



THE HISTORY OF INDIAN ANIMATION (1912-1961) - Part 1

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ABSTRACT

Today in India, Animation in any form is loved by all ages. The unique style of Indian animation is very much influenced by varied global production styles. Although the Indian identity is showcased by renowned visual narratives by using animation as art medium which is now become an integral part of different industries such as films, advertisements, games, news channels, educations, fashion and many more. This paper gives you a culminated idea of the contribution made by Indian Artists in converting "Animation" into an Industrial necessity.

KEYWORDS : Animation, History, India, Films

INTRODUCTION

ANIMATION- Birth of New Style of Entertainment

Using the theory 'Persistence of Vision' a new art medium "ANIMATION" evolved in the mid of 19th Century. This art form was something like drawings stages of an action in sequence, moving them in fast succession which is perceived by human eye as a continuous movement(1)

The early existence of Animation dates back to 5,200-year and was thought to be started in a city named Shahr-e Sükhté (Burnt City) southeastern Iran, where a pottery depicting a Desert ibex jumping up to grab the leaves of a tree was found. The jump of the deer was in a sequence of its action (1).

In 1906, J.S. Blackton, known as Father of American Animation, recorded the first ever animated film named "Humorous Phase of Funny Faces" using the technique of Stop Motion Animation (10). Countries like Japan, China, Argentina, England and India started experimenting using this new art medium and tried to make Films. Every experiment they did strengthened its beauty of telling a story in better way and today in 21st century it is one of the Biggest Medium of Entertainment.



Pottery depicting a Persian Desert ibex jumping up

SHADOW PUPPET

In the beginning of 20th Century the early signs of Animation in India evolved in the form of **SHADOW PUPPET**. This form had a story which talked about the mythology and folk culture of India.

The form included stylized leather crafted puppets which were pinned in overlapping fashion onto the sides of the screen. The puppets were mounted in the middle on a palm stem, extended to form a handle which puppeteers used to move the body of the puppet. The arms of puppets were moved using detachable sticks that had a small piece of string with a peg at the end. Generally, puppeteers moves the puppets using all three sticks of a single puppet, holding the central handle stick in one hand and two arm-control sticks in the other.

The puppeteers placed the puppets on the screen and then moved them away and it created an illusion of the figures suddenly materializing and then fading out. They also made the figures to walk, sway, hop, and fly through the air.

The puppeteers animated every movement of arms and hands of

the puppets, which they flip over to create a three-dimensional effect (12). The movement of freely dangling legs also created a feeling of animation. When several puppets are stationary on the screen at the same time, they are pinned to the screen with date palm thorns. A puppet would be rapidly pinned with one or two of the lone, thin thorns passed through the perforations in the headdress of shoulder ornaments. In this time **Tholu Bommalata of Andhra Pradesh(12), the Togalu Gombeyaata(13), leather puppets Karnataka, the Chhaya** became very popular



Tholu Bommalata

Togalu Gombeyaata

STOP MOTION ANIMATION

The credit of exploring Animation in India goes to Veteran **Dhundiraj Govind "Dadasaheb" Phalke**. His first attempt in Animation dates back to 1912, where he experimented by creating stop motion animation named as "**The Growth of a Pea Plant**." He made this film using the technique of time-lapse Photography which he clicked each day. The movie was never released by him but In 1915, another attempt was made by Dada Saheb Phalke to develop a stop motion Animation named "Agkady mouj" (Match Stick) inspired by the work of Emile Kohl(1).



Dhundiraj Govind "Dadasaheb" Phalke

CLASSICAL ANIMATION

On June 23, 1934 First Indian Animated Artwork was showcased in **Chitra Cinema**. The name of the Film was "**The Pea Brothers**". The Film was directed by **Gunamoy Banerjee** and it was produced by **New Theatres Limited**. This film used the technique of black and

white hand drawn images. This film showcased the story of 5 peas popping out which gets converted into 5 different toys playing with each other. With the length of only three to four minutes this film motivated artists in Kolkata and others for the first time to follow the classical style of Animation. In the very same year, **Birendranath Sircar** from Kolkata directed a film in one month named "**On a Moonlit Night**". The film released with soundtrack composed by **R.C. Boral** head of New Theatres Calcutta. This was the first time Sound Track was added into an Animated Film. This amused the audience more than previous years. In November 15, 1934, Pune based **Prabhat Film Company** released **Jambu Kaka** at the Majestic Cinema, Bombay (now Mumbai). The short film featured a character named Jambu Kaka which was actually based on a Jackal animated by **Raghnath K. Kelkar**. The birth of this new technique became popular, which lead to the growth in Indian animation. A decade, led to the direction and production of animated films such as, Lafanga Langoor in 1935 by Mohan bhavani, "**Superman Myth**" in 1939 by directed by **G.K Gokhale** and produced by **Indian Cartoon Pictures**. Leading to more improvement, another cartoon film was produced in 1947 in South by Gemini Studio entitled '**Cinema Kadhabham**', which was of 5 to 10 minutes duration. The cartooning work was done by noted cartoonist **N. Thanu**.



Gunamoy Banerjee Birendranath Sircar Jambu Kaka

ESTABLISHMENT OF CARTOON DEPARTMENT

With all the passed successful experiments of animated films, officially the Indian animation found its place in Indian Film Department in 1945. In the year of 1951, **the Jumbo the Fox** by **Ranjit Movietone** and **Michke Potash** by **Bhaktaram Mitra** become recognized. This was first published as a comic strip in a contemporary journal, Sachitra Bharat. The animators were **Shaila Chakraborty** and **Rebati Bhushan**. The responsibility of creative artist don't stop only on entertainment, keeping this in mind the great animators worked for society by producing animated films which sensitized general public regarding literacy, voting rights, population control and many more such social issues(1).

In the year 1956-57, the Film Division of India received help from UNESCO and through US Technical Cooperation Grant, an ex Disney animator Clair Weeks joined the Film Division in the year 1956. Clair Weeks started training to Ram Mohan, Bhimsain, Satam, Ezra Mir and Pramod Pati. **The Banyan Deer** was the first film the Indian animator did complete under the guidance of Clair Weeks. The film was directed by **Shanti S. Sharma**. The Film talked about the Buddha teaching peculiarly known as "**JATAKAS**" and combined the Ajanta fresco and Disney drawing styles. The film got huge popularity in India and among audience.

FILMS BASED ON SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL THEMES

The Cartoon Film Division started making various films based on educational or social themes. In 1960, **Ezra Mir** with help of **G.K. Gokhale** made an animated film called **A Great Problem which was one of the earliest pro-social film**. The story line was basically related to awareness of family planning. This film was internationally acclaimed(3). In the year 1961, Ezra Mir produced "**This Our India**." It was animated by G.K. Gokhale, with music by Vijay and directed by **Pramod Pati**. This cartoon film depicted some geographical and economic facts about India with the help of animated maps and diagrams. It wanted to aware people of India the Five Year Plan Projects which Government are striving to achieve a fuller and better life for all. In its 50th years of experiments in this medium, the

style of animation and storytelling in India increased and it grew from just a medium of entertainment to a medium of awareness. Many animators and directors started investing their time in this form of art to communicate people in a visual form.

CONCLUSION

Animation and animated films developed in India, long time back. Introduction of ANIMATION started the Birth of New Style of Entertainment. Many contributors who were well known artist in Indian film industry and abroad, struggled to develop this new form of entertainment to India as discussed in this paper. More elaborated discussion can be done to understand the importance of the journey of development of this medium.

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