**Film Language: Film Form and Meaning**

(Notes on How to analyse a film by ***Geetha Bakilapadavu***)

Film analysis requires a clear understanding of film form and film content. One needs to know some of the basic concepts of film medium like the structure- both at micro and macro levels, relationship of structure, meaning, emotive aspect and value, image construction, and the design in film composition etc.

However, before moving further into the realm of these, we need to understand the story of a film, its plot, theme, conflict, characters play crucial roles in completing the film maker’s intentions. A viewer, like a discerning reader of a work of literature, has to pay careful attention to all these elements. We have already discussed these elements in our discourse related to literature. Since they are applicable to films as well, we are not repeating the discussion. The focus in this chapter will be entirely on those aspects that make the language of cinema unique. It goes unsaid that cinema is a popular medium and we all understand films even without being initiated into the nuances of the film medium. We all respond to both visual and aural stimuli. As already stated, we understand film’s story, its plot, its characters and their motivation. They are immediately perceived and easily articulable and. mostly one does not go beyond these initial impressions. However, for an enriching experience, one should be able to go beyond these and uncover the coded messages that are subtly conveyed through various elements. Knowing the aesthetics of film language helps one to go beyond the ‘denoted’ meaning and decipher the ‘connoted’ meaning- what is beneath the surface and what might be inarticulable. So, what we are attempting at is a richer experience and more comprehensive analysis of a film.

For this, we need to focus on the following three areas:

* **Form/ Structure:** film form or structure at both micro and macro levels- from composition of individual shots, fragments of picture and sound to the arrangement of these fragments into scenes, sequences and finally the entire film.
* **Film language:** elements of the film ‘language’ like visuals, sound, editing, acting,

lighting etc.

* **Meaning:** the meaning of the film is its essence; the theme, story, plot, characters, the various elements of film language as used in the film, and its composition etc. add up to provide that ‘meaning’.

Careful attention to these aspects would allow us to go beyond the surface level meaning of any film. These considerations along with our initial response to the film hold key to any film analysis.

**Film Form**

Film form or film structure is the total system that the viewer perceives in the film. It is the overall system of relations that we can perceive among the various elements in the whole film. When we watch a film we perceive it as a complete whole though it is created by joining many fragments of various elements. If we pay attention to the structure of the film, we would be able to look at the individual parts and try to explain why they are in the film and how in a uniquely cinematic way the entire film functions and has its effect on the viewer. Hence, the concept of film form is important in film appreciation. Let me explain this in greater detail. While making a film, the filmmaker creates an image of an event so that the spectator perceives it. The event on the screen is not a real event, but a created one. Each real event has an inner structure of significance which has to be understood by the film maker. Then, he has to select visual fragments and sound fragments that are expressive of that significance and arrange them into a single whole so that the spectator perceives that inner structure of significance. From a well composed screen image of an event, one can experience the fullness or richness of the real event. Structures, in general, have various elements that serve different purposes. In works of art too they have a functional role to play though that is not its entire significance. The pattern in which various elements in a work of art are woven together to make a complete whole in itself has aesthetic appeal of its own. This aesthetic quality enriches and enhances the created ‘content’. Hence, ‘what’ is said (meaning) in a work of art is intrinsically linked to ‘how’ it is said. A good film, like any work of art, draws its principles of composition from the principles of human experience. Otherwise, the film would not make sense to the spectator. In this context, understanding the structure of the film helps.

Let us conceive a film as a design or a system in which various elements have been intertwined where each individual fragment, be it visual or aural, has a relationship with the complete film. Here we have to think of two levels of structure: the microstructure and the macrostructure. The **microstructure** is related to the composition of images, individual shots, sound fragments and the concept of editing with which these fragments are joined. The composition of these have an impact on what these images convey to the viewer and hence how the complete film is experienced. Further, when we consider an individual visual shot, there are many elements like camera placement, lighting, lenses, relationship of frame outlines with elements contained within the frame outlines, duration of the shot etc. that go into its composition. In a well-designed film, much attention is paid to the composition of such individual shots and aural fragments- be it a fragment of music or that of a dialogue or an incidental sound. When we move from this basic level into higher levels, a design of the entire film emerges. We can perceive that these individual fragments are composed to make various segments; a careful attention to the way in which scenes, sequences and finally the entire film have been put together makes us perceive the inner structure of the entire film. This composition of scripting is referred to as the **macrostructure** of the film. Various **narrative** and **stylistic** elements play important role in shaping the macrostructure of a film.

