

Learning softwares does



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In a time of global opportunities for Indian animation there is a grave need to examine, more than ever, animation education in the local context.

A recent NASSCOM survey of the Indian animation industry has cited India as a significant provider of animation production. In the current scenario the industry is poised for tremendous growth, although presently the demand for animation production services is mainly due to relatively low costs added to the availability of technical manpower.

Drawn into the international framework, India is positioned to provide viable production activities to overseas studios working in the areas of animation film and TV program production, non-entertainment sectors and gaming.

A recent windfall has been a massive surge of investment in locally made animated features for consumption by the Indian viewer.

Although opportunities loom large a lot remains to be done to fully tap the present prospects, primarily by working towards proving that India can deliver and even generate quality products locally.

This turning point would be a useful time to reflect upon how this can be made to happen. State support for animation activity and education has been insignificant and unlike most other countries animation as an industry was not nurtured indigenously. This lack of foresight has led to a huge gap in animation awareness, appreciation and education. There is unfortunately no particular animation culture to speak of, despite having amazingly rich visual and storytelling traditions in every part of the country along with a vibrant film industry and cutting edge technical capacities.

Despite huge apparent lacunae in the development of animation in India, interestingly, experiments in this medium have been made consistently, albeit on a miniscule scale. This first happened with feature filmmakers like Dada Saheb Phalke and continued in spurts till the late 1940s when the Cartoon Film Unit was established to ostensibly make films with a social agenda. The late 50s saw the establishment of small studios and animation saw an application in commercials, film titles and special effects. In the 90s many large studios were established to facilitate backend production for international projects.

From 2000 onwards till the present, seems to be the phase of either the making or breaking of the local industry, of education and training, of individual animators striking out to make their mark and of indigenous content for local consumption. These are exciting times and animation is a buzzword. What remains to be eventually seen is whether we can sustain the buzz, grow up and come of age and finally mature as animators.

Today Animation has generated widespread and passionate interest among the current generation who are keen to work in this medium but lack exposure, awareness, education and practice. A quest for an insight into the medium has led to people floating from one studio to another grappling with the intricacies of a very exacting and intense medium, learning on the job or in short term, studio schema related training programs. The results of such learning are obviously far from adequate, not only in terms of gaining an understanding of the medium but also from the point of view of a lack of production quality. This can only severely damage a delicately balanced industry of promise.

The establishment of a farsighted and well-rounded approach to animation teaching and learning can only overcome this issue. It is imperative that we now look at ways to create educational opportunities in animation outside working environments, which allow for an exploration and understanding of the medium that is unhampered by commercial goals.

It is only when we are able to address the issue of providing appropriate animation education can India hope to offer more than just backend service to the international animation industry. Sustaining an international profile will

not an animator make

entail developing an identity, which can only be born of local and successful development of concepts, content, narratives and visual styles.

Conviction and pride in their culture has served countries like China and Japan and they have been able to achieve a unique animation profile internationally. Similarly we must encourage and give strong impetus to pre-production where we can draw upon our strengths to speak an animation language that is a unique reflector of our particular sensibility in terms of time and space and a worldview that is ours. We must be ready to push the medium and experiment with ways of animating and storytelling that do not stop at mimicking the norm but

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look forward towards true engagement with the medium.

In the Indian context new animators should assume direct responsibility for nearly all aspects of the film making process – from concept to finished artifact.

What is required is reclamation of creative authority in sharp contrast with the impersonal assembly line production system of the studios.

Animation would mean creating alternate worlds of unreal moving pictures where the animator manipulates time and space in keeping with a unique sensibility that is proud to be in sync with the robust culture that is ours and not one that unsuccessfully replicates alien form and content.

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As a player in the international framework of animation production India is at a turning point which brings with it huge responsibilities. We are a newly born, yet unnurtured potential animation culture without a substantial animation history. It is an important time to pause and examine this intense and exacting medium and devote ourselves to its learning and practice that is informed by an indigenous sensibility.

This is an opportune time for all with a strong commitment to animation education in the context of Indian requirements to respond to the necessity of a holistic approach to animation education in keeping with an endeavour to respond to changing needs, emerging areas and demands of the industry.

Numerous animation courses are being run today due to the huge demand for trained animators required by the industry. These courses fail to hone animation talent when they address purely the need to have a working knowledge of animation softwares.

This can be redressed by including all areas of study essential to nurture a well rounded and rigorous approach to animation learning and understanding by looking beyond the tool and liberating the learner from such limitations. Rather what should be given impetus is a deep insight and reflection into the moving image, storytelling, analysis and criticism, and image making.

Animation today sees applications in many areas including films, special effects, gaming, educational material, illustrating medical processes, simulation, virtual reality, mobile devices, information graphics, web graphics, advertising, information films, TV graphics etc. The dynamic image has pervaded everywhere with a seemingly unstoppable momentum. What is of utmost importance today is for learner, teacher and practitioner to work at ways of anticipating the growth of animation and to collaborate meaningfully to shape the change to make it pertinent to our context.