

## General Overview of Effective Posters in Islamic Revolution of Iran and their Symbolic Connotations

Hamid Alami

Department of Theology, Dezful Branch, Islamic Azad University, Dezful, Iran  
Tel: 00989161418762, E-mail: [hamid.aalemi87@yahoo.com](mailto:hamid.aalemi87@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** Art is one of the highly effective means of promulgation and demonstration of culture. Among the different kinds of art graphic designing is considered as one of the most important means for its suggestiveness and visual effect. Islamic Revolution in Iran formed a new historical and cultural identity for Iranians, so that great change in every class of society happened. And both intellectuals and common people joined the stream to advance the objectives of the Revolution. Artists and among them graphic designers were among the heralds who played an important role in this way. They made great movement in the Revolution. By creating beautiful and effective works of art without mentioning their names in their works, artists start a new stage in the life of people and themselves. They also changed the way this art had been evaluated by people, and also they could save the art from absurdity and nothingness, and made it purposeful and used it in accordance with the human values, dignity and heavenly values.

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### Introduction

A poster, a picture, a sketch or a poem could have an effective role in revival of beliefs. Revolutionary artists tried to create their works of art under the influence of Imam Hossein cause and based on martyrdom, ethics in Alavi school of thought. They used this thought in order to join people, to support the Revolution and also demonstrated the objectives of the Revolution in their works of art.

Graphic designers in continuity of their activity in the first and second decade of Islamic Revolution tried to demonstrate the humanistic and spiritual values in their works, and transmit those important and unrepeatable incidents to the new generation. They used the language of art to show if there were not ideologies like sacrifice, and martyrdom in Islam how could empty-handed people defeat such a powerful regime. They tried to teach and warn the new generation not to go astray from the main issues and not to be trapped in the quagmire of the enemy. The language of art is the most effective, valuable and elaborated language. "Poems of a poet can be a cop data in the calm country of words." (Razi, 1985) Drawings of a graphic designer, poster, and words of a preacher can make big changes in the society. Iranians thinkers and poets talked about the impressive language of art a lot. Molavi, a great Iranian poet, says "a simple word can destroy the world, and it can create a lion out of the corps of a fox." (Molavi, 1991)

Because of the effectiveness and impressiveness of the works of art, artists are expected to create special and beautiful works of art in order to make essential changes in society in crucial times. Because "creation of beauty is one of the definitions

of art," (Moin, 1992) beauty can make great change in society.

The posters which were created during the Revolution considering the current condition of the society, and lack of suitable facilities and opportunity, were designed beautifully and simply to have the highest effect on common people. In this regard this article tries to answer the following questions: what was the role of Islamic Revolution on the change in the outlook of art? What were the especial symbols of Revolution? What were the common symbols used in revolution? What was the idea of the artists about art before and after the Revolution?

In addition to the physical and materialistic needs of human beings have some other needs such as truth-seeking, worshiping God, sympathy, kindness and tendency to art and beauty. Human beings' tendency toward art and beauty is rooted from his aesthetic beauty-seeking. Art invites human to look for the source of beauty and calm his restless soul. It should be mentioned here that art and religion are very close to each other; both of them are bestowed to human being by God Almighty and the creator of beauty in order to help him know God better. Thus if human being come to this knowledge that whatever he has is from God, he tries not to step in astray and worship false gods, and establish his life in Godly manners. For sure artists understand it better that they should not use their pens and brushes in wrong ways, and use their art to bring human soul, which is Godly, close to God. This way they could at first make the art a cosmic substance and in the next step they made it heavenly. The artists tried to consider this role of art in posters of Islamic Revolution. Inspired by this

notion artists transformed the words of Imam Khomeini which were influenced by Ashoora into works of arts. Graphic designers like other people in society tried hard and put themselves and their lives into trouble in order to gain victory. Most of the posters were spiritual rather than materialistic since they demonstrate the heartbreaking event of Ashoora and Imam Hossein, this idea made Islamic Revolution of Iran different from other revolutions.

#### **Political posters and their symbols**

In addition to their artistic values the posters which were created during Islamic Revolution had social and political messages. There were many symbols that were common in political posters pigeon, rainbow, broken chains, closed fist, blood drop, barbed wire, the crowd, bayonet, flower, gun, cloud, and eagle. Sometimes traditional and Islamic motifs were added to the posters in order to explore the national, cultural and religious identity of people. These motifs were applied either masterfully or amateur. The symbols that were mentioned above were quite familiar and could be found in other nations. In other words, they were not belonged to any especial group or party, on the other hand, there were some symbols which were foreign to Iranian. The reason behind the use of these symbols was rooted from political view of those groups or parties. Star, hand in hand, and V are a few examples of these symbols. The other symbols which were used and mocked in political posters during the Revolution were the flags of some superpowers and symbols of some parties and groups which plotted against Iranian Islamic Revolution. Half-burned flag of the United States, an eagle with an arrow in its hand, sickle and hammer of Soviets Union, six-angled star or Zionist regime of Israel, Kremlin Palace, bear as the symbol of Soviets Union, fox and multi-headed dragon as the symbol of interference of superpowers in Iran.

One of the especial symbols which were used in the posters of artists was tulip which is the symbol of martyrdom and this symbol was not used in other nations. The root of this symbol can be traced in literature, namely poetry of Iran. There is a famous line in poetry saying "the tulips are grown from the blood of martyrs". The reddish sky that can be found in some posters is the symbol of sadness and mourning of the sky for the martyrs. The gray and cloudy sky shows the tyranny of the rulers and the stormy condition of the society. In one of the posters a martyr is pictured with open eyes which show the awareness and insight of the way of the martyrs. Cedar which is an ever green tree and the symbol of life, height and beauty was used as symbol of martyr. Bent tree in some posters is the symbol of curtsy and also the tree's sadness for the loss of martyr.