Having said that the film form or structure is done through careful selection of elements, we now discuss some guiding principles that we can perceive in the structuring of a film: *Function, Similarity and Repetition, Difference and Variation, Development, Unity and Disunity.*

* **Function**: Each element chosen in a film, as in any work of art, should have a purpose to be there and this purpose is its function. We can notice the function of an element by considering its motivation, or justification for being there.
* **Repetition and Similarity**: A film’s pattern emerges due to elements which are repeated. Repetition is basic to our understanding of any film. Elements such as characters and settings, music, camera positions, story actions or even certain lines of dialogue repeat at various points in the film. Here we need to introduce the concept of a **motif** which is going be very useful in analyzing films. Any significant repeated element in a film is called a **motif**; it may be an object, a color, a place, a person, a sound, a song, a charactertrait, a pattern of lighting, or a certain type of shot.
* **Difference and Variation**: The form of a film cannot be composed only of repetitions because it would be very boring to have too many repetitions. Thus difference is another fundamental principle of film form. Variety, contrast and change in characters, environments, times or activities, differences in tonality within an image, texture, direction and speed of movement, etc. are required to make an interesting film.
* **Development**: A film often follows a pattern of a development which may compared to a journey. From the beginning to the end there is a progression of events or a development of story that happens. Similarity and difference, repetition and variation work together to create development. A film’s pattern of development can be understood by **segmentation** of the film. By segmentation we mean breaking the film into major and minor parts and assign them with consecutive numbers. By segmenting a film into various **scenes** and **sequences**, we can perceive similarities, dissimilarities, and overall progression within the film.

It is conventional to divide a film into three dramatic units in order of increasing complexity- shot, scene and sequence. A shot is the basic unit of film construction; it is a single piece of film without breaks in the continuity of action. Next to a shot is a scene; it is a series of shots joined together by means of ‘cuts’ so that it has unity of time and action. Though in the earliest days of cinema, a scene was defined as a series of shots with the same setting, unity of place is not a criterion any more to call a particular segment a scene. A series of shots usually make up a scene and a series of scenes put together make up a sequence. A sequence is next to a scene in the hierarchy of structural units and forms a distinct narrative unit, usually connected by unity of location or unity of time. Also, a sequence may have sub sequences. It may be noted that a single shot can become a scene and a single scene can become a sequence. We may recall that the first film by Lumierre brothers is a single shot film! It helps one to segment a film into various sections as we can the progression of the film and locate important events in the film at various points. We can thus understand the narrative structure, the development of the ‘action’ of the film in a better way.

**Unity**

A film is considered to have **unity** when all the elements of the film have certain functions of their own and also when they all are economically interwoven into a beautiful whole. When there are no gaps in the formal relationships and has unity in it, we refer it to be “tight”, If there is any unrelated element whose presence cannot be justified in the film, then, the film does not have unity in it. because. Thus a film is said to have unity when every element present in has a specific set of functions, similarities and differences are determinable, the form develops logically, and no element is unneeded. Thus film form/structure is not about just plot structure. So far we have discussed what we mean by micro and macro structure of the film, basic units of structure, some of the guiding principles behind structuring of a film etc. Sensensitising ourselves to these aspects of film structure enriches our experience and understanding of any film. A careful viewing of Satyajit Ray’s much celebrated masterpiece Pather Panchali would make one understand how important it is to pay attention to structural elements at both micro and macro levels. Now, we shall move on to discuss various aspects of film language. As you proceed, try to relate the discussion to your experiences while watching a film. You may go back and ‘revisit’ a film which held great appeal to you, even if you found it difficult to comprehend completely.

**Film Language**

Cinema, being a medium that has a rich language of its own, needs one to pay attention to the elements of image and sound. Deciphering various aural and visual cues provided through the text and subtext is crucial to understand the film. While it is important for the filmmaker to handle this language skillfully, it is equally important for the spectator to be sensitised to this unique language. In a film, every image carries a meaning of its own; also sound plays an important role as it may complement/support/exaggerate visual image. Proper use of both ‘sound’ and ‘silence’, as abstract as they are, lend a beauty to the whole film.

