet Ferdousi (10th century A.D.) in verse form.



**Figure 4.5: Coffee House Painting from Shahnameh (subject epic) the style that developed under the Qajar dynasty, source: iranculturalstudies.com, 2002.**



**Figure 4.6: Kheymehshab - bazi, the 9th International Puppet Theatre Festival Tehran 2002, traditional Iranian puppet show, technique Marionette, based on folktales, Mobarak and Morshed are two main characters in this show.**

With respect to the Iranian perception of imagery, one should be aware of the long tradition in poetry. From Yashts (the ancient Persian Hymns) to post-Islamic Sufi poetry, as well as contemporary Iranian poetry, we can find numerous examples of this



fine art of image making. The extravagant use of symbolism and the juxtaposition of codes and symbols give Persian poetry a unique visual sense.<sup>6</sup>

This excerpt from a long poem is a good example of such visualisation, written by Sufi poet Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi in 13 century AD.

Am I now I am as liquid  
    wine on fire  
        turned vaporizing  
            to fire at the touch of your mouth  
                blazing even on the glass that holds me....  
                    in your cup?

You have not asked me he  
    -this I know.  
        No door have you opened to me.  
            It seems I have been poured  
                into your wine glass as by accident  
                    or as one small piece of some cosmic joke.

In the heat  
    of your breath  
        I have become nothing that I know.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the existence of highly developed abstract visual arts and artistic potential together with the warm reception given by the Iranian public to cinema, (chapter 3) it is surprising that by the 1950s there was no attempt to produce animated cinema in Iran. However, before the start of experiments with animation in the Ministry of Art, in the late 1950s, the only opportunity people had to see animation was through the screening of American animation in Iranian cinemas. The popularity of the American animation was due to emerging dubbing industry, which adapted the narrative to the specificities of the Iranian culture and language by Demavand and Shahab studios Shahab that enhanced the artistic reputation of Walt Disney, Warner Brothers and others.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Parhami, Shahin, *Iranian Cinema: Before the Revolution*, [shahip@hotmail.com](mailto:shahip@hotmail.com), 1 Dec 1999.

<sup>7</sup> R.S. Prescott, Ryan, *In Praise of Rumi*, Homhm Press, 1989, p.6.

<sup>8</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, *Cinema in Iran 1900 – 1979*, United States of America, 1989, p.126.

#### 4.2- Founding an animation centre in the Ministry of Culture and Art

The Ministry of Culture and Art (MCA) has been instrumental in fostering all sorts of artistic developments, and played significant role in founding and developing an indigenous and independent animation in Iran. The MCA covers a wide range of cultural activities, from traditional arts to modern arts, from domestic socio- cultural activities to the introduction of the Iranian artistic works to the outside world. Thus, in carrying out these responsibilities, the experts of the Ministry could not neglect animation and needed to find a way to incorporate animation alongside with live action cinema.

Asadollah Kaphafe, an expert on the history of Iranian animation, who was attracted to the first Iranian animation centre as an animator photographer believes that one of motives for the advent of animation in Iran was observations of the warm reception given to foreign animation by Iranian children.

The observation of children viewing animation via mobile projection in schools and villages showed that they welcomed foreign cartoons. The Ministry of Culture seeing the usefulness of these kinds of films on children's minds and memories established a unit for animation production.<sup>9</sup>

The MCA was keen to find and train animators who will be capable of reflecting aspects of social life of people in a country rapidly moving toward a new form of society. Esfandiar Ahmadieh joined to MCA when he had already made a personal exploratory animated film. Although his work was not sophisticated, the MCA

---

<sup>9</sup> Kaphafe, Assadollah, the Background of Animation in Iran, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.315.

recognized the importance of domestically trained talented artists and saw its task to encourage and establish the first animation centre in the country. He recalls:

Once I [Ahmadieh] saw a peddler who was selling some 16mm and 35mm animation films. I bought them and analyzed them frame-by-frame. I learned how to make an animation film. However, I did not have animation equipment. I traced paintings on to paper and photographed them using an old single frame crank camera. The films were sent to England for developing. It was a 10-second animation. The story was about a man riding on a donkey who fell off on to the floor. He tries to ride the animal several times. This test film was shown to ministry organizers and following that make an arrangement was made for me to produce animation.<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 1: Mollah Nasreddin, first Iranian animation by Esfandiar Ahmadieh 1957, source: artist's private archive.**

<sup>10</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, A Discussion with Esfandiar Ahmadieh, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.152.

Noureddin Zarrinkelk recalls, in the years from 1956 to 1961, the Fine Arts Administration grew into the Ministry of Culture and Arts. The ministry founded a unit for animation production within the section for ceramics, carpets and miniature workshops. It was intended to be a vision factory for the country, although in the end this idea was not realized. The factory was a place where a few young and interested people with great expectations gathered together and through trial and error learn the art of animation. This group included; Esfandiar Ahmadiéh (ceramic painter in ceramic workshop), Jafar Tejaratchi (an air force colonel and caricaturist), Parviz Osanloo (camera operator and director), Potros Pallian and Asadollah Kaphafe, they together established the animation department in the MCA. Later Nosratollah Karimi a Czech-educated director joined this group as well. These people with the assistance of a group of talented young men and women made the first Iranian animation.<sup>11</sup>

Mahin Javaherian has argued that the advent of animation in Iran can be traced back much earlier. However, her argument is based on a definition of animation, which includes a physical phenomenon known as “persistence of vision”. It entails creating an optical illusion of movement by assembling a sequence of pictures and is based on a trick of the eye. Standard definitions begin with the drawing of movement and frame-by-frame exposure on film.

Although the onset of the frame by frame film experiences by Esfandiar Ahmadiéh and Jafar Tejaratchi date back to 1957, the first independent animation department in Iran was officially founded in 1959 in the Arts Administration (Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance) by Parviz Osanloo who on his return from the United States and under the order of the Art Administration brought back an Oxberry rostrum camera.

---

<sup>11</sup> Javaherian, Mahin, Short History of Animation in Iran, Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau, 1999, p.27.

The first single frame camera that was used in this centre was “cine especial 2 “. This camera was one of the rare 16mm cameras that was capable of shooting single frames and taking pictures of drawn scenes like a photo camera. It had a film cartridge that was able to store 200 feet of negatives. This camera was fixed on a portable stand, which made it possible for the photographer to zoom in and zoom back.

Soon after the Oxberry, another special animation camera was imported from the United States to Iran. This camera had more visual possibilities. It had a cartridge with 400-foot capacity and a changeable system for using 35mm or 16mm negatives. Nevertheless, previous problems from the last camera, viz setting up pictures during camera movement to front direction or back direction (travelling) remained. For travelling, we had to set up the lens frame by frame by hand, that was boring and time consuming work.<sup>12</sup>

In 1959, the Arts Administration invited Jafar Tejaratchi, Potrose Pallian and Asadollah Kaphafe to join Parviz Osanloo and Esfandiur Ahmadeh in forming the department. This group produced the first two-minute Iranian animation using a paper animation technique called “Artificial Satellite”. Despite the lack of necessary experience in animation techniques and professional production, this group used great effort to become seriously involved in production and succeeded in producing many short animated films. If this group had been sponsored by the government and their works were taken seriously the combination of their personal experiences could have been sufficient to sustain the future development and production. Instead the group split after a few years of production.

---

<sup>12</sup> Kaphafe, Assaddollah, the Background of Animation in Iran, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.316.

In order to find out the underlying reason for the split we need to examine the personal traits of each of the members of the group and their assistants establishes. Although their experience was insufficient for the production of professional films as compared with the next generation of animators in the Iranian animation industry, nevertheless, each one of them possessed more skills and knowledge of this artform. Now because of the existence of systematic processes of production and financial support, production is easier than at that time. For instance Osanloo was a photography and script writing graduate of Syracuse University. He also attended an animation course at the University of Oklahoma and completed a period of work experience at Walt Disney studios. Mahin Javaherian writes: "Osanloo's interest in animation led him to be creative in his analysis and experimentation with the structure of film. He washed emulsions of negatives and framed them with pencil. Then by painting on the transparency films he succeeded in producing his own first personal animated film through the technique of drawing in film that had not previously been used in Iran. His experimentation was simultaneous to similar experiments of this technique in other parts of the world, especially in the National Film Board of Canada. This technique has progressed and in recent years we have seen many remarkable films using this production technique. Unfortunately, however, Parviz Osanloo's experimentation in Iran ended after the first stage".<sup>13</sup>

Nosratollah Karimi, a later member of the group, gained his practical experience through a college of puppet theatre in Prague, five years cinema study at a school in the Czech Republic and the learning of the frame by frame puppet animation technique under the supervision of Jiri Trnka. Jafar Tejaratchi was a caricaturist, Esfandiur

---

<sup>13</sup> Javaherian, Mahin, Short History of Animation in Iran, Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau, 1999, p.34.

Ahmadeh was a skilful designer who even now is active. Parvin Timory, an assistant, was educated in painting at the Faculty of Fine Art in Tehran. Nosratollah Shirazi, another assistant, was a miniaturist. Each one of them possessed of a great deal of knowledge and practical experience. However, if they or the Ministry of Culture had kept up their level of activity the Iranian animation industry would now be capable of much higher level of quality animation. To illustrate this argument, it is useful to compare the experiences of the Iranian group with that of the Aardman Animation Studio<sup>14</sup> in England. In Iran each member of the group transferred experience of high level Eastern European and American styles such as those of Jiri Trnka or Walt Disney to Iran. The Aardman Animation's group did not have the benefit of such experience, but through perseverance and the stable artistic and economic background of Europe and America has become the most successful animation company in the world. It is instructive quote at some length the beginning of Aardman company – which seems to be a typical experience shared by all pioneering animators elsewhere:

Dave and I experimented with animation. In the great tradition of British amateurism our first film was made on the kitchen table. Only later, after we had served our apprenticeship, did we advance to the spare room. The camera was mounted on a developing stand pointing straight downwards on the table, and our first piece of animation was achieved by drawing a chalk figure on a blackboard, shooting a frame, then rubbing out part of the figure, redrawing it in a new position and shooting another frame. And so on. At the time it seemed painstaking, but compared to some of our subsequent experiences in animation, that first film was a high-speed, spontaneous affair.

We did not launch into animation entirely unprepared. We had seen documentaries about the world of cartoons, and heard how Disney and

---

<sup>14</sup> Peter Lord (Bristol, 1953) and David Sproxton (Liverpool, 1954) in 1972 they founded Aardman Animation, in Bristol in order to fill the demand of the BBC for children's series. *Greasure and Comforts* Oscar winner and *War story* (1989), *Wallace and Gromit* (1989), *The Wrong Trousers* (1993), *Never in your Wildest Dreams* (1996) and *Chicken Run* (2000) are some of this studio's production.

Hanna Barbara made films with thousands of separate drawings on acetate sheets, but we had no access to the techniques or the materials to shoot this sort of traditional animation. We made up the chalk technique quite independently, to suit our circumstances, though I now know that like so much else in the world of animation it had all been done before- much of it ninety years ago or more.<sup>15</sup>

Despite hardship the Iranian animators went through the similar experience; they started their work from the basics and after many years of experimentation and completion of many professional productions have succeeded to create a viable animation industry in Iran. An example is Abdollah Alimorad a well-known puppet animation director in Iran. In 1975 Alimorad graduated from a two-year animation course at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in Tehran. In recognition of his talent, he was given a grant to attend a short workshop in the Czech Republic. He worked alone and was self-directed in his experimentation. Through patience and hard work he developed his own puppet animation. Puppet animation is a difficult and slow technique of animation; thus few people are inclined to enter in that type of animation in Iran. In his studio, with a few assistants, he made a successful puppet animation film called "Bazaar Stories" that is the first Iranian puppet animation feature film. He underlines the fact that many animators, for socio-economic or political reason, are not able or willing to stay together and work in long-terms projects.

If all of the people who started a common work were able to continue to cooperate with one another, the result would have been much better. But unfortunately, after a period of time groups scatter and you have to start from nothing. If we achieved continuous cooperation, we could produce a film with good quality. In the meantime the production of animation will

---

<sup>15</sup> Lord, Peter & Sibley, Brian, cracking animation. The Aardman Book of 3- D Animation. Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, p.9, 1998.



not be well organized. I hope that a time will come when Iran will have well-organized animation industry.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.2.1- Evaluation of the demise of the Animation Centre in MCA

Table 1 below gives an account of the Animation Centre production for the 1957 to 1972 period. It can be seen that there were neither an annual quota for production nor an equal contribution made by individual animator. In 1957, for example, only 5 seconds of animation were produced. One of the best works of the whole period, *Life*, was one of three productions in 1967, which together made up only 35 minutes of production for the whole year. In the final year, 1972, only 6 minutes of animation were produced. Most of the films (19 out of 32) were animated or directed by Esfandiyar Ahmadiyah and Nosratollah Karimi.

**Table 1 Animated films produced by Animation Centre of MAC from 1957 to 1972**

R O W	TITLE	DIRECTOR	ANIMATION	PHOTOG RAPHER	TECHNIQUE	TIME	FOR MAT	YEAR OF PRODU CTION
1	Mollanasreddin	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Patrose polian	Drwan Animation	5sec	16mm	1957
2	Satellite	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Parviz Osanloo	Cell Animation	5min	16mm	1959
3	Life Insurance	Nosratollah Karimi	Nosratollah Karimi	Nosratollah Karimi	Puppet Animation	6min	35mm	1959
4	The Jealous Duck	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Asadollah Kaphafi	Cut out Animation	6min	35mm	1960
5	Cat and Mouse	Parviz Osanlo	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Asadollah Kaphafi	Cell Animation	5min	35mm	1960
6	Weight Cluster	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Asadollah Kaphafi	Cell Animation	16min	16mm	1961
7	Naranj and Toranj	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah		Cell Animation	5min	35mm	1961
8	Cat and Mouse	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah	Esfandiar Ahmadiyah and Parvin Taimory	Asadollah Kaphafi	Cell Animation	6min	35mm	1964

<sup>16</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, A Discussion with Esfandiar Ahmadiyah, *Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation)*, published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.156.

9	Fisher King	Nosratollah Karimi	Parvin Taimorei	Asadollah Kaphafi	Cell Animation	6min	35mm	1964
10	Baba Karam	Nosratollah Karimi	Nosratollah Karimi and Faridon Farshbuf	Asadollah Kaphafi	Puppet Animation	2,30 min	35mm	1965
11	Hierarchy	Nosratollah Karimi	Nosratollah Karimi	Asadollah Kaphafi	Pixilation	59sec	35mm	1966
12	Cowardly like a Mouse but Leopard Skin	Nosratollah Karimi		Mazyare Parto	Puppet Show and Live action	15min	35mm	1966
13	Life Insurance	Nosratollah Karimi	Esfandiar Ahmadiéh and Parvin Taimory	Asadollah Kaphafi	Cell Animation	20min	35mm	1967
14	King Jamshid	Nosratollah Karimi	Esfandiar Ahmadiéh	Hossine Kamali	Cut out Animation	10min	35mm	1967
15	Bigotry	Nosratollah Karimi	Faridon Farshbuf	Masomei	Object Animation	10min	35mm	1967
16	Moon Hunting	Nosratollah Karimi	Esfandiar Ahmadiéh	Asadollah Kaphafi	Cut out Animation	5min	35mm	1967
17	Discovery of Fire	Nosratollah Karimi	Serkis Vasepour	Asadollah Kaphafi	Cut out Animation	6min	35mm	1968
18	Flower and Nightingale	Faridon Farshbuf		Asadollah Kaphafi	photo Animation		35mm	1968
19	The Covetous Dog	Parviz Amir Afshari	Esfandiar Ahmadiéh	Hossine Kamali		5min	35mm	1968
20	Acquaint Foot print	Nosratollah Karimi	Nosratollah Shirazi	Asadollah Kaphafi	Cell Animation	6,20min	35mm	1969
21	The Cock Who Crows at the Wrong Time	Nosratollah Karimi		Masomei	Puppet Show and Live	12min	35mm	1971
22	The Man who grow Horns	Nosratollah Karimi		Masomei	Puppet Animation	6min	35mm	1972
23	Value of Every Thing							
24	Your Best Friend	Dellara Rasoule						
25	Wheel	Parviz Afshari						
26	Turtle and Duck	Jafari Tejaratchie						
27	Reward	Dellara Rasoule						
28	Golden Fish	Faranake Hasani						
29	The Tricky Fox							
30	Flower and Bullet							

31	The Proud Eagle						
32	Golden Coins					2,30m in	35mm
Total minutes						161,19sec	

The unequal contribution to production can be attributed to an employment system, which guaranteed the salaries of animators irrespective of actual production completed. Thus, we witness evidence of the lack of personal motivation that existed in other governmental centres including television. The primary difference between the television animation centre and the animation centres in the I.I.D.C.Y.A. and the MCA was that television's routine production process prevented them from engaging in independent film production. Animators were required to provide specific animation clips to accompany production in other departments such as the science or children's programming groups. Thus, overall, television produced more animation annually than the other centres. Because television wished both to establish new channels and to reach to wider audiences in the country, there was a national scheme to take animation more seriously. The result of this was the establishment of the Saba Animation Company in 1994 as an industrial contribution to animation. (See Chapter 6) A comparison of the total production of MCA (161.19 seconds over the 1957-1972 period) with the yearly production of Saba shows clearly a market orientation policy to animation can be superior and facilitate its development.

**Table 4.2: Annual Production of Animation by Saba Company**

Percentage increase	Annual production	Year
	214 minutes	94
5%	224/4 minutes	95
50%	336/9 minutes	96
265%	895 minutes	97

Concentration of MCA animators on purely artistic and creative aspects of animation hindered the growing opportunities offered by commercial sector. These animators did not have a specific aim in mind or to respond to a particular demand, both in terms of quantity and quality of their productions which could enable them to compete with growing domination of the American and Japanese animation in Iran. As will be shown in Chapter 7, the domination of American and Japanese serials affected and, to some extent, shaped the tastes of the Iranian audiences. A daily diet of one or two hours of foreign animation cultivated an appreciation of the American aesthetic which led to negative feedback on Iranian works. As a result, on the occasions when animations produced by the MCA were televised, they were often ridiculed by audiences.

Being an enthusiastic viewer of animation in my teenage years in the 1970s, I can remember when Nosratollah Karimi's *Malek Jamshid*, was shown in television. The production was severely criticised by friends who found it extremely low quality film. For viewers whose standard was Walt Disney, this Iranian production looked amateurish. This negative feedback strongly affected me that from that moment, I made up my mind to study animation in order to assist in the development of Iranian animation.

However, it is not to say that the problem lies with government sponsored production. In Russia and Eastern Europe, the public ferment for subverting capitalist values and supplanting them with socialist principles provided a motivation for production, which was sponsored by the government. This sponsorship facilitated the progress of Russian animation within the context of worldwide animation. The primary difference between Russia and Iran was in the direction each country took after initial development and the

steps taken afterward in each country. Russian animators had clear plans for the control of production, a target for annual production and a teamwork system; none of which existed in Iran.

This lack of managerial control can be seen in the case of Basat Studio established in 1991 (see Chapter Eight) where again the basic infrastructure for animation was provided – studios, basic equipment, a budget for materials and salaries, but without an overall direction or plan. In practice, a visible managerial change can be seen with the establishment of the Saba Animation Company.

Saba aimed to fill the gap in industrial animation in Iran and began with a well-thought plan and production scheme through which responsibility for project development was divided between two sections – cultural research activity and production and technical logistics. Cultural research was organized along 13 priority areas such the relationship between Islam and justice intended to provide a practical theory of Islam and encouraging and persuading the ethic of cooperation. In this section, there is a committee for examining projects, selecting animators and scriptwriters, and prioritising the production of projects. Table 4.3 shows the number of projects reviewed during the period 1994-97.

**Table 4.3: Result of Cultural and Research Committee Selection Process, 1994-1997**

Examined Result of Projects			Number Of Projects	Year
Refused	Conditional	Accepted		
125	59	45	229	1994
82	22	36	140	1995
80	49	37	166	1996
20	8	9	87	1997
357	138	127	622	Total

Source:

The production and logistics section, takes account of industrial considerations and serial production. Table 2 shows the growth in production from 1994 to 1997. The

downside of Saba's initial concentration on increasing quantity is that they have had to endure low quality production. They are now beginning to see gradual increases in quality.

The incomplete cells in the table 1 indicate a further problem for Iranian animation – the lack of proper archives. In a few cases, apart from the name of the film, no further information about or copies of the work remain. The relative completeness of the table.1 is due to reference to secondary sources and discussion with animators such as Nosratollah Karimi and Esfadiaur Ahmadiéh. This situation again highlights the fact that Iranian animation does not have a tradition of learning from experience or building on past work.

Esfadiaur Ahmadiéh retired from animation in 1993 while Nosratollah Karimi switched to the field of live action cinema in 1997. Given the extent of their contributions to the MCA's animation production, their departures could not but have a substantial negative effect on the future development of the MCA animation centre.

Also two newly established centers, namely the animation department in Iranian Radio and Television and in Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults Institute, attracted skilled animators away from the MCA's centre. This was especially true for Radio and Television, which had its own regular programmes. This was another factor in the stagnation of the centre. Mahin Javaherian explains:

After retiring from the Ministry of Culture and Art, for the next 20 years I constantly had contracts with Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting. My cooperation was concerned with training the personnel of the animation department and producing commercial and educational animation for television.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Javaherian, Mahin, Short History of Animation in Iran, Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau, 1999, p.29.

Similarly, Nafisseh Riahi<sup>18</sup>, who was one of members of animation centre in MCA, took in 1974, his experience gained from the Centre to the newly established animation centre at the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults Institute and became a well-known animator in that centre for years.

Finally, a glance on the Table 1 shows that the level of team working was extremely low. It can be seen that most productions were based around one person or very small groups, not more than 3 persons. Although it is possible for one person or a very small team to create a complete film, I believe that the best way to pass on the practical knowledge of experienced filmmakers to inexperienced filmmakers is through activities that require teamwork. Then, if a master filmmaker leaves the group the other members will be able to continue production otherwise project may come to standstill for not having required experience and knowledge to complete it.

#### **4.3- The first animation centre in Iranian Radio and Television**

Television came to Iran in 1958 when a private citizen, Habib Sabet, established the first private station in Tehran. According Mohammadi:

A parliamentary bill in June 1958 gave the private company permission to establish a television broadcast center in Tehran, and the system was inaugurated in October 1958 with the mandatory speech of the Shah, who said he was very happy to have television broadcasting in Iran to help “the

---

<sup>18</sup> Nafisseh Riahi worked as a director for Ministry of Culture and Art (1966-1968) and made 2 short animation films. She directed 6 short animated films for the municipality of Tehran (1994) and a short animated film for U.N.H.C.R (1995). She also worked as an animator for the animated film of Luke the Lucky (1969-1970) and participated in several international film festivals. Winning 5 international and national prizes for animated films and book illustrations are another part of her career. See The 1<sup>st</sup> Tehran International Animation Festival's Bulletin, Tehran, Iran, 1999.p.10.

training of youth and improve social knowledge”(Kayhan, October 4,1958).<sup>19</sup>

The station went on the air on October 7<sup>th</sup> with three hours of broadcasting per day.<sup>20</sup> In 1960 Sabet opened a second station (the first regional station) in Abadan in the South, the centre of Iranian oil industry contained both a sizeable foreign community as well as a growing cadre of skilled and well-paid industrial workers.<sup>21</sup> These two stations operated under Sabet’s company for eleven years, until 1969 when they were bought by the government and became a part of the national television network. In 1964, the Iranian government took the first step toward the establishment of a national television organization by hiring a French consulting firm to prepare a proposal. As a result National Iranian Television, “an autonomous, government affiliated, central authority for the governance of all broadcasting in Iran,” was established. On October 26, 1966, it began trial programs of twenty-one hours a week and on March 20, 1967, was officially inaugurated.<sup>22</sup>

Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT) is another arm of the government centre that has played an important part in the encouragement of artistic creativity and talent searching for animation in the country. From the beginning the proportion of animation programmes among television broadcasts was considerable because demographically Iran is a young country with young people (under 16-year-old) making up over forty percent of the audiences. This, combined with the general excitement about television, ensured that television developed very quickly in the first decade of its establishment.

---

<sup>19</sup> Sreberny-Mohammadi, Annabelle, Mohammadi Ali, Small Media, Big Revolution. Published by the University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p.62.

<sup>20</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900- 1979, United States of America, 1989, p.2 12.

<sup>21</sup> Sreberny-Mohammadi, Annabelle, Mohammadi Ali, Small Media, Big Revolution, Published by the University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p.63.

<sup>22</sup> Issari, Mohammad Ali, Cinema in Iran 1900- 1979, United States of America, 1989, p.2 12.



For example, prior to 1967 television reached about 2.1 million people. When NIRT began regular transmissions that year, coverage rose to 4.8 million, and by 1974 had risen to over 15 million, roughly half the total population.<sup>23</sup> Moreover:

“NIRT was accorded a very high priority in the state development strategy is evidenced by the large budget allocations that were provided to the organization.... By 1975-76 radio covered almost the entire country, and 70 percent of the population had television reception...Television became extremely popular across all ages and social groups; the little audience research that was undertaken recorded roughly six hours of viewing a day with an average of seven viewers per set by 1974(NIRT Commercial Affairs, 1974)... By 1975 NIRT was second only to Japan in Asia in terms of the development of its broadcasting capabilities.<sup>24</sup>

In Iran, demographically, children and young adults make up over half of the population of the country. This along with the fact that television is now a member of the family and has an instructional effect on people's life's particularly on children and young adults, demonstrates the deep and grave responsibility that television has to society. These effects are often even more influential than parents and schools, and play an important role in the formation of the characters of the viewers. Despite growing criticisms of children programmes the NIRT continued to old American serial, fashionable and heavily advertising-content programmes imbued with values alien to national culture and traditions.<sup>25</sup>

This type of programming continued even after Iranian television developed into a state-run organization with multiple channels. Concurrent with the beginning of

---

<sup>23</sup> Sreberny-Mohammadi, Annabelle, Mohammadi Ali, Small Media, Big Revolution. Published by the University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p.66.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. pp. 66-67

<sup>25</sup> Golstan, Shahrokh, Imagination Lantern- Iran cinema's adventure from initial until victory of the Islamic Revolution by narrative of BBC, publisher Kavir, Tehran, 1995,p.139.

broadcasting in Iran, the import of television set into the country began. In the late 1960, television merchandise had to be imported, as it was not produced in the country. Therefore, for most people it was difficult to buy a television. But, despite the high cost of the purchase of a television the persistence of children was an important factor in making parents succumb. As we know for most children and young adults cartoons has extraordinary fascination and during the hours when cartoons were broadcast children were not willing to do anything else. Sometimes children went to relatives' and neighbours' houses to watch cartoons. Occasionally family gathering occurred with this specific aim in mind. Therefore ownership of a television in a family became a measure of wealth. In 1974, television organizers formed a department to produce short and long pieces of animation.

Needless to say that among all age-group, children usually are the most ardent viewers of television. It must be emphasized that although production of animation for children and young adults requires a comprehensive production process, which is labour-and-resource intensive, cartoons are central to the relationship between people and animation. Furthermore, television is the major public medium for sending messages, particularly for a developing country like Iran. In order to convey messages to audience tools and systems are required. Hence the efficacy of tools manifest in many art forms such as graphics, cinema, music and animation were marshalled together in aid of television. Each one of these forms of art played a different role according to audience characteristics and public demand. Bearing in mind the fact that half the population of the country was composed of children and young adults, it was very logical that television would be easily persuaded to establish an animation department.

Over two decades of its existence animation in the Iranian television has been centered in two departments namely, the Channels One and Two Animation Departments. These

departments, rather than being animation studios with independent production policies for film projects as is the case at present with the Saba Animation Company (chapter 6), each had a specified remit. The structure of Channel One was such that it covered most general content and Channel Two's animation section acted as a supplementary unit for its own channel by fulfilling specific animation needs for other types of programs. These highly differentiated content and styles of programmes, the former was general content and the latter aimed to be educational and cultural.<sup>26</sup>

#### **4.3.1- The Animation Department in Channel One**

##### **A) From 1974 to 1979 period**

The period began with the establishment of an animation studio in Iranian Radio and Television in 1974 and finished with the onset of the revolution. During these five years, six animators produced 8 animation films. Their collective production amounted to not more than one hour, which means, an annual output of ten minutes for each year.

The choice of the ending period related to the fact that 1979 was marked by the beginning of the Islamic revolution which changed fundamentally all aspects of television including production policies and program themes, and as such provide an independent period for the purpose of comparison. Nonetheless, it is interesting to enquiry why the animation production in those years was so low. There are many possible reasons. I believe the first reason is related to the recruitment of the workforce. In comparison with other centers such as I.I.D.C.Y.A, the selection process resulted in the appointment of people not only inexperienced in animation but also with less artistic creativity in general. In addition, the employment conditions in state-run

---

<sup>26</sup> Sreberny-Mohammadi, Annabelle, Mohammadi Ali, Small Media, Big Revolution, Published by the University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p.67.

organizations encouraged a culture of complacency rather than creativity. If we want to concentrate on the skills and experiences of the group contrasting with I.I.D.C.Y.A, that group also consisted of amateur artists. Nevertheless, I.I.D.C.Y.A stressed quantity of production and thereby made better use of their talent. A final factor reflects the strategy of television production is that it didn't concentrate on independent animation projects like those at I.I.D.C.Y.A.

In the post revolution period, some of MCA animators, in particular Esfandiyar Ahmadiyeh joined to newly established Islamic television and were instrumental in training a new generation of artists and animators. While, others such as Shahriyeh Bahrany and Ali Banai attracted to live action cinema or left the country. The latter group was unhappy with tremendous changes that television went through, especially dismissal of artists and technical experts and appointment of heads of sections with no or little knowledge of television programme making. They objected the imposition of Islamic ideology as a measure of acceptability of the works of artists and scriptwriters. Indeed, ideology and art stood against each other and the latter was to adapt itself to the former. Mohammadi describes that:

“... It was soon clear that radio and television were to become major weapons on the ideological front... Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, one of the triumvirates who had joined Khomeini in Paris and had been rewarded with important positions after the revolution, became the first head of Voice and Vision of the Islamic Republic (VVIR) ... Ghotbzadeh criticized the frivolous, uncommitted tone of past RTV content and promised that henceforth VVIR would be the voice of the “barefoot people” of Iran who had made the revolution, and not the voice of government... He developed this populist strain further by inviting the barefoot to become involved with media production, an idea that further alienated the professionals but never

became a reality... paralleling similar operations in other government bureaucracies, was *Pak - Sazi*, 'cleansing'.<sup>27</sup>

### **B) From 1979 to 1994 (establishment of Saba Animation Company)**

During these years, the animation department improved its operation. New practitioners joined which resulted in an increase of output to 133 titles. This increase can largely be attributed to the increase in the revolutionary and political atmosphere of the country. In the early years of the revolutionary government, particularly in the war years, much animation was propaganda. According to Genovese, a political film has to fulfil at least one of the following criteria:

- The film serves as a vehicle for international propaganda,
- The film's major intention is to bring about political change,
- The film is designed to support the existing economic, political, and social system.<sup>28</sup>

Of the 79 animation titles (562.44 minutes) produced in the 1979-84 period 29 (219. 22 minutes) were related to propaganda topic such as: anti-imperialism or war animation. With the end of the Iran-Iraq war and the changed political atmosphere of the country resulting from the gradual decrease in political conflicts, this ratio greatly decreased. The animation centres of television returned its attention to the cultural and entertainment themes for children.

The above statistics of animation production in television during this period demonstrate the fact that contrary to other governmental animation centres such as the MCA and IIDCYA, NIRT (Channel 1) had increased its output. This was because of

---

<sup>27</sup> Sreberny-Mohammadi, Annabelle, Mohammadi Ali, *Small Media, Big Revolution*, Published by the University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p.196- 170.

<sup>28</sup> Goergen, Jeanpaul, *Animated Propaganda in Germany*, paper: 12th Annual Society for Animation Studies Conference, University of Trondheim, Norway, 5-9 August 2000., p.2,

the nature of television, which has to broadcast all the time and meet the demands of a daily schedule. However, most productions were propaganda animation and they were used within a very brief political period. Also few of them made any claim to artistic merit.

Two episodic projects, *When Daddy was a Child* with thirteen episodes of ten minutes in 1987 and *Ali Kocholo* (Little Ali) with thirty episodes of ten minutes in 1986 were examples of what could be achieved through indigenous production of children's programs. Both projects provided episodic structure for an appropriate style for children's programming. The former project directed and photographed by Behrouze Yagmaian and animated by Esfandiyar Ahmadiieh used a Cell – Animation technique. As the title of the film indicates, the film is a flashback to the father's childhood as it is told. While, the latter, was a team production directed, painted and designed by Hassan Tehrani, Shahla Etedaly, Javade Mire - miran, Amir- Hussein Esbaty, Amir-Hussein Ghahari, Ebrahim Haghegie and Rana Javade; photographed by Mohammad Fajjani and Hussein Goliezhadeh and produced using Photo Animation techniques. In *Ali Kocholo*, [Ali's] father gone to the war front and his mother looks after the kind and funny boy. His mother is kind and, like most mothers involves herself with housework. She tells stories to Ali and he helps his mother at home. Ali and his neighborhood friends Reza and Ahmad do not go to school. They play together and talk about their ambitions, birds, spring and kindness.

Most of these animations were born out of the individual motivations of artists rather than through a programmed strategy of television. The lack of financial support to motivate talented staff coupled with rising economic problems in the country had a negative effect on employees with fixed salaries, in comparison with the private sector

that improved job opportunities after war ended in the country in 1988. As we mentioned earlier - about the Iranian live action cinema which shaped the second post-revolutionary period of filmmaking-, many well-experienced and talented animators of this period such as Andranik Aghazarian and Hammed Navim left the department for better opportunities in private sector and sought work abroad.

An animation expert who had crucial influence in the reorganization of a new system of production was Masoud Dashtban. A graphic artist that whose career in animation began in 1976 proceeded to become the chief of the animation department in 1988 making the department more active than ever before. By means of careful planning he improved the quality and quantity of the production process organizing the work force into groups of five: animator, animation director, tracer, colourist and background designer. Each group was encouraged to apply its ability to a wide range of fields and concentrate on a selection of scientific, historic, fiction and political subjects. Attracted to these groups was a workforce whose background was already in animation: some had a university qualification others have work experience or benefited from short training courses.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the efficacy of the animation department was greatly enhanced by the graduates from the Faculty of Radio and Television (chapter six). The faculty was established to provide the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) with the necessary personnel to their animation department.

---

<sup>29</sup> Javaherian, Mahin, Short History of Animation in Iran, Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau, 1999, p.88.

#### **4.3.2- Animation Department in the Channel Two.**

Before the revolution, Channel 2 was an educational channel; it was established in October 1973 to cover about 75 percent of the school population at the intermediate level. It transmits more than 2,480 hours of educational programmes on Persian history and literature, foreign languages for primary and secondary schools, science, programmes for new literature, etc.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of these changes in quantity and quality and the existence of two independently operating channels, a need for new production groups was created so new departments such as the animation department began production in 1989. The results of these years of production were 22 animation titles amounting to 199 minutes of film. Because of the success of Channel 2 and the progress of animation in television in general, it was decided that two channels should merge together. It was this merger in 1994 that the animation departments of Channel One and Channel Two that resulted in the establishment of Saba Culture and Art Company.

My first acquaintance with an animation workshop goes back to 1983 when as an art student I visited an animation department at I.R.I.B. It was a traditional animation workshop. Although, now, animation drawings are digitally scanned, coloured at the touch of a key and the production system is very fast, then, because of a lack of computer equipment in the country, production was slow and, as a result, the production costs for animation were expensive. The majority of works commissioned from the studio was routine and included orders for urgent insert animation from other departments. As animators were always active with these kinds of tasks, only a few of them were free to do independent animation. Also, a lack of specialist knowledge about

---

<sup>30</sup> Teheranian, Majid; Hakimzadeh, Farhad; L.viale, Marcello, Communications Policy for National Development( a comparative perspective ), Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London, 1977,p.260.



animation among producers from other departments led to problems regarding timing and finances in the processing of animation orders.

The following are characteristic of the types of orders coming from other departments.

- Animation with short-term life. Orders for insert animation usually did not have the production of requirements of more permanent or creative work, although they had documentary-type themes.
- Time constraints in production. Most orders such as titles or insert pieces for programmes were complementary to other parts of other television programmes. As a result, their work time was subordinated to the main programme timetable leading to time constraint problems in the production process.
- Financial limitation. The budgets were subordinate allocations from the main programme funds. The smallness of these budgets led to limitation in the production process.

However, while some of the artists in the studio continued to do their routine work others turned their attention to ways of developing their personal interests and abilities outside of their full-time positions in the studio. Without any financial reward they concurrently produced their own creative and artistic ideas as independent animation.

Andranik Aghazarian joined the Voice and Vision<sup>31</sup> animation department in 1981 and became successful using his penchant for experiment. He initiated some creative techniques and brought about some qualitative change in the technique of Cell Animation as hitherto produced and which had become more and more boring. He produced many short animations for children that were used in between programmes and helped to improve the quality of programmes in television. His knowledge

---

<sup>31</sup> The name of National Iranian Radio and Television after the Revolution in 1979 changed to voice and vision of Islamic Republic of Iran (I.R.I.B).

developed from personal study of National Film Board of Canada productions that included "Animation Under the Camera" such as Painting on Glass and Sand Animation. His experiences produced much simple but beautiful animation.<sup>32</sup>

Through out the 1980s financial constraints together with the lack of exposure to foreign cultural influences on children animation made television managers to ignore the necessity of improving the quality of indigenously produced animation which could satisfy the rising expectation of the Iranian children. Ali Akbar Alemi recalls: "...Let me tell a bitter memory about once when I was working in the Voice and Vision. In those days as an expert I took counsel from senior managers of the television organization. In a meeting attended by financial experts I was asked about my view concerning the progress of animation in the country. I told them that the Sound and Picture must, as one of the institutes that had the obligation to protect this art form; sponsor serious production. One of financial experts asked, how much is the expenditure on animation production? I said if we want to produce a high quality and permanent work, the average cost per minute is 65000 *Toman* (Iranian currency). He responded, but we buy Japanese animation for just 7 dollars. Therefore, from a financial aspect it is not economical. I told him this is a faulty calculation, because investment in cultural cases must not equate with this kind of reasoning. Please remember that animation will bring for the country, identity and credit. Is the progress

---

<sup>32</sup> Javaherian, Mahin, Short History of Animation in Iran, Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau, p.88, 1999.

of animation important or the purchase of low-quality and weak animation from Japan?"<sup>33</sup>

After 20 years of activity the Radio and Television animation departments stopped their production for a reorganization that took place between 1974 and 1994. This reorganization coincided with the extension of television channels from 2 to 5 and the establishment of many new dependent film and television companies under the control of I.R.I.B such as, Sima-Film Company and Saba Culture and Art Company. In fact the I.R.I.B re-organized animation activities by introducing new management, purposes and name in a building outside of the television studios. The new animation center was called Saba Culture and Art Company.

Most animated films that were produced in both studios can be categorized into one of following fields:

1. Animation for children. This kind of animation including serial and episodic cartoons is often very popular and covers most children programmes. However, because of the high cost of production they were produced rarely.
2. Animation for educational.
  - Programmes such as medical programmes where the function of the digestive system is illustrated through animation;
  - Language where the learning formation of the letter is illustrated through animation.

In 1985, when I was an animation student, I participated as an animator in the production of a German language programme. This episodic learning television programme included a lot of inserts that were produced by animation. In those parts,

---

<sup>33</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, a discussion with Ali – Akbar Alami Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.180.

we used the Cell - Animation technique to explain how makes the shapes of a letters such as A, B and so on. Therefore, we had to spend a lot of time, energy and material on a simple animation whereas nowadays these kinds of animations are done quickly and cheaply by a 2D computer.

The animation departments of the Channel One and Two technically produced orders through three main categories.

1. Animation based on song. Children's songs in particular became a popular element in television programmes after the revolution especially because of curtailment of live music in terms of having live performances with singers and musical instruments in scenes.
2. Titles for programmes. Most titles were for live action productions such as feature films or television programmes. In those days when there was no computer system the titles of programmes and films were produced by frame-by-frame shooting systems with a rostrum camera. Therefore the rostrum camera and cameraman were a service provided by the animation department to other groups.
3. Urgent and unexpected events that must be produced very quickly. Animators also were proficient in graphic skills and techniques, therefore urgent orders for graphics could be filled by the animation department.

#### 4.4- The first Animation Centre in the I.I.D.C.Y.A.

The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults was established in 1964. It was the third state institute to found an animation centre in the country. The institute, as is reflected in the title of centre, aims to collect and improve the artistic talent of children and young adults in the country. Because the lack of sufficient publications and media resources in the important area of developing children and young adult's education was keenly felt in the country, the institute focused its activities on developing the culture of books, cinemas and libraries.<sup>34</sup>

In the 1967, when I was a student in primary school in Zanjan, I remember the days when textbooks were the only educational resource available in the country. At the beginning of every school year, the Ministry of Education distributed textbooks to students. No supplementary educational resources existed with the exception of a weekly-children's magazine called *Peike Daneshamuze* (student message). Students had to pay for this and, although the price was cheap, unfortunately most students could not pay.

The second serious move taken in this respect was the publishing of *Peik* magazines. In 1963, the Ministry of Education, in order to publish a series of *Peik* magazines, established a center for providing reading materials suitable for newly- literate people, in co-operation with Franklin Publishing House. Before publishing the *Peik* magazine series, the experts in the center carried out widespread studies on the activities and plans of similar centres in other countries. Publishing *Peik* magazines in that time was a

---

<sup>34</sup> Sharifi, Saeed. Centre For Intellectual Development of Children And Young Adults (1965-1996), *Goftego [Dialogue]; Cultural & Social Quarterly*, 1998, No19, 2000, p.1.

completely new experience. The *Peik* magazine with a circulation of 100,000 copies contained attractive and helpful materials for children, which reflected the relentless effort of its staff, on the one hand, and the need of society for such a magazine, on the other.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, with regard to the lack of sufficient educational facilities such as libraries, televisions and art workshops in the country, the establishment of this centre was very necessary and important. The institute's first project was to establish many branch libraries in Tehran and every other province. Now, the libraries of this institute with study rooms, amphitheatres and workshops are some of the most important cultural centres in the country particularly as they cover the majority of the young population.

The institute set up more than 130 libraries across the country and sponsoring the Tehran International Film Festival for Children and Young Adults in 1966, and provided studios for short feature filmmakers.<sup>36</sup> In the autumn of 1965, a number of artists and educational figures held a meeting, at the invitation of a lady who was a literary expert, to make preparations for the establishment of a library for children and needed reading materials. Before that, there existed no library for children in the country and perhaps this was the main motive for the founder of the centre. At any rate, necessary decisions were made and construction of a large modern building started at Laleh Park in Tehran.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Sharifi, Saeed. Center For Intellectual Development of Children And Young Adults (1965-1996), Goftego [Dialogue]: Cultural & Social Quarterly, 1998, No19, 2000, p.2.

<sup>36</sup> Maghsoudlou, Bahman, Iranian Cinema, New York University, 1987, p.28.

<sup>37</sup> Sharifi, Saeed. Centre For Intellectual Development of Children And Young Adults (1965-1996), Goftego [Dialogue]: Cultural & Social Quarterly, 1998, No19, 2000, p.2.

After its establishment the institute quickly began to invite and attract many artists to co-operate in the two areas of publication and cinema. A main part of children's books is the illustration. Because of this, the institute invited many talented illustrators to co-operate with the centre. Most of these artists, alongside illustrating books, frequently joined the field of animation and produced animation for the institute.

It also became a centre for artists experienced in other media to try their talents in cinema. Among these were Farshid Mesqali, Ali Akbar Sadeqi, Mortise Momayyez, Nureddin Zarrinkelk, Mohammad Reza Aslani, Nafiseh Riahi, Abbas Kia-Rostami and Arsalan Sasani. Most of the short-length films made by these young directors have won first prizes at various international film festivals. In 1975, the Institute also launched an animation school.<sup>38</sup>

Among other activities of the Cinematic Centre was the production of animation, which until then was a monopoly of the Radio and Television Organization. As in other domains, the centre managed to take the lead in this field and by attracting prominent artists such as Nureddin Zarrinkelk, Farshid Mesqali, Arapik Aghdassian, Morteza Momayyez, produced great works that today are still considered among the best.<sup>39</sup>

These artists often cooperated in interrelated projects. Zarrinkelk states:

In the Franklin Institute as an illustrator I was illustrating educational books. In the institute we had a manager whose name was Firouz Sheirvanlo. After some time we became intimate friends with each other. When he moved to manage the illustration of children's books at the newly established institute the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults he recommended that I move with him. This coincided with the founding of *Shoraye Ketabe Kodak* (Council of Children Books) and, in

---

<sup>38</sup> Maghsoudlou, Bahman, *Iranian Cinema*, New York University, p.28, 1987.

<sup>39</sup> Sharifi, Saeed, Center For Intellectual Development of Children And Young Adults (1965-1996), *Goftego [Dialogue]: Cultural & Social Quarterly*, 1998, No19, p.4, 2000.

fact, the development of literature and children's books in Iran stems from this period in 1962.<sup>40</sup>

I [Ali Akbar Sadeqi] was exempted from military service because the institute ordered me to work on the illustration of a book called *Pahlevan Pahlevanan* (The Hero of Heroes) ancient Persian epic story. I illustrated the book using my personal style. While I tried to remain faithful to the historical atmosphere of the book by adding some decorative aspects to the pictures, considering that this book was for children I endeavoured to get close to children's minds. When the book was published, the institute decided that I should produce an animated film with reference to the pictures and story from this book.<sup>41</sup>

After two years, the Institute quickly followed the same aims and strategy in relation to cinema as they had with publishing. As animation is an important category in the media of cinema, which is favoured by children, the institute organized its activities into two departments live action which focused on children and young adult's cinema and an animation department.