#### **Classification of political posters of Islamic Revolution based on their subject matter**

Posters during the Islamic Revolution can be classified as follows: Ashoora, Moharram, Mahdaviyat, Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini, martyrs, women in Islamic Revolution, holy defense, soldiers, chemical bombing, human rights, crimes of the enemy, Qods, murdering in Hajj, unity. (Gholizadeh, 2001)

#### **Techniques and size of posters of Islamic Revolution**

The most common size for posters in Iran was 50/70 cm and they were created by techniques like photography, collage, using paintings for animation, airbrush, color pencil, and hand machine developing of posters, one of the characteristics of political poster of Islamic Revolution unemphasized role of written text in posters. By looking at posters WWII and other revolutions the major role of written text in posters is quite obvious. Moreover, some of these posters were designed by written materials. On the other hand, in the works of Iranian designers the symbolic use of written text and painting and calligraphy tracts are noticeable. (Gholizadeh, 2001)

There were many professional and amateur designers during the Revolution; the most famous of them were Ahmad Aghagholizadeh, Mohammad Zarabi, Hosseir Khosrojerdy, Seyed Hamid Sharifi Ale Hashem, Habibollah Sadeghi, Abolfazl Aali, Majid Ghaderi, Ali Vazirian Kashi, Korosh, Behzad and Esmail Shishegaran. (Habibolahi)

#### **The role of Islamic Revolution in changing the artistic view**

Regarding the role of Islamic Revolution in changing the artistic view it can be said that before Islamic Revolution, generally speaking, the art was in the hand and service of well-to-do and wealthy class of society, art had been used materialistically and had been used for non-religious purposes and sometimes against it. In short it can be said that art was in the service of sexual and sensual and materialistic pleasure, but Islamic Revolution made a great change in art. Islamic Revolution directed art toward spiritual and high values, Islamic Revolution not only influences the form, but also the content of art works. Because of the political condition before Islamic Revolution, artists were not free to express their ideas. But after Islamic Revolution the suffocating condition collapsed and young artists get the chance to express their feeling and artistic talent without fear, create unique works of art and started a new stage for graphic in Iran. (Godarzi, 2011) Young artists who were among the main stream of Islamic Revolution based on their instinctive motivation wanted to express what they got as truth about Islamic Revolution in their works. They created valuable

works of art truthfully and enthusiastically. (Godarzi, 2011) When the art of Islamic Revolution created from the initiation to the representation honestly, it was highly valuable and could present the meaning of humanity and Islamic Revolution literally. For this reason, in the works of Islamic Revolution they were not just heroes and dignified people that determine the horizons of humanity in essence and existence, but they were individuals and common people that retell the how of their presence to world. It should be mentioned that artists usually think of their creativity as something purposeful, and they are free in their creation of artistic works, but they are not aware of what influence their purposeful creativity or they do not pay attention to it. Although William Butler Yeats considers artists as lonely and dissociable people, he believes that creation of work of art is the result of social interaction of artist. (Haves, 2007) Islamic Revolution of Iran as a great social change made a great change in art, and artists could change the dull and useless art to an active and hot art under the influence of social changes.

It can be said that since most of the artists of this era were young. They were in rush to picture and demonstrate their works to common people and they did not pay attention to the beauty and techniques. This is not just applicable to the Islamic Revolution of Iran, similar facts are found in other revolutions in the world. For example, in analysis of artistic works of French Revolution Prodon said "revolution does not have enough time to introduce itself to artists and painters by aesthetic or induction of thought and idea. The revolution presented itself by the best possible way and used any available tools such as Greek, Latin, classics, and even the Holy Scripture, but since borrowing from languages was based on style, methods and forms sometimes the works of art turned to be rough, cheap and wrong. (Prodon, 1992)

Because the Islamic Revolution of Iran was influenced by religion, honesty and piety, the graphic designers of Islamic Revolution, too, were far from selfishness and proud, they designed their works by honesty, simplicity and what they had in their mind without being involved in artistic details, and this spiritual simplicity created the ultimate beauty which had the highest effect on common people. As what a poet says, what comes truly from the heart penetrates to other hearts.

### Conclusion

Finally it can be concluded that there are good works and plain truth in these posters and they can convince the thoughts, and this is the value of art that could transmit the messages and objectives of this

posters to the thoughts and soul of the audience. All these posters contain religious and spiritual messages and though there might be more beautiful posters but without religious or spiritual messages. Generally Islamic Revolution in any field has its root in heavenly Nabavi thought and instructions. Since religion has the least attention to the worldly prosperity and materials, so most artistic works put the emphasis on afterlife, in Islamic art, art is not just using the color, design, and symbols, but art is rooted from Islamic and religious thought. It should be mentioned that in Islamic art using color, design and symbols have the secondary importance and the main concern is devoted to the content and meaning. In most of the posters Islamic, there are messages of martyrdom, holy Jihad, Imam Hossein's cause, because these posters can be spiritual, religious and political posters, rooted from Islamic thought and beliefs in a Islamic country for Islamic Revolution. It is a fact that the art of a country is rooted from the belief of its nation. In Islamic culture martyrdom is the ultimate beauty, Imam Hossein says "martyrdom is like a beautiful necklace around the neck of a woman. (Godarzi, 2005) The relationship between martyrdom and honor can be grasped from this valuable saying. Islamic artists tried to put this message in their works in order to influence people.

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