A film’s cinematography- colour, contrast, deep/shallow focus, depth of field, exposure, rate, framing, aspect ratio, movement of the camera, lighting etc- is one aspect of film’s language. These elements contribute in designing the ‘visual’ part of a film. In any film, image is not just a picture; it is a moving image with a meaning of its own. The object that has been shot, how the shot is composed, from what angle or distance it is shot, what lighting/ colour is used, etc play important role in creating the meaning of the image. In other words, it is important for us to perceive what is ’in the picture’ and how the action has been ‘staged’- known as mise-en-scene.

**Mise-en–scene**

Mise-en-scene analysis, a well-established approach to film analysis, focuses on what can be seen ‘in the picture.’ The term **mise-en-scene** in French literally translates to ‘staging an action’ or ‘putting on the stage’. It was originally used with reference to theatre and it included elements of set design, lighting, costume, figure expression and movement. Film scholars, extended the term to film direction; they use the term to signify the director’s control over what appears in the film frame. In controlling the misc-en-scene, a film director stages the event for the camera. In film analysis, mise-en-scene is one of the most frequently used but variously interpreted terms. Film scholars David Bordwell & Kristin Thompson (1979) in their book ***Film Art*** state that mise-en-scene consists of setting, lighting, costume, figure expression and movement. They do not consider camera placement as a part of mise-en-scene. But, Bruce Kawin in his book ***How Movies Work*** (1992) includes “Choice of filmstock (black-and-white or color, fine-grain or grainy) . . . aspect ratio (the proportion of the screen) . . . framing (how much of the set or cast will be shown at a time) . . . camera placement and movement, and . . . sound environment” as part of mise-en-scene.

Generally, mise-en-scene study includes studying the following elements:

* production design: setting and props
* costumes
* colour (present both in production during and lighting)
* lighting
* actor’s performance (including casting and make-up) and movement (blocking)
* framing including position of the camera, aspect ratio, depth of field, height and angle
* diegetic sound
* **Setting and props**: Setting plays a more active role in cinema than in most theatrical styles where human being is all-important. Theorist Andre Bazin stresses the importance of setting in films when he says “The drama on the screen can exist without actors. A banging door, a leaf in the wind, waves beating on the shore can heighten the dramatic effect. Some film masterpieces use man as an accessory, like an extra, or in counterpoint to nature, which is the true leading character”. The important point to note here is that cinema setting need not be a passive element; it can dynamically enter the action of the film narrative. The filmmaker may control setting in different ways. One may select an already existing locale to shoot the film. On location shooting has a long history as the first films ever made by Lumiere brothers ***Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat***, ***The Squirter and the Squirted*** etc. were shot on location. Italian neorealist films too are known for their on location shooting. Indian ace filmmaker Satyajit Ray’s selection of locations for shooting has a remarkable quality about them. Viewing of any one of the films from ***Apu Trilogy*** is enough to understand what I mean by the above statement. While on location shooting is a favourite of many film makers till day, a filmmaker may choose to construct the setting where most controlled pre-filmic events are fabricated in a studio. George Milies, the pioneer of trick films (what we now refer to as films with special effects), understood the increased control yielded by using a studio setting for shooting. Most of the early Indian films were shot in studio setting. One look at the early films by Damle or V. Shantaram, and one would understand that they were shot in studio setting. Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman is famous for opting studio settings against the use of on location shoots. While creating a shot’s setting, the filmmaker may create a prop- an object in the setting that operates actively in the ongoing action. One good example of prop is the little girl’s balloon in Ftitz Lang’s film ***M.*** It is worthwhile to point out that a prop may further gain significance by working as a motif. When we watch Ray’s ***Pather Panchali***, we see Pishi’s (Indir) water pot gaining such significance. Initially it is the container of life giving water; but when she dies the same pot falls into a water pond, suggestive of Pishi’s death.
* **Costume and make-up**: Costume simply refers to the clothes and the accessories that a character in the film wears. Costume in narrative cinema is used to signify character, or advertise particular fashions, or to make clear distinctions between characters. A film’s costume speaks about the characters; costumes can be iconographic. The importance of costumes can be seen in the period films where characters of the past come alive donned in the attire similar to that of the people during that period. eg: costumes used in period films like ***Cleopatra, Gladiator, Troy, Elizabeth*** etc. have a distinct character of theirs own as is seen in the following shot from the film ***Cleopatra*** in which Elizabeth Taylor is donned in the costume for coronation. Sometimes costumes become the identity of certain characters and symbolize their power. Costumes of superheroes like Spiderman and Superman are some examples. Costumes also reflect the lifestyle and attitude of the society. We find a stark contrast between the costumes donned by the lead actors in the films today and in the earlier films. Bollywood cinema has seen phenomenal change in the way in which costume is used in films. Costume too may work as a prop in a film. Film genres make extensive use of costume props. The gangster’s automatic pistol, guns, cowboy hats are some examples of costumes that work as props. The actor’s make-up is a closely related area of mise-en-scene and all the points discussed with respect to costume apply to make-up as well. Make-up mostly aims at realism; but it is possible to use it in nonrealistic ways as in horror, fantasy and science fiction films.
* **Colour:** Colour is present in the setting, props, costume of a film. The type of lighting used affects the colour seen in a film. Early films were shot in black and white but the cinema soon included color images. These images were initially painted or stenciled onto the film but by the 1930s filmmakers were able to include color sequences in their films. Apart from the added realism or glamour that a color image could provide, color is also used to create aesthetic patterns and to establish character or emotion in narrative cinema. For example, use of black and white film stock when colour is available is interesting to study. Directors sometimes use black and white or sepia in a colour film to either show flash backs or dream-like state. It is often used in Tarkovsky’s film oeuvre. There is a nostalgic feel to the sepia toning and this is best manipulated in his film ‘Nostalghia’. Indian film maker Aparna Sen also artistically uses this technique to show the dream sequence in her film ’36 Chowringhee Lane’. Black-and-white or sepia can also be used to suggest sophistication. The type of lighting affects the colour seen. Light and shade is important in the mise-en-scene of ‘black and white’ cinema. The use of bright colours works as a denotation for cheerful and happy times. Often melodramatic and sad moods are brought out by using dull colours. *Cold* or bluish lighting can convey a sense of cold, alienation or technology, while *warm* or yellowish lighting can be used to convey comfort, sunset and so on. If colours are very rich and intense they are described as *saturated.* However one has to keep in mind that colors do not necessarily carry meanings that can be read easily. For eg., the use of red in Ingmar Bergman's 1972 film ***Cries and Whispers*** (*Viskingar Och Rop*) does not carry meanings that can be read easily.
* **Lighting:** In films, much of the impact of an image is due to the manipulation of lighting. The intensity, direction, and quality of lighting have a profound effect on the way an image is perceived. Light affects the way colors are rendered and can focus attention on particular elements of the composition. Lighter and darker areas within a frame help create the overall composition of a shot. A brightly illuminated part of a shot may draw our attention to certain objects or gestures while a shadow may conceal a detail or build up suspense. The famous shower scene from Alfred Hitchcock’s “Psycho” is a brilliant example of powerful use of back light to conceal the face of the murderer and highlight the horror on the victim’s face. Fig. …shows basic arrangements of these lights. Most mainstream films rely on the three-point lighting style, referred to as tripartite lighting scheme, and its genre variations. Other films, for example documentaries and realist cinema, rely on natural light to create a sense of authenticity. Films of Indian directors like Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal and Aparna Sen make full use of the natural lighting in their cinema. Aparna Sen’s ***36 Chowringhee Lane*** is one such film where the filmmaker makes extensive use of natural lighting to complement the moods in the protagonist’s life. The darkness of Miss Stoneheim’s apartment reflcts the misery of lonely life is in complete contrast with the well-lit outdoor sequences in the company of Nanditha and Somesh. In the song sequence ‘itsy bitsy teeny veeni’, Miss Stoneheim’s child-like simple happiness is complimented by the energy of an out-door shoot on a pleasant day. Four major features of film lighting are its **quality**, **direction**, **source**, and **colour**. By quality we mean the intensity of illumination. While ‘hard’ lighting creates clearly defined shadows, ‘soft’ lighting creates a diffused illumination. (take examples from Ray). Hard lighting creates edges, crisp texture and softer lighting blurs contours and textures. There is gentler between light and shade when the lighting is soft. According to the **direction** from which a shot is lit, we can recognize whether the lighting is frontal lighting, side-lighting, backlighting, under-lighting or top lighting. **Frontal lighting** eliminates shadows and creates a flat looking image. Use of **sidelighting** creates as in ***Psycho*** when Norman Bates is seen watching the drowning car has a tendency to sculpt the characters features. **Backlighting** comes from behind the subject that is shot. If it is used with no other point of illumination, backlighting creates a silhouette, as in ‘Psycho’’s murder scene. **Under-lighting** has light coming from below the subject. As it has a tendency to distort features, underlighting is often used to create dramatic horror effects. If the light is coming from above the subject, then it is **toplighting**.