The department of cinema began its activities with the celebration of the first annual International Children and Young Adults Festival in 1965. During those days the institute did not make any productions. For audiences watching animation at the festival in those years when the country lacked media facilities, it was like an animation workshop. The existence of these festivals emerged as an opportunity for interested people to become acquainted with and influenced by this media.

---

<sup>40</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, a discussion with Nouredin Zarrinkelk, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.167.

<sup>41</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, a discussion with Ali – Akbar Sadeqi, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.161.



Ardeshire Keshavarzi, a well-known puppet-show director was one of first people who begin to work on experimental puppet-show in Iran. Now he teaches at the Faculty of Radio and Television. During a conversation, he made the following remarks. In the 1960s experimental animation was shown at the International Children and Young Adults Festival in Tehran for the first time. This category fascinated new animators, as before this event Iranian artists believed that the best examples of valuable animation were those produced in the style of by Walt Disney. However, they lacked the courage to get close to animation. But following the celebration of the first festival and the recognition of experimental animation by Iranian artists, they found themselves closer to the world best animation than ever before. Keshavarzi recalls one animation that has had lasting influence on him was the *Line* by Italian animator Osvald Cavandoli. In the 1950s, Cavandoli began working on his own in advertising with a specialisation in animated puppets. Success came to him, however, with an animated drawing, *La line* (*The Line*), which he created in 1969 for a *Carosello* advertising spot. *La Linea* features a man who is formed by, and lives on, an infinite horizontal line. While walking along the line, the man is faced with graphical as well as situational adventures. Each time he ends up calling upon the artist's hand, which, like a demigod, solves his problems. The man's incomprehensible mumbling serves as a comic thread running throughout the piece.<sup>42</sup> Keshavarzi says it was especially animation like the *Line* that encouraged and gave self-confidence to young Iranian animators. In similar vein, Zarrinkelk remembers that:

I saw animation at the International Children and Young Adults Festival in Tehran and I was very eager to learn about it. I sought everywhere to find out about animation but no one knew how animation was made, even those

---

<sup>42</sup> Bendazzi, Giannal Berto, *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation*, translated by Anna Taraboletti-Segre, London: Johan Libbey & co., p.296, 1994.

in the cinema industry. New generations may wonder about this, but in those days it was normal. Finally, one of my friends who was a cinema director told me he knew a filmmaker who made animation. But that filmmaker never told anybody about the mystery of his work. When his work was finished he locked his workshop door and did not give the key to anyone else.<sup>43</sup>

The institute, by considering the development of an animation centre, attracted the attention of a few experienced animators from the MCA such as Nafiseh Riahi and Nosratollah Karimi. Karimi could have been a good advisor for the newly established centre, had the institute organizers paid attention to the experience of other animators and centres. Instead; their piecemeal approach to development slowed down the progression of animation. Therefore, what occurred in this period was similar to the initial experiences in the animation centre of the Ministry of Art.

Karimi's personal artistic contribution included his involvement with puppet show production in the newly established television industry and also links to the cinema industry (chapter 5). If he had stayed in the animation industry and as a talented animator had remained involved with animation projects, Iran could have developed beyond the initial stages of animation progression more quickly.

Disconnecting with past experience is a political/ideological issue that unfortunately is still observed in Iran. The polarisation of political views has hindered a research atmosphere whereby a balanced and documented understanding of social events can be established. This problem is exacerbated by a management approach where it is thought that reference to the past experiences and events that have been already occurred would

---

<sup>43</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, a discussion with Nouredin Zarrinkelk, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, p.168, 1999.

invalidate current creative efforts or lessen their originality. The avoidance to give references to the past artistic achievements is a managerial decision, which often deprives new organisations (Islamic television and animation centres) to exploit previously learned knowledge and experiences accumulated over decades. Mahin Javaherian argues that: "A valuable point at that stage of animation production in the institute was beginning from the zero point or in terms of production without using any previous experience. The animated films that had previously been produced by a few animators such as Nosratollah Karimi, Osanloo and Ahmadih and also some dispersed experiences that were mostly in service to commercials did not have any important influence on the production of animation in the institute. But patience and traits by a group of graphic artists, painters, scriptwriters, photographers, sound makers and also art managers in the institute resulted in the first service animation shaped in the institute."<sup>44</sup>

However, her view in the above quoted paragraph expresses appreciation for the attempts of a few well-known artists over many years but she does not recognize the crisis related to these issues. Her views crystallize the lack of connection between two pre-and post revolutionary eras as an asset.

In the institute, the production of animation was shaped and continued by the activities of two groups. The first group included many filmmakers such as Nureddin Zarrinkelk, Ali Akbar Sadeqi, Mortise Momayyez, Farshid Mesqali, Nafiseh Riahi and Arapik Bagdasarian. This group, as I pointed out already, included a few graphic designers and painters that had been attracted to the centre for the purpose of illustrating children's books. They entered this field without any animation background and mostly relied

---

<sup>44</sup> Javaherian, Mahin, Short History of Animation in Iran, Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau, 1999, p.43.

upon their own personal reference to practical animation books through a trial and error method. Ali-Akbar Sadeqi, a pioneering animator explains how he learned to do animation: "I remember when I wanted to animate the characters in *Haft Share* (The Seven City) I did not know how to create a walking cycle or which camera techniques created animation. I had a Walt Disney book which included an analysis of movement cycles. From the human cycles drawn in that book as flipping pages I tried to learn how to create movement for my characters in the *Haft Share*. After many attempts, I drew and animated all the movements. Then, when my character was walking in a long shot, he became lame. I cut two frames from that shot where he went lame, but the problem still remained. In the end by using a back projection technique, I took a medium shot of the character and obviated the problem."<sup>45</sup>

Although this group did not initially have experience in animation, they, in other art forms like painting and illustration, were remarkable artists whose ability in graphic design helped them to make many notable works. Consequently, the works produced in that period were internationally successful. In terms of the history of Iranian animation, this brilliant period represents the Golden Age of Iranian animation which I will consider in the next chapter.

If one considers individual animators, one can see that Zarrinkelk success in international festivals was due to his academic studies in animation, his multiple attempts towards the perfection and professional progression of animation, and the quality and quantity of his productions. Farshid Mesqali's international success can be attributed to his imaginative views, powerful sketches and graphical investigations in

---

<sup>45</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, a discussion with Ali – Akbar Sadeqi, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.160.

animation. Ali Akbar Sadeqi's reputation is based on his special use of domestic forms created a personal style for him. His references to Iranian culture and literature were internationally appreciated and Nafiseh Riahi's respectful position is related to the fact that she was one of the first people to begin making animation in the country and also for number of animated films that won international prizes.<sup>46</sup>

The second group included a few animators like Abdollah Alimorad, Vajihollah Fard Moqaddam, Rasoul Nasre Azadani who learnt their artistry and became involve in animation through the academic system. In fact, they were the first group of animation students to study in the first Iranian animation school. Although only few of them went on to work in the centre, while others switched to other arts. Nonetheless, some of them such as Abdollah Alimorad and Vajihollah Fard Moqaddam are now well-known filmmakers who are active in the centre with a lot of successful animation. Rasoul Nasre Azadani, who emigrated for the purpose of continuing his study in animation, was attracted to Walt Disney studios as a layout man. Vajihollah Fard Moqaddam passed three animation courses in the Ministry of Art, the I.I.D.C.Y.A. and school of animation in the Czech Republic. He produced *Taqlyd* (Imitating), *Mozahemha* (Intruders), *Jorjorak* (Puzzle), *Bausgasht* (Return), *Lei Lei Lei Lei Hozaak* (Chicken in the Pond) and *Dar Kenare Ham va Ba Ham* (Beside Each Other). He was awarded many prizes at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Roshd Festival in 1992, and the 8<sup>th</sup> Tehran Children and Young Adults Film Festival in 1992 in Esfahan.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Javaherian, Mahin, Short History of Animation in Iran, Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau, 1999, p.46.

<sup>47</sup> First Tehran International Animation festival's Book, Deputy in Charge of Research and International Affairs I.I.D.C.Y.A., 1999, p.58.

1970 marked the beginning of animation activities in the institute. During this year, two animators produced four animations. *Agayeh Hayola* (Mr. Monster), and *Sue Tafihome* (Misunderstanding) by Farshid Mesqali, and *Gereftare* (Very Busy) and *Vazneh Bardare* (Weightlifter) by Arapik Bagdasarian. One year later, in 1971, four animations were produced in the centre by Mortise Momayyez; *An-ke Kheuale Bauft* *An-ke Amale kard* (That Which Imagined That Which Did), Farshid Mesqali; *Pesare va Saze Parandeh* (The Boy and Fling Instrument), Nureddin Zarrinkelk; *Zamine Baziye Baaboosh* (Baaboosh's Playground) and Ali Akbar Sadeqi *Haft Shahre* (The Seven City). However, in these years there was not sufficient professional experience in the production of animation. Subsequent financial support from the government and the assembling of a few notable artists in the institute created the opportunity for the production of 38 remarkable animated films from 1970 to 1978.

The improved quality and increased quantity of production could be taken as signs that the time was ripe for the rediscovery of animated films in the country. But previous artistic activities did not conform to codes of the new Islamic regime. However, because of the ideological change brought about by the Islamic revolution in 1979 all cultural and artistic activities went through a period of stagnation. The Islamic regime did not have any new measures for artistic activities like animation, which corresponded with Islamic ideology. As a result, 1979 was like a zero year for all cultural activities in the country. The newly established animation centre in the institute suffered from this stagnation for many years.

#### **4.5- Concluding remarks**

This chapter has examined the embryonic phases of development of animation in the context of rapidly changing socio-economic and political conditions in Iran. In the 1960s, three fields of artistic activities, namely cinema, book illustration and television broadcasting led to the emergence and development of related centres and institutes in the country. The Ministry of Art focused on cinema, the I.I.D.C.Y.A on book illustration and television on broadcasting. These institutions shared a common policy intended to provide audio and visual programmes and printed materials for children education, and animation was found to be most suitable and effective media for this purpose, hence an animation centre was established in each of these institutions. However, the histories behind each of these institutions differ. For Ministry of Art, the priority was to create and train artists who, in collaboration with other artists working in related art-forms, could promote national culture and art through animation. For I.I.D.C.Y.A animation appeared a natural and easy way of transferring information and knowledge to younger people through publication and animated films. Television, a new phenomenon in the 1960s, was keen to make programmes for large and growing number of children and young people who were its overwhelming audiences.

The chapter has also outlined in detail the role and contribution of pioneering group of animation artists, some educated in foreign schools and other self-taught, who create centres often around a single or few master animators whose departure meant total stagnation of the centres. A particular feature of these centres was that they were highly individualistic and creative in their production, and worked under no specific direction or management control, although those who worked in television found themselves increasingly under pressure to produce a specific quota as dictated by the managers.

Moreover, within television a division existed between an animated film programme (channel One) and a supplementary and order animation (channel Two), which was detrimental to all-inclusive learning and training process. A major step taken in this early period was the establishment of an animation school by I.I.D.C.Y.A to train student within the centre or send them abroad for more specialised training, largely in response to the rapidly expanding demand in the domestic market. In the next chapter further analysis will be made on the contribution of master animators and their decisive roles in founding an indigenous animation industry in Iran.



## Chapter Five

### A Golden Age of Animation in Iran

This chapter examines the Iranian 'golden age' animation focusing on the socio-economic condition that brought together a number of master animators whose works and ideas have been the inspiration and guiding practice of the second generation of animators in Iran. They were instrumental in introducing art of animation to Iran and put the name of Iran among best-known animator artists in the world. It provides a detail account of the works of these artists.

#### 5.1- Introduction

A thorough analysis of the Iranian animation, in particular since 1989 must consider the artistic and experimental activities carried out during 1966 and 1979 period by the first generation of animators at the I.I.D.C.Y.A. The artistic influence of this pioneering group has been keenly felt and reflected in the works of current generation of animators. The Iranian International Animation Festivals, held in Tehran in 1999 and 2001, six of the nine-member jury panel belonged to the first generation of artist animators whose contribution and status can be shown by a glance at their respective careers:

- Ali Akbar Sadeqi began his career at the I.I.D.C.Y.A. illustrating the book, "Hero of the Heroes". After six years, he had made a 6 minutes animated films, many of which became highly influential and classic works of Iranian animation, garnering numerous national and international awards. His films have been screened around the world and his illustrations have received many awards.

- Ebrahim Forouzesh became a management assistant in charge of cinema affairs at the I.I.D.C.Y.A. from 1971 to 1978. He has produced more than 90 short films, and written many screenplays.
- Akbar Alemi holds an esteemed position in Iranian animation circles having worked in an affiliated animation school at the I.I.D.C.Y.A since its establishment in 1974.
- Abolfazl Razani has lectured at the same institute from 1976 to 1981.
- Nafisseh Riahi directed six short animated films for the I.I.D.C.Y.A during the period 1970 to 1977.
- Abdollah Alimorad studied animation at the institute for the intellectual development of children and young adults, before taking single-frame puppetry courses in the former Czechoslovakia.

## **5.2- Factors contributing to a Golden Age**

The emergence of modern animation is closely associated with a set of reforms and initiatives introduced by the government to link the Iranian economy to the world market economy.

### **5.2.1- Economic development and oil income**

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the Iranian society underwent a fundamental change in both in composition of class structure and in the sectoral contributions to the national economy. John Foran called this period “the second period of the multilateral crossover of Iran to a capitalist economy”<sup>1</sup>. During this period the continually rising oil income deepened the rapid shift in the economic base of the country. New industries were founded with high investment from the government and other industrial countries. During these years, manufacturing industries such as car and electric home appliance assembly registered a high rate of growth. For example, annual car production (most of which produced by multinational companies) rose from 7000 in 1965 to 109,000 in

---

<sup>1</sup> Foran, John, Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution, Publisher West view Press, 1993, 216- 230.

1975, TV production rose from 12000 to 31000, telephones from non-existence to 186000, and gas cookers from 87000 to 220000.<sup>2</sup>

### **5.2.2- Manufacturing, urban life and consumer demand**

Economic development was also accompanied with a process westernisation in the consumption technologies and the values that underlying them. The results of which crystallized in public life and shaped a new lifestyle. The government emphasis on industrialisation and urban life encouraged landless peasants (those who did not benefit from the land reform)<sup>3</sup> to migrate to urban areas, especially to the capital city Tehran. In the late 1970<sup>s</sup> around 3 million people immigrated from villages to cities. One third of these people were unskilled labourers employed by the building industry and the rest of them were temporary workers, peddlers, servants and porters. These immigrants settled in newly established slums on the border of Tehran and many tragically joined the unhealthy marginalized part of society as prostitutes, vagrants, drug smugglers and addicts or beggars.<sup>4</sup>

The imbalanced socio-economic development resulted, on the one hand, in the appearance of many necessities of modern life such TVs, refrigerators, telephones, personal cars and on the other, the expansion of large industrial and trading centres which attracted increasing numbers of illiterate people who lacked the skills necessary to work in manufacturing and service sectors in cities, and hence suffered from acute poverty. Within this context, the I.I.D.C.Y.A was established to provide cultural activities to the children who made up 50% of the countries population.

---

<sup>2</sup> Annual Industrial Reports, Trend in Industrial Production, The Iranian Ministry of Economy, various years.

<sup>3</sup> Karshenas, Massoud, Industrialisation in Iran, 1990, chapter 3

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

### **5.2.3- Necessity of attention to education for the new generation**

Children's literature prior to 1951 was confined to the books of Mirza Jabbar Asgharzadeh (Baghcheh Ban) and Fazlollah Mohtadi(Sobhi). From 1951 to 1961, Nour-e Jahan was the sole publishing house active in the domain of children's books and literature. Though in later years such publishing houses as Marefat, Franklin, Book Publishing and Translation Company and finally Nil, Ibn Sina and Amir Kabir made some efforts in satisfying growing demands- their contribution, however, was insignificant for reasons of the contents and presentation which could address the needs of children and young adults. Through an active policy of cooperation and assistance of prominent authors, poets, painters and artists at the time, the Publishing Organization of the I.I.D.C.Y.A managed to extend the scope of its activities, thus considerably improving the quality and quantity of its publications. Although the first two years, the publication of the I.I.D.C.Y.A was limited only two titles, in the third year it rose to 13 and each had a print run of 30,000 or 40,000 copies. In the 1969, *The Story of Pigeon* (toqi), *Away from Home* and *The Little Black Fish* were chosen as the best books by the Children's Books Council. The books' *The Little Black Fish*' and *Flower and Glass of Sun*' won prizes at the Bologna (Italy) exhibition. In the same year, besides participating and winning awards in the Bratislava (Slovakia) exhibition, the Publishing Organization succeeded in getting six titles of its books translated and printed in the United States in cooperation with two American publishers.

### **5.2.4- Animation as a means of presentation of modern face of Iran**

In the early 1970s, the rapid economic development of the country together with the emphasis on the Shah's "Gates to Civilization" which was intended to unearth

(imaginary) pre-Islamic Iranian civilisation glory promoted a type of modernisation policy relying heavily on secularisation and internationalisation. In this process, the role and importance of the newly established cultural and artistic centres enhanced greatly as a power means of presenting the country's socio-cultural achievements. The I.I.D.C.Y.A, in particular, was sponsored by the Queen Farah, and gave opportunities to a small number of talented artists to write, paint and publish their works unrestricted by managerial direction or financial penalty. Artists were able to write and illustrate children's books in most innovative manners and then transferring the concepts and ideas into the design of animated films. It was an ideal environment in which artists specialising in different art-forms working together free from market forces and assured for financial rewards.

#### **5.2.5- Political imperatives and freedom of artistic expression**

The increasing authoritarian regime of the Shah alienated secular and religiously minded people to the extent that the survival of the regimes became increasingly dependent on the military and intelligence forces. The celebration of 2,500 years of the Persian civilisation – failing to mention the contribution of Islamic culture to the Iranian culture- and back dating the solar calendar of Iran (the Moslem year) to the beginning of ancient Persian empire in 1971 caused a great resentment and opposition against the regime, in particular from religious authorities (*Rohaniyat*) and served to unite and mobilise opposition forces. Coupled with this the pressures from international community to relax harsh political suppression, the government adopted a relatively freer policy towards writers and artists so as to reduce the negative criticism made by internal opposition and external observers. Thus the state institutions were mobilised to encounter the negative image portrayed by the oppositions. Thus filmmakers and

writers who were attracted to the cultural and artistic centres were often warned and penalised for their leaning either towards left politics or religious attachment. The government, however, believed that mass media, including animation could be used to amplify the achievements of the regime and down play the negative and side-effects of the development policies. Morteza Momayez an animator and graphic designer working in the I.I.D.C.Y.A, recalls:

The works that we produced were reviewed in the last stages of production by a censor checking for political content. However, although the works were reviewed, the directors and organizers of the center made efforts to avoid the striking of any content.<sup>5</sup>

#### **5.2.6- First International artistic festival in Iran**

The holding of domestic and international festivals by the Cinematic Centre not only demonstrated its capabilities but also provided a suitable venue for Iranian artists to get acquainted with the works of their foreign counterparts and thus augment their artistic experiences and knowledge. The festival provided a forum to all participants exchange views and experiences free from censorship and assess their works relative to the works of other artists. This was particularly important for the artists working for the I.I.D.C.Y.A who were restricted in the artistic expression both in terms of contents and styles of presentation. Despite everlasting impacts of the I.I.D.C.Y.A's artists on the development of animation in Iran, it is safe to argue that its artistic inventiveness was in decline, partly because of political censorship on the artistic expression and partly for few master animators emerged to extend and build upon the established animators.

---

<sup>5</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, Vision of Wakefulness ( collection of discussion , writing and interviews about animation ), published by Assitant Research of I.I.D.C.YA, Tehran 1999, p.188.

Despite the fact that more than two decades has passed since the end of the Golden Age of Iranian animation, the influence of its main contributors are still keenly felt both at home and abroad. This is particularly evident at international events where the sole knowledge of foreign experts and filmmakers of the Iranian animation is located in the person of Nouredin Zarrinkelk. Part of the reason for this acclaim can also be attributed to the stagnation and lack of development in the industry in the first decade following the Islamic revolution, which saw little or no quality Iranian animation films produced. This however, is not to detract from the high artistic quality of the films that were produced during the Golden Age. Indeed, this quality can be clearly seen from the fact that Nouredin Zarrinkelk's film "The Mad, Mad, Mad World" (1968) was included in the list of the ninety four best animation films of the twentieth century at the International Animation Festival held in Annecy in 2000. Zarrinkelk's film illustrated the turmoil and devastation of political turmoil and was a call for peace and understanding in the world. The film was widely acclaimed and won six prizes at international festivals in the first year of its release in 1968.

I have chosen two animated films, as representatives of the Golden Age, for a detail analysis, both were then considered highly inventive and artistically masterpiece.

#### **5.2.6.1- 'The Mad, Mad, Mad World'- a global message through a simple graphical form**

Zarrinkelk's *The Mad, Mad, Mad World* is a pure example of animation which predominantly occurs in the short form, and manages to compress a high degree of narrational information into a limited period of time.<sup>6</sup> He creates an environment, at the

---

<sup>6</sup> Wells, Paul, *Understanding Animation*, London, Routledge, 1998, p.76

one level, in which an educated viewer who has an awareness of geography and knowledge of the world's political situation could easily comprehend its message. This was at a time when the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in the super power politics of the Cold War. At another level, the film also succeeds in appealing to young children by presenting them with images of the countries of the world transforming into and acting like animals.



**Figure 5.1:** *the Mad Mad Mad World* by Nouredin Zarrinkelk 1974, source: *Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran International Animated Festival 2001*.

A tiny point in the centre of a white background moves towards the camera. As it gets nearer we recognize that the dot is in fact the planet earth. Soon we are able to discern the various geographical shapes of specific countries. Suddenly these countries change form and take on human characteristics. Italy transforms into a boot and kicks Sicily into the Black Sea. Africa awakens as a sleeping giant before swallowing Madagascar and returning to sleep. Australia transforms into a dogs head and starts to bark. Scandinavia becomes a dinosaur-like, which opens its mouth and swallows Denmark.

The first step in Zarrinkelk's development of the film was his imaginative use of the visual characteristics of various countries to metamorphose them into objects or creatures. The message of his film takes account of the fact that national boundaries



have been both geographically and politically shaped over centuries. He provides the following explanation for origins and development of this film:

For me the genesis of any idea has strong roots in ones everyday life. I remember in school, my top grade was always for drawing geographical maps and for me every map had a similarity with a particular animal. For instance, the top of America is the same as a hen's head and Saudi Arabia resembles the long beak of a hen. This way of seeing the world stayed with me and I gradually extended it to other countries which I included in the film *Mad World*.<sup>7</sup>

Britain reaches out and hugs Ireland before biting it. Spain becomes a fist and proceeds to punch Morocco and Algeria, which wakens an angry Africa. In a long shot, we see two islands in the Archipelago of Indonesia transform into two pairs of teeth pulling in opposite directions stretching a disputed islet that lies between them. India becomes a hen's head that starts to peck Sri Lanka with its beak. Similarly, we see Alaska change to the head of an eagle and begin to peck at the Hawaiian Islands, which in turn leads to a confrontation with Siberia. Zarrinkelk used symbolic actions to knowledge to pre narrate existing and past political crises in the world such as Britain's guardianship view Ireland which on the one hand appears to be kindly in fact is entirely expansionist and the historical colonial challenge between France, Spain and North African countries.

Next we see all the countries of the world in conflict with one another whilst America and Russia both transform into the shape of hens and start to pull the various warring parties to their own sides. The theme, which makes this work timeless is the director's comprehensive view of the political challenges posed by imperialist power to smaller

---

<sup>7</sup> Yaseinpour, Sahar, *the Arts of Eight*, a Thesis for the MA in animation, university of art, 1999, p.132.

and weaker nations. In this matter eating, swallowing, biting, fighting and escaping are the visual symbols of struggles for existence that Zarrinkelk sees happening across the globe. He explains how he linked his childish view of the world map to political reality:

Once I had the form I needed to find a way to link it to what I call *the Association of Idea*. In contrast to my other work it is usually the idea that comes first and then the form. This time I had the form first and then I began to think about the idea, which in this instance was the political relation between different countries. Conceptually, I began to work with political events in the past, present and future, in a bid to link them to my geographical shapes. My emphasis was not just to concentrate on specific subjects or one event, but I decided to state the law of jungle where the strong always exploit the weak.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the fighting the earth continues to rotate and the countries begin to divide into east to west. This action is repeated three times until we hear the sound of running and then a cut to silence. In this scene there is nothing except an empty background and the sound of a hen and a cock making love. Then we hear the sound of bells ringing and music denoting a marriage before the earth returns to its soft regular rotation and the well-off countries return to the map. By considering that the conciliation between the two superpowers occurs beyond the sight of viewers, we notice that there are no outward signs of friendship and peace. It works to their advantage that others still believe them to be in conflict. Therefore one can take away two the messages from the film. The director shows the image of peace, but the images of the back scene action highlight the idea that the world is involved in a political play and the peace has not yet been achieved.

---

<sup>8</sup> Yaseinpour, Sahar, *the Arts of Eight*, a Thesis for the MA in animation, university of art, 1999, p.132.

This film is Zarrinkelk's second film since he returned to the Iran. Initially he tried to produce this film by combining animation with live action scenes, but it never seemed to work and he eventually gave up the idea. This is the shortest film that he made but he feels that it is long enough to get its message across to the audience.

#### **5.2.6.2- "The Flower Storm" - a global message through Persian paintings**

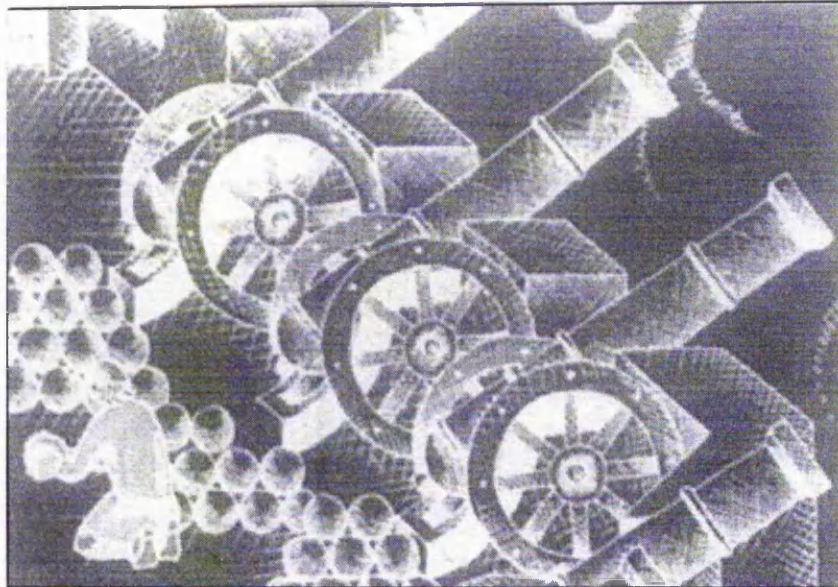
In this period from 1966 – 1979, Ali Akbar Sadeqi was one of the key figures in Iranian animation. Despite the fact that he has produced no animation films since that period he is still one of the country's most respected artistic talents.

In an interview when he was asked whether he had ever been tempted to re-enter the animation field despite the fact that he had not made any films since 1977-8; he responded by saying:

Yes, on two separate occasions. The first was about seven or eight years ago when I was a member of the jury at the International Children's Film Festival in Esfahan. During the festival many people told me how much they respected my work and that they would really like to see me make some new films. The second time occurred about two years ago (1997) when I was a member of a jury panel in Paris where they were showing a retrospective of my work. There I saw that even after twenty years away from animation people still appreciated and were aware of my work. Unfortunately these desires came to nothing as there are no longer the production facilities in Iran to produce high quality animation.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, *An Interview with Ali Akbar Sadeqi, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation)*, published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, P.166, 1999.



**Figure 5.2: the Flower Storm by Ali Akbar Sadeqi 1973, source: Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran International Animated Festival 2001.**

Sadeqi's *The Flower Storm* shows that peaceful coexistence and avoidance of war are lasting needs of all human beings. Although the story of the film uses traditional Iranian paintings and forms to represent a historical period, it is in fact a message for all times and places. The film focuses on two kings from neighbouring cities who decide to go out hunting together. The film starts with a number of sequences that emphasise the peace, beauty and tranquillity of nature; a bird sitting on a tree in the centre of a river, the pleasant sound of rushing water and two men fishing quietly. By appropriating most of the running time of the film to presenting the concepts and beauty of peace, Sadeqi critically reflects on the hideousness of war. He presents concepts such as the relationship between territories, children's play, water and birds as symbols of life and freedom while conflict, jealousy, spite and enemies are represented by hunting, fire, war and the barking of dogs.

Suddenly the contemplative calm of the scene is abruptly shattered by the incessant barking of dogs. The noise of the dogs frightens the bird and it flies from the tree only to be felled by an arrow shot from the bow of one of the hunting kings. The dogs rush

to where the bird has fallen and proceed to tear it apart. In Iranian culture a dog's role is limited to farm activities including shepharding. They are often used as symbols of security similar to the role played by dogs in Halas' film *Animal Farm* (1954).

The kings begin to argue over the possession of the dead bird before their anger boils over into a declaration of war. Next we are shown how war tears peoples lives apart in much the same way as the dogs tore apart the dead bird. The next scene shows the transformation of a carpenter and a shepherd into soldiers as the music of a flute, which the shepherd was playing, fades to the sound of marching feet. This is followed by the metamorphoses of a horse and cart into an artillery field gun before the full-scale preparation of war between the peoples of the two cities begins. A metamorphosis here legitimises the process of connecting apparently unrelated images, forgoing original relationships between lines and objects. Through the equality and symmetry of design applied to the two castles, Sadeqi illustrates his belief that human wars are not about superficial inequalities but come from the inside of man. If the size of the characters, and castles or the amount of equipment and facilities were not balanced the audience might assume that exterior weaknesses had prompted the dispute instead of investigating the selfishness of the kings and their interior weaknesses, as the cause of war.

The children of the two cities are uncomprehending of the events that are unfolding and cannot understand why they suddenly have to hate their friends, whom they had played and swam in the river with, and see them as enemies. They decide to get together and do something to change the situation so that they can still play with one another. That night they sneak out and replace the shells of the field guns with objects not shown to the audience. The next morning the war-trumpets are blown and the

soldiers rush to their posts to man their guns. The king from the first city gives the order to fire and instead of artillery shells, birds fly out of the barrels of the guns causing much laughter and hilarity. The king from the second city sees this as his opportunity and orders his men to open fire. However, rather than bullets his army's weapons shoot colourful flowers into the sky. This quells the fires of war, people rejoice and celebrate as peace ensues and the children go back to swimming together in the river and we once again see the beauty and joy of life.

Mankind that lives in a community which is based on selflessness and non-profit-making environment. Sadeqi by contributing children in this duty as good as moved through I.I.D.C.Y.A's policies. Again the conciliation between the two kings, or superpowers, occurs inside the castle away from viewer's and the public's eyes. We see once more that the face shown by the superpowers is different from their actions or feelings which take place out of sight. In this film, the director starts out by showing his respect for peace, but the ending clearly indicates that the peace is an illusion and the power games continue. Children, as the future generation, suffer more than anybody from the distortions of war and it is they who must rebuild the ruins, therefore they are cast as the main antiwar group in the film.

However, the final scene provides the film with a bitter sweet ending, which serves as a reminder that peace is a fragile entity and that the enmities of war can linger on. As the two kings sit at a banquet to celebrate the end of war and a new friendship the bird which they killed whilst out hunting is served up as the main course. The film ends, as both pulls at the same piece of meat roaring like lions.

It should be noted that both animated films were produced during the period when the Shah's regime presented Iran as a land of peace. The regime was confident of the fact that it had withstood the political crises of the early part of Pahlavi's regime including the occupation of the country by the Allies (1941- 1945), and the coup - d'état of the 28<sup>th</sup> of Mordad (1953). In addition, both were intended to focus attention on the increasing oil-revenues and flow of foreign capital into the country, the building-up of the military, the extension and deepening relationships with the Western powers and the diminished threat of attack from neighbouring countries. Despite this, existing wars and crises in other parts of the world such the war in Vietnam and the Arab Israeli conflict (1960<sup>th</sup>) were a bitter reality that directly influenced the artists' works and ideas. The above two films were the result of those influences. (See attached video).

*The Flower Storm* strongly illustrates the relationship between Sadeqi's painting and animation. The graphics and design of the *Flower Storm* are some of the best examples of Sadeqi's unique and outstanding painting style and can be seen as a continuation of the illustrative style that he first developed in his work on the book *Hero of the Heroes*. Sadeqi himself points out that the visual space of *The Flower Storm* is inspired and influenced by the style of Iranian miniatures and lithography. The use of soft and pure colours in the representation of characters creates a visual texture, which is very similar to that seen in miniatures. This is contrasted with the style of the background paintings, which are seen to have more in common with the lithographic art form in their emphasis on clear and simple outer line patterns.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Safoora, Mohammad-Ali, *Analyzing of Ali Akbar Sadegi's animation works*, a thesis for the degree of MA in animation, school of Art Tarbiat Modarres University, Autumn, p.115, 1999.

### **5.2.7- Quality painting as illustration or animation**

As I have already mentioned in chapter four the main aim of the I.I.D.C.Y.A in establishing an animation centre was that the centre to assist in the promotion of children's education through the publication and illustration of children's books. In this respect, the production of animation films was very much seen as being of secondary importance. Indeed, the fact that most of those working at the center came from a painting or design background has meant that much of the illustrative work has generally been of a much higher quality than the film output in general.

In general, most Iranian animators are illustrators before they become filmmakers. Perhaps because of background many of the animated films that were produced were more graphically than cinematically inclined. Many were simply satisfied to meet the minimum requirements demanded by the screen and exhibited a plodding workman like style lacking in inspiration. This was a situation that was further exacerbated by the fact that many of the films were seen by their creators as simply a certain amount of frames, rather than book pages, that had to be filled with illustrations.

Ali Akbar Sadeqi highlights this problem, stating that "most Iranian animation lacks any sense of art direction and fails to give due attention to each of the various different elements involved in the filmmaking process". This is a situation that could be said to be changing with the new generation of animation graduates emerging from the universities who receive training in all aspects of cinematic process. However, even here Sadeqi feels that some of this new work being produced, whilst showing a technical improvement, still exhibits "a tendency to veer towards caricature".



The renowned Belgian<sup>11</sup> animator Raoul Servais gave his impression and view of Iranian animation by stating that:

Many years ago when I first came to Iran, there was not any kind of animation production taking place. However, I saw that painting and illustration were very well developed art forms with a long history in the country. During this period I suggested to certain cultural managers that they had a responsibility to the cinema industry in Iran to establish a center for animation. Nothing appeared happen, until I heard some time later that an animation course had been started in one of the universities. After that the quality of Iranian productions began to improve and many excellent and interesting films have been made since. Iranian artists bring a special and unique style to their work. I have to admit that I know very little about recent Iranian animation, as it has been very difficult to see any of them, but I hope that this unique style has continued.<sup>12</sup>

### **5.3- Five Masters of Iranian animation**

In order to gain a broad perspective on the Iranian animation I have selected five masters for detail analysis on their roles and artistic achievements so as to identify the characteristics, which define the Golden Age of animation in Iran. The importance of these artists lies in the fact that their styles and narratives have been taken up by new generation of animators. Indeed, one may argue that they have created the basic ingredients of an Iranian indigenous animation.

From the beginning of the history of cinema and animation, schools and studios such the NFBC and Disney have played a valuable role in the development of this artform.

However, in tracing the development of this art, one cannot overlook the role of

---

<sup>11</sup> Raoul Servais in 1968 participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> Tehran International Film Festival for Children. When Zarrinkelk in 1968 from I.I.D.C.Y.A for two years dispatched to an animation course to Belgium he was been one of Raoul Servais' student.

<sup>12</sup> Tavakolian, Saeed, Wakefulness of Vision (about animation cinema), assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 2001, p.200.

masters, whose individual mastery has been a very important driving force in many movements in animation. As discussed in chapter two, in the Iranian culture master craftsmen and painters are valued and respected. Notable elements of a master's character and work can be used to identify problems and talents for new generations.

As the history of animation is not too old I would like to introduce the masters of Iranian animation. The master of a particular field of endeavour is generally regarded as an exceptional and innovative talent that has succeeded in influencing and appealing to others within and beyond their particular field of excellence. In most cases the artist who is regarded as the master sees his work transcend time and space and appeal to a large and varied audience with his name becoming synonymous with a particular style and body of work. In the case of American animation the name of Walt Disney stands head and shoulders above all else;

Walt Disney has been called a prudish moralist and a brain manager who harshly exploited the creative talents of other artists to the full, nobody, however, has been able to deny his achievements, his influence, his courage and his consistency.<sup>13</sup>

In this context Zarrinkelk could be said to be the Walt Disney of Iranian animation given his overarching influence and contribution, both structurally and artistically, to the development of all aspects of the animation industry in Iran. Indeed, it almost impossible to mention Iranian animation without mentioning the name of Zarrinkelk.

I find John Halas's 'The Masters of Animation' most appropriate framework for the analysis of personal traits and artistic perception which distinguishes innovators from

---

<sup>13</sup> Halas, John, Masters of Animation, published by BBC Books, London, 1987, p.56.

followers. Halas provides a detailed analysis of the most influential artists in the world of animation. His investigation of masters covers many different nationalities and schools. From the 42 masters<sup>14</sup> profiled, I selected 12 who are noted more for the artistic, independent and experimental qualities of their work than the industrial aspects. By analysing the key histories of these artists, I derived four aspects, role, artistic character, personal character and reputation which form the bases of Halas' prototype of a master. By extrapolating from the profiles key characteristics, which exemplify each of the above aspects, I developed a framework which would assist me in identifying and defining the masters of Iran.

In adapting this framework to Iranian masters, I have had to take account of the fact that I am working within a national context and therefore the aspects defining the characteristics of a master have in some cases to be adapted to local considerations. Therefore, the profiles of the five Iranian animators should not be considered equivalent to those of Halas who was study on an international basis and standards.

---

<sup>14</sup> Halas, Johan, *Masters of Animation* ( Chuck Jones p.59, Carolin Leaf p.63, Norman McLaren p.64, Fredric Back p.66, Ishu Pater p.68, Kihachiro Ka Wamoto p.69, Osama Tezuka P.73, Dusan Vukotoic P.75, Borivaj Dovnikovic P.78, Gorge Duning P.80, Ivan Ivanov – Vano p. 106, Paul Dressen p.112, Macell Jan Kovics p.89), Published by BBC Books, London, 1987.

**Table 5.1: Four key aspects for masters**

	Key aspects of masters
Roles	link between past, present and future contributed more to the modernisation of animated film Founder representative of a nation's animation
Artistic character	flexible enough to keep up with constantly changing styles and techniques experimenting new techniques Creative brilliance technique exuberant human being who is obviously in complete command of his medium entirely devote to work from story concept to design of figures versatile artist, adapt easily from book illustration to writing and drawing comic to film production astute observer of human weaknesses instantly recognisable
Personal character	boundless energy sensitivity to human condition unassuming man highly original
Reputation	unique visual language personal style artistic background , comic strip, comic books world - wide reputation revolutionised the medium in a period representative of a nation's animation

### **5.3.1- Esfandiar Ahmadiéh**

Esfandiar Ahmadiéh was born in 1928 to a well-known family in Tehran. His father Abdollah- Khan Ahmadiéh was a famous medical researcher. Under the influence of a well-educated father and a prudent mother his natural talent was carefully nurtured and actively encouraged and he began to experiment in

creating sculptures and shapes from a variety of materials such as wood, iron and fabric. At school he studied design and drawing under the tutelage of Ostad Asqar, before moving to the Technical Art School in 1948. During the five years that he spent there he was taught by some of the masters of Iranian painting such as Esmail Ashtiyani, Hosein Sheykh and Mahmoudeh Oliya. His style and artistic education was further honed and developed by a number of trips he made to the Soviet Union, Romania and the United States where he was able to research the work of other artists.

Esfandiar Ahmadiéh's career can be divided in two periods. The first covers his activities in the field of painting, which resulted in several successful exhibitions, including the Mehraqan Club in 1961 and the Gallery of Kamal-Ol Molk in 1948 to 1950, and the establishment of various cultural links between Iran and a number of countries abroad, most notably with the Soviet Union in 1956. The second period of his artistic life could be said to have begun from 1956 onwards when he founded the Animation Centre in the Ministry of Art.<sup>15</sup>

Ahmadiéh has stated that he had always been interested in producing animation films even before he began his involvement with the Ministry of Art. "However I have to admit that at the beginning I had very little knowledge of the animation artform. But through perseverance and experimentation I succeeded in eventually making my first animation Mollah Nasreddin."<sup>16</sup> Since then he has made many unique and challenging films that explore, represent and have become part of, the political, sociological and artistic heritage of contemporary Iran. However, it was not until a retrospective of his

---

<sup>15</sup> *The Culture of Cinema (Magazine)*, *Esfandiar Ahmadiéh, the beginner of animation in Iran*, N. 12, 1992, p.75.

<sup>16</sup> *The Culture of Cinema (Magazine)*, *Esfandiar Ahmadiéh, the beginner of animation in Iran*, N. 12, 1992, p.109.

work was held at the First International Animation Festival in Tehran in 1999 that his work achieved the full attention and praise that it so richly deserves. As the organisers of the festival stated, Esfandiur Ahmadeh holds a unique place in the history of the Iranian animation. He is not only the founder of modern animation in Iran but has contributed over 40 years of his life to the promotion and development of the art form.<sup>17</sup>

However, Ahmadiéh's wife, Parvin Mahager, told me in a recent interview of the importance and need for her husband to have his work shown abroad. "When the organisers and managers of animation in this country are sending filmmakers and their work to international festivals abroad they tend to overlook Esfandiar. It is very important for him to be able to attend these events, not only to increase the knowledge and awareness of his work but also to inspire and motivate him to produce new and exciting films."<sup>18</sup>

During the course of this interview I was also shown a large number of Ahmadeih's paintings, which covered a wide variety of styles and subjects, as can be gleaned from the following titles, "The 30<sup>th</sup> of Tir"; "After the Earthquake of Qazvin"; "Workers in Winter", "A Traditional Water Store in Tehran", "A-Lak Do-Lak Playing in Returning from School", "Children's Wrestling and "Rice Cultivation in Rice Field of Iran". Despite the enormous influence that he has had on society Ahmadiéh informed me that he does not consider himself a political artist or feel that there is much political content in his work. However, it is soon becomes very clear to anyone who has seen his work that he is an artist who does not shy away from expressing his emotions or comments about society. This was very much evident in the problems that his work encountered

---

<sup>17</sup> First Tehran International Animation festival's Book, Deputy in Charge of Research and International Affairs I.I.D.C.Y.A, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Mahager, Parvin, Interview, Shariati Ave (Ahmadeih's house), Fieldwork Tehran, summer 2001.

under the previous regime, with many of his films being banned. In this respect Ahmadieh's work is very much part of the evolutionary tapestry of the artistic, political and sociological evolution of contemporary Iran.

This engagement with the social issues is further evidenced in his recounting of the inspiration and influence that lay behind his painting the 30<sup>th</sup> of Tir (July). That picture was painted as a result of reading of the deaths of a boy and girl, run over by a tank, on July 30 1956. The Kamal – Ol – Molk Technical School refused to exhibit the picture. However, as a result of the encouragement of the Minister of Culture, Derakhshesh to exhibit his own work at the Mehregun Club in Lale-Zar he had an opportunity to travel, as an artistic representative, to Moscow. His return to Iran coincided with the 28<sup>th</sup> of Mordad's coup d'etat and he was then under suspicion as a result of his visit to a Communist country.

His subsequent arrest and transfer to Qezel Hesar Prison where he was abused and tortured, came about as a result of Security and Information Organization's perception of the "The 30<sup>th</sup> of Tir painting" as political criticism. He was prohibited from further comment on political and social themes in his art and after his release the Technical School continued to distance itself from him.<sup>19</sup>

### **5.3.2- Nosratollah Karimi**

Nosratollah Karimi is one of the few Iranian animators who came to the field with a background in cinema. In this sense he is somewhat unique in that most Iranian animators start their careers in either graphic design, illustration or painting before

---

<sup>19</sup> Khalili, Gh.Reza, *A Review the Art works of Esfandiur Ahmadeh "the First Iranian Animator"*, a thesis for the MA in animation, Tarbiat Modarres University, winter 2001, p.23 – 34.

progressing onto animation production. For Karimi it was the cinema that was to be the most important influence on his artistic development;

In 1952 I went to study in Europe and ended up spending about six months in Rome. In Iran I had seen De Sica's *The Bicycle Thieves* and I was completely entranced by it. About this time De Sica was in the process of producing "Central Station". I received a recommendation from the ambassador of Iran and approached De Sica asking him if he would allow me to work on the film. He offered me the job of third assistant director. During the two-month shoot I received a thorough practical education on all I needed to know about the cinema".<sup>20</sup>

Most Iranians, particularly the pre-revolution generation, know Karimi through his work in the cinema, both as a director or actor, in productions such as the television serial, *Dai Jan Napoleon* (the Dear Uncle Napoleon) in 1976, rather than in the animation field. However, his animation films exhibit a formal and stylistic innovativeness coupled with high technical values that can be attributed to his cinematic background.

Nosratollah Karimi is an artist with many different talents. In a long and prolific career, which has spanned both the pre-revolution and post revolution periods, he has been active in the fields of animation and live action cinema and has enjoyed success both as an actor and director. If he had concentrated solely on animation production he would have done much to develop and mould the direction of the industry, with his technical skills and knowledge of the cinematic medium, and become one of the most influential figures in Iranian animation. However, this is not to disparage his contribution to

---

<sup>20</sup> Karimi, Nosratollah, *the Biography of Nosratollah Karimi for Hozeh Honari Personal Archive*, include 14 original letter, document and papers, summer 2001, p.3.



Iranian animation as he is one of its recognised masters and occupies an important place in its history. Indeed, as we observed in chapter four his departure from the Ministry of Art was seen as one of the main reasons for the fall in the activities of the animation centre.

Karimi himself illustrate the condition of the animation industry when he first stated working at the centre; “When I joined the animation centre in 1964 none of artists working there had any background in cinema and they knew very little about camera or editing techniques. The first thing I did was re-edit a number of productions that they had already made in order to make them look more cinematic. Then I added sound to some of the films, such as *Cat and Mouse*, added dialogue tracks using my own voice and re-shot some material where I felt that a close up or a long shot was needed. I then set up a course at the centre that taught the basics of cinematic technique for two hours each week. The first film that I actually made at the centre was *Zandegi* (Life) in collaboration with Ahmadiéh and my wife. I had originally written the scenario for *Zandegi* during some time that I spent in the Czech Republic and I finally decided to make it using puppet animation.”<sup>21</sup>

One of the most infamous and contentious films in Iranian animation is Karimi’s *Malek Jamshid*. The controversy and debate surrounding the film has centred on the question of the authenticity of its authorship. Mahin Javaherian in the Short History of Animation in Iran cites Nafiseh Riahi as the films director. The ensuing dispute over

---

<sup>21</sup>Khalili, Gh.Reza, *A Review the Art works of Esfandiar Ahmadiéh “the First Iranian Animator”*, a thesis for the MA in animation, Tarbiat Modarres University, p.89, winter 2001.

the question of ownership was widely seen as the reason for Karimi resigning from his post at the Animation Centre.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 5.3: Malek Jamshid by Nosratollah Karimi 1967, source: artist's private archive.

Nosratollah Karimi has experienced many problems with the authorities of the Islamic regime as they have deemed much of his work to be “contrary to the values of the revolution” (chapters six and seven). Indeed, in the early years of the revolution he was completely banned from making any films whatsoever. However, despite these difficulties he stayed in the country and continued to try and make films that remained true to his artistic values and beliefs.

Karimi explains the difficulties he has experienced with the authorities; “In the pre revolution period my films were prohibited from being shown abroad because I had received my education in Prague and was a member of the Tudeh party. I was then approached by a number of SAVAK’s officials who asked me to leave the party and co-operate with them in producing officially sanctioned films. I told them that I did not want to fall out of the frying pan into the fire and that I was not interested in political

<sup>22</sup> Karimi, Nosratollah, *How the Malek- Jamshid (by Nosratollah Karimi) produced?* Prepared for Graphic Magazine, [personal archive](#), include 14 original letter, document and papers, summer 2001

issues and wanted to just concentrate on artistic and cultural matters. After that I received no official sponsorship or support for my work and I was constantly under suspicion and investigation from the authorities.

During this time (the 1960's) I produced a fifty nine-second film with Ahmadiéh that was included in the International One Minute Film Festival. It was made in Pixillation<sup>3</sup> with a white decorative modern background and a live character set up for single frame shooting. However, this film was banned even before it went through the developing process. I still have a 16 mm copy of the film in my possession.<sup>23</sup>

After the revolution I found myself once again experiencing problems with the authorities. At one stage I was on the verge of being executed for what was seen as the anti-regime message of my 1972 film *Mohallal*. I managed to explain to the authorities that my work was not political and I was eventually pardoned by Imam Khomeini. However, after that I was prohibited from making films for over twenty years.<sup>24</sup>

However, the limitations placed on Karimi's film work became a motivating factor in encouraging him to explore other areas of artistic endeavour. He moved into the art of sculpturing, with many of his works being favourably received at exhibitions throughout the country and once again bringing him back to the attention of the artistic community. An observer on Iranian art-work wrote:

Since the revolution, he has spent more time mastering what initially began as hobby. Sculpturing in clay, he has created over 300 statuettes of Iranian and foreign characters. Some of his subjects are famous historical figures, some are common people. However, they all have dramatic expressions, in

---

<sup>3</sup> A term used to describe animating real people by either single frame or slow speed filming. Neighbours by Norman McLaren, the National Film Board of Canada. This is an example of Pixillation (Taylor, 1996, p.128).

<sup>23</sup> Khalili, Gh.Reza, *A Review the Art works of Esfandiar Ahmadiéh "the First Iranian Animator"*, a thesis for the MA in animation, Tarbiat Modarres University, winter 2001, p.90.

<sup>24</sup> Karimi, Nosratollah, *a letter from Nosratollah Karimi to organizers of the festival of "the examination of history of Iranian cinema" in London*, 4 January 1999, personal archive, include 14 original letter, document and papers, summer 2001.

the style of figures such as *Rostam* (Persian mythological hero), *Roshanfeker* (the intellectual) or *Fahhash* (the Foul-mouthed), all under Karimi's masterful direction.<sup>25</sup>

Q: When did you first become involved in sculpting?

A: I first began when I was a child, by using clay from the garden to make simple models. My first teacher was my brother Ali Karimi who was studying painting at Kamal Ol-Molk at the time. He encouraged me to experiment and draw on my experiences from everyday life. However, it was not until I went to study in Prague in 1954 that I began to seriously engage with the art form.<sup>26</sup>

One day, a friend of mine said to me that I was lucky that people like and buy my portraits and statues so that I am able to live and survive financially. However, I told him that even if they did not buy them I would still continue to make them. For me an artist's brain is like a hen laying an egg, when the eggs are ready the hen must lay them. An artist when he has an idea must find a way of expressing it. When I was prevented from making films I had to find another way of expressing my ideas.<sup>27</sup>

It was through my sculpting that I began to be noticed again and I was invited to give talks and teach on some of the animation courses in the universities. I have also assisted on a number of animation productions although this has been in an unofficial and a behind the scenes capacity.

---

<sup>25</sup> Karimi. Htm, Dramatic Expressions, [www.Iranian.com](http://www.Iranian.com), May 1996.

<sup>26</sup> Karimi, Nosratollah, *interview by considering to history of animation in Iran, future prospective and technical issues as scenario in animation*, in Zafarneyah Valley – Asre (Karimi's house) Fieldwork Tehran, August 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Karimi, Nosratollah, *the Biography of Nosratollah Karimi for Hozeh Honari* Personal Archive, include 14 original letter, document and papers, p.2, summer 2001.

In 1989 the I.I.D.C.Y.A asked me to produce the cut out animation film *Hambazi* (Playmate). I agreed, but in order for the film to receive a screening we had to name Abedi (Zamany) as the film's director and make sure that my contribution remained anonymous. However, despite these restrictions the film succeeded in winning an award at the Festival of Education<sup>28</sup>

### 5.3.3- Nouredin Zarrinkelk

Sixty years ago, when asked to choose a name for the family, his grandfather, a writer by profession, opted for Zarrinkelk, which means "golden pencil". With such a poetic name it seemed inevitably that Nouredin Zarrinkelk would become one of the country's top animators. If he initially studied medicine to please his family, it was in the field of animation and illustration where he was to find his true vacation.<sup>29</sup>

As a result of his father's profession Zarrinkelk was to spend much of his childhood travelling and living in numerous cities where he experienced many different cultures, all of which had a marked influence on him and his later career. The sociological situation in Iran at this time was very different to that which exists in the country at present. Most children followed a traditional style of education that was based on pedagogical learning by rote under the harsh supervision of teachers and the individual discipline of the father. In this respect Zarrinkelk was no different, falling under a dual system of tutelage, one which he received from his teachers at school and the other from his father at home.

---

<sup>28</sup> Karimi, Nosratollah, *the Biography of Nosratollah Karimi for Hozeh Honari Personal Archive*, include 14 original letter, document and papers, summer 2001, p.2.

<sup>29</sup> Viel, Françoise, *What's in a name?* , Daily bulletin, International Festival of Animation Annecy, 1993.p.16.

Born in Mashad (Iran) in 1937, Zarrinkelk spent his childhood in Tehran, Tabriz, Orumiyyeh, Isfahan and Rasht, before returning to Tehran to finish high school. After high school he entered Tehran University in 1955 to study pharmacology, graduating in 1961.

It was his father who first introduced him to the pleasures of calligraphy and painting and Zarrinkelk began to pursue this new found interest by taking a number of art courses in parallel to his formal education.

He started illustrating as early as 1949 and joined the press as a political cartoonist when he was only 16. In 1956, due to military service regulations, he was prevented from entering the only Fine Art School to exist in Iran at that time. Unperturbed, he continued to paint and develop his art form.<sup>30</sup>

Zarrinkelk has spoken of the difficult gap that existed, and still does to a certain extent, in Iran between a family's expectations and belief in what is best for their children and in the child's desire to express itself and follow its own education path; "In those days (1950- 60<sup>th</sup>) families were very much against their children going to study at an art university. They did not recognise this sort of education and found it difficult to accept that anyone could, or would want to become, a painter or musician. My family wanted me to become a doctor because they felt it was a respectable and useful career. This was not my choice. However, it was as a result of their constant pressure and insistence that I eventually found myself sitting exams for pharmacology and medicine."<sup>31</sup>

Zarrinkelk's first artistic endeavour of note occurred at the age of fourteen when he drew the front cover illustration for children's storybook. In 1952, at the age of sixteen, he began to study the art of miniature painting and drawing at the Department of Art

---

<sup>30</sup> Second Tehran International Animation festival's Book, Deputy in Charge of Research and International Affairs I.I.D.C.Y.A, 2001, p.122.

<sup>31</sup> Oleeyaei, Mohammad, Pooyesh, A Periodical on Literature and Art for Children and Young Adults, An Interview with Nourredin Zarrinkelk, published by IIDYA, Vol.1 No.2, December 1989, p.54.

and Culture. He continued to pursue his interest in these art forms at the Kamal-Ol Molk's Technical School. After finishing high school (military school) he went to university where, despite his interest in literature, he ended up studying pharmacology (the Officer's College 1955). Throughout his university years Zarrinkelk continued to paint and draw, doing illustrations for a number of publishers and eventually becoming the cover designer for *Kayhan Bacheha* (children) magazine from 1956 - 1961.

When I initially began my research, I did so on the assumption that the era of the Islamic Republic was the first period when animation and politics, more by fate than design, actively came together. Furthermore, I also believed that animation was less politically motivated and overtly influenced by socio-political events than its live cinema counterpart. However, I have since discovered that the content and style of the 'political' films of the revolutionary period have been influenced as much by the work of the pre-revolutionary animation pioneers as by the course of political events themselves. This point became clear when I began to compile a bibliography on the masters of Iranian animation. It was here that I realised that the influence and exploration of socio-political events was not simply confined to the work of artists such as Ahmاده and Karimi but could be seen to extend to the films of many more animators of that era, some of whom ran into trouble with the authorities. In this respect Zarrinkelk was no exception, with his work being criticised and treated with suspicion by the ruling regime, eventually resulting in him being incarcerated and interrogated by the security authorities.

Zarrinkelk's final year at university coincided with the authorities cracking down on the activities of all forms of political opposition groups. Many political groups, such as the *Second Jebhe Meli*, were forced underground in order to continue their activities.

This period was one of intense political action and debate throughout the country, particularly amongst students at the universities.

For his part, Zarrinkelk had been a supporter of Dr Musaddiq<sup>32</sup>, and was opposed to the *coup d'etat of 28<sup>th</sup> of Mordad* (August 1953) which led to the latter's downfall. However, because of his military profession Zarrinkelk was somewhat limited as to what active political role he could play and instead began to devote himself to more sociological concerns. In 1953, with the assistance of some of his classmates, he began to publish a daily newspaper of critical literature reviews. Roman Rolland was one of writers to exert a large influence on Zarrinkelk and many reviews of his work appeared in the newspaper. However, because he was an army officer at the time Zarrinkelk began to attract the attentions of the secret police (SAVAK) who eventually closed down the paper, arrested him and placed him in jail without charge for seven months.<sup>33</sup>

The next major event in Zarrinkelk's life occurred when he met Firouz Sheirvanlo (an English graduate) whilst working at the Franklin Institute. Both of them left the institute to join the I.I.D.C.Y.A where Zarrinkelk was to experience the most productive period of his career. From 1967 to the present, Zarrinkelk has been active in the fields of book publishing and illustration, animation and socio-cultural activity, making him one of the most influential cultural figures in Iran.

---

<sup>32</sup> The leader of the popular movement of Iran, and the statesman who nationalised the Iranian oil industry ( Katouzian, 1988).

<sup>33</sup> Yaseinpour, Sahar, *the Arts of Eight*, a thesis for the MA in animation, University of Art, p16, (1378) 1999.



Zarrinkelk has illustrated a total of twenty books, eight of which have received awards from national and international festivals. Of these eight awards, *Kalagh-ha* (Crows) is perhaps the most successful winning a total of three prizes - Best Book from Iran, 1970, awarded by UNESCO, The Golden Apple Award at the Bratislava Exhibition in Czechoslovakia in 1970 and the International UNESCO Prize in 1982.

Zarrinkelk has spoken of the way he approaches and views the process of illustrating children's books:

In the past I have tried to involve children in the illustration process. I view this as an interactive process where I have a lot to learn particularly in trying to understand what children want and the kind of things they appreciate. As an illustrator I must engage with children's lives in order to become close to them. However, the entire process is very time consuming and I have been unable to do this as much as I would like".<sup>34</sup>

In the area of animated film Zarrinkelk has made a total of thirteen short films and one feature length production. The latter, called *Sindbad* was made in conjunction with a Finish animation company and is discussed in detail in chapter 6. The short films are as follows:

**Table 5.2: Animations Produced by Nureddin Zarrinkelk listed by year, 1970 - 1998**

ROW	TITLE	TECHNIQUE	TIME	FORMA T	YEAR OF PRODUCTION
1	Before Every Thing	Cell and Paper Animation	42 sec	16 mm	1970
2	Aplay Ground for Baboosh	Cell and Paper Animation	42 sec	16 mm	1971
3	Plippo and A Train from Hong Kong	Cell Animation	5 min	35 mm	1971
4	Association of Ideas	Paper Animation	4 min	35 mm	1973
5	Atal Matal	Cout out and Paper Animation	5min	35 mm	1974
6	The Mad Mad Mad World	Paper Animation	3,30 min	35 mm	1974

<sup>34</sup> Oleeyaei, Mohammad, Poovesh, A Periodical on Literature and Art for Children and Young Adults, An Interview with Nourredin Zarrinkelk, published by IIDYA, Vol.1 No.2, p.50, December 1989.

7	Amir Hamzeh	Cout out and Paper Animation	20,30 min	35 mm	1977
8	A Way to the Next Door	Pixillation	12 sec	35 mm	1977
9	Mamoonish Greed	Cell Animation	18 min	35 mm	1982
10	Super Powers	Back light and Paper Animation	9 min	35 mm	1988
11	Mouse and Cat ( Moscow)	Paper Animation	1 min	35 mm	1997
12	Identity (Children Right)	Paper Animation	26 sec	35 mm	1997
13	Weft	Computer Animation	20 min	35 mm	1998

Zarrinkelk has received a total of eleven awards for his work from both national and international animation festivals. The most successful of his films has undoubtedly been *The Mad Mad Mad World*, which won six prizes altogether as mentioned in the first section of the chapter.

Considering the fact that Zarrinkelk has been equally successful in both the field of animation and illustration its seems pertinent to ask whether he has a preference for one particular discipline over the other and also how he views the relationship between both art forms:

Considering the fact that I learnt animation after illustration, I would have to say that I am principally an animator. But if we want to look at the issue from the question of interest and attachment, I would say that animation is my “son” and illustration is my “daughter”. In this aspect I like each of them as much as the other. However, this does not hide the fact that they are two very different disciplines. Animation is serious, time consuming and extremely hard work that requires a lot of creative, organisational and communicative abilities. Illustration on the other hand is different in that from the very first stage it is very much a work of individual creativity and an expression of personal artistic sincerity.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Abrar (Daily newspaper), In *Listening to Zarrinkelk's Conversation a Master in Illustration of children's books and Animation*, No.972, Iran, 1992.

For the most part Zarrinkelk's cultural and artistic activities have been of a voluntary and non-profit making nature. These activities have generally attempted to improve and develop the animation industry in Iran and include; establishing the first Animation School in Iran (1974) in the IIDYBA; establishing an MA course in animation at the University of Faraby in 1977; teaching animation courses in a number of education centres and universities throughout Iran, including one in Helsinki (Finland 1988); establishing ASIFA in 1986; participating as a member of the board of directors of Asifa, from 1988 till the present; acting as a jury member at the International Animation Festival in Annecy in 1993, as well as at SECAF in 1997.

In his capacity as a member of the jury at the 19<sup>th</sup> international animation festival in Annecy 93 Zarrinkelk explained his reason for awarding the festival's Grand Prize to the Canadian film *Power River* by Fredrick Back and in doing so revealed a lot of what he viewed as the essence of animation:

This was a beautiful, poetic and philosophical film that began as an ecological report on the San Lorn River before going on to criticise mans destruction of nature. The filmmaker had worked on his own on a difficult and complex subject to for almost three years in order to produce these 24 minutes of film. Back has shown a concern and humility towards the world and nature and has expressed it in a beautifully poetic cinematic language. I took immense satisfaction in being able to award this masterpiece of animation the Grand Prize at Annecy and give it the recognition it truly deserves.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Zarrinkelk, Nourredin, *Every Body has A Different Value*, a special report from 19<sup>th</sup> international animation festival in Annecy 93, Film Magazine, No. 147, 1993, p.31.

### 5.3.4- Ali Akbar Sadeqi

Sadeqi was born in Tehran in 1937 and because of his interest in art and painting quickly earned for himself the nickname “Painter Akbar” among his schoolmates and friends. However, in the social environment of the 1930s and 40s in Iran such a title was problematic, as previously mentioned, given the generally low standing in which artists were held. Given their precarious economic situation, and the hostility and problems they received from their immediate families, the authorities and religious quarters, it is not surprise to learn that most of the artistic pioneers in Iran were strong willed and moral individuals who were determined to confront and document the socio-political conditions of their time no matter what the cost.

Sadeqi clearly illustrates these points when he speaks of his own formative years.” In school I was generally poor at subjects such as maths and spent most of my time painting, as this was where my real interest and passion lay. I became more and more interested in art and in 1957 I succeeded in entering university as one of the top students. It was only during my time at university that my father became aware of my success, through announcements made on the radio and television, and this helped to allay some of his doubts about my career choice. I managed to continue and extend my studies for almost twelve years in a bid to avoid doing military service<sup>37</sup> before succumbing to the inevitable<sup>38</sup>. However, it was during this period that I became aware of the activities of the newly established I.I.C.D.Y.A. and applied to serve my military service with this organisation.<sup>39 40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> In Iran, all men are required by law to complete two years military service. This is normally done between the ages of 18 and 20. However, university students can delay conscription until after the completion of their degree.

<sup>38</sup> Saffora, Mohammad – Ali, *Analyzing of Ali Akbar Sadeqi's animation works*, a thesis for the degree of MA in animation, School of Art Tarbiat Modarres University, autumn 1999, p.73.

<sup>39</sup> There is a co-operation rule between army and some of governmental organisers that over peace period in the country some soldiers particularly universities graduates who have speciality as a non army member and permanent employ recommend to other organs during their military service.

Despite the establishment of many new art schools and the increased educational possibilities in the field of art occurring at the time many of the traditional art forms and styles, such as "Coffee House Painting" (see appendix), had fallen into disuse or were completely forgotten and ignored. However, throughout his childhood Sadeqi had been very interested in the traditional art forms and they were to have a major influence on his subsequent career and artistic development. "I remember when I was a child that I saw a lot of Coffee House Paintings inside of shops and they greatly effected my imagination. I was also influenced by those pictures that the *Naqal* (Story Teller) hung on curtains or boards to help illustrate the story which they were telling (for more detail see appendix)".

Despite the fact that I have been very successful as an animator, more so than as a painter, I felt that when I graduated I was a painter and I still feel so today. However the elegant and attractive light of the cinema is a very seductive force.<sup>41</sup>

Most of Ali Akbar Sadeqi's major artistic works, covering book illustrations and the production of animation films, belongs to a creative period during the 1970s. The former are particularly noteworthy and include works such as, *Praying is not the same as Thinking*, *The Words of Prophet Mohammad* (1975), *Truth Higher than the Sky*, and *The Words of Imam Jafar Sadeq* (1973), all of which display an Islamic patterning style and are epic and mystical in tone.

---

<sup>40</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, *Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation)*, published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.543.

Among the seventeen books that Sadeqi has illustrated seven have been concerned with religious themes. This is particularly noteworthy given the fact that the I.I.D.C.Y.A was established under a regime (Pahlavi) that was keen to promote secularism in the general populace especially through the use of the media and arts. Nader Ebrahimi, a well known Iranian author and filmmaker, explains the significance of Ali Akbar Sadeqi and his work:

Undoubtedly, Ali Akbar Sadeqi is a "philosopher- painter ". In other words he is one of those people who paints "philosophy", "philosophical thoughts" or "emotional philosophy". However, it has to be emphasised that Sadeqi is a "philosopher-painter" rather than a "painter-philosopher". This is because he is completely under the influence of his philosophical thoughts and emotions, which he then endeavours to express artistically, as opposed to trying to apply artistic tendencies to the field of philosophy.<sup>42</sup>

Sadeqi exhibits a certain contradiction in his views regarding the educational and practical aspects of art:

I believe in the classical teaching system that was used when I was student. Unfortunately nowadays art teachers are advising their students to only work from their personal experience". However, with regard to the practical field he has remarked that: "We find a lot of people who have never painted before now analysing paintings and believing themselves to be authorities on the subject. At the same time there are a lot of people who have never studied cinema now working in film studios whose creative and artistic knowledge of the medium is greater than those graduating from the universities."<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Ebrahemei, Nadir, Alphabet, publisher Farhanghan, Tehran, 1993, p.7-8.

<sup>43</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.159.

One of the main features that has distinguished Ali Akbar Sadeqi from other artists and animators has been his ability to incorporate the traditional and diverse elements of Iranian art and culture into a unique and distinctive personal style. Between 1972 and 1978 Sadeqi succeeded in creating a unique body of work within a relatively short space of time, which most other artists would have found very difficult to achieve.

**Table 5.3: Animations produced by Ali Akbar Sadeqi listed by year, 1972 – 1977**

ROW	TITTLE	TECHNIQUE	TIME	FORMAT	YEAR OF PRODUCTION
1	Seven Cities	Cell Animation	18 min	35 mm	1972
2	The Flower Storm	Cell Animation	8 min	35 mm	1973
3	Boasting	Cell Animation	9 min	35 mm	1974
4	Rook	Cell Animation	10 min	35 mm	1975
5	Prince Khorshid	Cell Animation	16 min	35 mm	1976
6	Zal and Simorgh	Cell Animation	25 min	35 mm	1977

Amir Mohammed Dehestany, one of the new generations of Iranian animators, has stated that:

In my view, Sadeqi's graphical work could have formed the basis of a unique style in Iranian animation. Unfortunately this never occurred due to a lack of governmental support and his own personal exhaustion. However, the graphical style that he did manage to develop in his work was very special and with regard to story telling and movement was very Iranian in style. In my view artists must continue to develop Sadeqi's style or attempt to assist him in its further development.<sup>44</sup>

The workshop training method developed by Farkhondeh Torabi, whilst engaged with the production of Vajihollah Fard- Moghadam's film *Lili Hosak*, stands as a perfect confirmation of the above view. Farkhondeh Torabi joined the I.I.D.C.Y.A in 1989 after working as an animator, photographer and assistant director to Vajihollah Fard-

<sup>44</sup> Safoora, Mohammad-Ali, *Analyzing of Ali Akbar Sadeqi's animation works*, a thesis for the degree of MA in animation, school of Art Tarbiat Modarres University, p.68, Autumn, 1999.

Moghadam. His first independent animation *Parvaz* (Fly) was awarded the Golden Butterfly and Certificate of Merit from the 1995 animation festival held in Esfahan.<sup>45</sup>

However, despite this success, and his desire to follow in the footsteps of Ali Akbar Sadeqi, he became disillusioned and soon left the animation industry. He explained his reasoning by stating that: "In an ideal world a director or an animator or a photographer can concentrate solely on his particular aspect of the creative process. I found that I was writing the script, preparing the storyboard, drawing the characters, painting the backgrounds and even carrying the cans of film to the processing labs. It's all just too much for one person."<sup>46</sup>

This was very much the situation in which Sadeqi found himself. Over a period of six years, between 1972 and 1977, he found that he was performing all aspects of the animation process in what amounted to a constant struggle to produce his desired films. It was this time and energy consuming aspect which eventually forced him to leave the industry and devote himself to other aspects of his life such as painting which he felt were being neglected. Furthermore, it must be noted that Sadeqi at the age of sixty-four is no longer a young man capable of devoting himself to the rigours of animation film production.

Such a state of affairs would seem to demand that the organisers of animation in the country should attempt to develop a strategy which emphasises and promotes the division of labour within the industry in a bid to encourage artists back into the animation field. The establishment of such a strategy would play a key role in

---

<sup>45</sup> Javaharian, Mahin, *Short History of Animation in Iran*, Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau, 1999, p.56.

<sup>46</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, *Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation)*, published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.158.



nurturing the talent of animation pioneers and bridging the gap in expertise and knowledge that currently exists in the industry.

I have not produced any animation for over twenty-one years now. Art and its development depend on continuity and constant engagement. If I do not paint for one month, my hands and eyes become dry and I find it very difficult to get back to the easel. Because of this belief, and the fact that I have been away for so long, I feel that I no longer have any influence on the field of animation. Now I just prefer to sit at my easel and silently paint.<sup>47</sup>

### 5.3.5- Abdollah Alimorad

Animation is a difficult task but the relevant artists accept these difficulties in order to protect the nobility of this art.<sup>48</sup>

"Alimorad is a calm and extremely active artist who works alone without any pretensions" (Ardeshire Keshavarzi). The first time I heard about Abdollah Alimorad and his work was when he came to the Animation Faculty of the IRIB in 1982 to teach Set and Skeleton techniques in Model Animation.

In those days, Alimorad was not a very well known filmmaker. During his time teaching Alimorad was asked about the establishment of the Model Animation Studio in the I.I.D.C.Y.A: "the studio that I am working now is the very place where we are now learning Model Animation in the I.I.D.C.Y.A. My first model animation production *The Old She Demon* was in fact a workshop project done with the assistance of students as part of a class I was teaching at the time. When the course finished everybody left the school but I stayed and began working and experimenting with ready set and puppet skeleton techniques. I started creating pre-plot structures that eventually

---

<sup>47</sup> Safoora, Mohammad-Ali, *Analyzing of Ali Akbar Sadegi's animation works*, a thesis for the degree of MA in animation, School of Art Tarbiat Modarres University, autumn, 1999.

<sup>48</sup> Iran Daily, *Animation Films Face Difficulties*, December 2, 2000.

evolved into full stories which I began to photograph and in that way the studio developed"<sup>49</sup>.

At the present, many independent filmmakers such as Ali Asqarzadeh<sup>50</sup> are now working in the model studio at the I.I.D.C.Y.A. However, such a situation would never have occurred without the pioneering work of Alimorad. The studio has the appearance of a museum where the work of artists, including Alimorad's early work, are on display. Alimorad's personality has left its mark on the studio lending it a supportive, creative and educational atmosphere, which seeks to create and encourage the development of model animation.

This dedication to the studio and the desire to open the medium to as many people as possible was made clear to me during the course of a meeting I had with Alimorad in the summer of 2001. As we were speaking about his current work he received a telephone call from an individual who was interested in model animation. Alimorad without any hesitation offered the prospective student a place at the animation studio (fieldwork, 2001). The first thing that occurred to me was how hard it is generally to gain access to animation courses and studios. In Alimorad, we have an artist who's primary concern is to encourage people in pursuing the art form by demystifying the process and cutting through officialdom. For him the most important thing is animation itself and the key to its successful development lies in creating a stable educational atmosphere that encourages experimentation in a supportive environment.

---

<sup>49</sup> Re - narrating a memory, conversation between Alimorad and students, workshop, Tehran, institute of IRIB, 1984.

<sup>50</sup> Ali Asqarzadeh was born in 1940 in kashan (Iran). He educated interior designing and teaching painting and drawing. Directing "Jarmaker", "Companion", "Altogether Kids" and "The lark and The Meadow" are most of his works till 1999.

Alimorad uses his work in the studio as the basis of his teaching in the classroom. Thus there is a constant interaction between theory and practice that is constantly in a process of development.

Alimorad was born Tehran in 1947 and graduated from high school with a diploma in science. He states that, "from childhood I was interested in painting and because of that I went to the Academe of Art in Brussels. However, I was not successful there and I soon returned to Iran".<sup>51</sup>

Shamseddin Rahmane, the deputy manager of production at the I.I.D.C.Y.A, in a discussion on the relationship artists and the character and imagination of children, made the following remarks:

We pay attention to character of the artist in our programming at the I.I.D.C.Y.A. It is the character of an artist, which generally influences the work of the group. For example, in the case of Alimorad, I felt that his work is influenced by and has an influence on children. Alimorad is a decent artist, with a strong personality. When he produces animation work such as *Bahador* he takes the imagination of children as his point of departure and we respect and encourage his opinion.<sup>52</sup>

Currently, Alimorad has produced a total of nine animation films most of which have been produced using the Model Animation technique. However, he has also used two dimensional animation techniques such as cell animation, although these have been mostly used for commercial purposes.

---

<sup>51</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, p.197, Tehran, 1999.

<sup>52</sup> Tavakolian, Saeed, Wakefulness of Vision (about animation cinema), assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, p.198, Tehran, 2001.

**Table 5.4: Animations Produced by Abdullah Alimorad listed by year, 1987 – 2000**

ROW	TITLE	TECHNIQUE	TIME	FORMAT	YEAR OF PRODUCTION
1	The Old Demon	Model Animation			
2	Children at the Museum	Model Animation	10 min	35 mm	1987
3	The Role Key	Back Light and Cut out	6 min	35 mm	1990
4	Parrot and Grocer	Model Animation	32 min	35 mm	1991
5	Experience and Technique	Model Animation and Live action	15 min	16 mm	1992
6	Jewellery Mountain	Model Animation	37 min	35 mm	1994
7	Travelling to the Puppet's World	Model Animation	20 min	35 mm	1995
8	One is not Enough	Model Animation	27 min	35 mm	1997
9	Bahador	Model Animation	27 min	35 mm	2000

#### **5.3.4.1- Jewel mountain, a journey to the world of wishes**

This film and Alimorad's other puppet animations reflect that he still a disciple of Jiri Trinka's traditional style which he studied during his short workshop course at the studio of this Czech artist in 1975 (chapter 4). Gene Deitch,<sup>53</sup> who has many years of familiarity with Czech animation, says "The Czechs had a diametrically opposite approach [to Disney]. The mouths did not move as they spoke dialog and the eyes did not really look. There was no great consideration to weight or the laws of physics. There was no real development of character. All of those things were secondary to a symbolic approach to story telling". Deitch also believes "that the ancient tradition of puppetry eventually evolved into the Czech animation style". These features of Czech animation are clearly evident in Alimorad's work.<sup>54</sup>

*Jewel Mountain*, based on an ancient tale, tells the story of a boy who works long hours for low pay as a charcoal seller. Everyday as he carries coal to various customers in the bazaar he gazes enviously at the lifestyle of a boy who works in the jewellery shop. The

<sup>53</sup> One of the last surviving members of original Hollywood UPA studio of 1946.

<sup>54</sup> Deitch, Gene, Prague, *A Change of Life*, *Animation World Wide Magazine*, October 18, 2002, p.2.

charcoal seller's only friend is the blacksmith-boy and they both wish to be in the position of the jeweller. However, both are unaware that the life of the jeweller boy is not all that it seems. In this work, Alimorad's crosses from the realistic atmosphere of the bazaar as a style of life and social communication between people to the world of treasure, hoards of jewels in mountains, and a gigantic eagle. This leap to fantasy provides a metaphorical conclusion to his work. The Argentinean novelist, Jorge Luis Borges once commented that "censorship is the mother of metaphor" (Manea, 1992:30), clearly foregrounding the necessity of smuggling meaning into a creative text that would otherwise be prohibited by the authorities.<sup>55</sup> The children's characters are the symbols of thousands of children who have fallen victim to their employers' trade and ambition in the traditional business system. A system, where there are no controls and advice for children's benefit. Thousands of children have to leave school and enter to business to the breadwinners for their families.

The charcoal seller eventually loses his job but continues to come to the bazaar to gaze at the jewellery shop. However, one day he comes and notices that the jeweller boy is no longer there. The jeweller tells him that he has left and seeing that the charcoal seller is now unemployed offers him the job that he has always wished for. This wish for an imported quality of life is shared by thousands children in Iran. This desire may be fuelled by looking at shops window or the lives of rich children. For older generations this wishful thinking was encouraged by the lottery in the Shah's regime and continues with the racket in dangerous illegal emigration through Islamic period in Iran.

One day the jeweller takes his new employee on a long journey to the top of a mountain inhabited by an eagle. The jeweller covers the boy in a sheepskin rug and leaves him on the mountain as bait for the eagle. The giant bird eventually arrives and mistaking the

---

<sup>55</sup> Wells, Paul, Understanding Animation, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 84.

boy for a sheep carries him off to his nest. The boy manages to escape from the eagle's talons and discovers that there is a jewel mine at the top of the mountain. He quickly fills his bag with jewels and throws them down to the jeweller who is waiting below. The jeweller takes the bag and rather than help the boy abandons him to his fate. The young boy looks around and discovers the discarded clothes of those who have gone before him and realises that he is not the first victim of the jeweller's cruel trick.

The eagle soon returns to its nest but is injured having just been shot by a hunter. The boy seeing that the eagle is hurt starts to tend to the bird's wounds and nurse it back to health. Through this act of kindness the eagle and the boy become friends. The eagle decides to help the boy and flies him back to the bazaar.

When the boy returns to the bazaar he discovers that his friend, the coppersmith boy, is now working in the jewellery shop. He relates everything to his friend and they hatch a plan to trap the jeweller and put an end to his scheme. The jeweller takes his new shop-boy to jewel mountain but this time the former charcoal seller is following him. When the jeweller discovers that he is being followed and that the two boys know everything he tries to escape by hiding in a pot that the boys had been using as a boat. The two boys discover the jeweller in the pot and roll it until they make him dizzy and giddy. Then they imitate the sound of a sheep. The eagle appears and carries the jeweller off to meet the same fate as his innocent victims. In this work the children are reminiscent of the children in *The Flower Storm* as in the end it is they who strive against the kings, who are the symbol of selfishness and ambition. However, the difference that we see in *Jewel Mountain* is that until the end of story many children have been victimized. Observing the bones and marks of the previous victims does not leave any space for

happiness in viewers as they watch the cleverness of the children who punish the jeweller. (see-attached video).



**Figure 5.4: Jewel Mountain by Abdollah Alimorad 1994, source: 1<sup>st</sup> Tehran International Animated Festival 1991.**

I believe that *Jewel Mountain* stands as a good example of the type of animation/cartoons that should be made in Iran. However, given the fact that it is a serial there are still a number of technical problems such as dialogue and lip sync that need to be improved upon. That Alimorad's adherence to the Czech style has resulted in a lack of development in such technical areas is clearly evidenced in the final production where music is used to fill in the gaps caused by the lack of dialogue and poor quality lip-syncing. It is through the work of people such as the Aardman Animation Company that developments to surmount such problems are being undertaken with a view to producing a superior product that is capable of being shown on the big screen.

In their progress from *A Grand Day Out* to *A Close Shave*, the Wallace and Gromit puppets have undergone a considerable evolution and are now much more rounded and three dimensional than they used to be. Wallace

had a much flatter face when he was building the rocket in the cellar in *A Grand Day Out*. In the first film he did not speak much, but when he did he suddenly developed cheeks and his brow got bigger. Now he has a much fuller face with rounded cheeks, and his mouth expands enormously in a sideways direction when he utters 'ee' sounds, especially in words like 'cheese'. In the same way, Gromit's brow was much smaller in the beginning than it is now. His nose or muzzle has meanwhile become shorter, and is less pear-shaped and more stubby. At first he was to have been a talking dog, with a mouth, but this idea was dropped when it became clear how expressive he could be just through small movements of the eyes, ears and brow.<sup>56</sup>

Alimorad's struggle and persistence with the slow puppet animation technique is commendable. However, he must separate himself from the historic Czech style still reflected in his works, if he is to achieve the standard level in world-wide animation. A technical review of Ardman's works from *Morph* to *Chicken run* illustrates the evolution in style. Alimorad must overcome to the technical difficulties and computerise his equipment to expand his ideas and update his knowledge. In my view, the basic necessities for such an evolution are financial support, a studio, workforce through I.I.D.C.Y.A. and continued motivation such as we have seen till now.

In an interview Alimorad was asked the following question about *Jewellery Mountain*; This film picked up the UNISEF prize at the Berlin Festival. It represents the anxiety and worry of a child's life. Does such a topic provide a positive representative picture of Iranian animation?

Alimorad responded: I do not deny that the film has an element of fear but it was not a negative fear. It was not like a horror film where the monster comes and children are

---

<sup>56</sup> Lord, Peter & Sibley, Brian, Cracking Animation, The Aardman Book of 3- D Animation, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, 1998,p96.



frightened and cannot sleep. I have tried to portray a harmless fear in conjunction with elements of excitement.

What was the reaction of children to the film?

Alimorad: In general their reactions were positive and most children seemed to like it. At the end of film the boys imitate the noise of the sheep to attract the eagle who comes and carries the jeweller off to his fate. Over ninety per cent of critics objected to this part of film. They believed that the scene sits uncomfortably with and detracts from the positive attitudes that the film promotes. Even one of my friends said that in the end he felt sorry for the jeweller, seeing the boy's action as simply mean spirited and vengeful. In the end I decided to change this final part of the film. What you now see is the jeweller emerging from the pot and attacking the boys before trying to escape in the pot. It is at this stage that the boys imitate the sound of a sheep and the eagle comes to their rescue and carries the jeweller away.

I think that it was because of these changes that the film was more successful in picking up more awards. The film received three international prizes from Berlin, Canada and India as well as five or six national prizes. The film has been screened at fifteen international festivals and has been shown on Swedish television. Asian satellite television has also expressed an interest in buying this film, along with a number of others from Iran, for international broadcast.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, p.200 - 201, Tehran, 1999.



Figure 5.5: Bahador by Abdollah Alimorad 2000, source: a detail of poster, artist's private archive

Alimorad also received the Special Prize at the Moscow International Animation Festival for his film *Bahador*. He believes that one of the main problems which Iranian animation suffers from is the poor quality of their scripts. Indeed, the production of *Bahador* itself was delayed because of the lack of a suitable scenario. As Alimorad states in an interview, “finding a suitable story is the same as looking for a rare jewel”.<sup>58</sup>

When asked about how newcomers to the animation industry should go about learning their trade and presenting their work, Alimorad responded by saying that:

First of all, they must learn the basics and gain experience alongside a master. At the beginning they should not try to make feature length films but should concentrate on developing their art by producing and experimenting in short film formats.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Dorane Emroze, *Alimorad talks about difficulties of animation*, No.14, First year, December 2000.

<sup>59</sup> Afshari, Amir, *Can not tell Animation had Obsolete, a discussion with Abdollah Alimorad, jury member in national competition*, *Javan Magazine*, No. 577, Tehran 25 February 2001.

#### 5.4- Conclusion remarks

In this chapter I have examined the golden age of Iranian animation personified in number of master animators whose works and ideas have been the inspiration and guiding practice of the second generation of animators in Iran. They were [are] instrumental in introducing art of animation to Iran and put the name of Iran among best known animator artists in the world. The selection of Zarrinkelk's 'The Mad Mad Mad World' at the Annecy Film Festival as one of the top ninety four of films in the twentieth century witnesses to his ingenuity and originality animation. Equally Ali Akbar Sadeqi works of animation in the 1970s has been fundamental in laying the foundation of an indigenous animation industry in Iran.

These master animators were highly knowledgeable on various forms of Iranian artery who worked collaborately together producing indigenously embedded works which is more graphical rather than cinematic. While, working under the pretext of providing animation for children, they founded the animation unit of the I.I.D.C.Y.A. However, most productions, even animation with children and socio-political concerns as the subject, were targeted at adult audiences. This tendency was the result of two factors.

- The socio – political climate of those days reflected the effects of the Cold War between the two Superpowers of the West and East on other regions of the world through issues related to communist ideology or anti – imperialist ideology.
- The success of experimental themes and non - narrative animation as the best technique for introductory work in animation encouraged the use of socio-

political themes, in contrast to animation for children which is completely narrative and requires team work and long term planning.

Esfandiyar Ahmadiéh, Nosratollah Karimi, Nureddin Zarrinkelk, Ali Akbar Sadeqi and Abdollah Alimorad are masters because of their boundless energy that provide illuminating link between Iranian animations past, present and future. This role brought them to the forefront of Iranian animation art. Among these five masters three of them had a particularly important role in the founding of Iranian animation: Ahmadiéh because of first frame by frame experiences in Iranian animation, Karimi through his initial cinematically examination in animation and Zarrinkelk because of his first educational effect in organizing animation school.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Islamic revolution and its impact on animation**

The 1979 Islamic revolution has changed the secular state to one of the clerical state and unleashed a process of Islamisation transforming all aspects of social life in Iran. The socio-political institutions developed during the Pahlavi rein entailed intricate relationships with religious establishment and religious orthodoxies were often subordinated to the imperatives of market forces. The modernization policy together with secularisation fostered a prosper middle class who believed in separation of religion from politics where the former seen to be a private affair. However, due to increasing mal-distribution of wealth and income a growing gap appeared between those who had benefited from economic development and those who found themselves in the verge of survival, especially those recent immigrants from town and villages with traditional religious beliefs. The late 1970s saw a coalition opposition forces challenging the legitimacy of the regime, and succeeded to establish an Islamic rule determined to reshape public institutions according to Islamic ideology. The new leadership recognised the paramount importance of education and media in the Islamisation of the Iranian society. This chapter examines the ways by which the Islamic ideology is systematically integrated in cultural and artistic activities in Iran.

#### **6.1- Islamisation of education and media**

Within a year of the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the regime had set up the High Council of the Cultural Revolution; its first duty was to revise the entire education system. It began by closing down all universities and kept closed for over four years,

having purged all 'suspected' professors and lecturers staff from teaching institutions. Though presented as a process of Islamification, in fact the closure of the universities was a political ploy to disperse the new groups of militant youths that had begun to express their dissatisfaction with the system. They were proving most resistant and unwilling to accept the rule of the theocracy and internalize the new definitions of freedom and control. In June 1980, the High council retaliated and setup a *Jahadeh Daneshgahi*, (university holy war), to purify the system. Its aims were to 'link the universities to the mass of the people and ensure the prevalence of the Islamic faith in every aspect of university life' (Kayhan, 5 August 1987).

Then it attempted to check all textbooks and remove any trace of un-Islamic opinion and illustration. This in the first instance meant covering up all the photographs of women, and rewriting Iranian history to glorify Muslims rather than Persians. Up to then the Arabs had always been depicted as uncivilized invaders who had conquered Iran and were then educated and trained by the Iranians, who soon returned to their tradition of royal rule and dynastic monarchy. The new version of history hailed Islam as the liberator of the people and denounced monarchs as oppressors. But the rewriting did not extend to biology textbooks; they did not introduce an anti - Darwinian with the pro - Islamic interpretation of evolution. There was however an attempt to simplify the curriculum and make it more *maktabi*, in the old style of clergy-run schools where learning had been by rote and there was dutiful acceptance of the teacher's views.

## **6.2- The role of animation in the post-revolutionary Iran**

Following the 1979 Islamic revolution (which was itself more a cultural than a religious revolution) the concept of the 'secular Iranian' was erased once again with the

emphasis of all aspects of what it meant to be Iranian being defined solely in terms of Islam. Culture was ordered into the service of the promotion and education of the righteousness of Islam, and more importantly, the Islamic government itself. This concept of 'Islam' is as false as the cultural definition of secularism propounded during the rule of the Shah.

The Pahlavi [Reza Shah, 1925-44, and Mohammad Reza Shah 1945-79] monarchy seemed to threaten the pendular balance and bi-polar tensions characteristic of Iranian culture through its unenlightened, unconstitutional authoritarianism and its naïve and insensitive imposition of western modernisation. Of course, in its own eyes, the Pahlavi regime was endeavouring to transform Iran into an efficient, "bottom-line" society that might subsequently compete favourably in the west-dominated world. It failed miserably in the unequivocal, dramatic way a monarchy can, with the ignominious flight of the royal family from the country in January 1979.<sup>1</sup>

Both concepts ignore the fact that they are not mutually exclusive but are in fact two halves of the Iranian soul ignoring one in favour of the other and ignores the multi-layered and complex nature of what Iranian national culture is and should be. It is therefore the job of culture/art to mediate and operate in the gaps between these two concepts and to reflect, question and combine the complexities of these issues. As long as this split exists, and the desire by those in power to monopolies one single concept seen as a "pure" reflection of 'Iranness', the people remain incomplete, injustice abounds and the nation suffers.

In this respect, the volume of political and social changes that took place as a result of the Revolution must be seen in the context of a complete refutation of the past by the

---

<sup>1</sup> C.Hillmann, Michael, Iranian Culture. A Persianist View, University Press of America, 1990, p.179.

new revolutionary forces. The greatest example of this culture of the 'past' is Ferdowsi's book "Shah-Nameh", which narrates epic stories of ancient Iranian kings and heroes, is generally regarded as one of the masterpieces of Persian literature. It has provided a treasure-trove of themes and characters for animators.

After the emergence of the New Persian language in the ninth century, the first monumentally significant Iranian cultural event was the eleventh century *Shahnameh* (Book of King) composed by Abolqasem Ferdowsi (d.c.1020). A loosely connected and chronologically ordered series of episodes, the *Shahnameh* recounted the mythological origins and some of the history of the Persian Iranian people who had entered the Iranian plateau region before 1000 BCE. One of the longest verse compositions ever produced by a single poet, Ferdowsi's 50,000 closed couplets comprise the Iranian national epic and the most discussed and revered literary work in the 1,100-year history of Persian literature.<sup>2</sup>

The revolutionaries, however, looking only at only superficial translations of the poems forbade the use of these stories for many years. However, a deeper analysis of the stories highlighted a greater congruence with Islamic themes, which saw the status of the tales and poems of Shah-Nameh change, with the result that many of them have now become the subject of several animation projects in recent years.

Esfandiar Ahmadi, one of the pioneers of Iranian animation, began to produce "Rostam-o Esfandiyar", taken from the myth of Rostam and Esfandiyar in the Shah-Nameh, following the opening of the re-established television animation centre, the Saba Company, in 1994. This project was scheduled to be produced in three episodes.

---

<sup>2</sup> C.Hillmann, Michael, Iranian Culture. A Persianist View. University Press of America, 1990, p.13



Two of these episodes, totalling a running time of 27 and 25 minutes respectively, have now been completed, with the third episode currently under production.<sup>3</sup>

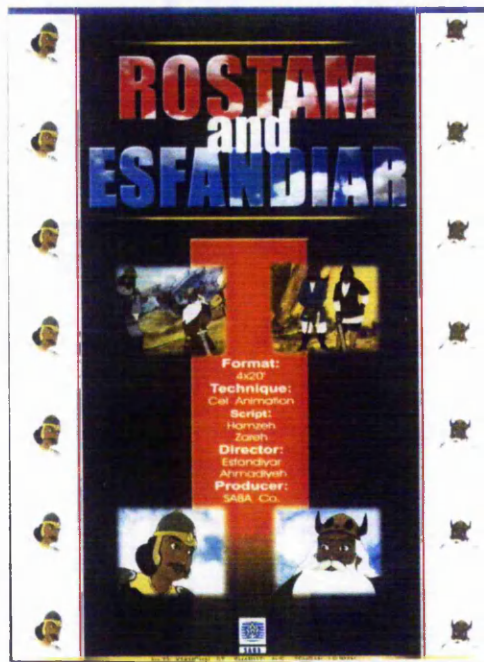


Figure 6.1: Rostam and Esfandiar by Esfandiar Ahmadi under production, source: poster by ASBA Animation Company 2000

### 6.3-The impact of the Islamic revolution on animation

First, because of a fatalistic replacement of political, cultural and sociological values, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, there was a general sense of pessimism regarding the future management of animation. This was especially true at the I.I.D.C.Y.A where many of its ex-managers were seen as being affiliated, and having close ties with, the former regime that operated under the Shah. This pessimism and unease was to quickly spread among all the producers, directors and writers at the centre. The production centre was placed under constant surveillance and revolutionary committees censored much of its work. The relationship between the inspector committees and the artists was similar to that between a victor and his vanquished foe.

<sup>3</sup> Simia (animation quarterly), Animation by Handicrafts Arts, A discussion with Farkhondeh Torabi and Morteza Ahadi, No.1, winter 2001, p.5.

The lack of consultation between both parties wasted much energy and valuable investment. An example of this process can be seen in the case of Zarrinkelk's famous animation film *Atal Matal* (1974) (for more information see Appendix 7). The screening of the film was forbidden by the revolutionary authorities for many years because it included a line from a children's game that was seen as blasphemous: Mahmoud up, up, leader group of Jackals "*Mahmoud bala bala, sar-dasteye shoghala*". The name Mahmoud was seen as referring to, in less than reverential terms, the Prophet Mohammad. Another example is the highly valued and much praised film *Amir Hamzah* (1977) which also ran into problems with the authorities: *Amir Hamzah* is a pleasantly ironic tale about a hunter freeing a princess who had been transformed into a zebra by a demon.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 6.2: Amir Hamzeh by Nouredin Zarrinkelk 1977, source: Giannalberto Bendazzi, One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation**

<sup>4</sup> Bendazzi, Giannal Berto, Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation, translated by Anna Taraboletti-Segre, London: Johan Libbey & co., p.401, 1994.

One of the reasons given for the suppression of *Amir Hamzah* was that it showed the drinking of alcohol by the demon. It was also claimed that the dance of the zebra could lead to sexual arousal. Zarrinkelk himself asks how the dancing of an animal could cause sexual arousal in children. In addition to these two films some of Zarrinkelk's books, such as *Zal-o- Simorgh*, *Zal-o- Rodubeh* and *Cyrus Shah*, were also censored, all of which were adaptations from Ferdowsi's *Shah-Nameh*.

Second, however, there was also a strong feeling among some Islamic experts that there existed many themes and subjects within Islamic culture, the teaching and promotion of which would be beneficial to children, and which could be most effectively transmitted through the medium of animation. However, the main barrier to instigating such a programme lay in the fact that many artists did not entirely believe in these kinds of concepts or possess a requisite knowledge of the function and role of religion in art. By comparison it must also be noted that the Islamic experts for their part had little if any knowledge of animation.

According to Bidokhty (2001), the production manager of Saba Company, this situation resulted in the emergence of certain types of work that were new in form and content: stories relating to the history of Islam, stories from the Quran and tales from ancient Iranian literature.<sup>5</sup>

The third factor to be considered in the phases examined thus far was the lack of financial support and independence of expression allowed to animators throughout the period from 1964 to 1979. Vajihollah Fard Moqaddam (1999) has stated that the "animation that was produced during the 1970<sup>s</sup> in the Institute (I.I.D.C.Y.A) was not

---

<sup>5</sup> Deidar, *Internal Bulletin of IRIB, Saba Company; past, now, future*, No.12, summer, 2001, p.23.

following a pre-ordered rule, and that animators, through gentle passion and personal motivation, were producing films without any limitation in time". Animator and graphic designer Farshid Mesqali (1999) also makes the point that "in the initial years of the Institute (I.I.D.C.Y.A) certain conditions were established that all artists were to follow in producing a film. The Institute (I.I.D.C.Y.A) did not turn down any individual who had the desire to make a film. This condition was not unique to the Institute (I.I.D.C.Y.A) alone but extended to television as well. In this way, and under such circumstances, many poets, painters and graphic designers became filmmakers".<sup>6</sup>

The stagnation in animation production occurred from 1979 onwards with the onset of the Revolution and was to continue for almost a decade up until 1989. This period, aside from the immense political, social changes taking place throughout social institutions, was also marked by eight years of destructive war between Iran and its neighbour Iraq. During these years all budgetary finances and cultural energy was focused on, and directed towards, the maintenance of the war effort. As a further consequence of these circumstances, the new revolutionary generation lost any communication with, and appreciation of, the work of artists of the pre-Revolutionary period as many of the latter left the country as a result of the unstable political and social atmosphere. Although there was some animation activity during this time, much of it was of a poor quality and relatively low standard. The most significant development to occur in the industry was the establishment of an animation course in the Institute of Radio and Television.

The Iran-Iraq war, despite its length and ferocity, was mainly limited to and located, for the most part, within a small geographical area in the Khuzestan (appendix 15)

---

<sup>6</sup> Yaseinpour, Sahar, *the Arts of Eight*, a thesis for the MA in animation, University of Art, (1378) 1999, p.64.

province in the south of the country and as a result did not directly affect the daily lives of the majority of the population. However, this situation was to change as the war progressed with the launching of air-attacks and missile bombardments on the country's main cities, particularly on the capital Tehran. This new phase of the war was to have two major social effects on the lives of the people. Firstly, it resulted in the migration and displacement of large numbers of people as moved to safer parts of the country away from the main areas of conflict. Secondly, it brought all aspects of life, socially and culturally, in the cities to a virtual standstill as infrastructure was destroyed, daily life was disrupted due to the uncertainty of when the next attacks would come and people became consumed with the struggle to survive and endure the hardship of material shortages and power cuts. Such conditions made artistic creativity, particularly given the amount of time and patience needed for the production of animation, virtually impossible. I remember on one occasion whilst working on a production in the university (1986-87) using the Animation Under the Camera technique that all our work was lost due to constant, lengthy and unpredictable power cuts. Despite the conditions of the time such an example highlights the painstaking effort, patience and absolute attention that is essential to the form where techniques such as Painting on Glass require paint to be kept moist over long periods or models to be constantly and minutely shaped and reshaped. These are the virtues that need to be transmitted within the educational sphere if we are to develop a new and dedicated generation of young animators. Eleanor Ramos (1998) elaborates further on these points in her explanation of the spatial techniques of Animation Under the Camera (Painting on Glass):

I did some tests with inks, water-based paint mixed with linseed oil. The tropical heat of the Philippines, however, is just so strong that aside from making me easily tried, almost every paint I tried dried much too quickly,

except for the oil paint. Along the way, it became much easier for me to use it pure. To keep the paint wet as long as possible, I decided to use fluorescent lights for bottom lighting with a minus green correction filter. A wonderful side effect was that it made the room temperature quite bearable as well, since I couldn't afford an air-conditioned room. Except for short coffee breaks, I had to work continuously to finish a scene or get to a point where I could dirty as I reworked it. I would really appreciate it if someone could share with me their secret of keeping the paint wet as long as possible because scraping off dry oil paint takes a lot of energy.<sup>7</sup>

This quotation from Ramos develops a realisable sense of the factors, which affect use of this technique; every thing from air - conditioning to break times is issues. Those who are involved in animation can perceive how animation students must be challenged by problems.

In 1991 Zarrinkelk was nominated and became a member of the board of International ASIFA. This appointment coincided the arrival in Tehran of a Finnish producer, Micheal Franck, to discuss the possibility of a Finnish-Iranian feature length animation co-production of the stories of *Hezaro Yak Shab* (One Thousand and One Nights). The film was to be based on the stories of Sindbad that Hassan Tehrani had converted into a fantasy story. Zarrinkelk accepted the proposals and agreed to direct the film. This project was to be the first major Iranian animation and feature film co-production. However, the production was confronted with several major problems. The primary problem was the fact that the production coincided with the start of Iraq's bombing campaign on Tehran, eventually resulting in Zarrinkelk's departure to Finland in order

---

<sup>7</sup> Kenyon, Heather, *Animation Under the Camera*, Animation World Magazine, Issue 3.2, May 1998, p.4.

to complete the project<sup>8</sup> (For more details concerning the production of the film see appendix 8). If the political situation in the country at the time had been favourable and allowed the project to be continued and finished in Iran it would have provided a major boost to the domestic industry by giving valuable experience to local producers, providing an opportunity and setting the standard required for Iranian animation to compete in the international market as well as encouraging new talent to enter the industry with the possibility of future such productions.

In chapter four, I referred to *Bazaar Stories* as the first feature length animation film to be screened in Iran. However, as the director of film Abdollah Alimorad explains, the aims of the work were not initially to produce a full feature length production. In an interview about *Bazaar Stories*, Abdollah Alimorad stated that, “the primary idea began whereby we thought that if one day our country [Iran] wants to be independent in animation production, we should provide for our own needs, and the best way to do this was by producing an independent short film. Then we thought we could produce episodic films. After the production of *Toote-va Baghaal* (The Parrot and the Grocer), the first episode of *Bazaar Stories*, we observed that if we added a short film to it, it could form the main part of a feature film. Initially when we began to produce *Kohea Javaher* (the Jewel Mountain), we had no intention of combining *The Parrot and the Grocer* and the *Jewel Mountain* in order to form a feature film. However, once we had decided on combining them together, and found that it worked, we were then faced with the problem that the new combined film did not have enough screen time to be considered a feature. Therefore we needed to add another part that could be used to link to the other two parts. To achieve this we decided to insert an educational section

---

<sup>8</sup> Yaseinpour, Sahar, *the Arts of Eight*, a thesis for the MA in animation, University of Art, (1378) 1999, p.42.

between the two episodes, which sought to explain the films techniques by entering an animated world of dolls. To achieve this we added some live shots to the start of *The Parrot and the Grocer* showing a group of children entering a cinema to watch a screening of that very same film. At the end of the film one of children is curious to know how animation is produced and goes to studio to find out. In the studio he communicates with one of the puppet characters who explains how the story of the entrance to the world of dolls began. At the end of this part we link to the next episode - *the Jewel Mountain*.<sup>9</sup>

This period also saw the production of a number of other films such as *LaLa-o LoLo*<sup>10</sup>, *Gerdube Sekandar*<sup>11</sup> (Eskandar's Whirlpool), which came be seen as feature films. However, this labelling had nothing to do with technical quality or cinematic structure but simply referred to the actual time length of the film itself. I personally view this is as an inadequate means of defining a feature length film. Raoul Servais (2001) has also commented on this issue by saying that:

Many people think that a short film director who makes a feature film comes out of puberty. This is especially true if you speak about live action, but I don't share this opinion. I made a feature because the script I wrote was too long to be done as a short. A feature-length film was an artistic necessity. [However] while making it, I knew that I would subsequently go back to doing shorts.

What would you like to say to experienced animators who want to make a feature film? First of all, be sure that the producer knows and like animation. You can find very good producers who are not mad about animation. When you are used to working as an independent filmmaker working alone or with a small team, you have to learn to delegate, which

---

<sup>9</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, *A Discussion with Abdollah Alimorad, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation)*, published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, p.199, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Directed by Fahimea Sorkhabi, producer Farabi and Jozan film, and 1989.

<sup>11</sup> Directed by Khoshkham brothers, producer I.R.I.B (Channel 1).



may be difficult for someone who is used to wearing many hats. You have to have a true dialogue between the director and his team; it is a habit one has to acquire. For a short, it is easy to supervise the whole thing, but sometimes with a feature, one may get lost in the details and not remain in control of the whole.<sup>12</sup>

*Gerdube Sekandar* (Eskandar's Whirlpool) provides a good example of the mismanagement that was taking place in the animation industry during this period. As pointed out earlier much of the work being produced at this time was of a poor technical standard unsuitable for screening in cinemas. For its part *Eskandar's Whirlpool* was somewhat unique in that it was a well produced full length puppet animated feature produced by a small group of three hardworking animators operating under a government contract for television broadcast. However, the authorities decided against broadcasting the film and it lay dormant for more than a decade. This is the level of organisational mismanagement, lack of foresight and understanding and general incompetence that seems to emanate from those who control animation in the country and it has a detrimental effect on the industry as a whole, discouraging innovation and development and disheartening new artists to embrace the medium. When, after many years, the film was finally serialised on television in 1997 it only served to further highlight the level of mismanagement in the country. This arose from the fact that broadcast control was seemingly being dictated by the subjective and random interpretation of conceptual form. In essence this seemed to negate the fact that the subjects of programmes had to authorise before production could proceed and suggested that despite having received permission to make a film that the finished project could still be prevented from ever being screened. This is an extremely wasteful

---

<sup>12</sup> Moins, Philippe, *Raoul Servais: An Interview*, Translated by Annick Teninge, Animation World – Wide Magazine, 2001, p.1

and frustrating practice given the amount of time and money that has to go into producing an animation film and it essentially retards the artistic and infra-structural development of the entire industry.

Behruz Yaqmaeeian (2001), commenting on the position of television during the first decade of the revolution has stated that: "In the sixties [1980s] animation in Iran was under oppression. However, its present situation is little better due to the socio, political difficulties caused by the revolution, the war and the inexperience of managers who had no understanding of the arts. As a result of these factors, the new organisers of the industry are concerned with producing work as quickly and as cheaply as possible for immediate broadcast. Consequently, they were no special budget allocated specifically for animation... During these years there were no internal projects undertaken in the animation department and investment in animation abated."<sup>13</sup>

In this period (the first decade of the revolution) Zarrinkelk performed the essential role of a communicational bridge for animation students, as the closing of the universities had seen students starved of the ability to watch films and engage in intellectual discussion. During meetings that took place in various students' houses he was also able to build an enthusiastic fan base for animation.<sup>14</sup>

This period also saw some of the old masters such as Zarrinkelk gradually return to the education system. They began to teach animation in the I.R.I.B. Institute bringing their own work and some valuable archival animation into the classroom as teaching tools. Furthermore, Zarrinkelk used his influence at the I.I.D.C.Y.A. to borrow many artistic

---

<sup>13</sup> Khalili, Gh.Reza, a review the art works of Esfandiur Ahmadeh "the First Iranian Animator", a thesis for the MA in animation, Tarbiat Modarres University, winter 2001,p.92.

<sup>14</sup> Yaseinpour, Sahar, the Arts of Eight, a thesis for the MA in animation, University of Art, (1378) 1999, p.22.

animation films from its substantial archives, most of which students had never seen before. Aside from the efforts of people such as Zarrinkelk, animation was also to be greatly influenced by the political and ideological changes occurring in the country at the time. Many groups of people, especially the religious fundamentalists began to call for the imposition of 'Islamic values' and an 'Islamic lifestyle' in all aspects of society. However, in most circumstances these calls, emanating from revolutionary fervour, were relegated to the level of sloganeering and were superficially imposed at best. However, despite opposition from some sections of society most people felt compelled in the interests of self-preservation to comply with the new ethos leading to a situation where dispersed communication and self censorship increased and became the norm in society. The aforementioned unofficial gatherings in peoples homes for viewing and discussing films can be seen as a direct manifestation of the changed conditions now operating in society.

One important event that occurred during this period, and one that was to have an important influence on the young and future generation of animators, was the purchase of 150 animated films from the National Film Board of Canada by the I.R.I.B. Institute. These films screened in the classrooms and analysed frame by frame on editing machines, served as the best educational tool in introducing the vanguard style of world animation to Iranian students. The style of the Canada school encouraged new thought and challenged the traditional thinking that believed that good animation could only be achieved with the strong hand of Leonard da Vinci, the technical animation ability of Preston Blair and the classical style of Walt Disney. These new films (1983) exposed Iranian animators to the works of Caroline Leaf, Norman McLaren and Paul Driessen amongst others.

According to the Plan and Budget Organisation's various reports during the eight years of Iran-Iraq war, the destruction of the country's industrial capacity and youth resulted in an economic loss estimated at around 350 billion US dollars.<sup>15</sup> With the ending of war between Iran and Iraq in 1989, the second decade of the revolution began with a marked increase in the production and promotion of animation throughout the country. This was achieved through the establishment and allocation of a budget for industrial development and at the same times more attention given to cultural development.<sup>16</sup>

### **6.3.1- Reconstruction of economy and Arts under Rafsanjani (1988-1996)**

The revolutionary period was very short. The Iran-Iraq war, which started in September 1980, required some rethinking of the extreme position taken by the leadership. During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), despite efforts to produce entertainment works with socio-cultural themes, a number of factors forced filmmakers to fall in line with the propaganda of Islamic ideology.

When a country is at war, people allow government to take full control in order to protect national interests. However, once war ends things should return to their normal order. However, in the case of Iran, because of the need to show the respect for the holy defence [Islamic state] of the country by young people and to memorialise the martyrs of the war, this did not happen in the immediate post-war period. During the era of reconstruction and economic adjustment, politicians were put in charge of cultural activities. Because senior leaders in the country were much concerned about the condition of culture in the country the cultural activities and media were placed under the supervision of conservatives and traditional forces who had no experience in

---

<sup>15</sup> PBO, final report on the assessment of the economic damages of the war imposed by Iraq: 1980 – 1988, Tehran: PBO, 1991.

<sup>16</sup> Government of Iran, First five-year Development Plan, (1989/1993), Teheran: PBO/1988.

keeping the government's cultural aspirations. These leaders believed that artists were only technicians and were supposed to produce cultural products according to what they are asked to do. Such political supervision was exercised on book publication and the press as well; the scope of the activities available to creative artists was continually narrowed and their creativity diminished. As discussed in chapter three during the Pahlavi regime there was a mild form of censorship concerning the extent of sexual relationships or drug use in the cinema although overt political criticism of the regime was severely censored. During the reconstruction period, much harsher censorship prevailed which promoted the defence of revolutionary values, and prohibited examination of the loss liberties and choice. Under such circumstances a film director could not reflect the people's real problems so audiences dwindled because they could not see the realities of community life in films that were being produced. This situation also prevailed for films that covered the Sacred Defence where the themes of war-related films were limited to the propagation of war spirit. This was justified during the war because of the need to raise the public spirit and foster resistance. However, after the war, film directors should have rebuked the war, but they were not permitted to because cultural policy – makers, who had a clichéd approach to the question of war, looked at everything related to the war as sacred. As a consequence this prevented film directors from examining the cause of the war in the films produced after the war or the social distractive consequences arose from it.

### **6.3.2- Animation under Khatami (1996 – 2000): dialogue between civilizations**

The 1979 Islamic revolution, which overthrew the Pahlavi system, and the impact of the various political movements, which opposed the establishment of the Islamic state, were not forgotten, and the majority of people actively demanded democratic change.

This was evident when Mohammed Khatami won a landslide victory in the 1996 presidential election. For the first time since the establishment of the Islamic state, Nehzate Azadi (liberation movement), a secular liberal organization, became active with their activities including the publication of a magazine Iran Farda (Tomorrow's Iran). During the period 1998-99 the constant demands of the majority of the population led to a democracy movement and a bitter power struggle with the conservative clergy and their supporters, now in the minority within the political institutions and rapidly losing their popular support.<sup>17</sup>

In this era, the ideological orientation of the country could mainly be classified into three groups whose views are considered critical in aspects such as the use of the media, values and ideological preference with regard to future cultural policies. The first group is Islamic fundamentalists, who believe that all individual and social problems can be resolved with the help of the divine law of Islam. If every one were to abide by it, human laws would become unnecessary. To be successful in the search for truth we should embrace the mystical insights of the holy Koran and the traditions of the Prophet and of his rightful successors. The second group is the liberal democrat-Islamists, who believe that Islam's teachings enlighten us on the true goals of life. However, piety alone cannot solve our problems. The mystical and legal traditions of Islam should be preserved, but it is the duty of all Muslims to maintain harmony between religious precepts and modern spiritual and material needs. The third group is the liberal nationalists who believe that in order to culturally develop, we ought to be inspired by our culture and revive the greatness of Iran's pre-Islamic past and the religious as a personal rather than political orientation. With regard to the economy,

---

<sup>17</sup> Poya, Maryam, Women, Work and Islamism (Ideology and Resistance in Iran), p. 143, Zed Books Ltd., London, 1999.

they believe western achievements depend on a free market economy and on a democratic political system. Both the latter groups believe that to reach the same level of development as the West, Iran should expand the role of the private sector and encourage the development of democratic political institutions such as political parties, parliament and the press.

The ideological tendencies of the more establishment-oriented members of these three groups range from strongly Islamic to secular. They agree that media and cultural are powerful media for social and cultural change. Those with an Islamic orthodoxy views tended to be more critical of the cultural programmes included in publication and cinematic activity under the guidance of Ministry of Culture and Art particularly in the periods under Mohammed Khatami (1983-92) and Mohammed Mohagerani (1996-2000). In this group some Ulama (members of the clergy) feel quite negatively toward the media even though they seldom watched television and never go to the cinema because of the perceived frivolous nature of the programming. This is despite the fact that broadcasting is under the control of the conservative clerics.

While there is praise for the technological achievements in television broadcasting in the country, there is criticism from the second and third groups towards television broadcasting for what they consider to be a one-sided monopoly on television programming. The more nationalistic among them would like to see a revitalization of the Iranian and pre-Islamic past. There are young people now who have a different attitude about western culture. They embrace and appreciate it, not the way that the older generation did.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Amuzegar, Jahangir, 2003, Iran's Crumbling Revolution, Foreign Affairs, January/February, 2003.

In an interview with CNN president Khatami commenting on his policy reiterated his commitment to expand and deepen the democratic rights of the Iranian people. He emphasised the promotion of grater understanding between different political groups and acceptance of the rule of law as the basis of party politics. The media are to be use to support these goals and to provide a true reflection of all elements of society.<sup>19</sup>

For a long time, intellectuals of different cultural/political backgrounds have used animation as a lingua franca to express the joy and grief common to mankind. The constituent elements of this lingua franca are not words but images translated by the enthusiasm of the filmmaker. The Tehran 2001 International Animation Festival was held at a time when the world was looking forward to more convergence and understanding. This goal will be achieved through dialogue. Dialogue can be a way, and may be the only way, out of the conflicts of modern times. This is an idea, which animators firmly accept.

Films representing the theme of the festival, Dialogue Amongst Civilizations, were as gift for the year 2001. there were ten films from six countries, Japan, Russia, Canada, Italy, Finland and Iran. Also, a group project made by Iranian, American, Chinese and Iranian animation students in USA was presented to the Iranian president, Mohammed Khatami when he attended the Millennium Summit in New York.

During the last president election (1996), for the first time in the post-revolutionary era, Iranian filmmakers openly entered the political stage. Most of those who worked in the field of artistic cinema supported the modern candidate (Mohammad Khatami) and those who made commercial films supported for the traditional candidate (Nateq

---

<sup>19</sup> Sahar Daily newspaper, No. 2561, Thursday 18 February 1996



Nouri). After the election, the reduced political interventions and the expanded activities of the media have lessened the political functions of the cinema, but its socio-political functions remained intact. In the late 1990s, Iranian filmmakers have been drawn to making films about the emerging a form of 'modern classes' in the Iranian society. Although one might see these films mostly superficial, nevertheless they are significant in a sense that they tend to reflect growing aspiration of segments of population for whom material wealth and joy of living are no longer considered as morally unacceptable. This could be an important turning point in loosening further the grip of politics on the filmmaking.

#### **6.4- The state of animation in Iran – political and international focus**

The present state of animation in Iran can be divided into three areas, 1) cultural/artistic, 2) educational and 3) industrial. Each category shares the same principal aim of working towards the development and progression of animation in the country.

##### **6.4.1-Cultural and artistic development**

The centre for animation in the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults' (I.I.D.C.Y.A) can be placed in the cultural and artistic sphere of development. The centre was initially established with cultural and educational aims, and celebrated its first international animation festival, after withstanding many ups and downs, in Tehran in 1999. In celebration, the centre intended to draw attention to the work of masters of the medium as well as encourage and support a new generation of talented artists.

The policy of most international festivals is to establish and promote a “retrospective” or “panoramic” programme plan with the express purpose of allowing animators, students and animation enthusiasts the opportunity to compare, analyse and review the work of past pioneers and present innovators in an effort to stimulate debate and encourage future developments in the field. The programming of masterpieces also helps to assure quality control and ensure the financial success of the festival. The director of Tehran’s first animation festival Karimi Saremi referred to these very issues and concerns in 1999 when he stated:

In taking the first step, there are always some doubts and uncertainties, worries that arise from the hardships of stepping onto unknown paths. But on the other hand, it may lead to discovering new perspectives and amazing moments, providing access into a world of new experiences. We should step into this world and go forward by the power of love and trust.

It was in this way that we set about organizing the 1<sup>st</sup> Tehran International Animation Festival. And all those who were co-operating in this event, believed that one could bear all the hardships when it comes to being united and coming together as a whole even though it will be just for a short period of time. And we can only see a bright future for animation arts through these continued hard works and unification.

Let’s hope for a great development and more pride in organizing our 2<sup>nd</sup> International Animation Festival. By taking advantages and learning from our first experience, we can be sure that we are on the right path.<sup>20</sup>

In the summer of 2001 I conducted an interview with the director of Tehran’s international animation Mohammad Reza Karimi Saremi in order to know his views on

---

<sup>20</sup> First Tehran International Animation festival’s Book, Deputy in Charge of Research and International Affairs I.I.D.C.Y.A, p.6, 1999.

the impact and influence of the festival on the activities of the I.I.D.C.Y.A. He explained to me that when the animation department of the I.I.D.C.Y.A was initially founded its declared main aim was to promote and develop programmes for children education. However, during the last few years statistical data have shown that the main themes of the majority of the work produced by the Institute have been concerned with intellectual and political issues arising within the country. In Karimi Saremi's view, people generally think that the activities of the animation centre in the I.I.D.C.Y.A are primarily directed for the benefit of children when in effect most of the animation films produced there have little or nothing to do with children at all.<sup>21</sup>

As it was shown in chapter 4, the animation centre in the I.I.D.C.Y.A operates under the pretext of recognizing animation as the best media for producing films for the educational benefits of children. However the realization of this policy has proved problematic as it operates under a system where artists possessing their own personal ideas but lacking a technical and thematic knowledge of the medium have produced short films that have been artistically lacking. I believe that for animation to develop artistically we must establish a system that rewards and promotes learning and experience so that those with the requisite skills are able to, and are given priority in entering the field of commercial production.

According to Dilworth:

Festivals provide many opportunities. The most obvious is the screening of your work for hundreds or possibly thousands of viewers. Like painters who dream of a gallery to hang their canvasses, film needs to be projected and fill a large white canvass of its own. My favorite festivals are international ones, which can bring together ideas from around the world

---

<sup>21</sup> Karimi Saremi, Mohammad Reza, fieldwork interview, Tehran, August 2001.

one can learn much about the lifestyles of other artistes- artists crating such different art than your own, yet at the same period of time and from different lands. Simply open your mouth and begin speaking. Language is never a problem.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, Frederic Back, an animation master states:

In the course of time we can appreciate the wisdom of the people who have been at the origin of the animation film festival we know today. Until then, the presentation of works was mostly an individual affair, with little consequences. Like any art form, animation needs the means and event to be enhanced and discovered. For this, festivals give government animation producing industry press to allow this important communication art the exposure it deserves. Festivals have become important occasions to honour creators, to reveal the state of the art, to underline the evolution of talent and techniques.

It is their duty to promote high quality standards and favor meeting with professionals, buyers and audiences on an international scale. For animation art and for everybody, festivals are positive and stimulating.<sup>23</sup>

The animation of the I.I.D.C.Y.A that has proved to be most successful, in the past and present has been those works that have emphasized Iranian themes and pure Persian/Islamic art forms over technical ability.<sup>24</sup>

I believe that the achievements of animation on the world stage are a result of the technical progression that has seen it pass from a period of emphasis on technique to one where the emphasis is on concept. The many international awards garnered by Ali Akbar Sadeqi for works such as *Goal Baran* (the Flower Storm) aptly prove this point. Whilst we must pay attention to the issue of technical progression we must also bear in

---

<sup>22</sup> R.Dilworth, John R., American filmmaker, New York, *Festival Reasoning*, Compiled by the Staff of *Animation World Magazine*, 2001, p.3.

<sup>23</sup> Back, Frederic, *Festival Reasoning*, Compiled by the Staff of *Animation World Magazine*, 2001, p.1.

<sup>24</sup> Karimi Saremi, Mohammad Reza, *fieldwork interview*, Tehran, August 2001.

mind the fact that animation relies on and should be aware of indigenous cultural and artistic forms and concepts. In the current globalised environment this is a particularly pressing and pertinent issue for developing countries such as Iran.

Tizianaloschi<sup>25</sup> believes:

... that the co-ordination of the elements which build the structure of film (music, graphic, timing...) while important in principle, are somewhat less important than story writing ability, a strong and vibrant national culture and the existence production facilities. In addition, each filmmaker must make valuable use of his or her own unique cultural context in order to produce high quality animation.<sup>26</sup>

The main motivating factor for animators in Iran has been the enthusiasm, encouragement and positive responses that they have gained through participation in international and national animation festivals. However, despite these successes and the optimism within the industry itself, the future for Iranian animation seems far from certain. The lack of governmental support and the poor financial state of the industry makes it difficult to attract new talent to the field and to viably sustain those already working within it. However, a recent policy was introduced to encourage those filmmakers that had achieved success and received awards at various festivals, to establish an animation centre for the development of new products as the first stage in helping to build a continuously operational and active production centre for animation.<sup>27</sup>

The new centre possesses its own animation studios and at the moment there are many short projects currently under production. These projects are generally artistic and

---

<sup>25</sup> Director of the International Animation Film Centre in France, a non-profit institute that promotes animated cinema world-wide, a member of the jury at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran International Animation Festival in 2001.

<sup>26</sup> *Iran Daily*, Tehran Animation Festival Ends, *An interview with Tiziana Loschi*, Feb 25, 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Karimi Saremi, Mohammad Reza, *fieldwork interview*, Tehran, August 2001.

experimental in nature and are produced with a view to participating in film and animation festivals both inside and outside of Iran. In this centre filmmakers are given more freedom and independence of expression than in comparison with the other centres mentioned. However, despite this relative artistic freedom the Institute is in a constant state of financial uncertainty and insecurity.

Karimi pointed to the work exhibited in the last two festivals as evidence of the success of this policy and as an encouraging sign of the continuing development of Iranian animation. The variety of the categories listed in the festival's programs provides ample evidence of the development and continued progress of animation in Iran. The festivals also established a number of workshops with the aim of introducing animation to children around the country as well as attempting to establish a video market for amateur and experimental production.<sup>28</sup>

Erling Ericsson, Swedish animation master, set up a series of classes at the festival for a number of Iranian boys and girls. Ericsson teaches animation in basic steps and it is clear from his way of teaching that his goal is to strengthen the creative abilities of children rather than just simply teaching them animation techniques. He opens a wide field of innovation in front of children in a bid to activate their talents and potentialities. The editor of the festival bulletin explained about the teaching techniques that:

Ericsson creates a cheerful and happy atmosphere in his class and this atmosphere helps the children to learn with ease. They learn to make animated films in four steps, the story, the illustration, the motion and the sound. He uses the cut out technique and has simplified this complicated

---

<sup>28</sup> Karimi Saremi, Mohammad Reza, fieldwork interview, Tehran, August 2001.

animation technique as much as possible. Therefore, the lucky children in his class have a great opportunity to find their way easily in the world of animation.<sup>29</sup>

The decision by the I.I.D.C.Y.A to celebrate and establish a film festival for children and young adults (Tehran International film festival for children in 1966), can also be taken as the spark that led to the birth of animation in Iran. Although the festival was not specifically for animation, it provided an opportunity for establishing a framework that would shape filmmaking for children, and by association, animation, in Iran for years to come. The films of this period were generally acknowledged as some of the best animation in the world. The fruit of this endeavour can be seen in the first international animation festival in Tehran 1999 which was an attempt to give voice to twenty years of silence and to develop and encourage new talented artists.

Ali Akbar Alemi (2000), an animation teacher and member of the jury at Tehran's international animation festivals, has stated that: these two festivals have been responsible for motivating and improving the quality of Iranian animation and bringing it to a world-wide audience to such an extent that the Tehran festival now ranks as the fourth most important animation festival in the world. After the festivals of Hiroshima, Annecy and Ottawa the eyes of animators throughout the world are increasingly turning to Iran.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Daily Bulletin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran International Animation Festival, step by step with children, N.4, 2001.

<sup>30</sup> Daily Bulletin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran International Animation Festival, An interview with Ali Akbar Alemi, N.1, 2001.

Writer and cinema critic Mansour Zubatuvan (2001) paints a realistic picture of animation in Iran, which acknowledges the importance of the festivals to the development of the art form. According to him:

Animation is lonely in Iran, nobody knows animators. Nobody prints their pictures; nobody looks at their works. Animation lives in the corner of its own golden cage. The animation festival is the key of this golden cage. For a few days, the silent lion's of animation are set free from the cage to take a breath and show themselves. The Tehran international animation festival not only sets our own lions free for a few days, but also invites other lions from other lands to show themselves on the Iranian stage.<sup>31</sup>

The festivals help to place Iran on the map both geographically and in terms of film and animation. If one considers that 80 countries in the world produce no animation, the significance of the 853 entrants from 52 countries for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tehran international animation festival in 2003 becomes clear. Because of the positive and stimulating effects of such festivals, I believe that they have an important role alongside educational and industrial approaches to animation in promoting the continuity of artistic and cultural activities.

#### **6.4.2- Educational Animation**

Currently there are three universities in the country offering courses in animation. These are a bachelor degree at the Institute of Radio and Television and two master degrees at the University of Tarbiat Modarress and the University of Art respectively. Together these programmes take in between 20 and 30 students each year. These courses are designed to teach students the various techniques and processes involved in animation production. Alongside these academic courses there are also a series of short

---

<sup>31</sup> Abrar, Daily newspaper, No. 3561, Thursday 22February 2001.



courses, designed specifically for young people, such as the animation courses run at the Center of Experimental Cinema that are organized by the Ministry of Art. There are also proposals to teach animation in high schools. However, despite the existence of these courses the universities face two major problems: a lack of animation facilities and the difficulty in attracting students to the field of animation.

The above identifies the main centres animation teachings located within the various universities in Iran. However, these need to be situated within the overall context of the educational system that operates in the country.

Entrance to university in Iran is conducted through a national entrance exam (konkour) (chapter 8) that is held once a year. Due to the country's large youth population, and the limited capacity of the universities, demand invariably exceeds the number of places available. This has led to a situation where the gaining of a place at any university has become the top priority of most young people without much concern being paid to their interest or suitability to a particular course of study. Such a situation has not only led to a waste in terms of human resources but has also had a detrimental effect on many education departments that are filled with students who possess little understanding or aptitude for their chosen subject. In the case of animation this has resulted in many students entering with the sole purpose of attaining a university degree, upon graduation, they seek employment in jobs not necessarily related to their subject.

Secondly, there exists no rational match between the number of jobs in different economic activities and the number of university graduates entering the jobs market. This is a situation that is exacerbated by the tendency of the education sector to respond

to sectional necessities that appear in the country from time to time. This results in the establishment of university courses in response to expedient concerns only to find that they quickly become redundant as soon as the necessity passes and that the courses cannot be easily removed due to governmental and public resistance. As a result many students are graduating with skills that have no corresponding application in the outside world. These factors are particularly acute in the animation industry where the lack of adequate production facilities means that many animation graduates are not only unable to find employment but are dishearten from developing their acquired skills further.

Another factor to consider is the age demographic of those entering the industry. The evidence from international festivals shows that the average age of those pursuing careers in animation has been steadily falling over recent years. The experience in Iran is somewhat different, where the average age of the new generation of animators seems to be increasing. This is due in no small part to the fact that all Iranian youth must perform at least two years of military. As a consequence, twenty is the earliest age that a person can gain entry into university. This means that, after completing four years to gain a BA and a further two to three years pursuing an MA, the earliest age at which a qualified animator can begin to consider entering the industry is late twenties. This is a situation that is exacerbated by the fact that the animation courses, particularly the MA course that are run in the universities are primarily theoretically based. Indeed, the MA course in animation has been cited as merely acquainting students with the historical development of animation through inventions such as the Zoetrope, the Phenakistiscope, and the photographs of Muybridge.<sup>32</sup> This orientation is due in no

---

<sup>32</sup> Alidosty, Faezeh, Educated Animator, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussions and writings about animation cinema), assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, p.223, Tehran, 1999.

small part to the lack of available facilities within the country, which deters the teaching of practical based courses and leads to a situation where graduates only begin to really learn the practice of animation techniques when they enter the industry and begin to make their first films. Furthermore, most of the students who graduate with the necessary qualifications and degrees wish to become directors or producers and view other positions, such as background artist, to be somewhat inferior, causing a shortage of those skills in the industry. One possible solution for this problem is to introduce animation practices into high schools in order to establish a foundation and thereby develop and expand the awareness of the various different technical skills needed within the animation industry.<sup>33</sup> In this respect, Laura Knight comment is most relevant to the ingraining artistic interests in children's education:

“In England, as in other countries, there exists a long tradition of developing animation projects with young people both in and out of school. Many animation projects are kick started in schools at the instigation of a pupil, individual teacher or through the involvement of an outside organization of agency. Arts organizations and peripatetic provide the novice animator with opportunities to participate in one - off projects both within and outside of the school's curriculum. These projects are a great way to make a splash and provide an initial stimulus. Such special projects can only occur through the creation of funding partnerships with local arts and government agencies and commercial sponsorship. Projects do occur despite the potential difficulties faced in terms of satisfying all the needs of all participating parties, be they funders, artists and students”.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Alidosty, Faezeh, Educated Animator, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussions and writings about animation cinema), assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, p.223, Tehran, 1999.

<sup>34</sup> Knight, Laura, “from Flip to Zip: pattern of delivering animation education to pre degree student as part of a school curriculum”, paper, the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Society for Animation Studies conference, Trondheim, Norway, August 5 - 9<sup>th</sup> 2000, p.5.

In an interview with Alemi, an Iranian master animator, concerning the lack of sufficiently rooted interests among youngster; he explained that young people have a natural instinct to quarrel with their parents. "My father disapproved my drawing and painting, he thought that I was playing and neglecting my serious studies. Nowadays many people, often with simple jobs and on low incomes, make financial sacrifices so that their children can pursue classes in music, painting or sport. In Iran, today, most young people who live in large cities such as Esfahan, Shiraz, Rasht, Mashad and Tabriz have access to a host of artistic possibilities through computers and the Internet. Animation experts must try to harness these new developments for the teaching and development of animation by introducing the subject into high schools at an early age. Courses should be designed with a view that students are to be provided with a foundation in the techniques of design, drawing and painting, which can then be used as a basis for teaching animation. Consequently they will be sufficiently knowledgeable and expert enabling them to produce high quality work when they graduate from postgraduate courses in the universities. Animators must also encourage and support the establishment of short courses on animation".<sup>35</sup>

The increased educational capacity and the establishment of new universities are seen as pre-requisite for broadening and deepening the development of animation in Iran. However, the quality of third level education and the lack of qualified teachers and facilities have lead to an overall drop in quality standards. However, steps have been

---

<sup>35</sup> Tavakolian, Saeed, Akbar Alemi (an interview) in Wakefulness of Vision (about animation cinema), assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 2001, p.308.

taken to rectify this situation with many Iranian universities forming links with foreign, particularly Russian, universities and inviting teachers from abroad to work in Iran.

Saeide Tavakolian, a member of the jury at the international animation festival in Tehran and an animation teacher believes that the student categories in the festival compare favourably, in terms of standard and quality, with all other categories present in festival and disprove the old belief that universities cannot produce good animators.<sup>36</sup> In 1999, in an interview discussing and evaluating the role of universities in producing future animators he commented that:

In my view we need a system that provides people with the technical skills to be able to produce animation as well as one that encourages the imagining and creation of ideas.

However, up until now the private studios have been more successful than the universities in providing technically competent animators who produce high quality work. This is primarily due to the fact that these studios, by responding to market forces and operating within a workshop system, are acutely aware of the needs and requirements of the industry. The need to emphasise and acknowledge the reality of market forces is completely lacking in the educational sphere, and is shown in their failure to recognise the importance of skills such as layout man, scriptwriter, photographer, and in-betweener. What is required in the universities is a total overhaul of the present educational framework, which would include a revolutionary and creative approach to a revision of the subjects currently being taught and the development of an evaluation system for assessing students' output.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Kayhan Caricature, weekly magazine, Animation in the Golden Cage; a short report from 2<sup>nd</sup> international animation festival in Tehran, Tuesday 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, *Saeed Tavakolian: An Interview, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation)*, published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, p.209.

In a similar vein, the filmmaker Raoul Servais has highlighted the situation and problems facing students and animation schools throughout the world.

Since you have begun going to festivals, what changes have you noticed? Mainly a quantitative change. There are many festivals now and in each of them there are always more films in competition, in retrospectives, etc. This is rather surprising, as the short film situation is always getting worse. Maybe the increase is due to the greater number of animation schools. The percentage of student films is very high in animation festivals. Somehow, I regret this increase in the number of festivals; some of them have become a little impersonal.<sup>38</sup>

There is a consensus that education and animation schools are facing many problems. Although universities and animation centres have been active for years but for the lack of a market for finished production's many students are turned off the idea of entering this field of study.<sup>39</sup> However, as Vladimir Elich Tarasoph (1999), a Russian master animator who was invited to come and teach in Iran, commented that the quality standard of Iranian student is quite high and 'I think they will be the protectors of Iranian animation. I am very glad to have the opportunity to teach here and I shall share with great pleasure my knowledge with them.'<sup>40</sup>

### 6.4.3- Industrial Animation

The third section refers to the industrial category. Central to this area was the creation of the semi-private Saba Animation Company, which arose from the reorganizing and amalgamation of the various television animation departments into one efficient unit. The Saba Animation Company has invested significantly in the area of production with

---

<sup>38</sup> Moins, Philippe, *Raoul Servais: an Interview*, Translated by Annick Teninge, *Animation World – Wide Magazine*, 2001, p.1.

<sup>39</sup> *Kar-o Karegar*, daily newspaper, *the festival being changed point for Iranian animation*, Sunday 25 February 2001.

<sup>40</sup> *Simia*, *Animation Quarterly*, *A discussion with Vladimir Elich*, No.1, winter 2001, p.47.

the express aims of safeguarding the programme needed for five national television channels and finding international markets for the programmes that are produced.

In 1995, Saba became formally linked to Iranian Radio and Television, through the amalgamation of the animation departments of Channel One and Two, with the express purpose of promoting Islamic culture and national identity through the production of animation films. The structure of Saba was organized around the principle of programming that emphasizes indigenous culture and arts from very inception, it was expected that Saba could bring necessary resources together to establish a viable company not only to recapture domestic market from foreign suppliers but also it would complement to other animation centre so as to create an Iranian animation industry competing with the leading producers in the region and challenging the domination of its closer competitors such as Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

The manager of the Saba, Masoud Shahey (2000), has been keen to establish and develop connections with animation centers in other countries around the world. The pursuit of this policy has seen the company establish contacts with a total of 84 countries to date. At present Saba is currently involved in co-productions with countries as varied as the United Arab Emirates, China, Lebanon, France, Spain and Egypt.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, the Saba has marketed itself through the MIFA international catalogue of animation. It describes itself as, one of the most prestigious animation companies in the Middle East, beginning its activities in 1995 with a staff of 35 professionals, modest installations and 260 square meters of working space. It has expanded with enormous

---

<sup>41</sup> Deidar, Internal Bulletin of IRIB, Saba Company; past, now, future, No.12, summer, 2001, p.22.

speed since then and now we have at our disposition more than 4000 square meters of offices, workshops and recreational facilities along with latest technology and hi-tech equipment. More than two hundred trained personnel and artists are working with the company. Fields of activity consists of 1) the production of computerized & Traditional Animation, Puppet Animation and TV Puppet Shows. 2) Computerized games. 3) Research and production of the prophet's lives, science fiction, folk stories, classic literature and entertainment 4) consultation, design, setting up advanced software and hard wear for the production of animation and the development of software for multimedia 5) establishing co-productions with domestic and international animation companies.<sup>42</sup>

Masoud Shahey (2000) has stated that the pursuit and development of these strategies has proved so successful that Saba has managed to produce more animation productions during its short lifespan than the combined total of all those made prior to the company's inception, in some cases even managing to outstrip the production capacity of many of its Middle Eastern counterparts. An examination of the available statistics provides the proof of this claim: 1) the production total of the I.I.D.C.Y.A, from 1970 to 1999, amounted to some 973 minutes. 2) The Iranian Young Cinema Society, from 1987 to 1999, produced 142/5 minutes. 3) The Houzeh Hounary of Islamic Propaganda Organization produced a total of 22 minutes from 1992 to 1999. 4) The production of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (I.R.I.B) Channel One, from 1974 to 1999, totalled 2030 minutes. 5) The production total of I.R.I.B Channel Two, from 1991 to 1999, was 199 minutes. 6) The IRIB TV centers in provinces such as Hamedan, Zanjan and Fars, from 1984 to 1999, produced a total of 773/5 minutes. 7)

---

<sup>42</sup> Saba, *a Representation Catalogue of Saba's Activity and Policy*, Published Tehran, 1999.



These figures appear rather insignificant when set against the 4580 minutes of programming produced by the Saba Animation Company from 1995 to 1999. In the first four years since its establishment Saba had managed to produce more animation productions than the combined efforts of all other institutions involved in the field over the previous 29 years. In this respect it could be said to have successfully achieved a viable and sustainable production capacity whilst working within the pre-determined parameters and value systems laid down by Islamic government.<sup>43</sup>

Iranian television with five channels, a large audience and daily non-stop broadcasting, was until now, by necessity, constantly looking to the importation of foreign productions to fill its programming scheduling shortfalls. The development and success of Saba has gone some way towards alleviating this shortfall dependency in the animation sector somewhat. However, there is still some way to go in this respect. This has seen Iranian television develop a strategy, which seeks to minimize the importation of foreign animation as far as possible by encouraging Saba to increase its production capacity as well as encouraging the company to produce films that are thematically suitable to television broadcast. Saba for its part responded by directing its activities towards these ends, as reflected in the center's annual reports.<sup>44</sup>

Towards these ends, the Saba has been given access to a wide range of government resources in order to help and encourage filmmakers to increase the capacity of productions on national, Islamic and moral themes that promote revolutionary values. However, a preoccupation with the promotion of such themes and a desire to negate what was seen as the 'cultural invasion' of foreign animation, especially Japanese, has

---

<sup>43</sup> Deidar, Internal Bulletin of IRIB, Saba Company; past, now, future, No.12, summer, 2001, p.21

<sup>44</sup> Deidar, Internal Bulletin of IRIB, Saba Company; past, now, future, No.12, summer, 2001, p.23.

seen little attention being paid to the question of quality. The shortage of experienced animators with required skills needed for serial production has been one of the main problems facing Saba. Furthermore, the production capacity of filmmakers in the country is still far below the level needed by Saba to attain its set targets and fully service the needs of television. This is exacerbated by the fact that many young and artistic filmmakers are attracted to the medium of short film production rather than animation, due in no small part to the low wage level paid by Saba for contract work. These factors need to be substantially addressed if Saba is to fully achieve its goals and encourage a new generation of artists to enter the field.

With regard to the shortage of talented animators, Sharei (2001), the manager of the Classic Animation department in Saba, has commented that:

We respect and welcome new pioneers in Saba, and although the door is always open to them we cannot simply just sit here and wait for them to arrive. We must seek to train young animators and encourage the energetic efforts of those already working in the field. Towards this end we have decided to replace the strategy of serial production with some moves towards the production of animation shorts even though it is not economical for us to do this. This is done out respect for pioneers and to encourage experimentation even though in the majority of cases there is no financial benefit to us.<sup>45</sup>

In my view, the main advantage of serial production is the fact that it promotes team work, allows established filmmakers to pass their experience and expertise onto young filmmakers, arouses the interest of young people in animation and develops a solid structured professional base for the industry. Prior to the establishment of the Saba it was virtually impossible to encourage people to enter the animation industry. That was

---

<sup>45</sup> Sharei, Esmaeil, Interview, Saba Yakhchal St Shariati Ave, Fieldwork Tehran, summer 2001.

the situation that has now changed due to the measures taken by Saba. However, if the industry is to develop further then the previously mentioned question of quality must be addressed. While the company might be secured by the financial support it receives from television contracts, the true test of, and impetus to improve, quality will only occur through increased participation in international festivals and tested in the international marketplace.

On the former point Masoud Shahey (2001) believes that Saba has already collected over thirty prizes from many different national and international festivals such as Annecy in France, Hiroshima in Japan that have been awarded to Saba productions. The extent of success has been such that a seventeen part animation serial 'The Magic Ring' was broadcast twice within three months on the Japanese channel NHK.<sup>46</sup>

However, controversy has been recently raised within the industry following a governmental decision, which was heavily criticized by the I.I.D.C.Y.A. directors and producers and a large number of private animation companies, to channel all animation productions for television through Saba. This monopoly creates a number of problems, the most notable of which is the fact that it eliminates the principle of competition and excludes private studios from their main market- television. Furthermore, centers such as the I.I.D.C.Y.A., which supports and promotes the work of independent artists, are deprived of the main exhibition avenue of their productions, all of which has a detrimental effect on the industry as a whole.

---

<sup>46</sup> Deidar, Internal Bulletin of IRIB, Saba Company; past, now, future, No.12, summer, 2001, p.22.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the cultural planners in the country can take little credit in helping to encourage a spirit of communication and co-operation between the various cultural institutes. As a result, have already witnessed the duplication of artistic activities and the economic failure of many productions. A close examination of the workings of the I.I.D.C.Y.A, Saba, Iranian television, the Ministry of Culture, or even some of the ministries with interests in cultural activities such as the Ministry of Power, would show that they have all attempted to organize their activities independently, irrespective of the abilities, capacities and functions of other institutes that could be of benefit to them. For example Saba could benefit from the I.I.D.C.Y.A's artistic and festival experience, while the latter could benefit from the facilities and marketing expertise that Saba possesses.

#### **6.4.3.1- Private studios**

Along with government above-mentioned institutions, private animation production has also been expanding in recent past in Iran. Most private productions are commissioned by government agencies or made for private industrial institutions working for advertisement and education. The main difference between the private and governmental institutes is that the former possesses private equipment and staff and is not beholding to a strict government agenda, which allows them to act with a certain amount of independence.

The private studios primarily gear their productions towards the commercial television sector. Although, majority of these companies use computer-based technology to produce their products, there are however, a few firms that still use traditional animation method (e.g. Cell - Animation). The market of these studios is limited to

those of five state-run television channels. This implies that under such a monopoly situation they rely heavily and almost exclusively on contracts from the governmental sources without which they are financially vulnerable given the fact that competition in foreign markets is high.

Javaherian (1999) in 'The Short History of Animation in Iran' has pointed to the fact amongst the many private animation studios in Iran only fourteen could be said to be commercially viable and productive. These studios are categorised into two groups; those studios that operate under company names, such as Hoor, studio 14, Jozan Film Co, Hilaj Film productions and researches Co, Kelk Khial Co and those that operate under the names of artists such as, Abolfazi Razani, Christ Karapetian, Vache Ghaspur and Vajihollah Fard Moqaddam.<sup>47</sup>

A large amount of the animation that is produced in these studios consists of short commercials, which provide their main source of income. The development and demand for commercials has risen rapidly since 1991 when the Iranian television removed the restriction on the amount of advertisements they could broadcast. With a quick production turnover against a tight schedule, the tendency is for most of the production work involved in advertisements to fall to the producer, the director and the designer. Furthermore, with fewer staff involved in the whole production process expenditure and costs can be kept to a minimum. In most of these small studios the producer does everything from planning the actual shoot to keeping the company's

---

<sup>47</sup> Javaharian, Mahin, Short History of Animation in Iran. Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau, 1999, p.135- 142.

books balanced. Also, most of these studios are now computerized, which helps to speed up the production process, which tends reduce expenditure and increase profits.

The Hoor Animation Association was established in 1991 with the objective of using computers in the art of 2D and 3D animation. It initially started its activities by assembling a group of specialists familiar with state of the art animation and computer science technology. This team set about collecting information and evaluating the performances of the companies active in the field of graphics, animation and computer games. About one year was then spent researching and experimenting with various different types of hardware and software and the methods of 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional animation production, until finally an optimum pattern of performance compatible with the existing facilities in the country was reached at which time the company commenced its own activities in the animation field.<sup>48</sup>

Rojna Animation Studio is a computer based animation studio creating a new generation of animated films. Rojna combines the creativity ability of animators and storywriters with high-tech computer tools in order to produce high quality films and animations. A Rojna animation studio was founded on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1996, and specialises in the production of animation, visual effects and digital compositions for the film, television and interactive industries.<sup>49</sup>

Using three-dimensional movements and new animation techniques are very influential in attracting an audience. These developments, new technology and faster and cheaper

---

<sup>48</sup> Hoor Animation Association, 2001.

<sup>49</sup> Rojna Animation Studio, *Who Are We?* [www.rojna.com](http://www.rojna.com), 2001.

production methods, are essential if animation is to become a viable and sustainable commercial entity. This is due to the fact that animation works within a restricted marketplace, when compared with live-action films. Furthermore, the commercial values of animation and the individual output of an animator are quite small.

### **6.5- Concluding remarks**

Under the Islamic rule the function of I.I.D.C.Y.A has gradually changed from one of the providing animation for furthering children mental development to the ideological use of animation for propagating religious fatalism. Animation became increasingly means of moulding children's perception and behaviours. This situation was further exacerbated by three factors:

1. A general sense of pessimism regarding the future management of animation.
2. 'Islamic' supervisors, for their part had little if any knowledge of animation.
3. A lack of financial support, which was especially marked during the eight years of the destructive Iran/Iraq war.

In the 1990s, having identified various problems following cultural development programme (1989), animation activities gradually raised in status through efforts in three areas: artistic, educational and industrial. Each of these essential areas with their specific functions worked together as the components of a single unit. The Artistic aspect acted as the heart, education as the brain and industry as the body for the animation society in Iran. With this understanding, design of a strategy, which could be compatible and work in harmony with all three centres, became a precondition for progression of animation in the country.

The artistic part, as now concentrated under activity of I.I.D.C.Y.A, celebrates and encourages attendance at international festivals that bring together ideas from around the world. The learning about the innovative ideas of other artistes, and indigenous artistic production has created a promising movement in animation. However the centre is completely dependent on government financial support, and vulnerable to the politics and change of the policy concerning the activities of the I.I.D.C.Y.A.

From a quantitative viewpoint, the number of animation teaching courses seems to be adequate for long-term development. However, the main problem is that they are neither linked together at different levels nor are not well organized. A major problem that needs to be addressed is the student candidates who enrol in animation course with little enthusiastic for this art form, often driven by having a university degree and might seek employment in unrelated job market. This is waste of scarce resources that the country can't effort to maintain, thus greater attention should be paid to the selection of the candidates and resources needed for practical training purposes.

From a qualitative viewpoint of view, educational programmes should be tailored with regard to the areas with greater development possibilities taking into account of the world market situation including use of computers and Internet, the establishment of new specialised animation schools and the use of supplementary long-distance learning courses for interested people, all are essential for the future of the Iranian animation.

As mentioned in chapter three, there are around two hundred active cinemas listed in Iran. The prohibition of foreign films showing provides an opportunity for indigenous filmmakers to reclaim back domestic Iranian cinema. The increased in the ratio of



younger people (under 16-year-old) and greatly expanded commercial programmes targeted at children through five nationwide television channels has created large domestic market for animated film. Domestic animation industry has the opportunity to expand rapidly provided some limits are placed on import of animated films. These opportunities have been, to some degree, exploited by industrial/commercial animation companies including studios such as Saba, Rojna and others. Taking the nature of television- it should broadcast programmes continuously and routinely- means that much foreign animation that is currently broadcasted is intended to fill the television schedule. Iranian animators cannot expect a sudden cut off of foreign imports to allow them to achieve the desired monopoly as happened with cinema at the time of the revolution. To achieve domination: Iranian animation must compete side by side with foreign imports and win its airtime by proving to be as or more appealing to audiences as the imports.

## Chapter Seven

### **The relationship between global developments and dominant local values**

This chapter explores theoretical and practical aspects of animation, in two distinctly different socio-cultural and political phases, that have characterised the development of the industry in Iran.

Everyone (in Iran) wanted to know what was happening in the rest of the world, animation-wise, what did we think about Iranian animation and how could they improve.<sup>1</sup>

Animation forms one part of an international media art form that has its historical origins in Europe and the United States. The progress and maturation of Iranian animation has been, to a certain extent, related to and influenced by the developments that have been taking place in other countries. As have seen in previous chapters, cultural development in Iran has usually followed in the wake of domestic socio-cultural and political upheavals. Under such circumstances, art forms such as cinema and television have traditionally filled the socio-cultural vacuum by attempting to document and articulate the ensuing events and define the parameters of a new society. The first comprehensive and explicit example of such a state of affairs occurred in the 1960's with the establishment of the State controlled media organization the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (I.I.D.C.Y.A)

---

<sup>1</sup> Vladermersky, Nag, *My Trip to Tehran*, Animation World Magazine, April 01, p.2, 2001.

The regime of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi had from the 1960s onwards co-opted and reconstructed key notions in the secular political vocabulary; the Shah promoted his own, "White revolution", claimed to be a "nationalist", promised "democracy." He purported to be a "modernizer," actively promoting the "development" of his country.<sup>2</sup>

However, despite the scale of the domestic changes that have occurred in Iran throughout its recent history, and the substantial influence that these events have had on the work of Iranian animators, by far the most significant influence on animation in Iran has been external, arising from the international and global developments that have occurred within the animation industry worldwide. One of the first steps towards the internationalisation of animation occurred in 1960 with the establishment of ASIFA. This organisation founded in Annecy, France was set up in a bid to encourage and develop a close co-operation, and a free exchange of ideas, experience, and information, between all those involved in animation worldwide. It is devoted to the encouragement and dissemination of film animation as an art and communication form.<sup>3</sup>

The international promotion and development of animation that took place under the ASIFA's leadership occurred on two fronts. Firstly, they sought to establish animation in those countries, (such as Iran and Korea in the 1960's), that had no previous experience, either infrastructurally or artistically, of the art form. Secondly, they provided opportunities for the development and promotion of existing animation

---

<sup>2</sup> Mohammadi (Sreberny), Annabelle, Mohammadi Ali, Small Media, Big Revolution, Published by the University of Minnesota Press, p.106, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Webb, Rain, ASIFA, Dope Sheet the ASIFA UK magazine, Published by Pat Raine Webb & Margot Grimwood, London, 2000.

industries, enabling them to compete on a larger worldwide scale. According to Bendazzi, animation has increasingly used in wide ranging fields:

Concomitant with these developments, the 1960's were to prove something of a golden period for animation in many countries across the globe. In Eastern European, for example, the medium experienced an unprecedented period of qualitative and quantitative growth. Many individual artists were achieving international recognition and fame under a guiding spirit of experimentation, which saw the development of a myriad of different styles, philosophies and schools of thought on the form, style and content of animation. This happened most dramatically in Yugoslavia and Poland.<sup>4</sup>

The 1960s also saw Great Britain establish itself as one of the world's main animation centers. Due to a low demand for entertainment shorts - a common situation in market-driven economies - animators began to develop a range of alternative and diversified productions including feature films, serials, educational cinema and public relations films. The high standards and artistic quality of these productions earned British advertising a world renowned reputation and resulted in the development of peripheral enterprises such as animation schools, children's workshops and amateur associations. However, because of its individualism and fragmentation, British animation did not exhibit what might be deemed recognizable national traits. Instead, it came to be defined by a rich creative freedom, novelty and variety of themes and motives.<sup>5</sup>

As pointed out earlier, the emergence of animation and the establishment of television were two developments that occurred almost simultaneously in Iran. However, it should be noted that this was not a situation unique to Iran. The development of the

---

<sup>4</sup> Bendazzi, Giannal Berto, Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation, translated by Anna Taraboletti-Segre, London: Johan Libbey & co., pp.333, 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Bendazzi, Giannal Berto, Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation, translated by Anna Taraboletti-Segre, London: Johan Libbey & co., pp.273, 1994.

philosophy behind Japanese cartoons, occurred primarily in the 1960s; in other words during the era of television.<sup>6</sup>

This historical entwining of the two media has led to a situation where both the needs of television and animation have in a sense served to influence the development of one another. For example, television through the requirements of time and audience share sees episodic and serial productions as its staple form of programming. Animators have reacted to this need, and under the influence of market forces, by producing what has now become the standard of television animation, the serial cartoon. This is a situation that has for the most part remained unchanged and indeed difficult to change, up to the present day.

Children's television was born out directly out of the demise of the market for cartoon shorts for cinema. Cartoons started out in the film industry as supplements to feature films, as there were no direct audience supply and demand requirements the studios sold their cartoon libraries to television when cinema demand declined. TV used these shorts to fill airtime and entertain children after school. The popularity of this programming resulted in the production of animation specifically for children's television. *The Flintstone's*, *Top Cat* and *Yogi Bear* are examples of Hanna-Barbera's success during this period.<sup>7</sup>

The Hanna Barbara productions mentioned above, along with the works of Walt Disney, as well as some newly arrived Japanese animas (Kimba the white Lion, Jungle

---

<sup>6</sup> Pilling, Jayne (Ed), *A Reader in Animation Studies*, Sydney Australia: Johan Libbey & company Pty Ltd., p.11, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Felperin, Leslie, *Animation Cool*, *Media Watch* (magazine), p.16, 1999.

Taitei), were the cartoons that filled Iranian television screens and shaped the imagination of the generation that grew up in the 1970's. However, this situation was to change with the coming of the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

As a result of the removal of copyright laws and the general anti-American atmosphere that existed in the country at the time, almost all American productions disappeared from Iranian screens. In order to fill the programming shortfall Iranian television producers began to look to Japan to supply them with increasing numbers of animation productions. However, the Iranian audience had little or no experience of Japanese animation and it took some time before they became familiar with and understood the style and content of the new form.

The Japanese animations that are broadcast on Iranian television fall broadly into two main categories. The first category is referred to as the Japanese indoors cool-animas. These productions are marked, both stylistically and thematically, by their strong and specific location within Japanese culture. The second category belongs to those groups of productions that are usually produced for a global market and tend to exhibit 'worldwide culture'. The characters and stories of these animations are usually familiar to most audiences and include famous stories and myths such as Pinocchio, Ali Baba or Sindbad. One final point needs to be made in relation to the importation of Japanese animation and that is the fact that television producers in Iran do not buy the violent and at times sexually explicit Manga type animation.

Due to the constraints and restrictions placed on broadcasters in Iran the productions that are bought and exhibited on Iranian screens are usually of an educational or moral

nature. However, the sadness, despair and at times hopelessness, that is portrayed in many of the Japanese animation broadcast on Iranian TV has caused some concern among Iranian parents. The central area of concern is the effect that such thematic depictions have on young children: "these animation serials are often centred on the hopeless search of the main character, usually a young child, for their parents. It is a concern that children viewing these animation productions will start to worry about the possibility of losing their own parents". Whilst such concerns are expressed by many, perhaps the most immediate ideological influence on the attitudes of children can be seen to arise from the structuring and personal experiences of their existing cultural environment.

#### **7.1- Culture and Media at the service of the Islamic**

Cinema and consequently animation are trips to a person's interior and being, to their transparent and hidden layers. It is a journey of discovery of one's layered secrets and mysterious; secrets and mysteries which cannot be explained without referring to environment and society. The more succinct and effective the singular language of animation and narrative arts, the more effective and valuable the creation. The language of any art form embodies its significance and value and the secret of its durability must also be sought in these relations.

Whatever the nature of the revolution of February 1979, it transformed the moral and material conditions of society which naturally affected all art forms. Out of the revolution, and the ideology propagated by the new regime a new style of Islamic art arose in Iran. This innovation has now been around for two decades, during which

thousands of books, novels, stories, poems, articles have been, and are being produced whose artists call them Islamic arts.

Yet the spirit dominating these artistic works leaves a feeling of absence of any deep movement. A talent that is in step with social development is just not there. The thinking governing new style of art has enclosed it with such a high ramparts that any deviation from or violation of its framework will not go unpunished. The conservative theoreticians of art claim that the days of diverse artistic styles are over. Contemporary life can no longer be displayed in those artistic moulds. They allegedly founded a new style and loudly denounce all existing artistic styles as infertile and valueless. These kinds of works are an attempt to link humans with an unknown circle. Their creations are not derived from any pressing need from life. They have turned to the heavens, they say, to gain a new expression, vision and perception of life.

## **7.2- Islamic Rituals and values and Narrative Arts (animation)**

In order to consolidate its power, the Islamic Republic instigated a process of wholesale Islamisation of media, defining the role and functions that it has to play in an Islamic society. Indeed, media is ritualised in a sense that it has to replicate religious themes and formats approved by the Islamic clerics.

### **7.2.1- The paternalistic perspective and the female**

According to Islamic tradition, visual media should strengthen the character and real place of woman as mother and educator and making clear her sociological duty in relation to rebuilding Islamic society. (The third article of the production policies of Saba Animation Company)<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Saba Animation Company, Guidline, 1995



This implies that animated films should be structured around the centrality of male character that is wiser and make rational decision. He is the protector of family and defender of his woman- these should provide the background to all family based-stories. Thus, the model for Islamic women is a traditional, passive and religious one. Without man woman has no identity. She spends most of her time at home. A woman, before appearing as a woman is portrayed as a mother of her children. It is only in the realm of motherhood that women "evolve". If there is a heroine in a story, she is inevitably married, and if she is a girl she will not face a man at any stage in the story.

Housebound permission and financial benefit (*nafaghe*) to women are two crucial aspects that justify the current situation of women in an Islamic state. According to *sharia* women must obtain permission from their husbands and / or another male head of the family to seek employment or to be employed. The ideological effect of the institution of marriage and the concepts of *mahr* (the contractual payment to the wife for the consummation of marriage) and *nafaghe* give the responsibility for domestic work exclusively to women. The Islamisation of the state and the emphasis on women's place at home meant that the only domestic work that men were willing to help with was shopping, which was an activity outside the home, and carrying heavy objects.<sup>9</sup> The above themes is often implied in the narrative of an animated film.

### **7.2.2- Martyrdom (*shahadat*), highest model for humanity**

In order to endeavour to keep alive the epic valour of the youths of the country [Iran], religious piety and Qur'anic examples should be used in

---

<sup>9</sup> Poya, Maryam, *Women, Work and Islamism (Ideology and Resistance in Iran)*, Zed Books Ltd., London, 1999, p. 143.

structuring programmes (The fifth article of the production policies of Saba Animation Company).

There is a strong belief among Islamic community that *shohada* (martyrs) follow a spiritual road to save the people, particularly those of women and girls of a Moslem community so as to preserve the chastity of that community (nation). The body is sinful according to Islamic beliefs and is the embodiment of earthy temptations. Body is the gateway to the devil. Moslem believes that when they go to hajj (the holy journey to Mecca which is obligatory for every Muslim during the life) their pre - hajj body, including its material and spirituality dies and they are born again with a new sinless body. In relation to the after life the most crucial issue for a Moslem is how do they want to answer to God about their sin? Among all who address God only martyrs go before God without any question. All the films made in the 1980s portrayed their characters that saw martyrdom ultimate achievement in their life. The characters who become martyrs at the end of films are usually preachers during their earthy life. Throughout a film such characters deliver strong monologues of advice on morals, behaviour and giving attention to the next life. Accordingly, in Iran/Iraq war, Iranian soldiers easily accepted that they had to go to war without giving any thought to dying. However, such characterization ignores the reality of life and usually results in a character that lacks credibility.

### **7.2.3- Islamic stereotype life**

Emphasis should be placed on Islamic-Iranian identity and de-emphasise perceptions of inferiority; avoid presenting a weak picture of Iranians and Moslems; avoid magnification of the west<sup>10</sup> (Saba, article 12)

In Islamic custom men are always together, and women are together. If the family has guests, or goes visiting, men sit around together; while women are gathering in the kitchen. Even the children play separately. A filmmaker must ensure that the two families are never placed in a situation where boys and girls have to play together. This is undoubtedly why naming or talking of physical love is considered offensive in Islamic Iranian culture. To enter this realm is in general a sin. Therefore, an Islamic filmmaker must keep the boundaries of the traditional family clean and keep the secrets of family life within this structure. With all of the religious anguish and helplessness that arises out of this, filmmakers have chosen to give in the strong policy guidelines to produce films without main female in their narratives.

### **7.2.4- Love and Sex taboos**

Emphasis should be placed on the union between religion and other aspects of cultural life and present a significant model of family (Saba, article 3)<sup>11</sup>.

Love is directed at the other world. Earthy love is introduced as sterile and life on earth valueless. There is a belief that to picture a love affair of the earthly variety ultimately does away with morality and the values of faith and the divine. Thus in Islamic stories men and women do not kiss, hold hands, woo or make earthly love. They do not share a bed, sit by each other, or go walking together.

Educational values are brought in against sexual desire. Sexual taboos, which are normally addressed in mixed societies, are intermingled with religious fears and the

---

<sup>10</sup> Saba Animation Company, The Guildline, 1995, the production policy.

<sup>11</sup> Saba, Ibid.

terror of sin. These in turn are the source of a variety of social disturbances. This is because religion has devised a punishment for sexual pleasure and sex, not just for the act itself, but even for such thoughts. Sexual inclinations are satanic and bad. Sexual excitement is a calamity for humans, a torture. It is almost destructive. *Hejab*, significantly given the name of "barricade", is encouraged. In Islamic stories, youth have no sexual feeling or inclinations. Examples can be found in hundreds of tales and "war works". The persistence of sexual repression gives rise to a disease - like unreal growth of such entities as "obligation", "duty", "purity and honor, bravery and self denial. Sexual behaviors are defined as something outside life itself. For this reason the young man is in battle with himself. He has to dry up sexual desire in himself and fight off sexual temptations. Superstition tries its best to replace sexual instinct with another. God and the Qur'an are amongst the tools by which sexual instincts are repressed, and joy condemned. Any pleasure is only explained by reference to God. The religious person gets pleasure through self-torment.<sup>12</sup>

#### **7.2.5- Sadness, joys and prays**

Rule and run spiritual and religious programs should persuade and encourage children and youths to pray and fulfil other religious duties (Saba, article 4)<sup>13</sup>

Through these actions, characters have to try to overcome earthly joy, and seek their pleasure in the heavens. In this context, prayer is a new behaviour to enter into people's public life. *The Komeil* prayer (a lengthy prayer on Thursday night), *the Nodbeh* prayer

---

<sup>12</sup> Mir-Hosseini, Ziba, *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), ch 7. Basmenji, Kaveh, *All for love in Iran's cinema MET correspondent in Tehran, metimes.com*.

<sup>13</sup> Saba Animation Company, *The Guidelines*, 1995, the production policy

(lengthy prayer on Friday morning), and mourning ceremonies such *Mouhaaram*, and a variety of prayers located in common aspects of life. Sadness became one of the main elements in artistic creation and joy, happiness and laughter cannot be said to be close to the essence of art and beauty.

Central in this respect is the prevalence and enforcement of 'Islamic values' within the educational sphere. This has led primarily to a situation where the sexes are separated in most aspects of the public sphere, a situation which is then replicated in cultural modes of expression. In the case of animation these constraints have led to a situation where editors have altered storylines and changed the relationships between characters, e.g. from a boyfriend and girlfriend to sister and brother, in order for them to comply with the officially decreed religious mores. In many cases these changes have resulted in productions that are often confused, compromised and incomprehensible.

The existence and celebration of culturally specific religious ceremonies also heavily influence broadcasting schedules in Iran. Foremost among these events are the months of Muharram, which mourns the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, and the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. During these periods religious programmes dominate Iranian television screens. This extends to the area of animation and the educational needs of children where cartoons and animated films are made and broadcast to reflect the values and religious ethos of these religious occasions.

During Muharram like most other religious ceremonies in the country there are communal gatherings at the mosques or private homes. Practicing Muslims will dress in black the traditional color for mourning. *Tazia* (Passion plays) are usually performed

during the first ten days of the month, while processions and self-beatings are carried out on the day of *Ashura* itself. Evenings are spent at the mosques praying and mourning. These are accompanied with *marthiya* (funeral hymns) accompanied with poetry expressing extreme sorrow and affection which appears to be older. Children are encouraged to participate in an event called *Shaam-e Ghariban* (the night of the deserted) re-enacting the tragedy as the orphaned kids abandoned in Karbala. Children are divided into two groups they recite poetry and sing songs related to the events and answer each other back and forth. All expressions of emotions are exaggerated and kids are encouraged to beat themselves lightly, cry, shout and even scream.<sup>14</sup>

Religious events are then ritualised into highly emotive stories and given visual constructs in film production. These religiously inspired animations usually conform to a set pattern where powerful and emotive rhythmical music is contrasted with the sombre gravity of the occasions, which the visuals attempt to depict. However, in recent years some television producers have begun to encourage filmmakers to develop and expand these generic conventions. This has led to the emergence of a number of works which have tried to experiment with the formal depictions of the religious events such as the altering or removal of soundtracks or the insertion of descriptive titles. Other innovations included the introduction of classical Persian music and word based titles to many of the productions. However, these changes merely served to cause confusion and a lack of understanding amongst the audience so used were they to the repetitive conventions of the religious format.

---

<sup>14</sup> Ali Karmi, *Muharram*, [www.culture\\_of\\_Iran.com](http://www.culture_of_Iran.com), 24/6/2002.

### 7.3- The Mode of Address in Animation Films

There are three key questions concerning the mode and language used in animation need to be addressed:

How does the illusion of movement define animation?

What is the capacity and function of the animated film?

What is the meaning of animation and its synonyms?

These and other terminological questions have been, and remain, some of the most important issues that animation filmmakers have had to continuously address. Every nation has attempted to articulate its own particular response to these issues by recourse to indigenous cultural and artistic forms. This is further highlighted by the fact that even after a hundred years of animation history, thousands of hours of film and a multitude of different techniques and styles, there still remains no single and easily comprehensible definition of animation. In essence, animation could be described as being an art form in search of its own particular essence through a continuous and ongoing process of self-definition, which serves to highlight the complex and fractured site of its being. There in lies the power of animation, which according to award winning filmmaker Frederic Back;

“[Animation] has the power to transcend cultural barriers and become a universal language that is easily understood by those who are word illiterate. Animation is a wonderful media to describe, not always reality, but a strong message. You can create a reality that is very attractive and you can reach everyone - children and adults”.<sup>15</sup>

It is in response to these questions, within the context of indigenous political and cultural developments, that I will attempt to define the meaning and function of

---

<sup>15</sup> Lent, Johan A (Edited), Animation in Asia and the Pacific. (Kenyon, Heather, *Animation for Development in South Asia*), Johan Libbey Publishing, P.225, 2001.

animation as it exists in Iran. The starting point for such an investigation must begin with the question “what is animation”, which one scholar in the field has described as:

To animate, and the related words, animation, animated and animator all derive from the Latin verb, *animare*, which means ‘to give life to’ and within the context of the animated film, this largely means the artificial creation of the illusion of movement in inanimate lines and forms.<sup>16</sup>

According to the Webster dictionary animation is defined as:

A: motion picture made by photographing the successive position of inanimate objects (as puppets or mechanical parts). An: animated cartoon is an animation picture made from a series of drawings simulating motion by means of slight progressive changes.

Norman McLaren's famous definition of animation sees it as:

“Not the art of drawings that move but the art of movement that are drawn; what happens between each frame is much more important than what exists on each frame.”<sup>17</sup>

Richard Taylor has referred to the function of the animated film as:

“A piece of industrial design fashioned for a purpose, which in this case is to communicate. There are three functions of animated films: to entertain, to educate or to inform”.<sup>18</sup>

However, despite these definitions the central task still remains to locate the essential characteristics of animation that allow us to redefine and locate it as a unique and developing art form. Such an undertaking is based on the dual notion of viewing it as

---

<sup>16</sup> Wells, Paul, Understanding Animation. London: Routledge, P.10, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Lent, Johan A (Edited), Animation in Asia and the Pacific, (T.Y.Hu, Gigi, *The 'Art' Movement Between Frames in Hong Kong Animation*), Johan Libbey Publishing, p.105, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Taylor, Richard, The Encyclopaedia of Animation Techniques, London: focal press, p.9, 1996.



an artistic and independent form of media but one which is also entwined with, and different from, the technical and theoretical aspects of other visual arts such as cinema and graphic art. Furthermore, these issues must be placed within the specific and unique cultural and social characteristics that influence the development of animation throughout different countries.

If live-action actors have different accents, facial features and clothing or live in differently styled homes, viewers may be fascinated or distracted, by the cultural differences and completely miss the message. Worse yet, they may feel that it is a problem only facing these 'other' people and not their concern at all. Therefore, it is very important to take advantage of animation's ability to smooth over situations and make them appear as if they could happen anywhere and be everyone's problem or situation.<sup>19</sup>

It is only by recourse to such a multi perspective theoretical approach that animators and experts in the field will be able to offer a comprehensive and detailed critique of animation, which seeks to locate it as an art form of social relevance in a constant state of development. Such an approach also aids the communicative function of animation films and provides the audience with a much more comprehensive understanding of the contextual meanings of the works they are viewing. The famous American animator Chuck Jones, (one of the few Hollywood animators who has constantly adapted his work to changing styles and techniques), has highlighted the importance of these issue by stating that:

---

<sup>19</sup> Lent, Johan A (Edited), Animation in Asia and the Pacific. (Kenyon, Heather, *Animation for Development in South Asia*), Johan Libbey Publishing, P.226, 2001.

If we ignore our heritage; if we forget or allow to lapse one of the most important factors in the art of pure animation whether it's a drop of water, a dinosaur, a paramecium, a Mc Laren dancing line, a blob, a silver wind, a silver flute, a beautifully animated, delightfully floating mass of our own introspection- if we forget that these wonders cannot be accomplished by simple means; if we use limited animation because we can get away with it; then we are overlooking the very essence of our craft and callously destroying history itself. 'We are fortunate, all of us, that animation is so appealing in its versatility. All over the world the most extraordinary things are happening. From Yugoslavia to Japan, South America to, I suppose, Lapland, young men and women are trying new ideas of the most imaginative sort. The medium is springing in to life on a thousand fronts with a million facets.'<sup>20</sup>

In Iran, animation is still very much viewed and defined within very narrow limits that tend to overlook the rich artistic heritage and developmental history of the medium. This has resulted in a situation where animation is simply equated with cartoons or puppet shows that exhibit generic traits such as linear narratives and comic themes, which are purely entertainment based and mainly directed at children.

An example of this underdevelopment can be seen in the fact that up until recently the term "Drawn Movement" was used in Iran to describe all forms of animation. However, this term merely describes one of many animation techniques and has become a catch-all phrase due to its position as the most popular and widely recognised form of animation i.e. cartoons for children. Part of the reason for this dominance (a situation not unique to Iran) can be attributed to the world-wide success and influence

---

<sup>20</sup> Halas, John, Masters of Animation, published by BBC Books, London 1987, p.59.

of Walt Disney whose work is synonymous with this particular style. Indeed, Kit Laybourne has shown Disney's dominance in this style and form of animation:

Traditional American animation is Cel - Animation. The technique has taken its name from the transparent sheets of celluloid that bore the likenesses of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella, Bambi, Pinocchio, Peter Pan, and the special universe of Fantasia. It is no coincidence that the classic animated feature films are almost all the work of the great Disney studios. More than any other individual, Walt Disney guides the development and refinement of Cel - Animation techniques.<sup>21</sup>

The dominance of the Disney style has led to a general neglect and lack of understanding and development of other animation techniques, which are not necessarily based on cell animation drawing. In certain instances this has contributed to a lack of experimentation and stagnation in the field and has discouraged new talent from entering the industry. It is this equating of animation with drawing which Ahmad Alasty<sup>22</sup> sees as being the main problem for the art form: "animation is an expansive art form that includes and must include many different strands if it is to develop artistically. The problem however is that for many people animation is simply defined as cartoons made for children. This is a misconception and remains the most serious and important issue, which all those involved in animation, must seek to redress". Kit Laybourne has also referred to this problem:

The biggest single misconception about animation is that you need to be an artist to do it that you need to know how to draw. To disprove this, just skim through the pages of this book and you'll find frame enlargements

---

<sup>21</sup> Laybourne, Kit, The Animation book, published by Crown Publishers, inc., New York, P.171, 1979.

<sup>22</sup> Alasty, Ahmad, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussions and writings about animation cinema), assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, Tehran, 1999, P.139

from many films that don't have a single drawn line in them. You can be a prize-winning animator and never touch a pencil or paintbrush.<sup>23</sup>

For many years Iranian animators have attempted to find a suitable Persian term that captures the essence of the art form. Although the literal Persian language translation of animation is "Life Create"; this has been somewhat problematic due to religious mores which dictate that God is the sole creator of life. The Iranian animator Nureddin Zarrinkelk has attempted to surmount these problems, whilst at same time trying to overcome restrictive definitions such as cartoon and drawn animation, by trying to develop more expansive terms of definition. These undertakings have seen him use terms such as, "*Mozhakke Ghalame*" (*Mozhakke*=laughable + *Ghalame*=pen-shaped) and "*Jan Bakhshi*" (*Jan* = life, solute+ *Bakhshi*=bestower).

The following interview highlights Zarrinkelk's search for a workable and comprehensive Persian definition of animation.

Q: Is there an acceptable and workable description for animation in Persian?

A: The search for an adequate Persian definition first began in 1974 when the Iranian Cultural Institute chose the term *Jan Bakhshi* as the appropriate descriptive term for animation. However, because of the newness of the term at the time it was very difficult for it to be generally acceptable as a bona fide definition and as a result it has been replaced by other definitions such as *Mozhakke-Ghalame* and Drawn Movement, which I find less suitable.

Q: Why do you find "*Jan-Bakhshi*" as a more agreeable term in describing animation?

---

<sup>23</sup> Laybourne, Kit, The Animation book, published by Crown Publishers, inc., New York, P.3, 1979.

A: Because the exact meaning of the term serves as an apt description of the function of animation, which is to give life to that which is lifeless, in other words to create life through movement. In this sense it is a fluent and rhythmic term. However, while I agree with the use of this term in the sense of animation giving life through movement, this is not to equate it in any way with the life creating abilities of God.<sup>24</sup>

*Jan-Bakhshi* is a term still very much in use in Iran. This arises from the fact that it offers a comprehensive definition of animation that seeks to include and emphasise its many different styles and techniques. However, as has been seen, it is far from being the definitive definition of animation and it is a term that is constantly changing in response to social and political circumstances. This was clearly evident in 1998 when, at the first animation festival to be held in Tehran since the revolution, a new definition, "*Poya Nemaei*", emerged. This new term defines animation as a process based on "repetition" and "time". However, most participants at the festival, myself included, found the term somewhat clumsy and unsatisfactory.

*Poya Nemaei* is the new term recently authorised by *Farhang-estane ollom* (The Academy of Science). In my opinion, it is not a suitable definition for animation, because it is based solely on the idea of being the opposite of non-movement. By this definition, *Poya Nemaei* suggests that an animation character has the same potential as a human for movement. This ignores the fact that animation uses a whole host of different techniques that suggest movement with the aim of transferring a particular feeling or emotion to an audience.

It must also be noted that much animation uses static pictures in creating certain moods and rhythms, which leaves a term such as *Poya Nemaei*

---

<sup>24</sup> Oleeyaei, Mohammad, Pooyesh, *A Periodical on Literature and Art for Children and Young Adults, An Interview with Nourredin Zarrinkelk*, published by IIDYA, Vol.1 No.2, P.62, December 1989.

somewhat redundant. I believe that animation, like "cinema" and "television", is a unique term that defies simple and easy categorisation.<sup>25</sup>

As I have argued throughout my thesis, education and publishing are essential areas for the development and progress of animation in Iran. In this respect the formulation and use of proper theoretical terminology plays a crucial role. The emergence of such terminology arises from, and needs to be located within, the specific cultural and sociological developments of the country. In the case of Iran these developments can be seen to have their roots in the nineteenth century when the country experienced its first full-scale contact with the Western world.

Terminology was brought into focus in Iran as a result of the familiarisation of a certain strata of Iranian society with the scientific and technological developments occurring in Western societies during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These changes began with, Iranians starting to visit European countries (or other Asian Countries under European influence e.g. the Ottoman Empire), the dispatch of students to study abroad, the translation many European works of literature into Persian, the introduction of printing to Iran, the introduction of European financial and military experts and advisors into the country, and the establishment of the first Iranian college, *Darolfonoon*. In this respect, the European influence began to expand and influence most social, cultural, scientific and technical aspects in Iran. As a result, an increasing number of concepts began to enter Iranian speech, most of which were expressed in their foreign form - French, English, Russian, Turkish, Portuguese, and alike.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Pesyan, Sasan, *interview via letter on the topic of the function and definition of animation terms in Iranian animation and production policy at Saba, Tehran (19 May2001)*.

<sup>26</sup> The First Seminar on Terminology, Tehran, February 2000.

The reaction to the introduction of foreign ideals and terminology in Iran has traditionally emerged from within three different ideological groupings. The first group centres on those individuals who are concerned with protecting the Persian language and culture from what they perceive to be the influence and hegemony of foreign ideas. From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after the Constitutional Revolution (1906), and more recently after the 1979 Revolution, these nationalistic sentiments have been very sensitive to any foreign encroachments in Iran. This group perceives the Persian language to have the ability to account for all foreign terminology. It includes many individual scholars and writers as well as government institutions who are charged with the responsibility of finding the Persian equivalence for foreign terms. The 1979 Islamic revolution was followed by a literary revolution. Although the combination of "pure" literary values and political concerns continued, their existence in the post revolutionary literature of this period was marked by the desire to redefine oneself in that changed society.<sup>27</sup>

The second group belongs to those people who are strongly influenced by foreign culture and view the use and knowledge of foreign terminology and ideas as a mark of learning and prestige. This group is mostly composed of those individuals that have studied or lived abroad for a period of time.

The final group includes those individuals who, whilst concerned with the preservation of the Persian language, see no reason to be resistant to the introduction of scientific and technical terminology from foreign sources. They believe that certain terms that

---

<sup>27</sup> Khorrami, Mohammad Mehdi, *Iranian Literature*, Article, professor of Persian literature and language at New York University, 2001.

emerge from specific cultural backgrounds have precise meanings, which generally become incomprehensible if they are translated into another language. This is more sensible approach to the issue of introducing new terms and concepts as it guards against language being used as tool of propaganda and cultural bigotry. Furthermore, it allows for the application of generally agreed precise meaning, which is essential for serious theoretical and academic debate. This is an extremely important point as the vagueness of new terms such as "*Poya Nemaei*" means that each time they are used they have to be qualified. This is a situation that is further exacerbated by the proliferation of different animation techniques, such as pixillation, that have no Persian equivalents. Another example is the term *Tasveer-Sazy* (illustration), which is the Persian translation for graphic art. However, illustration is but one technique in graphic art and the elevation of a part to stand for the whole leads to a miscomprehension of the art form.

The first issue of the Iranian animation magazine *Simiya*, (published annually since 2000), set out to address the issue of terminology and definition by stating in its editorial that: "In this magazine the term animation is used as a term with specific meanings. We use the terms '*Poya Nemaei Sahktan*', '*Poya Nemaei*', '*Poya Nemaagar*' and "*Poya Nema*" to mean "Animation" "to Animate", "Animated and Animator".<sup>28</sup>

However, despite this declaration the publication quickly reverted to the use of the term animation rather than its proliferation of Persian substitutes. Indeed, the first page of the publication refers to the former term more than five times. This can be attributed to an aspect of globalisation effect where the product and brand-name are simultaneously

---

<sup>28</sup> *Simia, Animation Quarterly*, No.1, winter 2001.



transmitted together and the latter is often identified with the product a well-known company like Walt Disney.

Language is a tool of communication and education and as such demands that it be used in its most easily comprehensible and intelligible form. If this is not done meaning becomes lost and understanding becomes impossible. The concern and debate over the use of language in describing the functioning and operation of animation in Iran is one of the most pressing problems for the future theoretical and practical development of the industry in the country.

#### **7.4- Concluding remarks**

Throughout this chapter I have tried to analysis the thematic and chronological relationship between animation, both as broadcasting medium and experimental art form and describe the sources of inspirations that have determined the content and forms of animation in Iran. The assumed animation audience developed during the past forty years has been continuously revised and expanded to cover larger segments of people.

Animation, a cinematically western-born phenomenon, has been conceptually and terminologically theorized by the originator countries and transferred through many globalised schemes, such as ASIFA programmes for developing animation, to the third world countries. In the 1960s, Iran underwent through major socio-economic change and increasingly integrated into global market economy from which animation together with a host of other cultural and art forms entered in the country. The main issue posed at that time was how to marry and adapt the internal socio-culture conditions with that of the internally induced influences so as to create an indigenous animation industry in

Iran. It was a challenge to the Iranian animators to define the functions and forms that could represent both the traditions and modernity in Iranian animation.

By the late 1970s, the Pahlavi's westernisation policies and secularisation of society was challenged and overthrown. The newly installed Islamic regime instigated a wholesale revision of the role of media including animation where the religious beliefs and values have increasingly become the determinant factors affecting all forms of artistic works- from music and sound to the circumstances of relationships between characters in animation.

Two issues raised in this chapter: theoretical and practical aspects of animation.

- The practical aspects covered industrial and production issues related to short and long-term strategies for the importation of suitable animation in correspondence with the cultural policies of the new Islamic regime. The development of indigenous production aimed to replace imported animation with Iranian animation. This part of the development process followed a predictable and well-planned program.
- The theoretical aspects relate to the socio-cultural background and future approaches of the country. International communication, the expansion of the population and new technology provoked discussion about terminological influences, audience size and the function of animation and their relation to the above issues. Academic and educational efforts are helpful in clarifying many of theoretical issues. However as these issues they are not stable and at various periods of time the nature and type of knowledge and audience will change,

solutions cannot allow for bigotry, censorship or mandates limiting creative behaviour.

The next chapter provides the result of a sample questionnaire addressed to both foreign and Iranian animators whose knowledge and experience will clarify some of the points raised in this chapter.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **International and Indigenous Views on the Iranian Animation: A Questionnaire Analysis**

This chapter presents the results of two questionnaires prepared for this study. They are intended to bridge informational gap and clarify some of ambiguities appeared during my research of the available literature on animation in Iran. Moreover, the views and suggestions of the respondents to questionnaire are analysed in conjecture to the development of the Iranian animation, so as to show the strengths and weaknesses of the current policy of the main animator centers in Iran. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first summarises the views of 30 international respondents and second reports on 30 Iranian respondents on various issues related to development of animation in Iran.

#### **8.1-Section one: International views on Iranian animation**

The international data was collected by two different means – in conference and festival attendance and posting questionnaire. I attended the 12th annual SAS conference in Norway in the summer of 2000 (appendix12). It is the only speciality animation conference in the world, which brings together theorists, authors, animation lecturers and animators. The majority of participants were from countries English

speaking countries and continental Western Europe. The majority of respondents to my questionnaire were from Great Britain, Australia and the United States.

Because the data collected in this conference did not include representatives from Eastern Europe, I chose to send questionnaires to a selected people who were [are] directly or indirectly involved in animation. It appeared that these respondents tended to know little about animation in Iran, hence I decided to sent questionnaires to people around the world who were known to have links to Iranian animation through attendance at or participation in the 'Tehran International Animation Festival'. Furthermore, in October 2001 I attended at the FAN International Animation Festival convened in Norwich UK. My participation in this festival gave me the opportunity to engage in professional discussion with filmmakers and I used this venue for distributing my questionnaires. The majority of respondents from this collection point were British.

### **8.1.1- Questionnaire Results and Discussion**

There was general agreement that the following countries had well-developed animation industries – the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Russia, Spain, Germany, Australia, Korea, China and Japan. The experiences of these countries are relevant to Iran because there are three key traits that are shared by all of them: 1) the idea of animation as media, 2) the idea that audiences have a human personality that reflects emotions and sentiments and 3) the idea of local and national culture.

The respondents' views on animation industry in these countries are given below:

- USA - a long history, big traditional and well-developed film industry and popularity of the Disney studios, and an efficient studio system.
- UK- animation courses at many leading art colleges, very beneficial influence of channel 4 in fostering this art form.
- Canada - originated with the National Film Board of Canada (NFBC), government support and excellent training institutions.
- France -very talented computer animators, encouraged by very low quotas on French production for TV.
- Russia- films used to be funded under the communist regime, rich heritage in drama, puppetry and story telling in the culture.
- Japan - big national market and indigenous and highly popular animation industry, highly distinctive styles- Anima, Manga- world-wide followers.
- Spain, Germany- in general supported by the EU's cartoon programme and media initiatives.
- Australia- an expanding offshore production and television advertising.
- Korea, China- acting as production houses for western countries.

Eastern European countries and Russia were the first countries that come immediately to mind with regard to government sponsorship. However, it became clear that the success of animation in Canada, France and the UK was also strongly reliant on government sponsorship. Animation in these capitalist economies could not progress without their government assistance.

### **8.1.2- National TV channels as a key domestic market**

Attention to the domestic market even working in an international market is important as can be seen with Japanese and American industries. Therefore, concentrating on the domestic market will be the best strategy for a developing country such as Iran that has not kept pace with standards achieved in international animation market. However, it is essential to draft a long-term strategy not only to defend national market but also to improve the quality of animated film so as to compete with dominant animator producing countries. Such a strategy has become more feasible undertaking as computer-based technologies have increasingly become accessible to all countries. The unique Iranian cultural heritage built upon a hybrid of ancient Persian civilisation and Islamic civilisation together with population over sixty million (over 60 percent of population are under 24-year-old) potential viewers for five TV channels provide sufficiently large domestic market for a thriving animation industry in Iran. It is, however, generally agreed that the success of the national animation industry is, to large extent, dependent on accompanied steps taken in establishing an efficient distribution system and exhibition agencies.

Several respondents agreed that television has an important role to play in boosting artistic creativity. One of most important domestic markets for animation in Iran is [could be] broadcasting animation to the huge number of children in the country. The children's audience has been discussed in previous chapters. In broadcasting, among all animation forms, cartoons need to be most emphasised. As Pat Rain Webb an ASIFA board member, says" well-developed animation industries exist in Europe: can be

largely attributed to the priority given to the cartoon animation, especially in Spain, France and the UK.<sup>1</sup>

### **8.1.3- Overseas production as an industrial force in animation**

The existence of cheap overseas production markets in the Far Eastern countries for European and American companies is an important factor in bringing local animators to the attention of world animation community. However, as a catalyst for the development of animation, overseas animation production proved to be inadequate in transmitting animation knowledge to these countries. An Australian respondent relates their experiences:

Australian animators were given a boost when Hanna and Barbera established an offshore production site in Australia in the seventies, followed by Disney a decade later. However, the work only involved creating simple layouts, tracing and painting. The real work of animation-character and story development, voice-overs, sound and final editing etc was, and still is, largely done in America. In my opinion the establishment of American animation studios in Australia encouraged practitioners, but discouraged an Australian style in cartoon shorts.<sup>2</sup>

### **8.1.4- Academic qualifications or apprenticeship**

Currently, the selection of best educational procedures for entry into the field of animation are seriously discussed by scholars and animators as well as administrators in Iran (chapter 6). Two options are considered; animation should be based either on

---

<sup>1</sup> Webb, Pat Rain (British), Freelance writer, film programmer plus voluntary work running the UK group of ASIFA, questionnaire by mail, 9 July 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Palmer, Roger, (British/Australian) Curator La Trobe University Art Museum; producing and directing animated advertisements for Australian and American television (1960s – 1970s); More recent his interest has been of a theoretical and historical nature, but remain involved with multi-media installation in art gallery exhibitions, questionnaire, the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Society for Animation Studies conference, Trondheim, Norway August 5 - 9<sup>th</sup> 2000.



academic qualifications or on apprenticeship. In an interview, Saeed Tavakolian an Iranian animation lecturer explained in the issue in the following ways: In my [Tavakolian] opinion, from now, there is no need for the concepts of a master or doctorate degree in animation. I suppose that a degree will be useful for people who want to think about animation in an active academic and theoretical way. However, at present, in Iran, we need people who, on the one hand, are able to make animation so therefore have technical ability, and on the other, we need people who will be able to use imagination and creativity in filmmaking. What this means is that we always need to think in terms of having both directors and scriptwriters.<sup>3</sup>

The respondent's views on the best ways of animator training can be summarised in three groups:

- The first believes that one or the other of the systems is the solution, e.g. "academic qualifications are the best, or apprenticeships give a chance to use theory and to make contact with people who already work in the field".
- The Second believes that selection between one of two systems is dependent upon a number of conditions relating animation to society and the individual, e.g. "are you going to work in the industry or are you looking for on artistic qualification".
- Finally the view of the majority of respondents is that "a combination of both is ideal".

Pat Webb argues that 'these days in the UK it is rare for a graduate not to find work and although they may not make it to fame and glory they all certainly seem to find

---

<sup>3</sup> Khoshdel, Jamshid, *a discussion with Saeed Tavakolian, Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation)*, published by Assistant Research of I.I.D.C.Y.A, p.208, Tehran, 1999.

employment'.<sup>4</sup> Principally the existence of either the first or second view from above arises from a shared anxiousness. There is a worry within most societies that the levels of activity of both their education system and industry are not sufficiently synchronised. Another area of potential mismatch, as can be seen in Iran is that animation graduates lack practical background skills in areas such as movement design, background drawing and lay out design so that they are not able to cover the needs of studios. Or, when they do possess those skills because of the 'culture' experienced in their academic courses "graduates want to be more independent and do not necessarily fit into the studio system".<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, most respondents pointed out and explained the traits and function of each system. They believe both academic qualifications and apprenticeships are simultaneously and organically related to each other; one can't work without the other. Because of the similarity and relatedness among of viewpoints expressed by respondents, which are the reflections of experience in their countries, can provide accessible models for the Iranian animation and find best combination between education and industry.

#### **8.1.4.1- Academic qualifications are recommended because:**

- Practical classes in drawing, painting, art history and theory are all essential elements in art training for animation.
- They allow for greater exposure to a variety of styles and techniques.
- Aspects of culture are considered which provide a base artistic works.
- They give the best preparation for "auteur" style independent films.
- Students can play with techniques and do research in their own interests.

---

<sup>4</sup> Webb, Pat Rain (British), Freelance writer, film programmer plus voluntary work running the UK group of ASIFA, [questionnaire by mail](#), 9 July 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Webb, Pat Rain (British), Freelance writer, film programmer plus voluntary work running the UK group of ASIFA, [questionnaire by mail](#), 9 July 2001.

- Without breadth of education, the industry would become too self-referential and narrow.
- They provide good knowledge of animation history, theory and basic skills for using equipment.
- Two-four years of art school can be followed by industry jobs that allow one to work his or her way up.
- Education is recommended if you want to develop a broad base of animators.

#### **8.1.4.2- The apprenticeship system is recommended because:**

- The British Animation Training Scheme [BATS] which is for those already working in a studio, produce good animators able to function efficiently in the studio system.
- A year-long course is adequate to learn about theory and fundamentals.
- It is the best form of applied art training.
- Working as an assistant is the best way of learning about the industry.
- It is the best preparation for working in studios.
- Working on the process of filmmaking is a good method.
- Field workshops give a sense of what is now.
- Education is criticized for not responding to the needs of the industry.
- An understanding of studio systems is necessary for employers and employees
- When you are patient and gifted mentor, a clear hierarchy and apparent prospects for a willing student is apprentices.

With few exceptions, the existing domestic spurs that spring from cultural, historical and geo-political experience, there are three main factors that can be generalized to the animation production in other countries:

- 1) Popularity through off shore production - the popularity of the early strong studio system such as that of Disney in the USA, has resulted in some countries acting as major off-shore production plants for North American and European studios.

2) Nationalization through governmental and non-governmental sponsorship - the nationalization of Czech cinematography in 1945 encouraged the restructuring of Czech cinematography including animation, through consideration of key global features of animation. The need for support for animation as a developmental factor which tends to link the past, present and future. This support can be governmental or non-governmental.

3) Production centres through animation schools - animation schools have acted as production centres in terms of industrial factors and have recognized opportunities and encouraged talent. Example include the Turku Art Academy in Finland; Sheridan College in Canada and Volda College which "in the late 1980's had an important influence upon the big expansion of the Norwegian animation industry".<sup>6</sup>

From views expressed by respondents together with the analysis provided in the previous chapters we can argue that there exists the potentiality for application of the mentioned factors in Iran. If serious consideration is given to each one of these factors and each factor is situated in its appropriate place, Iran could join the list of well-developed countries in animation. For instance, in Iran, there are just three degree-level animation courses in the universities that annually accept around 30 students. If they were provided with financial support and necessary facilities for research and experimentation, they would be able to produce 30 short, independent, artistic projects per year, which would be an adequate production record for Iran.

So far I have tried to discuss the views and suggestions of the respondents to my questionnaire outlining socio-political and organizational solutions e.g. education

---

<sup>6</sup> Lien, Torbjorn (Norwegian); teacher of media and animation (Volda Collage) and cartoonist; educated as an animator and have done three films as a student and one after that. Are now planing a 5th film, questionnaire, the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Society for Animation Studies conference, Trondheim, Norway August 5 - 9<sup>th</sup> 2000.

schemes, the stimulation of young people, government sponsorship, thriving production centres, and platforms for exhibition. However there are two additional points that deserve some attention.

First the lack of emphasis on technical aspects in terms of foundation knowledge of production is a danger that could threaten countries such as Iran where animation industry is in nascent stage of development. As some of respondents suggested that the neglect of technical aspects of animation could be seen in lack of emphasis on characters, and storytelling techniques, a slavish rather than inspirational and innovative cartoon designs. Indeed, all these shortcomings are evident in most of animation serials made for the Iranian television, especially those of computer-based animation- often justified for the lack of sufficient funding.

Second, respondents placed heavy emphasis on national and local culture as the most important factor in sustaining the expansion of the industry, particularly for those countries with long and rich historical heritages in painting and literature- the point that has been well-taken by the Iranian animators.

In relations to the points already discussed I was also interested to know my respondents' view about how significant they consider the convention of international festival of animation in Iran and how well they were informed about the Iranian animation. As mentioned earlier, there is no doubt about the importance of festivals for the progression and presentation of the animation of a country. This issue is supported by the fact that animation experts who are involved in research and publications have gained their knowledge of Iranian animation not through published papers or books,

but through their attendance at Iranian festivals or through coming across Iranian animators at international festivals.

"No, except that I attended the children's film festival in Tehran in 1968 or 1969".<sup>7</sup> "I know Nouredin Zarrinkelk who I worked with on the board of ASIFA for some years. I also met Mahin Javaherian when her film *Once Again I'll salute The Sun* was screened at the Hiroshima festival in Japan".<sup>8</sup> "I was in Iran only once (1999) and I visited the SABA studio in Tehran. The famous Iranian animator Nouredin Zarrinkelk was my colleague on the ASIFA board".<sup>9</sup>

The attendance of artists and experts at Tehran's two International Animation Festivals in 1999 and 2001 and their viewing of dozens artistic animated films shown clearly the importance of the festivals in informing foreign observers of the development of animation in Iran. The festivals gave the opportunities to the Iranian artists to view and discuss the works of foreign participants and learn more about shortcomings of their own works. One respondent commented that the festivals could be used for marketing purposes for both commercial works and independent works. In fact, the festivals provide often the only opportunity to see independent artistic works. Moreover, festivals could provide short courses to those interested artists. The managers of art centres should concentrate primarily on the home market, another respondent insisted upon, to enable the Iranian animators to learn about domestic cultural market using artistic creativity with entrepreneurial senses in choice of content and forms of animation, whether it is feature films, children programmes or

---

<sup>7</sup> Robin Allan (British), lecturers in film, drama and English and has been studying Disney for most of his life (he began to teach animation at his college and then he studied Disney for his Ph.D.). He has written a book "Walt Disney and Europe", questionnaire, the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Society for Animation Studies conference, Trondheim, Norway, August 5<sup>th</sup> 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Webb, Pat Rain (British), Freelance writer, film programmer plus voluntary work running the UK group of ASIFA, questionnaire by mail, 9 July 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Jiri Kubicek (Czech), lecturer, He has worked 27 years in the field of animation as scriptwriter, script editor, and director, questionnaire by mail, 18 October 2000.

independent art works. Of course, some degree of financial support and security is necessary to attract and retain talented animators to the industry.

However, the pursuit of this strategy entails risks, so it is important to start with smaller, more readily marketable products such as advertising commercials, public service announcements and children television programs because "feature films are the final step in the development of an industry".<sup>10</sup> The important points raised above are the extent of their correlativity. If artistic progression achieves a reputation for Iranian animation, commission production can serve as an engine for the animation industry. Experts advise that even artists must take account of these points in their professional life. Having a presence in the commission animation market is key and reciprocally restricting one's presence to non-artistic atmospheres destroys the spirituality of works and the shaping of independent style. Independent animation feeds innovation in advertising and sets the trends in technique. Children's cartoons popularise that genre of animation and a lot of money can be made if merchandising is linked.<sup>11</sup> We can see that other rapidly developing nations such as Singapore also give consideration to both sides of animation.

Singapore is keen to pursue the art form for reasons other than monetary reward and to create awareness that animation is more than just getting a slice of the cartoon and merchandising pie. Therefore, side by side with a growing commercial animation industry is an increasing interest in

---

<sup>10</sup> Walz, Gene (Canadian/ US), professor of film studies and animation; scriptwriter, story editor, reviewer and historian, questionnaire by mail, 26 June 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Knight, Laura (British), senior lecturer in animation, made four-degree films, set up educational charity to work with non-professional in 1989 in Liverpool, In the period 1989- 1995 worked as commercial producer of animation also, questionnaire, the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Society for Animation Studies conference, Trondheim, Norway August 5 - 9<sup>th</sup> 2000.

experimental animation and in producing original works for the sake of art and culture.<sup>12</sup>

As part of independent artistic animation there are many non-mainstream techniques that are routinely used in students' experimental projects such as drawing on film, cut-outs, shadow animation and simple non-cell techniques which can be produced with a minimal budget and equipment. Because these works are produced mostly in universities by students who are not subject to commercial constraints, the freedom of creating, screening and presenting helps to raise the self confidence of the young generation. However I have identified a lot of such works gathering dust in university archives as nobody takes it seriously so they gradually disappears.

This example of the lack of a connection between independent, creative and commercial markets illustrates the potential for stagnation of a country's animation industry. The Saba Company in Iran is working to avoid this situation by carrying out an in-depth study of the animation industry, including elements such as working conditions; and trying to establish a methodology that would ensure efficient production of TV series without sacrificing creativity. The following quote illustrates the available potential for developing animation in Iran:

Iranian animation initially seems very simple and symbolic; the stories are allegorical, can be read on many levels and are enjoyed by adults and kids alike. Local myths and fairytales are bound up in a sure grasp of technique. Often meandering, when you release yourself to the pace of these films you can literally get lost in them.

---

<sup>12</sup> A. Lent, John (Edited), Animation Asia in and the Pacific, (Soon, Lilian, *Animation in Singapore*), Johan Libbey Publishing, p.155, 2001.



In recent years liberalization has become more visible in Iranian cinema sensitive issues are aired on screen and scripts no longer have to pass the censorship board which was set up with the 1979 revolution. A powerful group of filmmakers and animators have emerged, growing in number and reputation, who are exploring the social and political territory of their country.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, a liberal view on indigenous aspects of Iranian animation is emerging.

## **8.2- Section two: Indigenous views on Iranian animation**

This section examines looks at domestic questionnaires that were administered during my fieldwork trip to Iran in summer 2001. This questionnaire was designed around two groups of questions (see appendix 12). The first sets of questions are very similar to or even the same as the first questionnaire. The next group of questions is based around more indigenous aspects of Iranian animation so I prepared a particular list of people to receive the questionnaires. Principally, these people include many experts and filmmakers whose names, activities and views I had noted while conducting my early research or who have been identified through research as a group or organizations consisting of pioneers, lecturers or animation students. However, sometimes collecting the questionnaires in Iran was more difficult than doing so abroad and after many contacts with people some refused to respond to the questionnaire. In cases where I was disappointed by any reply to the questionnaire I attempted to interview the respondents directly and indirectly and made a record of their responses.

---

<sup>13</sup> Iranian Panorama, [www.mifa.net/mifs/irsnina.htm-3k](http://www.mifa.net/mifs/irsnina.htm-3k), Saturday 30 June 2001.

Before beginning the main part of my analysis, I would like to mention that some responses have already been mentioned in earlier chapters when they were directly relevant to the point under discussion.

### **8.2.1- The place of women in the animation work force**

Before the revolution (1979), Iranian women had, at least on paper, obtained the right to equal employment. Although the post-revolutionary state accepted this right in theory, in practice it did not facilitate female employment. Since neither the public nor the private sector could operate without female employees, nor for that matter could most households survive without women's income, they continued to have a presence in the workforce. But their employment levels have fallen drastically over the past decade and a half. Examination of the official statistics highlights this fact<sup>14</sup>:

Women's employment levels fell from 13.7 per cent of total employment in 1976, to 8.8 percent in 1986. It had only recovered to 9.4 percent in 1991, still lower than in 1976. By 1996 the percentage had moved up to 12.71 per cent.<sup>15</sup>

This first response to the questionnaire is made up of personal information comprising the name and current jobs of respondents. Among the thirty respondents, only eight are women animators; this is representative of the lack of a gender balance in the field. However recent statistics show that in Iranian universities, the number of women is not only equal to that of men but according to Ministry of Higher Education, 52 per cent of

---

<sup>14</sup> Afshar, Haleh, *Islam and Feminisms An Iranian Case- Study*. Published by Macmillan Press Ltd (UK), and St. Martin's Press, INC(USA),P.85,1998.

<sup>15</sup> Statistical Centre of Iran, National Census of Population and Housing, November 1966, P.41, November 1976, P.55 and Mehre 1365, October 1986, P.240.

those students who passed the September 1998 universities' entry examination (*Konkour*)<sup>16</sup> and entered university in the academic year 1998/9 were women.

**Table 8.1: women taking further and higher education degrees in different fields of study (%)**

	Higher diploma	BA/BS c	MA/MS c	PhD
<b>1992/ 3 - 1993/ 4</b>				
Medicine	51	71	55	40
Humanities	12	32	15	13
Science	20	38	19	22
Technical and engineering	3	7	4	4
Agriculture	1	3	3	8
Arts and architecture	47	45	20	7
<b>1996/ 7 - 1997/ 8</b>				
Medicine	67	66	49	45
Humanities	41	40	19	17
Science	27	45	24	18
Technical and engineering	7	14	5	5
Agriculture	21	29	3	7
Arts and architecture	74	49	22	29

Source: Extracted and calculated from Iran statistical Year books 1998:471-2

The high ratio of women studying art subjects partly reflects regulations forbidding females to study in some fields such as agriculture (Keyhan 16 May 1989) and law (Keyhan 25 September 1991) and is partly due to differences in career orientation between men and women. Women have more flexibility to choose the arts with their elegance and the patience that artistic work such as animation needs. As we have seen in the historical account (Chapter Four), from the outset, animation has attracted many women filmmakers such as Nafiseh Riyahi, the first female Iranian animator who passed away in 2000. Abase Kiarostamy the well-known Iranian filmmaker who began his activities at the I.I.D.C.Y.A. with Riyahi, gave the following recollections about her in an interview:

<sup>16</sup> A highly competitive examination system to enter universities and higher educational institutions.

I think I met Nafiseh Riyahi in 1969 or 1970 when we were both drawing publicity murals for a great circus from Moscow. Then we both began filmmaking; I made "Bread and the Street" and she found her way into the world of animation. Before entering this world she had experiences in illustrating children books. Her works were not as appreciated by the public as they deserved to be, because they were resourced from contemporary western paintings and there was nothing specifically Iranian in them. She, like me, did not believe in geography for the arts. But the Iranian audience could not comprehend the characteristics of her work though she was always patient about these matters and continued her work as she liked.<sup>17</sup>

In art, there are two ways of working, teamwork art, such as cinema and theatre where scenes and location have an important role, and individual art, such as painting, graphics and animation. With individual art there is no any sign of playing or traveling. This is important because many people still do not accept mixed activities for girls because of religious beliefs; they therefore, prefer that their daughters become active in individual arts.

As novelist Jeannette Winterson has commented, 'For women with a talent for art and an interest in film, animation offers both a challenge and a safe place.' A challenge because of the unlimited potential for expression (and self - expression), and a safe place because it can offer a private space in which to experiment.<sup>18</sup>

In Iran, women still have less responsibility than men for providing financial support for a family. A manager of an advertising studio prefers to hire women rather than men. He explained:

---

<sup>17</sup> Afshari, Behzad, An Artist with a Global View an interview with Abbas Kiarostamy, daily bulletin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran International Animation Festival 2001, No.2, 20 Feb, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Pilling, Jayne (Edited and designed), Women and Animation a Compendium, the Exhibition & Distribution Division of the British film, 1992,p.6.

Unlike women, men are not obedient to the will of their managers. They often, after a short – term engagement where they become acquainted with the process of work, try to find out the total number of projects I have and which parties my contracts are with. Particularly when they find out the difference between their wages and the size of the contracts, they personally contact the customers for work. My customers usually report this to me and never order unofficially. However, this behavior creates problems for my credit. Women do not meddle in this aspect of the work. They work patiently and harder, but financial their expectations are lower. My preference is for single women who have more time to ease out of family issues and are more flexible about following orders and rules.<sup>19</sup>

Thus artistic activities which may not make money or may only yield in the long term attract women more than men. Overall, women and men operate under unequal cultural, political and biological conditions which affect relationships in the home, at work, and in society. These gender inequalities force women to accept the marginalisation of their choices and to have lower financial expectations than men. As result of the above, in the field of animation, women are usually more ready to engage in lower-wage jobs such as paint'n'tracers, or ink'n'painters, in - betweeners, colourists of designers that involve repetitive and extended work.

---

<sup>19</sup> This is from a personal interview, Tehran , 1988.



**Figure 8.1: Animation Department, Ministry of Art June 1966, (back standing right) Esfandiar Ahmadiéh, (middle row second and third) Nosratollah Karimi and Nafish Riahi and first group of Iranian women animator during production of “life”, source: Nosratollah Karimi’s private archive.**



**Figure 8.2: Saba Animation Company (2000), many of new generation women animators at work in the studio, source: ASBA Animation Company**

According to animation author Jayne Pilling:

In the field of animation films for children, they [women] have had a more creative and authoritative role. Women have also often been in demand for voicing cartoon characters particularly if the characters are children, as adult women are seen to be more experienced, and reliable, than child actors.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Pilling, Jayne (Edited and designed), *Women and Animation a Compendium*, the Exhibition & Distribution Division of the British film, p.5, 1992.

What has changed over the last decade (since 1989) for Iranian women in animation has been the developing opportunities for them to make their own films.

A second notable group of respondents are four persons who belong to the first generation of Iranian animators and entered the field of animation in the pre-revolution (1970) period. The remainder of respondents includes people who do not have any pre-revolution experiences. Most of the people in this group began animation in the second decade after the revolution (1980s) i.e. the years that coincide with the end of the socio-political crises of the revolution and war and the start of cultural and educational activity in the country. In those years a wave of investment in cultural and educational aspects developed which led to the creation of new curricula for animation courses in the country (chapter 6).

Because of increased investment, the majority of respondents became involved in animation by choosing to study it at university. Fewer respondents reported entering the field through accident, personal interest and experience or through apprenticeship. Jian Dibavari reported that "while studying painting on my BA, I became involved in a student animation project. After being accepted on an MA animation course I completely switched my profession to animation. Now I am working for SABA Animation Company and will continue to do so". This system of entrance to the field of animation could be seen as confirmation of the international respondent views, pointed out in the first section, which emphasizes the importance of stable academic system

providing progression to animation schools as an important factor in the development of animation.

### **8.2.2- Indigenous filmmakers and the professional market**

In response to questions about respondents' access to a range of animation techniques and concepts, most responses pointed out that the existing social reality in Iran tended to restrict access to new themes. Television is the only public media for daily broadcasts of serial animation, which is limited to children's animation. A second resource for animation experts and students is short artistic and experimental animation, which is purchased by universities for educational purposes. Although these kinds of animation are ideal for technical practice, they do not have a public function and are not suitable examples for commercial production. Because of the Islamic influence in Iran that increased after the revolution, there exists a paradox between the required break with western manifestations in Iranian work and the educational goals of animation. The twenty-four years past since the 1979 revolution have provided a long period for experimental animation and industrial-based production of animated films in western countries, the best known of which are *The Rugrats* for children and *The Simpsons* for adults which are not limited to simple entertainment but deal with wider social issues. While Iranian animation has, over that period, stagnated for lack of contact with the world animation community- though since 1999 positive steps have been taken to remedy this major problem in Iran.

In addition, there is no video market or official access to satellite broadcast, which could legally provide access to newly released animation to the public. Although, most films can be obtained through poorly copied illegal imports. Moreover, the popularity



of computer animation features such as *Toy Story*, *Ants* and *Shrek*. has given a misleading impression about western animation. The best of artistic western animation are not easily available even to the professional animators. The lack of access is more acute felt by the Iranian animators who are still thematically and conceptually disconnected from international community- very little discussion is taken place in among Iranian animators on western artistic works in Iran.

Therefore, a modern stimulus for the professional animation market still has not been recognized in Iran, and filmmakers are not properly involved in this market. This is an industry that is well developed not only in western countries, but also in many Asian countries while searching for economic development opportunities did not overlook animation as a money-maker industry. These countries, such as Singapore, may have begun animation production relatively late, but they have achieved a high standing globally.

In Singapore, everything is an economic unit and it's worth is measured in Singapore dollars. Therefore its comes as no surprise that the animation industry was born from attempts to attract foreign investment into the country, with a view to turning Singapore into the media hub of the Asia-Pacific. In the early 1990s, Singapore embarked on an ambitious plan to create the infrastructure needed to entice the big players in the media industry. Plans were also set in motion to encourage the creation of local firms. Since then, there has been no looking back.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> A. Lent, John (Edited), Animation Asia in and the Pacific. (Soon, Lilian, *Animation in Singapore*), Johan Libbey Publishing, 2001,p.155.

Therefore, in order to develop a professional animation market alongside an academic approach it is necessary to recognize the barriers to such a market within the country and remove them. This strategy could provide satisfaction in that animators could look to the field as providing a viable primary job and more people could become involved with animation full-time. The barriers that have been pointed out through the questionnaire are in the three areas of 1) technical factors, 2) financial factors and 3) socio-political factors.

In view of the fact, that the professional animation market is largely based on the contractual agreement which takes in to account the required investment, the economic conditions reflected in supply and demand, expected audiences and technical and manpower required for production. Like other specialised market, it has its own language and trade rituals. In the professional world of animation, team-working and division of labour (in terms of various skills needed) are the basis on which production of animated films are produced. Iranian animation designers and directors still do not have sufficient experience that would enable them to participate in the professional market. There is a lack of knowledge about how the group system works and about script writing for the professional market. I believe that continuing reduction in the gap between individualism as seen in independent animation and teamwork as seen in commercial animation is one of the main challenges facing the animation industry in Iran.

However, animation is an expensive media that regularly has problems attracting investment from the private sector. Producers lack of familiarity with the language of international trade and the amateurish tendency of most animators are important reasons why animation is still not a money-making industry in the country.

Zarrinkelk commenting on his experience of attending an international animation-marketing meeting says "Once I represented Iran at an international animation tender. Many people from other countries attended this tender meeting. The Japanese delegates succeeded in winning the tender by giving the best bid in terms of the shortest production period and the lowest price. The length of the production period that they suggested was much less than anything I could have imagined. When I began to work through the suggested budget looking at format and length, as is regular for production, I could not find any framework for similar production opportunities in Iran. I turned to the delegate from the American Orders Company and said, I suppose that as you have Mexico as a neighbor, you can produce animation very cheaply with easy supervision because of the short distance between countries. He replied that although Mexico has many good animators, they rarely complete the work on time and time in the professional market plays an essential role. Immediately, I remembered our animators and groups in Iran work in an atmosphere similar to that of Mexico".<sup>22</sup>

As we can see in following quote by John Lent about animation in Korea, speed in production is an important factor:

A third pioneer in foreign animation production is Nelson Shin, whose AKOM is one of the largest Korean studios with many contracts, including that for the *Simpsons*. In 1980- 81, Shin took up the challenge of the recently established Marvel productions to produce for them a 75-minute feature within two months.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Group discussion between Nouraddin Zarrinkelk and some of animation forces of Studio Besat, Hozeh Honari, Teheran, 1990.

<sup>23</sup> A. Lent, John (Edited), Animation Asia in and the Pacific. (Overseas Animation Production in Asia), Johan Libbey Publishing, 2001,p.155.

The third factor relates to socio-political difficulties; many respondents believe that the closed-shop practice of working acts as a social disease which leads to a variety of difficulties. Work falls into the hands of poor management, many budget spends are unnecessary and project potential is not properly evaluated. The existence of bigotry and the airing of partial views is sometimes done under the guise of advice for safeguarding Islamic and moral values. This leads to a fall in the quality of work, offended artists and the politicization of work. As a result of the above barriers, animators mostly prefer to work in the experimental and independent area of animation that can at least cover their attendance at festivals. Also the short length of the production process is a positive aspect that develops opportunities for independent filmmakers to be active in an artistic avenue.

That word, 'independent'...a lot of interesting discussions can be had around it, but I don't think it will ever be solved. I think the only true independent I know is Bill Plympton who makes a film first, then sells it. That's true independence, but he ran out of steam, too. You can't sustain yourself on being an independent. What helped him was that for years he didn't have children and he had a working wife, and then once in a while he would make a film and it would get some money. People like that can do it if they have a parent in life and don't have children. That's independence, but it didn't last forever. Now he has commercials. You can see in the commercials that they're twisting his arm and his mind. They're making him think along their line. There's nothing wrong with it. They're paying for it and they have certain goals, so they're making him adapt to them instead of accepting whatever comes out of him.

It is not easy and I don't think it's even necessary to be that independent. Its teamwork: it's somebody needs a film and they need somebody like you to help them with it which means it's your ideas and their ideas. It's their money, your income. What's wrong with adhering to their wishes to a

certain degree? I don't find anything wrong with being dependent. We're all dependent on income. I don't think there is any real independence in this business.<sup>24</sup>

However alongside of this independent group there is a group of artists that because of the recent increase of TV advertisements in the country and the introduction of high quality computers are becoming money-makers. They prefer to be active just in local industry. The advertising industry is made up of small studios which are trying to survive.

In designing the question "If a very large budget was put under your authority for the promotion of Iranian animation how would you spend it?" I was looking for people who deal with the difficulties of animation to provide a reformist view. One response was: "First, I would invite the most experienced people in the country to a gathering period. I would ask them to consider what we could do to progress animation in the country? I am sure they could help significantly".

Each of the respondents had different views and explanations, but overall these can be classified into four areas 1) founding a system and organization, 2) training the work force, 3) financial support and 4) absorption of well-skilled work force.

I had discussions relevant to each factor but the necessity of emphasizing the organizational system began to take priority. If this stage is developed in the appropriate direction it will aid in clarifying most other aims and priorities. In this manner through organizing systems, methods of education, attraction and protection of

---

<sup>24</sup> Kilmer, David, *What Price, Independence? An interview with Paul Fierlinger*, Animation World Magazine, issue 4.2- May 1999,p.4.

artists, allocation of funds and rapidity of production process will be shaped automatically.

After the revolution, the Hozeh Honary of Sazeman-e Tablighat-e Islami became an important and influential art centre in the country for most art fields such as film, painting and music. In 1991 they also established an animation centre which is called Studio Basat. This centre quickly provided most equipment that was necessary for animation production such as a single frame video system (EOS), (that in those days was a unique in the country), a 2D and 3D computer animation system. The studio then invited many professional and young talented animators to work for each section of the centre. Apparently, most essential facilities were available for an energetic start. But the lack of definite aims about production markets, methods and production discipline led to a cultural vacuum in the activity. A collection of reasons caused the rapidly established studio to be ambushed by a few self-generated unsuccessful experiences. These repelled animators and resulted in a change in the studios direction to live action activities.

By transferring various parts of the Mostazafan Foundation to the Hozeh Honary Islamic Propaganda Organization, in the middle of the 1990 Studio Basat came under the authority of this institute as well. Following this reorganisation computer, animation and puppet units were centred in Studio Basat. Examples of production from this centre include a two minute animation *Cigarette* by Nasser Golmohammadi and a twelve minutes animation *Our Team Their Team* by Asadollah Benakhahei and Maryam Faheami.<sup>25</sup>

I produced the 35mm short animation *Cigarette* (1991) just as a spiritual necessity, there was not any control or questions about this project from the studio's managers. They did not authorize my storyboard but they did pay for the cost of the materials and laboratory process. I did not get any salary for the film and the only serious viewing of this film was just a limited student screening. It is not a masterpiece, but it could be more used as an anti-smoking warning than many of the posters routinely designed in the country at great expense.

*Our Team and Their Team* (1993) was a full Cell - Animation project that took two years of energy of many young talented animators. The story of this film is about the Palestinian people's battle with the Israeli regime. The narration of the story likens their war to a football match between two non-equal teams. This film is a type of propaganda animation and was broadcast several times on television on the occasion of the day of Quads. In comparison with *Cigarette*, this film was definitely under the attention and control of studio's management.

Asadollah Benakhahei, director of this film, told me: "This project took a lot of energy from me and my group but it imposed on me, as an animator I would have liked to produce animation. This film because of its political benefit has a deadline. I think it will not appeal to a wide range of audiences and will not provide any artistic credit to me. When I consider artistic life and how much animation I will be able to produce, I carry on with this only to do one's duty" (1992). After passing many years working on the production of this project that financially had been authorized for a five-minute animation but during process of production developed to 12 minutes, Benakhahei still

---

<sup>25</sup> Javaharian, Mahin, Short History of Animation in Iran, Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau,

had financial problems. Later, he and his wife, both of them talented animators, emigrated from the country.

The three cases highlighted above is intended to show that there is much greater awareness among managers of the animation centres to give opportunity to individual animators to pursue their own idea (of course at their own expense) and restructure production into team working group with some degree of long-term financial supports

### **8.3- Concluding remarks**

For the first section, it is imperative that the Iranian government to pay greater attention to bringing the independent artists closer to commercial market and concentrate on exploiting domestic market rather than trying to obtain a share in the international animation market. Although these two aims are not mutually exclusive, nevertheless, the latter can be detrimental to indigenously inspired and culturally embedded animation industry in Iran. Moreover, in order to bring independent and artistic animation into mainstream, the government should embark upon a general education starting from primary schools- like any other subject, appreciation of animation requires some level of education and learning about it.

Support for artistic animation production might entail some risks, hence animators should be encouraged to working for advertising commercial where there is already large market or to enter into contractual agreement with educational institutions providing teaching programmes. It is generally believed that best of artistic and creative animations can be seen in the advertising agencies in European countries,

---

1999,p.131.



which provide sufficient earnings to those artists pursue their creative talents. Making children animation can be quite creative- one should not underestimate the mental capability of children to understand abstract concepts – using innovative drawing and techniques which could best suited to indigenous storytelling.

Many of commercially successful art works tend to be thought of and sketch in the student projects, thus animation teachers can play an important role in discovering and leading talented students in the areas of speciality with greater commercial rewards. There is already recognition that future of animation in Iran depends, to a large extent, on emerging the existing high level of creative and artistic talents with the requirements of commercial world.

The analysis of the questionnaires in section two highlighted the existence of women animators among the respondents and allowed for particular consideration of this gender's role in animation in Iran. Both socio-cultural factors affecting women and the existence in women of traits like elegance and the patience needed for artistic work such as animation means that women have more flexibility in choosing the arts. In comparison with live action cinema, women are numerically better represented in animation. As western scholars have noted, this fact is because of the unlimited potential and privacy of animation. As a result of the cultural plan program in the country, Iranian women animators have moved onto the animation platform in the last decade.

The analysis of the questionnaire results showed that in Iran it is mainly academic qualifications which provide opportunities for people to enter the field of animation; it also showed that restricted access to new themes (following the revolution) effected 1)

policies of the only public media, for animation, television, which is further limited to the broadcast of children's animation. 2) the public function of experimental and artistic animation through the lack of adult and other animation markets that provide animation for video, games, satellite and the internet.

To fill the gap between individualism as seen in independent animation and teamwork as seen in commission production, expert respondents believe 1) the technical side needs group system work, as for story writing for the professional market. 2) on the financial side there is a need to recognize international trade, and cheap production processes for cutting unnecessary costs 3) on the socio – political side, it is necessary to solve problems caused by closed-shop practices, poor management, and ideological and religious bigotry practiced under the guise of advice for safeguarding Islamic and moral values. 4) Identifying the appropriate direction for organization and management of the field is the key element in finding solutions to the other three points.

## Chapter Nine

### Conclusion

In this thesis I have tried to examine the multi-faceted nature of animation in Iran, emphasising its cultural/artistic as well as socio-political functions rather than describing technical aspects of its production. I have sought to explore the contribution of the prominent animators, both of past and present, who have helped to lay down the foundation of an indigenous animation industry in Iran. The emerged animation industry is primarily traced to three main public animation centres as well as to the works produced in commercial sector and independent artists. The research has involved an exploration and interrogation of the complex composition of Iranian culture and artistic traditions that have sought to hybrid and merge Persian and Islamic imageries as an abstract artistic representation of the Iranian society. It is however, necessary to discuss briefly globalisation and cultural imperialism in which the study is broadly located.

#### 9.1- Globalisation: an Overview

Debates on the concept of globalisation are conducted mainly in the terms of two theoretical perspectives. These are those which stress the underlying continuity and those which claim that there has been a profound disjuncture in the historical development of capitalism. Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson argue on the side of underlying continuity, and politically in favour of a middle ground. They argue that the present highly internationalised economy is not unprecedented; genuinely international companies appear to be relatively rare and capital mobility is not producing a massive shift of investment and employment from the advanced to the developing countries.

Foreign direct investment, they argue, is actually highly concentrated among the advanced countries and the Third World remains marginal in both investment and trade; the world economy, far from being genuinely global, concentrates investment and trade flows within the economies of the core. They do not deny trends towards increased internationalism, nor that there are important constraints on nation-state industrial policy; their claim is rather that there is still a major role for nation-state level policy measures.<sup>1</sup>

For some businessmen and policy makers globalisation represents a major discontinuity with the past signifying a different world economy. The new economy is seen, first and foremost, as consisting of those firms and economic sectors most closely associated with the revolution in digital technology and the growth of the Internet. The rapid convergence of information technologies—including computers, software, satellites, fibre optics, and the Internet—has, it is believed, fundamentally altered the economic landscape. Since the mid-1990s, these revolutionary technological developments have, it is argued, spilled over into the wider economy, generating higher productivity growth, a sustained acceleration of economic growth, lower unemployment, lower inflation and prosperity for all.

Alan Greenspan, the US Federal Reserve Chairman argued that “it is the proliferation of information technology throughout the economy that makes the current period appear so different from preceding decades...One result of the more-rapid pace of IT innovation has been a visible acceleration of the process —the continuous shift in which emerging technologies push out the old.” Among the advantages of the new era is the ability of corporations to generate a flood of information in mini-seconds,

---

<sup>1</sup> Hirst, Paul and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance*, 2nd edition, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, ch.2

allowing them to “reduce unnecessary inventory and dispense with labour and capital redundancies.” He claimed that “until the mid-1990s, the billions of dollars that businesses had poured into information technology seemed to leave little imprint on the overall economy.” But beginning in 1995 that changed, and the spillover effects of digital technology are revolutionizing Old Economy sectors, making the New Economy a more universal phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

For proponent of neo-liberal economics,<sup>3</sup> the only question is how quickly governments are going to learn to adjust to that integration, and learn how to benefit from it. The benefits arising from globalisation are threefold:

- The world economy's industrial core and those in the developing periphery benefit when the capital-rich core loans to the capital-poor periphery.
- Consumers benefit from lower transport costs and reduced tariffs make goods produced far away more affordable. Producers of goods that are exported gain as well because they sell into a wider market. Producers of goods for home consumption do not gain, but there is nothing like competition from abroad to keep them on their toes, alert to ways in which they can improve efficiency and better satisfy their customers.
- The more globalised the world economy, the more use producers in each country can make of commodities and production processes invented elsewhere. Faster diffusion of knowledge raises the level of productivity and technology worldwide.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> For Greenspan's speeches see the Federal Reserve Board website: <http://www.federalreserve.gov>

<sup>3</sup> Martinez, Elizabeth, "What is Neoliberalism", 29 August 1996, Online. [www.igc.apx.org/envjustice.neohg.html](http://www.igc.apx.org/envjustice.neohg.html). 10 November 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Greider, William, *One World, Ready or Not, the Manic Logic of Global Capitalism*; Simon & Schuster, 1997, pp. 231-235

Kanishka Chowdhury argued that since the fall of Berlin wall Western capitalism has become the dominant logic of the world; market economy, the operative word of globalisation, has triumphed. Under the new round of World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations all kind of trade barriers are to be removed and a dream of an unregulated global market is to become reality. Globalisation is to give rise to a common culture, one which provides common opportunities and brings unity to a world of consumers with common dreams and hopes. Moreover, the ideology of globalisation is presented as the logical culmination of 'market forces'. Chowdhury outlined five groups of people who are affected by globalisation

The first are those who are fully integrated into this "new" economy (such as owners, executives, landowners, those with disposable capital and reasonably secure financial positions) and control most of the capital and wealth.

The second group are those who serve the global economy in more precarious employment; these people, especially in the third world, have increased access to the privileges of consumption; they are the global middle class (managers, urban professionals, small business owners) whose economic positions are precarious, yet they are ideologically affiliated to globalisation.

The third group consists of those whose claim to being "middle class" is increasingly under threat as housing, education, and health care become unaffordable; in this group are teachers, clerks, and government workers; as governments cut back on social programs and denationalise industries, these individuals find themselves on the margins of their class position.

The fourth group can be characterized as the urban working class, most of whom are increasingly dispensable and replaceable; their diminished prospects cause them to be generally opposed to globalisation.

The fifth and final group consists of those who are completely outside the scope of the global economy, the marginal groups- temporary-part-time workers, the rural poor and others.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, globalisation signifies not only changes in the economic and technological sphere but also in the spheres of ideology and culture. Samuel Huntington argues that a clash of civilisation in the process of globalisation tends to increase as Western countries assert their dominating powers. In the sphere of culture the clash between civilisations can be characterised by attempts to impose a culture (European or American) on other countries. Huntington believes that globalisation is a form of cultural imperialism based on political and economic power<sup>6</sup>- this is a fiercely contested position. Hence, globalisation of culture can be defined as gradual unification of cultural patterns, values and norms on the level of many countries.

However, it is also argued that globalisation causes cultural fragmentation on ethnical lines. Appadurai believes that globalisation does not lead to their homogenisation. As interaction between the elements of globalisation is not homogeneous there are created new diverse culture configurations, which do not lead to their unification. Because competing national cultures use globalisation elements instrumentally

---

<sup>5</sup> Chowdhury, Kanishka. *It's All Within Your Reach: Globalisation and the Ideologies of Post-nationalism and Hybridity*, Cultural Logic, Vol.6, 2002, p.18

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Appadurai Allan., *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, in M. Featherstone (ed.) "Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity", London: Sage, 1990, chap 2.

to improve their competitive position. For this reason they are reluctant to globalise culture, which could lead to global national and social conflicts.<sup>7</sup>

It is worth noting that the diffusion of culture patterns takes place faster whereas the diffusion of norms and values takes place more slowly. Values are the core and most lasting element of culture. Spreading global culture concerns mostly culture patterns and then norms and values. In local cultures the assimilation of global culture will not take place uniformly. Most likely centres of communication and exchange will adopt global culture faster, while the peripheries will stay closer to the local culture for a longer period of time.

### **9.1.2- Cultural Imperialism and Globalisation in the Iranian context**

The concept of cultural imperialism is frequently used to refer to a host of influences that the culture of one country (or a group of countries) exerts over other cultures. A glance at international communication literature will reveal several different terms such as 'media imperialism'; 'structural imperialism'; 'cultural dependency and domination'; 'cultural synchronization'; 'communication imperialism'; 'ideological imperialism', and "economic imperialism" - all relating to the same basic notion of cultural imperialism.<sup>8</sup>

Although several authors have posited their own interpretations of cultural imperialism, the main proposition of the theory is that a society is brought into the modern world system when its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping its social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> For example see Galtung, 1979; Mohammadi, 1995; Sui-Nam Lee, 1988 and Mattelart, 1994)



and structures of the dominating centre of the system.<sup>9</sup> A notable feature of the theory is that it does not employ a precise set of terms to explain the phenomenon, but rather the key terms are treated as 'primitive' concepts as it is assumed that their basic meaning is understood.<sup>10</sup> These key terms include: the modern world system', implying capitalist society; 'third world countries' implying any country or community within specific geographic boundaries, considered to be less developed than the 'dominating centre'; dominating centre refers to developed countries and historically imperial powers; "values and structures" refer to the culture and actual organizations that originate from the dominating centre and are foreign to the country considered to be lesser developed than the dominating centre.

In essence, cultural imperialism is a grand theory of domination of one nation over others. This dominating relationship may be direct or indirect and based on a mixture of political or economic controls. As such, the theory is a multi-layered conceptual tool for framing a complex totality of global cultural exchanges and interconnections.<sup>11</sup> It seeks to explain various strategies for regulation, deregulation and re-regulation on a broad global spectrum. At its heart is the claim that certain dominant cultures, primarily Western and/or American, threaten to overwhelm other more vulnerable cultures.<sup>12</sup>

At one level, the theory suggests that some cultures are made subordinate to others because their value systems are privileged - because of some historical circumstances.

---

<sup>9</sup> Schiller, H.I. (1989). Culture, Inc.: The corporate takeover of public expression. New York: Oxford University Press 1989, p.25.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Tomlinson, Tomlinson, John, (1991). Cultural imperialism: A critical introduction. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, p.23-30.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

One of these relates to the processes of colonialism that enabled Western cultures to impose their values on the conquered people of the third World countries. The discourse of colonisation was based upon the cultural superiority of the 'West over the Rest' and Western notions of economic progress and liberal democracy frequently provided the benchmarks against which other cultures were supposed to measure their sense of being<sup>13</sup> Thus one can argue that cultural imperialism has been operating at both the conscious and the unconscious level, providing images of what 'good' life means and seeking to shape people's identities<sup>14</sup>

Another layer of the cultural imperialism theory relates to the emergence of capitalism in the Western world. It often conflates Western and capitalist values, which may not necessarily be the same. Thus capitalism has been a major influence in ordering, structuring and regulating culture exchanges, especially between the economically developed 'first world' and the 'third World. Colonialisation and expansion of foreign direct investment has created social/cultural conditions, which are conducive to capitalist forms of production. Thus the production and consumption of goods/services is becoming increasingly unified not by choice but because of the single way of producing commodities. Major corporations and the resulting trading relations are seen to be promoting capitalist and Western cultural values.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Hall, Stuart. (1977) 'Culture, the Media and the 'Ideological Effect.' in *Mass Communication and Society*, Ed. James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janice Woollacott, (London: Arnold) 1992.

<sup>14</sup> Said, Edward (1993), *Culture and imperialism*, New York: A.A. Knopf. (1985)

<sup>15</sup> Tomlinson, John, (1991). *Cultural imperialism: A critical introduction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p.122-134.

The third layer of the 'cultural imperialism theory relates to the effects of American cultural exports to the rest of the world, as the only economic/military superpower. American movies, television programmes, fast food, drink and corporations are seen to disseminate cultural products, which marginalize local products and values. In particular, Americanisation has become a symbol of Western dominance. A key vehicle for this is the global media and communications industries, which promote the ethos and values of capitalism and consumerism and portray American way of life way as the ultimate progress that the people of the third world should desire.

The above historical, economic and cultural contexts also provide a backdrop to the emergence of major world institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which shape international relations. They promote and police Western concepts of liberal democracy. Organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank are supposed to help to secure economic stability, but it is a particular kind of economic stability, which is to secure the long-term well being of market economies.

The explanatory power of the cultural imperialism theory may be somewhat limited in other arenas as the influence of Western and American values are contested. Hybridisation of local and global cultures creates new genres, or the 'nativisation' of foreign culture. Western/American cultural superiority, celebration of wealth and consumption which are frequently exhibited through films and television programmes are portrayed as progress and told in terms of Western values where technology is usually supreme, and where the Western hero always wins against non-Westerners who are clumsy, cruel, backward. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that the Iranian

government has unsuccessfully tried to control the sale of satellite dishes and ban programmes, such as *Baywatch*, which promote Western meanings of sexuality. Other Asian countries (such as India) have tried to resist Western TV programmes unless they are tailored to the taste and cultural values of their countries.

There are a number of weaknesses that have been identified by various critics of the cultural imperialism thesis. These include:

- The theory lacks explanatory power and needs to be advanced beyond the level of pure description.<sup>16</sup>
- The economic component of media imperialism may be expressed in statistics, but the cultural component is much more difficult to measure.
- The theory lacks conceptual precision.
- The theory does not acknowledge an audience's ability to process information and interpret messages differently based on their individual background.
- The theory does not hold true in all situations of the phenomenon that it attempts to explain.

These criticisms are partly rejected as simple and ahistorical. Schiller (1989) has argued that: “

The transfer of cultural values is a complex matter. It is not a one-shot hypodermic inoculation of individual plots and character representations. It involves the much more difficult to measure acceptance of deep-structured

---

<sup>16</sup> Ogan, C. 1988 “Media imperialism and the video cassette recorder: The case of Turkey, Journal of Communication, p37.

meanings that may not even be explicitly stated. Can the transfer, for example, of acquisitive or consumerist perspectives be simply quantified?<sup>17</sup>

In another article Schiller, he also responded further to active audience critics, asking "How can one propose to extract one TV show, film, book, or even a group, from the now nearly seamless media-cultural environment and examine it (them) for specific effects?"<sup>18</sup> He goes on further to question how a researcher can specify the individual source of an idea, value, perspective, or reaction. According to Schiller an individual's response, for example, to a television series may be the result of "half-forgotten images from a dozen peripheral encounters in the cultural supermarket".

The theory of cultural imperialism was developed in the 1970s to explain the media situation as it existed at that time. The nature of media (i.e., print, radio and television), at that time, promoted a one-way, top-down transmission system from dominant country to dominated country that theoretically gave rise to a passive audience and a powerful media. Advanced electronic media, that are now available in the form of telecommunications, computers, and satellite technology, provide for greater interaction between sender and receiver than has ever before been possible. Therefore, the cultural imperialism argument that has been framed in terms of centre nations with power over dis-empowered periphery nations must be re-evaluated as the advanced media has penetrated into developing nations.

For Iran, globalisation is closely linked to her historical experience with major imperial powers and the context of the Islamic leadership has taken a highly ambiguous position

---

<sup>17</sup> Schiller, H.I. (1989), *Culture, Inc.: The corporate takeover of public expression*. New York: Oxford University Press, P.149

<sup>18</sup> Schiller, H.I. (1991), "Not yet the post-imperialist era." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, p.24.

concerning the extent and type of relationships that Iran likes to establish with the outside world. The government recognises that it has to work within an increasing global economy and maintain economic/political and cultural contacts with other nations. However, the nature and extent of these relationships and the level of integration into a global system have been determined by various factors including Islamic ideology which attempts to carve out an independent identity for Iran.

By the 1990s the regime had felt sufficiently confident to re-establish its international relations with the outside world. In 1992, the Iranian government had accepted much of IMF and World Bank recommendations including promotion of private enterprises, creating conducive legal and tax conditions to attract foreign direct investment as well as readjusting its foreign exchange and monetary policies in line with a capitalist economic development. A notable feature of these policies has been to foster a regional cooperation and extension of trade and cultural exchange with the Third World countries, while relying heavily on major European countries for high technologies, construction projects and expertises.

The major concern of the regime has been the pervasive aspects of mass culture that accompanies globalisation. It objects to, and resists, what is called 'cultural imperialism' which spreads through electronic communication and media, and to particular values and norms associated with Western behaviour and way of life. Indeed, the major impetus for of the Islamic revolution was to reassert Iranian-Islamic cultural heritage, which had been diluted by the indiscriminate import of foreign cultural artefacts.

Globalisation can be defined as a developing process of complex interaction between societies, cultures, institutions and people worldwide. It is a process which involves a compression of time and space, shrinking distances through a dramatic reduction in the time taken – either physically or representationally – to cross them, so making the world seem smaller and in a sense bringing people ‘closer’ to one another. But it is also a process which ‘stretches’ social relations – removing the relationships which govern people’s lives from local contexts to global ones.<sup>19</sup> There are several opposing positions on the effects of globalisation. One position critical to spread of globalisation is that it tends to give rise to a global standardisation, manifested in the homogenisation of consumption patterns, cultural artefacts. The other position which endorses globalisation suggests that the flows of capital, people, information and images bring about new cross-cultural encounters and respect for diversity. A third position argues that both homogenisation and heterogenisation are taking place at the same time.

The impression of global uniformity is, however, deceptive. Just as trade, foreign investment and the flow of capital have affected only a few regions of the world and left the rest untouched, so this globalization of culture is fragmented and affects only the small minority of the population which has access to modern media. There is the often uneasy acceptance of standardized information and consumption patterns. People turn to culture as a means of self-definition and mobilization and often assert their local cultural values. For the poorest among them, their own values are often the only thing that they can assert. Traditional values, it is claimed, bring identity, continuity and meaning to their lives.

---

<sup>19</sup> Tomlinson, John. (2000) ‘Globalisation Theory’ in Dan Fleming (ed) (2000) *Formations: A 21<sup>st</sup> Media*, New York: Century Media Studies Textbook,

It should be noted that development policies pursued by governments in the third world countries have alienated the vast majority of population and meant the loss of identity, sense of community and personal meaning. Most people wish to participate in "modernity" in terms of their own traditions. Some features of traditional societies are worth preserving in their own right; these and others may also be instrumental in advancing economic development; others will have to change, be adapted to the requirements of a changing and progressing world; yet others will have to be implanted from the outside. Traditional consumption habits, community loyalties, patterns of co-operation and hierarchies have contributed to the extraordinary economic growth in Japan and other East Asian countries. Positions which advocate only traditions or, conversely, only modernity are far too simplified. Neither tradition nor modernity is static: both are continually changing. Neither all tradition nor all modernity is to be welcomed. The repressive nature of some traditional values and practices and of some modern ones is evident. Tradition can spell stagnation, oppression, inertia, privilege and cruel practices; modernization can amount to alienation, anomy, exclusion and a loss of identity and of a sense of community.

## **9.2- Originality of research**

Research on animation in Iran has been a difficult undertaking for the obvious reason that there is very little written materials on the subject of animation, and what exist are confined to only the Institute (I.I.D.C.Y.A.) for the 1969 –1979 period. These are largely of descriptions of various activities undertaken in the Institution, and lacked the socio-political context in which animation industry has evolved in Iran. Despite growing interest in animation, as a part of increasing popularity of cinema, research on this subject remain extremely scanty as compared to television and cinema.



Moreover, research on the development of animation worldwide has rarely mentioned the expanding animation industry in Iran, which can be attributed to the lack of artistic and cultural exchange with the world artistic community, in particular over the past twenty-five years. However, in recent years, certain steps have been taken to redress this neglect through the establishment of international animation festivals in Tehran (from 1999) and the publication of a number of indigenous magazines devoted solely to the subject. It is hoped, these endeavours would create critical and theoretical approaches to the development of animation in Iran.

A study of animation cannot be separated from the quality of artistic works, financial constraints and the intended purpose of its production – educational as well as political and ideological. Indeed, the emergence of animation in Iran can be located in the socio-political context in which the Iranian government attempted to embrace modern communication techniques and mass culture, as a complementary part of economic development initiated in the early 1960s. In contrast to the imported tangible material, art and cultural artefacts require a period for assimilation and adaptation to the local socio-cultural environment. This is especially true of the Iranian cinema where in the 1960s it created its own 'New Wave' producing a number of highly acclaimed films deeply embedded in the Iranian traditions of artistic works (Chapter four). However, the 1979 Islamic Revolution halted this new way of experimentation in the Iranian cinema. The traditional Iranian cinema has been based on hybrid of various stereotypes of moral/religious values taken by protagonists together with some music, dance and fighting with a story line that can be easily understood by least educated. The Revolution brought about major changes in the cinema, first by banning almost all western films, which were considered 'corrupt' and spreading unethical values and

behaviours. The new regime instituted a detailed guideline requiring domestic producers to uphold and propagate the 'ideals' of an Islamic society. The imposition detailed censorship of foreign films and encoding domestic production has created a new environment of an artistic renaissance.

### **9.3- Hybridisation of culture and art-forms**

Discontinuity in the experimentation of hybridising traditional and modern arts has been a major factor in retarding organic development of all forms of arts including television, cinema and animation in Iran. Indeed, there is a close link between all art-forms, a process of cross fertilisation that unite them as indigenously adapted to feed from domestic culture and responsive to the major socio-political events. Similar to other countries, modernisation policies pursued in Iran had been at the expensive of total neglect of indigenous sensitivity and intellectual needs, hence creating an alien culture and art forms with little direct relevancy to the society.

It should be noted that the Iranian culture has underpinned a form of nationalism built upon a common language, shared customs and a strong sense of race. These elements were further strengthened with the coming of Islam to Iran, where the new religion was adapted and assimilated into the pre-Islamic Iranian culture giving rise to a unique religious beliefs- Shi'ism.<sup>20</sup> The uniqueness of religion is also coupled with uniqueness of the Iran's geo-political position in the Middle East. Being located in the major commercial routes connecting East to West, Iran has been exposed to and influenced by variety of cultural trends and values, which have given it a high degree of adaptability

---

<sup>20</sup> Keddie, Nikki. R. Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983, Part One.

and capacity to incorporate distinctive religious beliefs, ethnicity and national minorities (chapter Two).

These factors have created the basis for a heterogeneous and culturally diverse society formed through the coexistence of the diverse ethnic groups that settled on the Persian plateau. This heterogeneity has resulted in the emergence of a culture that exhibits a variety of different influences, but it paradoxically manages to retain and appeal to the constant essence of an Iranian-Islamic sensibility. Indeed, it is this ability to adapt to outside influences that remains the most striking aspect of Iranian culture.

#### **9.4- Integral parts of the Iranian animation**

The development of animation in Iran can be subdivided into two periods. The first covers from 1960 to 1979 and the second extends from 1979 to the present time. There are three areas in which animation is extensively used; namely for children, for education, and politics (government). It is generally recognised that animation can play crucial role in the education of children and adults. This art form has the capacity to impact on the perceptions and behaviour of children, as well as influence family structures and the politics of the country.

##### **9.4.1- At the service of Children entertainment**

Since the 1960s, the Iranian government has recognised that animation can be used as an entertainment/educational means to foster better understanding national culture and traditions. This recognition reflects the fact that a high proportion of the population consists of children (about 40 percent under 16-year-old), hence television programme makers and film producers were expected to pay sufficient attention to this growing

segment of the audiences. Moreover, children's fascination with animation can be directed towards their mental development. Thus, a thriving indigenous animation industry is needed, if the country is to reduce its reliance on the imported films.

#### **9.4.2- At the service education enhancement**

Animation has been perfected to a degree that it has become an important tool in various scientific and engineering activities. Highly elaborated computer software has widened the application of animation both in industry and commerce, and educational institutions. It is now inescapable fact that any country that wishes to have some control over its scientific/educational/cultural development has to support the establishment of an animation industry.

Presently, Iran has around 20 millions students, where computer science has increasingly become not only an important learning subject of its own right, but also computer is used to facilitate and improve the learning process as a means of conceptualisation through animation. In 1964, the Institute was established with the aim of improving the level of education for children through publication of books and animated stories. Since then the Institute's activities have greatly expanded and animated works have assumed much greater importance in the institute. Education defined in its broadest sense, embracing not only traditional schooling but also include sociological and ideological aspects of education that affect the perception of children and adults the way they comprehend their culture and society. The Iranian government has been keen to lay down an ideological foundation propagating a value system through animation and willing to bear the high costs of establishing institutes such as

Saba (Chapter Six) and underwrite the high cost festivals of biannual Tehran International Animation Festival (Chapter Seven).

#### **9.4.3- At the service of politics**

Animation as a form of expression has given rise to various social issues. The inherent power of animation to manipulate and control public opinion is enormous and the Iranian government in pre-and-post revolution has used it for political and cultural propaganda.

Development of animation in Iran has been a state-sponsored activity. The emergence and subsequent development of the industry is located in three state-centres- Ministry of Culture and Art, the I.R.I.B (television) and the I.I.D.C.Y.A. Besides, the use of animation as an important means for education of children and adults, the government has also pursued a policy of utilising animation as a means of political stabilisation and creating social base for its legitimacy. In the post revolutionary era, animation is given high priority for political and ideological use rather than to expand artistic aspects of animation. Thus careful attention is given to the capability of animation in education in the broader sense to form public opinion at large. They endeavour to use the medium for the development of their social, cultural and ideological programs prohibiting the production of programmes, which may contradict or question the existing cultural policy of the government.

The propaganda approaches of the government to animation are clearly realised in Iran. Chapters Four and Five examined the cultural policies of the Institute in the 1966 to 1979 period, where the emphasis was on the epic tales and folklore of the pre-Islamic

period (ancient Persian civilisation) served to convey an ideological construct preferred by the Pahlavi regime. While in the post revolutionary era (Chapter Seven) the cultural and artistic policies of the regime reflected primarily in the Saba productions where animation is used to emphasise and propagate the cultural values and achievements of post-Islamic of the Iranian civilisation.

Despite some drawbacks, state sponsored animation industry in Iran has helped to lay down the foundation of the industry and created centres for training and experimentation of animated works. Although there is a tendency in these centres to denounce or overlook the achievements of the pre-revolutionary era, however, for those working in the centres have undoubtedly benefited from secured financial support and experimentation in the art of animation. In recent years, two new centres were established, Saba Animation Company (1994) for television and the Young Cinema Association (1985), both are structured in accordance with the existing animation departments of I.R.I.B (television) and the Ministry of Art.

Animation centres have been active in similar or overlapping areas and even in areas, which are in opposition to their own infrastructure. For example while experimental and artistic activities are compatible with the structure of the I.I.D.C.Y.A, they are incompatible with the structure of television, which must fulfil routine broadcasting demands. Experimental/artistic animation is most common among independent animators who are not working to a defined public audience or to the market aims of commercially commissioned animation. It should be not that some 90 percent of all animated films are produced or subcontracted to private producers by IRIB for television broadcast.

Although there has been a notable improvement in the infrastructure necessary for expansion of animation industry- the existence of art work shops, equipment, journals, broadcasting, markets, and art shops around the country, however, it is also important to train performers, writers, painters, graphic designers and directors. It is natural that attention should be paid to the country's ancient art, textbooks must teach about it in schools, museums must exhibit it, universities must train historians and archaeologists so as to deepen industrial base of this art.

#### **9.4- The Proposed reorganizing animation centres**

I have argued throughout Chapter Four, animation in Iran has been shaped by the policies of three governmental centres – the Ministry Culture and Art, the I.I.D.C.Y.A and I.R.I.B. The country's need for these well-established cultural centres has become more apparent over time. With the exception of the I.I.D.C.YA, which experienced a decade of stagnation and confusion (Chapter Six) in its activities and management policies from 1979 – 1989, these centres have continually contributed to Iran's cultural development. The Ministry of Culture and Art has made the largest contribution to changing cultural face of the Iranian society. The critical role of this centre is evident in the fact that the head of the Ministry is a political appointee. Political challenges have resulted in the removal and reappointment of this ministerial post holder (Chapter Six). The reach of television's contribution to broadcasting and artistic activities is vast by virtue of its countrywide coverage via three national channels, local centres in the provinces and two international channels (for Iranians living abroad). From the beginning of the Islamic revolution the activities of the IRIB have been expanded and increasingly promoted.

After considering the socio-political facts examined throughout the thesis, I believe that animation in Iran must undergo reorganization. Figure 9.1 illustrates the current state of animation in Iran. Figure 9.2 shows my proposals for a reorganization of animation industry. The following section outlines a set of strategies that will best facilitate the necessary changes.

First, the above three centres should be seen as valuable bases for learning and experimentation. As examined in Chapters Five and Six, because of the transience of social, political and management systems in Iran there are insufficient inclination to establish new organizations (e.g. Studio Basat in Chapter Eight). Although the tendency of these three centres to ignore or overlook the achievements of the past generation has resulted in an unnecessary loss of capital and labour, those working in these centres have benefited from organized governmental budgets and activities in the area of animation. In recent years, two new centres were established, Saba Animation Company (1994) for television and the Young Cinema Association (1985). However, the fact is that their structures are wholly within the existing animation departments of I.R.I.B and the Ministry of Art, the latter having been reorganized under a new name.

Second, my plan proposes a new definition, explanation and classification of the function of the three centres according to their industrial, educational and artistic activities as discussed in Chapter Six. These centres have been active in similar or overlapping areas and even in areas, which are in opposition to their own infrastructure. For example while experimental and artistic activities are compatible with the structure of the I.I.D.C.Y.A, they are incompatible with the structure of television which must



fulfill routine broadcasting demands. In developing a chart for my proposed categories of artistic and industrial activities I refer to Paul Wells' division of animation production into categories labelled orthodox and experimental animation (Table 8.2). Experimental/artistic animation is most common among independent animators who are not working to a defined public audience or to the market aims of commercially commissioned animation. Well compares this group of animation with another label "Orthodox Animation". This classification system allows one to easily recognize and classify most animation productions.

**Table 8.2: Orthodox animation and Experimental animation**

Orthodox Animation	Experimental Animation
Configuration	Abstraction
Specific continuity	Specific Non - Continuity
Narrative Form	Interpretive Form
Evolution of context	Evolution of Materiality
unity of style	Multiple Styles
Absence of Artist	Presence of the Artist
Dynamics of Dialogues	Dynamics of Musicality

Thirdly, I propose that new areas of activity be developed in the country for types of animation which do not currently exist and that ideas for new projects be developed into concrete plans suitable for implementation. This include ideas for establishing new animation schools, short workshops and technical schools covering animation already

suggested for Tehran and the provinces of Hamaden, Esfahan and Khorasan (Figure 9.1) . There have existed similar courses in the past but have been located in the wrong category. Figure 9.1 shows that at the present education is not unified and sufficiently centralised as academic and technical subject where and short courses are offered at most centres. Figure 9.2 shows that developmental approaches through attendance at international marketing exhibitions and off-shore production with well developed countries is an industrial aspect which should fall under the responsibility of I.R.I.B (Figure 9.2).

Upon consideration of the industrial, artistic and educational classification of animation in the country as proposed in section two, I propose that all educational activities be placed under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Art (Figure 9.2). All artistic and ASIFA-related activities should be centralized in I.I.D.C.Y.A. as this recognizes the presence of many active artists in the center. By cooperating with the Ministry of Higher Education, the I.I.D.C.Y.A could have a role in supplying teachers to educational centers.

As Figure 9.1 shows most commissioned animation has been produced in the private sector. Considering that around 90% of this production is ordered by the IRIB for television broadcast, I proposed that this isolated industrial sector of animation activity be linked to Saba Animation Co.

As experienced until now education ministries in the country such the Ministry of Higher Education have more financial limitations than the Ministry of Culture and Art. Therefore they have focused on basic educational matters rather than production or

post-production matters. The proposed linking of the Ministry of Higher Education to the Ministry of Culture and Art (Figure 9.2), which might improve the quality of animation education by placing it under authority of Ministry of Culture and Art. A stable link with Education Ministries could give a clear direction and agenda to the artist animators and enhance the role of animation in education.

Production of animated film is a highly collective undertaking where various ideas and expertise are the pre-requisite for quality animation. Along with animation centres, a successful system of animation depends upon the existence of art work shops, equipment, journals, broadcasting, markets, and art shops around the country. It also requires performers, writers, painters, graphic designers and directors. The development of national cultural institutions must move forward on many fronts simultaneously. If there is to be appreciation of the country's ancient art, textbooks must teach about it in schools, museums must exhibit it, universities must train historians and archaeologists to document it. Animation producers must have a source of material available to them. The development of culture is more than the development of animation.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Teheranian, Majid; Hakimzadeh, Farhad; L. Vidale, Marcello, Communications Policy for National Development( a comparative perspective), p.139, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London, 1977.

Figure 9.1: Organizational structures of animation centres in Iran

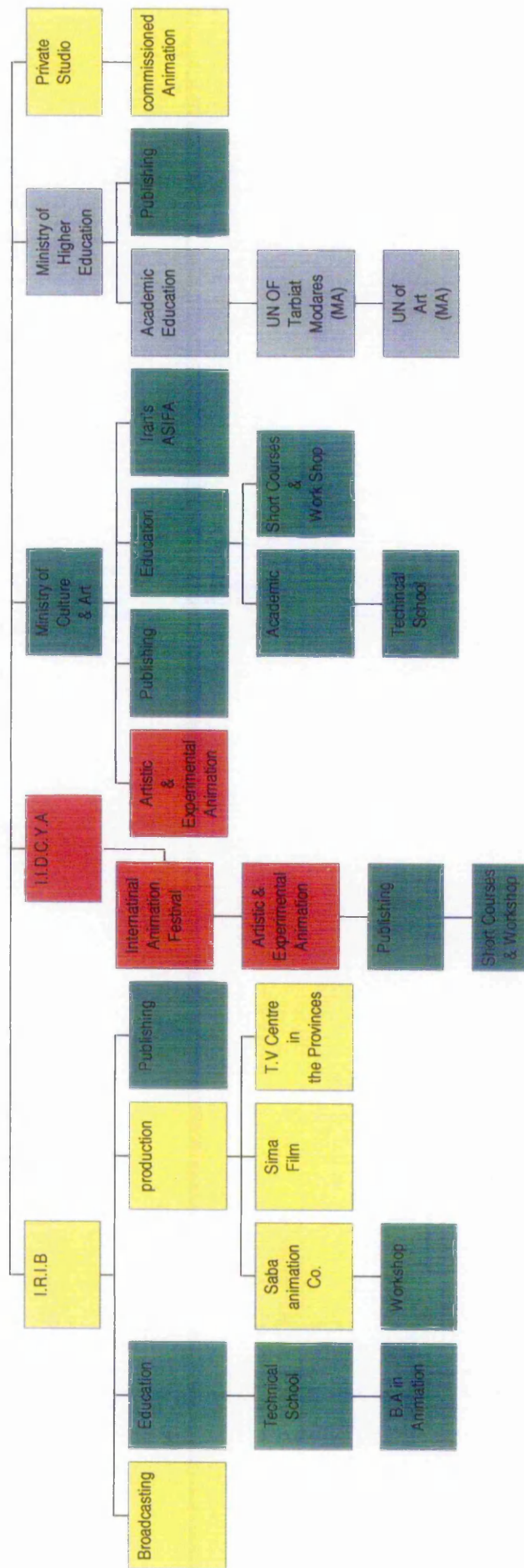
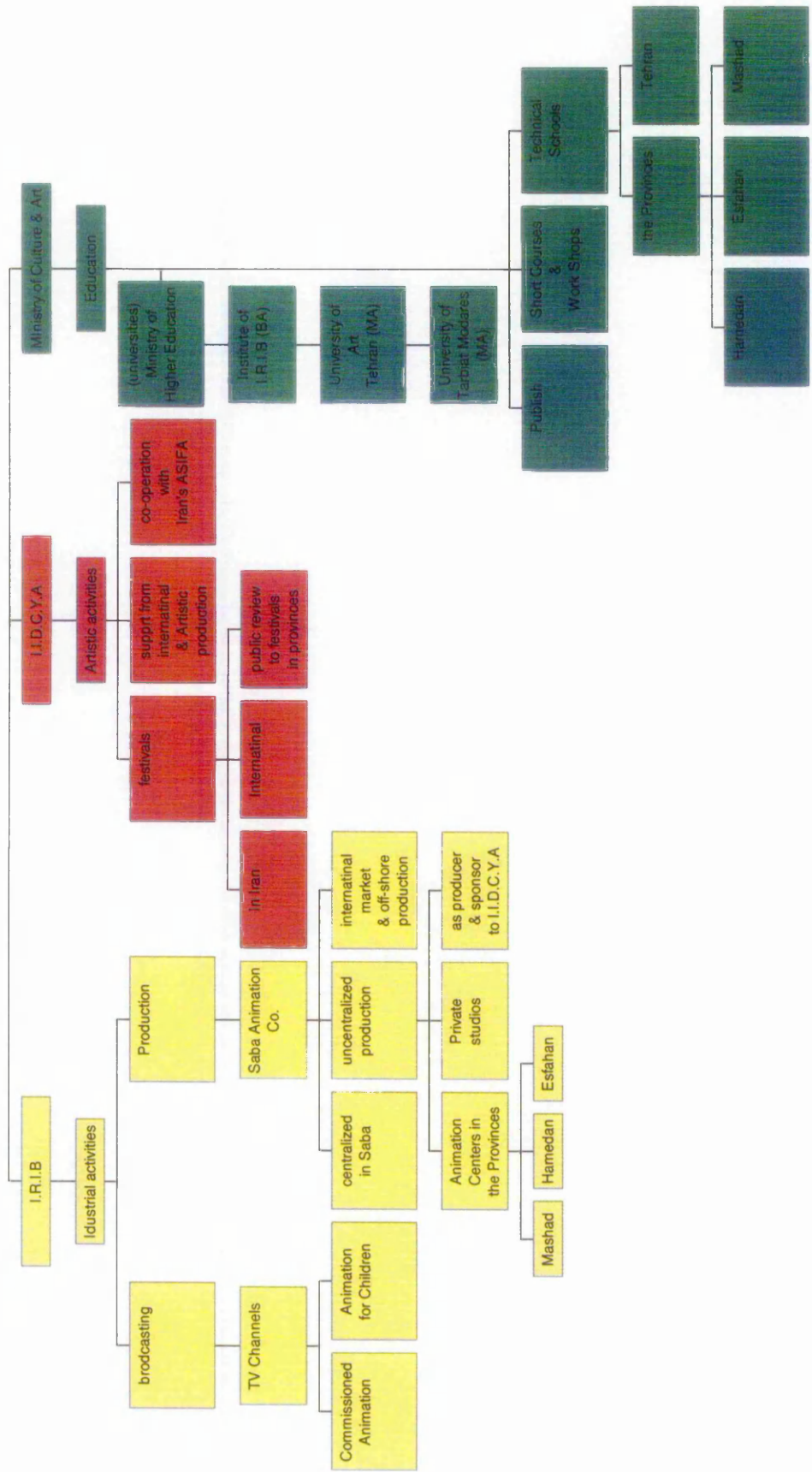


Figure 9.2: A proposed organizational change for furthering rationalization and efficiency of animation centre



### **9.5- The history of animation in Iran is a living history**

Animation in Iran is strongly influenced by the country's rich past historical heritage but it is also an art form that intimately related to the present reflecting as well as commenting on the way the society moves.

The recourse to the historical events serves as a means of highlighting the foundation and influences that have helped to shape the development of animation in Iran. It also provides a framework for understanding the unique manifestation of the artform and allows us the means to analyse, preserve and critically assess the issues of cultural heritage and identity.

A little over forty years separate this study from the first animated film produced in Iran - *Mollah Nasreddin* by Esfandiur Ahmadeh in 1958. During this period animation has flourished, both artistically and infrastructurally, to become a functioning industry that employs hundreds of people. However, it has also gone through a number of dramatic changes that have seen it having to adapt to changed political, social and ideological circumstances. The most dramatic of these changes occurred with the advent of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Under the new ideological system advertising was banned for almost ten years because it was deemed "to tell lies in attracting the customer". This development deprived animation of its most lucrative source of income and the industry went into decline. Indeed, the first decade of the Islamic Republic was a difficult if not impossible period for most animators to work in.

The Islamisation and de-Westernisation policies of the Islamic Republic in the cultural / media sphere were based on Shi'ia Islam where the bulk of Iranian population adhere and arguably majority of people accept clerics as both religious and political leaders. These leaders recognised, to a great extent rightfully, that the media in Iran were developed by the autocratic Shahs as part and parcel of their political consolidation plans. Media were therefore, were used to manipulate public opinion and masked the increasing the country's political and economic dependence on the West with unavoidable consequence of cultural alienation and hurt of national pride. The revolutionary elite and many intellectuals alike believed that the media and particularly the state broadcasting monopoly (NITR) under the Pahlavis widened the material, spiritual and cultural gaps between the ruling elite and modern upper class advocates and the traditional middle and lower classes. It is generally claimed that modernization policies adopted by Pahlavi regime destroyed Iran's political independent and diluted and undermined traditional culture – an old order based on a pre-modern morality and sense of justice was replaced with an new order immorality and injustice.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, dignity, self-respect, and the identity of the majority of the population were injured by the subsequent alienation and 'Westernisation.' Consequently, one of the most crucial aims of the Revolution of 1979 was to recapture and control the cultural domain and media, to re-store traditional value systems, and to reintroduce the pure, authentic, and popular Shi'a culture.<sup>23</sup>

After its establishment in 1979, the Islamic Republic tried to use the media to disseminate Islamic ideology and to confront the westernised views and behaviours. The

---

<sup>22</sup> Amir-Arjomand, Said, (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988). Chapter three

<sup>23</sup> . Ibid. pp.63-69

regime attempted to establish a just and moral society by developing an Islamic educational system, Islamic public sphere, and Islamic mass media. As far as the media are concerned, it limited the share of foreign content and set control mechanisms on domestic production. It also banned the production, import and/or dissemination of all messages that advocated alcohol, gambling, consensual sexual relations, un-religious interaction between male and female, cultural liberalism, anti-Islamic propaganda and the like.

However, it must be noted that animators have always faced numerous difficulties no matter which period they worked in. Prior to the revolution and indeed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the dominant cultural influence in Iran came from the industrialised West. This proved to be a cultural form that was much harder to assimilate into Iranian forms. Such was its all pervasive influence that cities such as Tehran began to be transformed into western style metropolises complete with bars, shopping complexes and flashing neon lights. People began to embrace the new culture as being modern and a sign of sophistication. Under such circumstances it became difficult for many artforms to articulate and voice their concerns over issues such as national and cultural identity (see Chapter Four). Ironically, this was also the period that saw the beginnings of animation in Iran.

Furthermore, the existence of a rigid hierarchy within the artistic institutions of the state and strict governmental controls have served to severely restrict artistic creativity. Such a state of affairs has given rise to a situation where artists are unsure of the boundaries of acceptance and are prey to the subjective decisions of those in positions of power. The result of this is that many artists have been reduced to the level of



technicians, working on subjects that are acceptable to the authorities but in which they themselves have no interest. This was the prevailing ethos for many years after the revolution in television (Chapter Four) and later in Studio Basat (Chapter Seven) as the visual media came to be governed by the dictates of official propaganda. However, under the enlightened vision that operated within the I.I.D.C.Y.A. animation was somewhat insulated from the full force of these controls and many amateur artists as well as a number of respected filmmakers began to produce original and valuable works.

The media for screening animation gave rise to another constraint on creativity in animation. The concomitant entrance of television and animation to Iran in the 1960<sup>s</sup> (Chapter Four), resulted in the popularisation of daily primetime TV serial animations over other forms, such as experimental or short or feature-length animations. The public's acquaintance with animation developed through television rather than through other media such as cinema and the influence of this is still felt after four decades, as animation is considered children's entertainment rather than adult or family entertainment (Chapter Four). This is despite the fact that cinema still accounts for a significant proportion of outside home entertainment for Iranian families (Chapter Three). There are two key reasons why animation has not made any contribution to cinema screens.

First, Iranian cinema screen timetables are fixed so that cinema-goers spend a around two hours in cinema. As a consequence, an animated film that is to be shown in cinema should be similar to a 'full-length feature films. Moreover, there has been a few full-

length animated films produced in Iran and the public expect to see an animated film to last the allotted two-hours screen timetable if they are to pay for a ticket.

The only relatively successful experience in this area occurred during the 1970<sup>s</sup> when cinemas in Tehran screened a few feature animations by Walt Disney such *Cinderella* (1950) and *The Aristocats* (1970). That period indicated that cinemas could be helpful in progressing animation, but emerging new values, censorship and the prohibition on Western animation launched after the Islamic revolution (1979) hindered the continuation of these experiences.

Considering the world-wide development of the animation industry resulting from the development of computer animation and the production of high market animation such as *Ice Age*, Islamic cultural policy's domination of Iranian cinema (discussed in Chapters Six and Seven) has severely restricted Iran's access to and development of the feature film market.

Second, the lack of public recognition of other forms of animation, such as short experimental/artistic animation has significantly impeded their development in Iran. On the whole, the impact of these forms on Iran's entertainment or cultural consciousness in comparison to 'animation for television' and 'feature animations' is negligible.

Television broadcasts and theatre screening are the two media publicly available for presenting these animations. However, because many experimental/artistic pieces work with non-narrative language and require greater concentration, they are not generally suitable for broadcast on small, uncontrolled TV screens in the home atmosphere. A

more effective mode of presentation would be to show a collection of many short animations in theatres. This type of presentation fosters a relationship between the artistic form of animation and the public atmosphere. Audiences also benefit from the dark, quiet atmosphere.

Animators who are active in this field are even more separated from their potential audiences than painters who have more flexible opportunities to exhibit and sell their work. By organizing group viewing of these animations in cinemas and allocating theatres exclusively to this type of work the following results could be achieved a) the popularisation of short and artistic animation among more group of people especially people living in the provincial towns and cities who do not have opportunities to attend festivals celebrated in Tehran; b) new revenue generated from increased box office receipts could provide financial support for experimental animation projects.

The development of experimental animation cannot wait for these new sources of income. Due to the time consuming nature of animation and the high level of financial investment required, it is often the case that cost dictates style and vice versa. Such a relationship suggests that it is those artists who are independent of economic considerations rather than those who are reliant on institutional finance that have the most scope and opportunity for independent expression. However, in Iran, a highly centralised state where all roads inevitably lead to the government and where resources are scarce, such independence is somewhat unrealistic.

The work of Paul Driessen<sup>24</sup> serves as a good example and possible paradigm for the development of Iranian animation. Working with a limited budget he has managed to create masterful animation films that exhibit a simple and fluent style. Katty Huffhines, on the occasion of The Festival of No Budget Animation, remarked that: "Paul Driessen is a master for all those working with a limited budget. He is the genius of limited animation"<sup>25</sup> The truth of this statement was brought home to me when I received some cell paintings from Driessen himself during the course of my MA research. These painted cells were from his film "The Water People" and had I not seen them for myself I would have found it inconceivable to believe that such a masterful film had been made from such a simple technique.

Driessen's approach is echoed in the work of a number of Iranian filmmakers such as Mohsen Makhmalbaf who has recommend to artists that if they wish to be oriented to cultural activity they should forget about making films with big budgets. No one allocates a filmmaker big funding to endorse culture. Investment in films is about getting big money in return. In contrast, adapting to a small budget and a small team can provide the conditions for the development of independent cultural activities as full attention need not be given to aspects of the commission.<sup>26</sup>

This is perhaps the most realistic course of action for cultural production in Iran given the fact that we do not possess a fully-fledged industrial sector with large studios capable of turning out quality productions promoting Iranian's cultural heritage. Furthermore, we are far from achieving a level of full or even satisfactory employment

---

<sup>24</sup> Famous Dutch Filmmaker, who was born in Nijmegen on 30 March 1940. With more than 40 international awards, he is a distinguished creator of philosophical comedies and lyrical films.

<sup>25</sup> Golmohammadi, Nasser, evaluation of the work of Paul Driessen, a thesis for MA, Faculty of Cinema and Theatre of university of art , theranP.133,1996.

<sup>26</sup> Hoffman, Adina, Makhmalbaf File, critic of *the Jerusalem post*, September 1996.

for all the industry's technicians - layout artists, animator and designers – and the lack of a strong union presence through which to represent their interests (as was discussed in the industrial section of Chapter Six). However despite these factors the presence of Japanese animation in Iran must be viewed as a plus, not only for Iran, but for the world at large. It is only by increasing contacts with animation industries in other countries and trying to broaden its audience beyond national boundaries that Iranian animation can begin to develop structurally and artistically and make its voice heard on the world stage.

However, we must also be mindful of the way in which we approach developments within the industry. In Chapter Six certain concerns were voiced about the use of computer based animation where many animators were beginning to see it as the totality of animation rather than an aid or one of many different animation processes. Such an approach tends to limit the field and ignore the rich and varied history of animation as well as ignore its multitude of different techniques and their social, political and cultural bases.

The forty years of Iranian animation, from Ali Akbar Sadeqi's pioneering work (*Golbaran*, Chapter Five) to the new generation of artists such as Farkhondeh Torabi (*Shangol-o Mangoul*, Chapter Six), presents a picture of an artform that has drawn its inspiration from indigenous historical and cultural forms and which at its best is capable of emulating the recent success of Iranian cinema. However, for the most part this has not been the case. Despite the many problems that Iranian animation has experienced the key element to its success lies in the development of good stories and ideas. Without these, increased investment and the benefits of modern technology will

merely serve to present a technically proficient product that lacks substance and meaning. This was very much the case that I made in Chapter Seven when I was examining the infrastructure and output of the studio in Basat and serves to further underline the point made throughout this thesis that without a developmental aspect through planning and education the industry cannot hope to progress into the future in a constructive and meaningful way (see Chapter Six).

Finally, there are a number of pertinent questions that should be delved upon:

- How are we as Iranians to define and represent ourselves, in terms of our position within the world, our sense of self, our language, our literature, our customs, our language?
- What has been our history and what will be our future and what role will culture and art play in shaping and contributing to their definition?
- How do we assess the influence of changing socio-political conditions on artists and the art they produce?
- What effect will the advent of new technological tools such as digital animation, have on the animation industry of a country such as Iran?
- How will the animation in developing countries cope with the rapid pace of change occurring in the industry worldwide? Where do they fit in the process of overall development and how do they assess their relationship with larger more powerful animation nations who dominate the global market?

I have tried to address some of these questions in the course of writing this study, but more work and in depth analysis still needs to be undertaken. The research presented here serves not just as a foundation for the further study of the Iranian animation but it

might be used as a basis for examining the development of animation in other developing countries that have [are] experienced some of the same problems and concerns as Iran.

## Appendixes

### Appendix 1: Interview with Freadric Back, French-Canadian Director

*Please introduce yourself:*

Name: Freadric Back

Nationality: French- Canadian

Age: 71

Activity in animation: director, designer

*If you have made films, please name them?*

Many for Radio-Canada used to teach French, to illustrate music since 1970; *Abracadabar* 1969, *Inon* 1973, *Creation of the Bird* 1975, *Illusion* 1976, *Taratatal* 1978, *All-Nothing* 1981, *Crac!* 1987, *The man who planted Trees* 1993, *The mighty river* produced by society Radio-Canada, producer Hubert Tison.

*Write those films you have seen from Dreissen?*

*Air, Cats Cradle, The Old Box, Elbowing, Tip- Top, Killing of Egg, On Land at Sea and in the Air, Spotting a Cow, Oh what a Knight, The Writer, The Water People.*

*Which film of his films has shaken you... why?*

*Air, Cats Cradle, The Old Box, Oh What a Knight.* I liked the most, because of the quality of inventions and good timing. There is also a quality in the many visual effects and execution that the help of The National Film Board of Canada helped a lot. And who came back in *The Water People*, in between the quality of design, even for the Dreissen style, is some how lacking, and the timing are not right. Often too long, or



repetitive. I was very deceived with *Spotting a Cow* and found it very insulting, especially at the end.

Do you communicate with the context of his films? If yes, please explain?

I like Minimal art and I enjoyed his films many ways for this. Absurdity is also something you find so commonly in mankind, and Paul has talent to show it or play with it in a very personal way. He always surprises me in the way he represents animals.

*What is your opinion about his technique?*

He is very clever and ambitious, like in: *On Land at Sea and Sky*, where he shows so many interrelated situations. I find his last film *The Water People* beautifully rendered, but I think he should not repeat too many times the same idea. I think the 15 minutes version of the film will be sufficient. I appreciated Paul's work and found it inspiring in many ways.

## **Appendix 2: Renaissance**

The French term renaissance was popularised by the Swiss cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt in the cultural of the Renaissance in the Italy first published in 1860 and now considered a classic. As early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the biographer and art critic Giorgio Vasari had spoken of the *rinascita* (rebirth), meaning that epoch which had began in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century with Giotto di Bondone (CA. 1267 – 1337) and had reached its zenith in his own time, with Michelangelo. The renaissance arose in Italy as a broad movement that encompassed many divers field of activity<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Gromling, Alexandra, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Publishing Management Cambridge, UK, p32,1999.

### **Appendix 3: Rouhozi, a traditional form of entertainment**

In some coffeehouses a wooden platform was placed over the pool, making it into a stage on which performers called *taghlidchi* (imitators) entertained the people with comical acts and sometimes-dramatic plays. (These shows were also presented outside coffeehouses, often in the homes of the rich.) Such entertainment became known as *Rouhozi*, meaning “shows performed over the pool.” Some believe that these performances, which preceded *Ta'zieh*, are the oldest form of dramatic productions in Iran. Others believe that they appeared as a means of mass entertainment during the Safavid dynasty (1501-1688) and developed to their height in the Zand period (1750-1779). Whatever the origin, Rouhozi’s comical acts became a popular traditional entertainment of the Iranians. When motion pictures came to Iran, the popularity of comedy with the people strongly influenced the locally produced films and at least one comedy character was included in each film—no matter what the subject matter.<sup>2</sup>

### **Appendix 4: Engraving, a traditional method of making art**

Engraving is defined as the art of creating delicate designs on metal. In Iran this art has always been done in the Iranian method and its designs have also been traditional ones. Engraving is done on different metals such as copper, brass, silver, gold and also some alloys. To engrave, first the backside of the work is covered with tar so that during engraving it prevents the work from getting wavy as a result of hammering and the pressure of the chisel and from causing a lot of noise. Then the chosen design is transferred on the work and by a tool called *Nimbor* the main lines are engraved; afterwards different patterns are cut using different sorts of chisels on the surface of the work. Sometimes if necessary or according to his taste and interest the artisan proceeds to reticulate, stone-set, gold block and silver block the product, in short, the beauty and

delicacy of the final work completely depends on the creativity of the mind and proficiency of the artist of this field.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Appendix 5: Coffee house painting, an artistic form of wall decoration**

“Coffee House Painting” was an art form that developed under the Qajar dynasty. It was a new form of painting that concentrated on traditional and religious themes. Its usual subjects were holy images of prophets, the religious epics, and the battles of national warriors. “Coffee Houses” were gathering places for the ordinary people. In these places, narrators use to tell religious and epic stories from ancient Persia. Artists painted these stories on boards and on the walls of the "Coffee Houses". During this period, unlike previous ones, it was the not kings or nobles but the ordinary people who supported artists and their work. Therefore, it was they who requested artists to paint the scenes they were interested in. Hence, most of the “Coffee House” scenes were painted in accordance with the desires of the public.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Appendix 6: Naqal, storyteller of imaginary events and worlds**

The storyteller (or naqal) was a major performer at the coffeehouse; he possessed a good speaking and singing voice as well as considerable dramatic talent and a lively imagination. For his material, he drew on the epic works of the famous Persian poets such as Ferdowsi, Nezami, and others.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Isaari, Mohammad Ali, *Cinema in Iran 1900-1979*, United State of America, 1989,p45.

<sup>3</sup> Salamiran, [www.salamiran.org/Iran Info/culture/arts/engraving/index.html](http://www.salamiran.org/Iran%20Info/culture/arts/engraving/index.html).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Isaari, Mohammad Ali, *Cinema in Iran 1900-1979*, United State of America, 1989, p44.

### **Appendix 7: Atal Matal, an animated children film**

Director and Scenarios Nouredin Zarrinkelk, Format 35 mm, color and 5 min, Producer I.I.D.C.Y.A in 1973.

This film was animated by four animators, working in co-operation with fourteen children, using the Paper Animation and Cut Out techniques. The film is a musical animation with the visuals shaped by a song sung by the children. The story of the film derived from the combination of three folk proverbs, *Atal Matal*, *In Daro Va Kon Solieymon* (open the door Solieymon) and *Asbeh Sefid, Asbeh Seyah, Zera Bagalam* (white hours, black hours, under my arm).

The film begins with a high angled shot of two pairs of children's feet stretched out on a *Gelym* (rug). This is followed by the recital of a poem written about Hassan's cow, throughout which we are shown a series of pictures and paintings drawn by the children depicting the cow. All these paintings are colored with a pure template and light style. The film attempts to replicate the style of the children's paintings in its form by blurring the border between lines and colors, perspective or faithfully seeking to replicate reality e.g. a cow has an oversized head or is blue in color. The shot changes are done through metamorphoses or the cut out technique.

Zarrinkelk himself says of the film; *Atal Matal* was the second film I made when I came back to Iran. The motivation for this film came from a series of children's paintings that I saw during a painting workshop in I.I.D.C.Y.A. The idea was then to combine these paintings with a series of proverbs and phrases. I think proverbs and folk

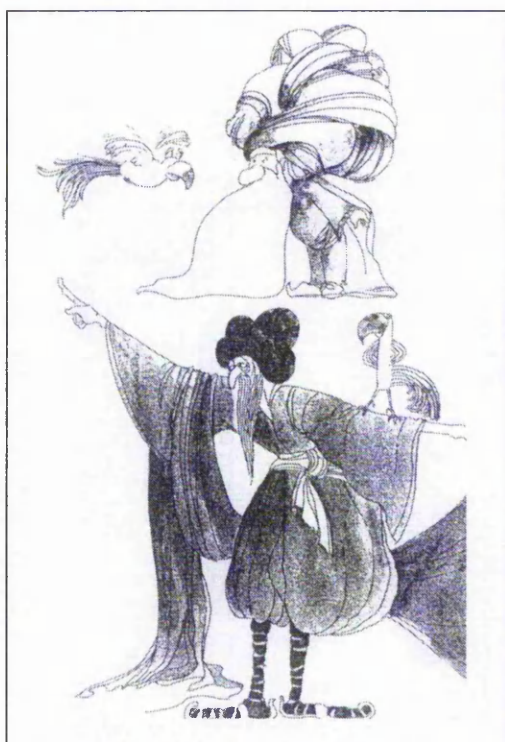
poems are the richest source of inspiration for animation because the two forms are structurally very close in spirit due to their freedom from rationality.<sup>6</sup>

### **Appendix 8: Sindbad, a failed experience**

In Finland Zarrinkelk and his Finnish group were again confronted with a lack of specialist animation and technical facilities and sought the help of a talented painter and caricature designer to assist them in their project. This alliance proved unsuccessful and they decided to try and continue their work in other European country. Once again they encountered numerous problems and difficulties and it was finally decided to take Sindbad's ship of adventure from the frozen waters of the Baltic to the warm waters of Hollywood and Burbank where all the skilful forces and necessary equipment existed in abandon. Throughout the three years in which the work was being produced, many factors combined to change the original direction of the project, not least of which was the inexperience and capriciousness of the films young producer and the greediness of opportunists. Finally the Finnish banks withdrew their investment capital from the project and Zarrinkelk moved to Argentina in a bid to finish the film before finally returning to Iran.

---

<sup>6</sup> Yasamin-pour, Sahar, *The Art of Eight, a thesis* for the MA in animation, University of Art, 1998, p115.



**Figure App.1:** (left) design for Sindbad in Iran, (top right) design for Sindbad in Finland, (down right) design for Sindbad in Hollywood, source: Shar Yaseinpour, a thesis for the MA 1999.

### **Appendix 9: International Animated Film Association (ASIFA)**

Membership of ASIFA is open to artists, writers, directors, producers, technicians, studio personnel, musicians, voice artists, distributors, critics, journalists, theorists, scholars, teachers, advanced students in animation, and all those who make a significant contribution to animation.

Some of the advantages of membership are:

Advance information of national and leading international festivals and events and provision of entry forms.

Close contact is maintained with festivals in order to protect the rights of the filmmaker and ASIFA has drawn up guidelines for festival organizers. Should any of our members have any problems (loss or damage of films, late return of films etc.) it is ASIFA that will confront the festival organizers. Conversely our support for a festival helps immeasurably with mailing lists, securing of film retrospectives and animation artwork exhibitions. We also maintain a booth at major festivals, which offers advice and publications and serves as a general meeting place for members.

ASIFA hosts the *Conversations with a Master* series at many international festivals. These enable our younger colleagues to meet and have discussions with leading artists in our field. Past *Conversations with a Master* have included Caroline Leaf (Canada), Raoul Servais (Belgium), Peter Lord, Mark Baker, Neville Astley and Barry Purves (UK), David Fine (UK/ Canada), Feodor Khitruk and Alexander Petrov (Russia) and Priit Parn (Estonia).

All members receive ASIFA News; our international 32-page journal (published in English, French and Russian) three times a year plus a fourth issue which is available on the internet. Members are encouraged to submit information and articles to this publication.

UK members also receive DOPE SHEET, the UK Group's magazine which provides news and information as well as articles about animation. Members are welcome to

submit articles, drawings, news items and information or to advertise. We also feature job opportunities whenever available.

ASIFA has established an international Databank of Employment and application forms are available for members. Registration on the Databank is free of charge. The Databank is accessed by many international animation studios including the Disney organization and Warner Bros.

The ASIFA Archive has collected almost 500 animated films from around the world and stores them in ideal conditions in the Swiss television archive. Funding is being sought to make these available on video format for research and educational purposes.

ASIFA has 30 workshop groups for children all round the world and has initiated many projects including collecting traditional children's songs made by children aged 8 to 14 years of age. One of the most successful workshop projects was Winter Wonderland, where 50 children from all over the world made animated films at Lillehammer in Norway on the theme of the 1994 Winter Olympics. All the films resulting from these projects have been sold to TV stations around the world. The latest project to be completed and screened at Annecy 2000 is on an environmental theme (Webb, 2000).

#### **Appendix 10: Questionnaire intended for foreign filmmakers and experts**

- In your opinion in which countries is there a well- developed animation industry. Please give reasons for your choices?
- Which method of training e.g. academic qualifications or apprenticeship (work experience) provides the best preparation for entry into the field of animation; please state the reasons for your answer?



- What do you consider the key features of the development of animation in your country? Please refer to past, present and future development?
- What aspects of your country's experience in animation might be useful for a country such as Iran, where animation is relatively under developed?
- Do you have any knowledge about or connection with Iranian animation? If yes, please give details?
- Which areas of animation are most influential in developing the animation industry? (E.g. children's cartoons, feature films or independent animation for festivals.)

#### **Appendix 11: Society for animation studies (SAS)**

The S.A.S (Society for Animation Studies) is an international scholarly organisation that was founded in the fall of 1987. It is dedicated to study of animation in all its forms and has member all around the world. The society supports animation scholarship in a variety of ways, including an annual conference, special exhibits and a newsletter. The purpose for which the organisation is organised is:

- 1) To study all aspects of animation in film, video and other media.
- 2) To promote the study of animation as a scholarly discipline.
- 3) To hold conferences at which research on all aspects of animation may be shared among members.
- 4) To issue publications dealing with the history, theory and criticism of animation.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Appendix 12: Questionnaire intended for Iranian filmmakers and experts**

- How many years ago, how and why are you implicating to animation?

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://ASIFA/ASA-BASICS.HTRR,2000-31-05,4:20PM>

- By consideration to conceptual and technical style, what are your trend to animation and why?
- What are the difficulties of implication in professional animation industry, and principally which business areas of animation industry you have expect?
- If enormous amount of budget put in your authority for promotion of Iranian animation by attention to which orders you spent them?
- In your view, by attention to which cultural, historical and artistic aspects, development of animation in Iran will be possible?
- How has animation in the Iran been influenced by the large youth population from cultural and education views?
- Which country or region of the world of animation could be a well sample for progression of animation in Iran, and how?
- What were the conceptual and structural effects of the Iranian revolution on the evolution of animation in the country?

### **Appendix 13: Iran as a bridge of victory**

This refers to Iran's transformation, by the Allies, into a supply route during World War II with the aim of preventing further German advances from the Russian Caucasuses. By the summer of 1942, as Nazi units pushed through Ukraine and the Crimea towards the Caucasus, the first elements of American logistic and combat engineer units began arriving in Iran to form the Persian Gulf Command. Working with Soviet construction battalions, the Americans built a network of roads to replace the narrow trails that proved impassable to large trucks.

The aid program known as "Lend-Lease" which had allowed a neutral United States to provide war supplies to England, China, and the anti-Axis effort; expanded greatly after America entered the war in December of 1941. Some 4.5 million tons of war supplies arrived at the ports of the Persian Gulf for shipment north.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Appendix 14: The Silk Road, an ancient trade routes and cultural exchange**

The Silk Road is long, dry, sandy, and to be a little more dramatic, lifeless. The old silk-trading route Chinese traders used since the second century to transport silk to Europe. The route, however, is certainly not as smooth as its name implies, even for present day travellers. The three roads run almost parallel along the Xinjiang province, before meeting in Tehran, Iran and going on to the Mediterranean. The 7000 kilometres Silk Road is more than just a route used by ancient traders - it is the link between various cultures - Chinese, Indian, Persian, Arabic, Greek, Roman. 5,000 years of history and culture, stunning desert scenery, the intrigue of centuries - old relics, and the source of numerous myths and legends.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Burgener, Robert D, *Bridge to Victory*, published the Iranian culture and ideologies meet, November 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Cheong, Doreen, *The Silk Road*, published on 8/15/01.

Appendix 15: The geography of the Iranian provincial divisions

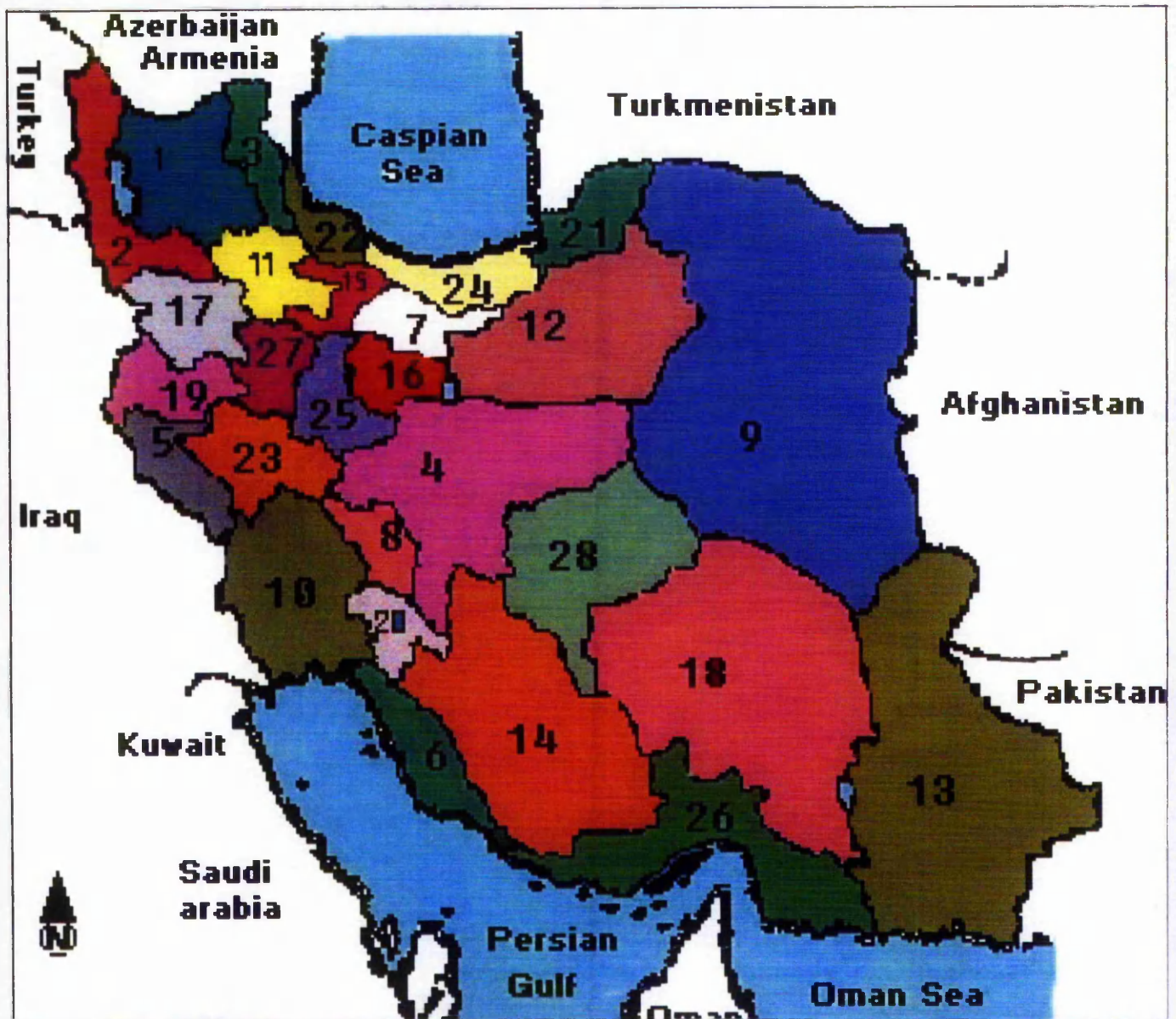


Figure App.2: Islamic Republic of Iran is a Middle East country consisting of 28 provinces

1- East Azerbaijan, 2- West Azerbaijan, 3- Ardabil, 4- Esfahan, 5- Ilam, 6- Bushehr, 7- Tehran, 8- Chaharmahal & Bakhtiari, 9- Khorasan, 10- Khuzestan, 11- Zanjan, 12- Semnan, 13- Sistan & Baluchestan, 14- Fars, 15- Qazvin, 16- Qom, 17- Kordestan, 18- Kerman, 19- Kermanshah, 20- Kohgiluyeh & Boyer-Ahmad, 21- Golestan, 22- Gilan, 23- Lorestan, 24- Mazandaran, 25- Markazi, 26- Hormozgan, 27- Hamedan, 28- Yazd

## Abbreviation appendix

AEPA	Spanish Association of Audio Visual Producers
ASA	Society for Animation Studies
ASIFA	International Animated Film Association
AWN	Animation Worldwide Net
BATS	the British Animation Training Scheme
FCF	Farabi Cinema Foundation
I.I.C.A.C.A.	The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults
I.R.I.B	Islamic Republic of Iranian Broadcasting
IYCS	Iranian Young Cinema Society
MCA	the Ministry of Culture and Art
NFBC	National Film Board of Canada
NIRT	National Iranian Radio and Television
SAVAK	Acronym for Sazman – e Etela'at va Amniyat – e Keshvar, National Information and Security Organization
SICAF	Seoul International Cartoon and Animation Festival
V VIR	Voice and Vision of the Islamic Republic

## **Bibliography**

### **Published Resources**

#### **Books**

- Aazam-Ghodsei, Hassan, (2000), My Memory (or One Hundred years of History of Iran), volume 1 & 2, Edited by Morsalvand, Hassan, Tehran: Publisher Karang.
- Afshar, Haleh, (1998) Islam and Feminisms An Iranian Case- Study, London: Macmillan Press Ltd (UK), and USA: St. Martin's Press, INC.
- Alasty, Ahmad. (1999) Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussions and writings about animation cinema), Tehran: I.I.D.C.Y.A (Research Section).
- Alidosty, Faezeh. (1999) Educated Animator: Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussions and writings about animation cinema), Tehran: I.I.D.C.Y.A (Research Section).
- Allen, Robin. (1999) Walt Disney and Europe, London: John Libbey company Ltd. and Impact, London: SAGE publications.
- Andre, Godard. (1965) The Art Of Iran, London: Gorge Allen & Unwin LTD.
- Banks, Marcus. (2001) Visual Method in Social Research, London: SAGE Publications.
- Bendazzi, Giannal Berto. (1994), Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation, translated by Anna Taraboletti-Segre, London: Johan Libbey & co.
- Chambers, Iain. (1994) Migrancy. Culture. Identity, London: Routledge.
- Comolli, Jean-Luc, and Jean Narboni, Cinema/Ideology/Criticism (Mast, Cohen and Braudy), 1972.
- Ferrier, R.W. (Ed), the Arts of Persia, Yale University Press New Haven&London, 1989.
- Fine, Ben, Economic theory and Ideology: (Great Britain: Edward Arnold), 1980.
- Foran, John (1993) Fragile resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500. to the Revolution, USA: West view Press.
- Frye, Richard N. (1995), The Golden Age of Persia (The Arabs in the East), London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Galtung, J. (1979). "A structural theory of imperialism." In G. Modelski (ed.),

Transnational corporations and world order: Readings in international political economy, p. 155-171. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company.

- Giroux, Henry. (1995) Beyond the Politics of Innocence: Memory and Pedagogy in the 'Wonderful World of Disney.' In eds Bell, Elizabeth., Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender and Culture. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Glassman, Marc and Gloudemans, Ton. (200) Paul Drissen- Image and Reflections. Holland: Holland Animation Film Festival (Utrecht) & Centre International du cinema d'animation (CICA Annecy).
- Golstan, Shahrokh (1995) Imagination Lantern- Iran cinema's adventure from initial until victory of the Islamic Revolution by narrative of BBC. Tehran: Kavir.
- Government of Iran. (1988) First five-year Development Plan, (1989/93), Teheran: PBO.
- Gunter, Barrie. (2000) Media Research Methods (Measuring Audiences, Reactions and impact), SAGE publications London. Thousand Oaks. New Deihli, 2000.
- Gramsci, A, Antonio. (1971) Selections from the Prison Notebooks: (London: Lawrence and Wishart).
- Halas, John. (1987) Masters of Animation, London: BBC Books.
- Hall, Stuart. (1977) 'Culture, the Media and the 'Ideological Effect.' in Mass Communication and Society. Ed. James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janice Woollacott.(London: Arnold) .
- Hansen, Anders, Cottle Simon, Negrine Ralph and Newbold Chris. (1998) Mass Communication Research Methods, London: Macmillan press Ltd.
- Hillmann, Michael.C. (1990) Iranian Culture: A Persianist View, USA:University Press of America.
- Hugh, Honour and Fleming, John. (1992) The Visual Arts: A History, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Issari, Mohammad Ali. (1989), Cinema in Iran 1900- 1979, USA: America Press.
- Jamal, Omyde. (1999), Iranian Feature Films Dictionary, Tehran: Negah Institute.
- Javaharian, Mahin (1999) Short History of Animation in Iran, Tehran: office of Cultural Research Bureau.
- Kaphafe, Assaddollah, (1999) The Background of Animation in Iran: Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion. writings and interviews about animation), Tehran: I.I.D.C.Y.A (Research Section).

- Katouzian, Homa. (1988) Musaddoq's Memoir's, Translated by S. H. Amin and H. Ktouzian, London: Jebhe.
- Khoshdel, Jamshid. (1999), Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussion, writings and interviews about animation), Tehran: I.I.D.C.Y.A (research Section).
- Klein, Norman M, Seven Minutes (The Life and Death of the American Animated Cartoon), Published by Verso, London- New York, 1993.
- Laybourne, Kit. (1979), The Animation book, New York: Crown Publishers, inc.
- Lent, Johan. A. (2001) (ed.), Animation in Asia and the Pacific, (*Kenyon, Heather, Animation for Development in South Asia*), London: Johan Libbey Publishing.
- Lent, Johan. A. (2001) (ed.), Animation in Asia and the Pacific, (*Soon, Lillian, Animation in Singapore*), London: Johan Libbey Publishing.
- Lent, Johan. A. (2001) (ed.), Animation in Asia and the Pacific, (*T.Y.Hu, Gigi, The 'Art' Movement Between Frames in Hong Kong Animation*), London: Johan Libbey Publishing.
- Locke, Lafe. (1992), Film Animation Techniques, a Beginner's Guide and Handbook, Ohio: Better way Books.
- Lord, Peter. And Sibley, Brian. (1998) Cracking Animation. The Aardman Book of 3-D Animation, London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.
- Lotfian, Hamid Reza. (1999) A decade of Kanoon's Cinema 1987- 1997, Tehran.
- Maghsoudlou, Bahman. (1987) Iranian Cinema, New York: New York University.
- Mattelart, A. (1994). Mapping world communication. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Mayer, G. (1991) Film as text, North Ryde NSW: Jacaranda Press.
- Mohammadi (Sreberny), Annabelle. And Mohammadi Ali. (1990) Small Media, Big Revolution, Minnesota: the University of Minnesota Press.
- Mohammadi, A. (1995). "Cultural imperialism and cultural identity." In J.Downing, A. Mohammadi, and A. Sreberny-Mohammadi (eds.), Questioning the media: A critical introduction, p. 362-378. London: Sage.
- Nafisi, Hamid. (1979), Documentary Film (Principle of Documentary of Cinema) Tehran: Iran Open University, Vols. I and II
- Nigel, Gilbert. (1995), Researching Social life, London: Sage-Thousand Oaks.
- Mir-Hosseini, Ziba, Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).



- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. (1996) (ed.), The Oxford History of World Cinema, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Omid, Djamal. (1985), The Iranian Films Encyclopaedia, volum1: 1928-1968, Tehran: Faryab publications.
- Omid, Djamal. (2000) The Iranian Films Encyclopaedia, volume 3: 1988- 1999, Tehran: Neghah Publications.
- Pak-baz, Roien. (2000), Persian Painting- since a long time ago till now, Tehran: Narestan Publications.
- Patten, Fred. and Lent, Johan. A. (2001) (eds.), Animation in Asia and the Pacific, Anime in the United States, United Kingdom: Johan Libbey Publishing.
- PBO (1991) Final report on the assessment of the economic damages of the war imposed by Iraq: 1980 – 1988, Tehran: PBO publications.
- Pilling, Jayne. (1992) (ed.), Women and Animation a Compendium, London: The Exhibition & Distribution Division of the British film.
- Pilling, Jayne. (1997) (ed), A Reader in Animation Studies, Sydney:Johan Libbey & company Pty Ltd.
- Pop, Allan.(1990) Masterpieces of Persian art, USA: Green Wood Press.
- Poya, Maryam. (1999) Women,Work and Islamism( Ideology and Resistance in Iran), London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Prescott, Ryan. R.S. (1989) In Praise of Rumi, London: Homhm Press.
- Robinson, B.W. (1976) Persian Painting (in the India Office Library), London, Sotheby Parke Bernet.
- Said, E. W. (1993), Culture and imperialism. New York: A.A. Knopf.
- Schiller, H. (1991). "Not yet the post-imperialist era." Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 8, 13-28.
- Schiller, H.I. (1989). Culture. Inc.: The corporate takeover of public expression. New York: Oxford University Press.
- SCI (1996) National Census of Population and Housing, Tehran: SCI
- Shay, Anthony.V. (1998) International Encyclopaedia Of Dance, Oxford: Oxford University Press, volume 3.
- Sibley, Brian. (2000), Chicken Run, Hatching the Move, London: Macmillan publishers Ltd.

- Smith, Philip. And Emmison, Michael. (2000) Researching the Visual. (Images, Objects, Contexts and Interactions in Social and Cultural inquiry), London: SAGE Publications.
- Stabile, Carol. and Harrison, Mark. (2003) (eds.), Prime Time Animation: Television animation and American culture, London: Routledge.
- Talebi-Nejad, Ahmad. (1999) Vision of Wakefulness (collection of discussions and writings about animation cinema), Tehran: I.I.D.C.Y.A, (Research Section).
- Tavakolian, Saeed. (2001) Wakefulness of Vision (about animation cinema), Tehran: I.I.D.C.Y.A (Research Section).
- Taylor, G. (1989), The Student's Guide for the Art and Social Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Richard. (1996) The Encyclopaedia of Animation Techniques, London: focal press.
- Teheranian, Majid., Hakimzadeh, Farhad. And Vidale, Marcello.L. (1977) Communications policy for national development (A comparative perspective), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- TIAF (2001), Second Tehran International Animation festival's Book, Tehran: I.I.D.C.Y.A (Section of Research and International Affairs).
- TIAF (1999), First Tehran International Animation festival's Book, Tehran: I.I.D.C.Y.A (Research and International Affairs)
- Tomlinson, John, (1991). Cultural imperialism: A critical introduction. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Tomlinson, John, (1999). Globalization and Cultural Cambridge: polity press.
- Vatankhah, Mostafa. (2001) Historical obstacles to Growth and Development in Iran, Tehran: Ministry of Art and Cultural.
- Wells, Paul. (1998) Understanding Animation, London: Routledge.
- Wells, Paul. (2002) Short Cuts, Animation Genre and Authorship, London: Wallflower Press.
- White, Tony. (1988), The Animator's Workbook, New York: Watson- Guptill Publications.
- Willams, Richard, The Animator's Survival Kit, Published in the United States by Faber and Faber Inc, 2001.
- Yahaqqi, M.Jafar. (1996) A Dictionary of Myths and Narrative Symbols in Persian Literature, Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studios and Soroush Press.

## Journals

Aalami, Akbar. (1999) *Twenty Years of Iranian Cinema*, Tehran: Donyaa-ye Sokhan: Scientific, Social & Cultural, (monthly), pp.3 – 22.

Abrar: Daily newspaper (1992), *In Listening to Zarrinkelk's Conversation a Master in Illustration of children's books and Animation*, Tehran, No.972.

Abootalebi, Ali.R., 'Civil society and Iran's quest for democracy', Iran Analysis Quarterly, Vol.1 No.

Abrar: Daily Newspaper (2001) *Children's Books and Animation*, Tehran: No. 3561.

Adinolfi, Anthony. (1999) 'Animation: A Lost Art Form' Leonardo, vol. 32 no 2.

Afshari, Amir. (2001) *can not tell Animation had Obsolete, a discussion with Abdollah Alimorad, jury member in national competition*, Tehran: Javan Magazine, No. 577, 25 February.

Afshari, Behzad. (2001) *An Artist with a Global View an interview with Abbas Kiarostamy*, daily bulletin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran International Animation Festival 2001, No.2, 20 February.

Afshari, Behzad. (2001) *Technique rules the content, An interview with Abdollah Alimorad, a festival jury member*, daily bulletin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran international Animation Festival 2001, No.3, 21 February.

Amiri, Noushabe. (1999) *The Social Function of the Iranian Cinema*, article, bulletin of the 10<sup>th</sup> Festival of Film Iran.

Back, Fredric. (2001) *Animator, Montreal, Festival Reasoning*, Animation World Magazine, www.awn.com,

Ballester, Jean- Luc. (1997), *The Lyon Conference*, Animation world Magazine, No.1, 11, February.

Benshoff, H.M. (1992) 'Heigh-ho, Heigh-ho, Is Disney High or Low? From Silly Cartoons to Postmodern Politics', Animation Journal, Vol. 12 , No. 3.

Barker-Plummer, Bernadette, *News as a Political Resource: Media Strategies and Political Identity in the U.S. Women's Movement*. Critical Studies in Mass Communication vol.12, 1995.

Brown, David, *Islamization of Television in Iran*, International Herald Tribune, Asia-special edition, July 2002.

- Cox, D. (1992) 'Caricature, ready-mades and metamorphosis: visual mathematics in the context of art', Leonardo, 1992, vol. 25 no3/4.
- Dilworth, John. R. (2001) filmmaker, *Festival Reasoning*, Compiled by the Staff of Animation World Magazine, New York
- Dorane Emroze. (2000), *Alimorad says about difficulties of animation*, Vol. 1, No.14, December.
- Ebrahemei, Nadir. (1993) Alphabet, Tehran: Farhanghan publication.
- Edgerton, G. (1996) Redesigning Pocahontas: Disney, the 'white man's Indian,' and the marketing of dreams. Journal of Popular Film and Television, 1996 vol.24, no .2,
- Felperin, Leslie. (1999) *Animation Cool*, Media Watch (magazine) Summer issue.
- Ghaba, Felix. (1992) *National identity in children's illustrations*, (literature critic from Ghana), Hamshahri (daily newspaper), Tehran: No.640.
- Gitlin, Todd, *The Whole World is Watching*. Berkeley (University of California Press), 1980.
- Golmakani, Houshang. (2000) *Pre-Revolution Years Of Iranian Cinema*, published Film Magazine, Sept. 28.
- Golpaygani, Ali Reza. (2001) *Missing Link in Education of Animation, A Discussion*, Daily Bulletin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran international Animation Festival, No.3
- Hebert, Pierre. (2001) *Highly Personal reflections on the state of animation*, ASIFA news, vol. 14, No1
- Hoffman, Adina. (1996) Makhmalbaf File: The Critic The Jerusalem post, September.
- Hoffman, Adina. (1996), *The American Prospect (Makhmalbaf File): The Critic* The Jerusalem Post, September.
- Hourcade, J.Charles. (2002) *professional Meetings*, Conference bulletin, Annecy
- International Esfahan Children And Young Adult. (1998) *Pioneer's of Iranian Animation*, (Daily Bulletin), No.7
- IRIB (2001) *Saba Company Past, Now and Future* Deidar (internal bulletin), IRIB, No.12, summer (1380).
- Iran Daily, (2000) *Animation Films Face Difficulties*, December 2,

- Iran Daily. (2001) *Tehran Animation Festival Ends, An interview with Tiziana Loschi*, Feb 25
- Iran Daily Newspaper. (2000) The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Various Issues
- Wang, James. (1996) International production and distribution, Animation, January
- Kar-o Karegar, daily newspaper. (2001) *the festival being changed point for Iranian animation*, Sunday 25 February
- Kaviri, Suzan. (2000) Iranian language, Chista: Political, Social, Scientific, Literary & Artistic, (Monthly), oct2000, No171
- Kayhan Caricature (weekly magazine). (2001) *Animation in the Golden Cage*; a short report from 2<sup>nd</sup> international animation festival in Tehran, March
- Kenyon, Heather. (1998) *Animation Under the Camera*, Animation World Magazine, Issue 3 & 2, May
- Keall, E. J, (1968) Animation in East, Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Toronto
- Kilmer, David. (1999) *What Price, Independence? An interview with Paul Fierlinger*, Animation World Magazine, Vol. 4, No.2, May
- Kinoshita, Sayoko. (2003) *A world-Famous Figures in the Third Festival*, Daily Bulletin, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tehran International Animation Festival 2003, no.2, 24 February
- Lent, Johan A. (1997) *Shin Dong Mun, An Old Warrior in Korean Animation*, Animation World Magazine, Vol. 1 No.11, February
- Mallory, Michael. (2000) *Familiar affairs, studios bank on tried and true formulas to lure ads*, Daily Variety, New York, November 10
- Moins, Philippe. (2001) *Raoul Servais: An Interview*, Translated by Annick Teninge, Animation World – Wide Magazine
- Mojavezy, Pak-sima. (1999) *The tales travelled from the East to the West*, a discussion with Manochehr Karim-zadeh, Iran (daily newspaper), No.1182
- NIRT. (1972) Animation, The NIRT publication department, Tehran, October
- Nouri - Zadeh, Sheida. (1998) *Persian Carpet, the beautiful picture of art in history*, Namey - e otaqe – Bazargani (newsletter of the Chamber of Commerce, Mines and Industries of the Islamic republic of Iran), No.3
- Ogan, C. (1988). "Media imperialism and the video cassette recorder: The case of Turkey." Journal of Communication, 38, 93-106.

- Oleeyaei, Mohammad. (1989) *An Interview with Nourredin Zarrinkelk*, Poovesh: A Periodical on Literature and Art for Children and Young Adults, IIDYA, Vol.1 No.2, December
- Rekha (Edotorial), (2002) Animation Reporter, Magazine, India, Vol.1, May
- Robinson, Chris. (2001) *peeling limes-various persons named Priit Parn*, ASIFA news, international animation film association magazine, vol. 14, No1
- Saba. (1999) A Representation Catalogue of Saba, Activity and Policy, Tehran
- Sharifi, Alireza. (2000) *Three Pillars of Iranian Culture: An Interview with Bernard Hocard*, Khorassan (Morning Daily), No. 14714, June 7
- Sharifi, Saeed. (2000) *Center For Intellectual Development of Children And Young Adults (1965-1996)*, Goftego: A Cultural & Social Quarterly, No19, p.1
- Shaheen, J. (1993) Aladdin: Animated racisms, Cineaste, vol. 30, no. 1,
- Simia, Animation Quarterly. (2001), *A discussion with Vladimir Elich*, No.1, winter
- Simia, Animation Quarterly. (2001) *Animation by Handicrafts Arts*, A discussion with Farkhondeh Torabi and Morteza Ahadi, No.1, winter
- Simia, Animation Quarterly. (2001) *the first resistant man*; a review on the life and works of Esfandiar Ahmadieh, No.1, winter
- Sui-Nam Lee (1995), "A case against the thesis of communication imperialism: The audience's response to foreign TV in Hong Kong." Australian Journal of Communication.
- Talebinejad, Ahmad. (1995) *An Interview*, Hamshahri (daily morning), Vol.3, No.639, 7th March
- Taylor, Richard. (2000) Dope Sheet the ASIFA UK magazine, Published by Pat Raine Webb & Margot Grimwood, London
- The Culture of Cinema (Magazine). (1992) *Esfandiar Ahmadieh, the beginner of animation in Iran*, No. 12
- TIAF (2001) *An interview with Ali Akbar Alami*, Daily Bulletin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran International Animation Festival, No.1.
- TIAF (2001) *Step by Step with Children*, Daily Bulletin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tehran International Animation Festival, , No.4.
- Trites, R. (1991) Disney's subversion of Andersen's 'The Little Mermaid.' Journal of Popular Film and Television, vol 18, no. 4

UNESCO (1995) *Books and Book Reading in Iran: A Statistical Viewpoint*, Iran (morning daily), May 24

Viel, Françoise. (1993) *what's in a name?* Daily bulletin, International Festival of Animation Annecy

Vladermersky, Nag. (2001) *My Trip to Tehran*, Animation World Magazine, April 1

Webb, Rain. (2000) *ASIFA, Dope Sheet the ASIFA UK magazine*, Published by Pat Raine Webb & Margot, London: Grimwood

Zabhi, Ramak. (1996) *A discussion with Zarrinkelk, Animation need to national support*, Film Report (cinema magazine), No.82

Zarrinkelk, Nourredin. (1993) *Every Body has a Different Value*, a special report from 19<sup>th</sup> international animation festival in Annecy, Film Magazine, No. 147

### **Unpublished Resources**

Internet:

[Awn.com/mag/issue4.07/4.07 pages/4.07 films. Php3](http://Awn.com/mag/issue4.07/4.07%20pages/4.07%20films.Php3), 2001.

Basmenji, Kaveh, *All for love in Iran's cinema MET correspondent in Tehran*, [metimes.com](http://metimes.com).

Burgener, Robert D. (1997) *Bridge to Victory*, published the Iranian culture and Ideologies meet, November 3, 1997.

Cheong, Doreen, *The Silk Road*, published on 8/15/01.

Cheshire, Godfrey. (2000) *The Iranian Cinema*, PBS Online, [www.pbs.org/visavis/BTVpages](http://www.pbs.org/visavis/BTVpages).

[Culture of Iran.com](http://CultureofIran.com), *Muharram*, 2002.

Hoor Animation Association, [index.html](http://index.html), 2001.

Iranian Panorama, [www.mifa.net/mifs/irsnina.htm-3k](http://www.mifa.net/mifs/irsnina.htm-3k), Saturday 30 June 2001.

IRNA (Islamic Republic News Agency), *Welcome to Iranian animations in France*, 12 October 2001.

Karimi. Htm, *Dramatic Expressions*, [www.Iranian.com](http://www.Iranian.com), May 1996.

Keall, E. J, Revised by Marx, Irma, Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Toronto.

Khorrami, Mohammad Mehdi, Iranian Literature, Article, professor of Persian literature and language at New York University, 2001.

Lawrence, Mark Andrew DDS, MCLD, *Mona Lisa/ Leonard da Vinci Profile Theory* discovered December 10, 1998 and released to the public on September 26, 2000.

Panushka, Christine, 'Absolute Panushka', 1999  
<http://panushka.absolutvodka.com/panushka/>

Rojna Animation Studio, *Who Are We?* [www.rojna.com](http://www.rojna.com), 2001.

Salamiran, <http://www.salamiran.org/IranInfo/Culture/Arts/engraving/index.html>.

The Awn Spotlight (weekly guide to Animation World Network and affiliate publication).

[www.salamiran.org/ct/culture/art/painting](http://www.salamiran.org/ct/culture/art/painting), the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ottawa, 1998.

### **Conferences papers**

Bahonar, Nasser, Television Religious Program and Audience Reception: A Comparative Study on Iranian TV Islamic Programs And Electronic Church, Tehran: Imam Sadigh University, memo, 2002.

Entezari, Ardeshir, Imam Khomeini's Expressions About The Islamic Media and the Structural Obstacles in Iranian press, University of Allameh Tabatabaiee, Tehran, presented at IAMCR General Assembly Barcelona, 2002.

Dovnikovic Bordo, Borivoj. (2001) *A paper about Zagreb*, International Jury Programme 2, FAN International Animation Festival, Norwich, October

Goergen, Jeanpaul. (2000) *Animated Propaganda in Germany*, 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Society for Animation Studies Conference, University of Trondheim, Norway, 5-9 August

Knight, Laura. (2000) "*from Flip to Zip: pattern of delivering animation education to pre degree student as part of a school curriculum*", paper, the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Society for Animation Studies conference, Trondheim, Norway, p.5, August 5<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>

Sallach, David. (1974). Class domination and ideological hegemony. In The TV Establishment: Programming for Profit and Power, Gaye Tuchman. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Theodoulou, Michael, Iran's culture and Art, the Christian Science Monitor, 2001.



### Private archive papers

- Karimi, Nosratollah. (2001) *the Biography of Nosratollah Karimi for HozeH Honari* Personal Archive, include 14 original letter, document and papers, summer
- Karimi, Nosratollah. (2001) *How the Malek- Jamshid (by Nosratollah Karimi) produced?* Prepared for Graphic Magazine, personal archive, include 14 original letter, document and papers, summer
- Karimi, Nosratollah. (2001) *a letter from Nosratollah Karimi to organisers of the festival of "the examination of history of Iranian cinema" in London*, 4 January 1999, personal archive, include 14 original letter, document and papers, summer

### Theses

- Golmohammadi, Nasser. (1996) *Evaluation of the work of Paul Dreesen*, a MA thesis Faculty of Cinema and Theatre of University of Art, Tehran.
- Khalili, Gh.Reza. (2001) *Review the Art works of Esfandiur Ahmadeh "the First Iranian Animator"*, a MA thesis on animation, Tarbiat Modarres University, Tehran
- Pesyany, Sasan. (1997) *A Survey and Analyse on Production system in Walt Disney's Cinema and Foresight of Production system in Iran*, a MA thesis, Faculty of Cinema and Theatre of University of Art, Tehran
- Sadeqi, Ravanbakhsh. (1995) *Analysing Ali Akbar Sadegi's animation works*, a BA Dissertation on animation, The Institute of the I.R.I.B, Tehran, 1995.
- Safoora, Mohammad-Ali. (1999) *Analyzing of Ali Akbar Sadegi's animation works*, a MA thesis on animation, school of Art Tarbiat Modarres University, Autumn, 1999.
- Sajjadi-Naeyni, Hamideh. (1995) *The Animation's of Nouredin Zarrinkelk*, a BA Dissertation on animation, The Institute of the I.R.I.B, Tehran, 1995.
- Yaseinpour, Sahar. (1999) *The Arts of Eight*, a MA thesis on animation, University of Art, Tehran.

## Interview

- Ahmadiéh, Esfandiyar. (2001) *interview by considering to team work production and ability of animation work forces*, in Saba Yakhchal St Shariati Ave and Shariati Ave (Ahmadiéh's house), Fieldwork Tehran, summer 2001.
- Karimi Saremi, Mohammad Reza. (2001) *interview by considering to production in I.I.D.Y.A, production policy, festivals and animation in Iran*, in I.I.D.C.Y.A, Fieldwork Tehran, August 2001.
- Karimi, Nosratollah. (2001) *interview by considering to history of animation in Iran, future prospective and technical issues as scenario in animation*, in Zafarineyah Valley – Asre (Karimi's house) Fieldwork Tehran, August 2001.
- Mahager, Parvin (Ahmadiéh's Wife). (2001) *interview by considering to Ahmadiéh's artistic life, attempts and promises to future as a pioneer*, in Shariati Ave (Ahmadiéh's house), Fieldwork Tehran, summer 2001.
- Pesyán, Sasan. (2001) *interview via letter by considering to function and definition of animation terms in Iranian animation and production policy in Saba*, Tehran (19 May).
- Sharei, Esmaeil. (2001) *interview by considering to industrial production, Saba's role in Iranian animation and plan for future*, in Saba Yakhchal St Shariati Ave, Fieldwork Tehran, summer
- Bidokhti, Saeid. (2002) *interview by considering to current situation of Iranian animation in the international market and off - shore production*, in Iranian Stand, MIFA Centre (international animation market), Annecy
- Dashtban, Masoud. (2002) *interview by considering to animation and education, independent production and animation in current situation of animation in the country*, in interviewee's studio, N3 Kambize Alley west Zoroaster, Tehran, August .
- Baroutian, Amir Ali. (2002) *interview by considering to mutual expectation as financial issues between animation organizers and new generation in the country*, in the international animation festival Annecy, June
- Navim, Hamid. (2002) *interview by considering to national and international effort in Iranian animation*, in the international animation festival Annecy, June

## Questionnaires

12<sup>th</sup> Annual SAS Conference, Norway august 2000.

1st Fan International Animation Festival, Norwich 2001.

Annecy International Animation Festival, June 2002.

Questionnaires by mail Eastern European countries, Canada, 2000 – 2001.

Saba, I.I.D.C.Y.A, Institute of IRIB, Faculty of cinema and theatre (university of art), personal contact, field work, Tehran, summer 2001.

## Videos

Abdollah Alimorad's collection, such as *Parrot and Grocer* (1991), *Children in Museum* (1987), *Experience and Technique* (1992), *the Role Key* (1990).

Ahmadiéh, Esfandiyar, first section, is a *documentary of Ahmadiéh's artistic life as insert part includes three animations - Molla Nasreddin* (1957), *cat and mouse* (1960), *the jealous duck* (1960). Second section, a copy of *the Smart Crow* (1994) produced in Saba Co.

Attached video to theses, a copy of *Shangoul - o Mangoul* (1999) by Farkhondeh Torabi, *Jewellery Mountain* (1994) by Abdollah Alimorad, *The Mad Mad Mad World* (1974) by Nureddin Zarrinkelk and *The Flower Storm* (1973) by Ali – Akbar Sadeqi.

Karimi, Nosratollah, first section is a *representing of Karimi's statutes (over 300 statutes of Iranian and foreign characters)* and an *interview base report about his statutes in exhibition* (1996). Second section, is a *documentary about karimi's artistic life: his puppets, workshop and books*. Third section, is a copy of "life" one of best early Iranian animation by Karimi (1967).

Pasian, Sasan, *Feast of Devotion* (1997), a production of Saba Co.

Saba, 2D and 3D demo tape of *Saba production (1994 – 2000)* and a representation of *Saba's facility, studio and equipment*.

The First Tehran International Animation Festival 20-23 Feb 1999, a *documentary about festival include: interviews report from opening ceremony, national and international competition, commemoration of masters, one choice one film and student a animation, 90min, 1999.*