Lighting can be characterized by its **source** as well. It could be natural light, light coming from the objects within the frame (visible sources of light) or extra light sources. But most fictional films use extra light sources. It is a common assumption that any subject normally requires two light sources: a key light and a fill light. The key light is the primary source and provides the dominant illumination. The key lighting source may be aimed at the subject from any angle. A fill light is less intense and it ‘fills in’- i.e, it softens or removes the shadows created by the key light. In Classical Hollywood films, it was customary to use three light sources for every shot: **key light, fill light** and **backlight**. Three-point lighting is generally used to render a brightly lit situation like that of a ballroom dance or a birthday party. But its use can suggest different lighting conditions or times of the day.

The following illustration shows the position of theses lights and how they work.

* **Key Light:** This is the main light. It is usually the strongest and has the most influence on the look of the scene. It is placed to one side of the camera/subject so that this side is well lit and the other side has some shadow.
* **Fill Light:** This is the secondary light and is placed on the opposite side of the key light. It is used to fill the shadows created by the key. The fill will usually be softer and less bright than the key.
* **Back Light:** The back light is placed behind the subject and lights it from the rear. Rather than providing direct lighting (like the key and fill), its purpose is to provide definition and subtle highlights around the subject's outlines. This helps separate the subject from the background and provide a three-dimensional look. Another aspect of lighting which most of us ignore is the colour in on-screen illumination. While the white of sunlight and the soft yellow of interior lamps are the two colours of film lighting that are commonly used, use of different colour filters placed in front of the light source colours the onscreen illumination. Also there may be a realistic source in the scene to choose a particular colour of light. Kubrik’s films ‘Clockwork Orange’ and ‘Barry Lyndon’ are two examples in which use of colour in lighting is prominent.
* **Performance:** Performance, an integral part of mise-en-scene, consists of visual as well as sound elements like acting, appearance, gestures, facial expressions, voice- tone, accent, and type of language, body posture and movement etc. Performances could be **melodramatic** or **realistic.** There are different **acting styles** and we can classify them in the following ways: **Classical style, Method acting, Natural style** Classical style is more obviously mannered. Consider the acting styles in period films like ***Cleopatra***, ***Gladiator***, or the ***Mughal E Azam*** of yester years and you would understand what we mean by classical style of acting. Method acting is intense and psychologically driven; we may give examples of films like ***Kagaz ke Phool***, **Pyaasa** etc. by Gurudatt for method acting. In natural style of acting, there is less affectation and it is more natural. When we watch Ray’s films, say, Pather Panchali, we are struck by the natural style of acting of each actor in the film. Films by Deepa Mehta, Mrinal Sen, Meera Nair, Aparna Sen distinctly follow natural style of acting. While we evaluate an actor’s performance, we have to see whether the function and motivation for the actor to perform in a particular way is fulfilled. A good acting style would make the actor look and behave in a manner appropriate to his/her character in the context of the film. Also, we need to see how an actor’s performance cooperates with other film techniques such as camera technique or editing. Facial expression, gestures, body posture and movement also are a part of performance. Both staging of the action and the camera’s distance from it decides what we get to see of the actor’s performance. A scene may either focus on the facial expression or on postures, gestures and movement. Thus performance in films or our perception of the actor’s performance in films is very different from that in theatre. In theatre, we are at a considerable distance from the actor on the stage. We cannot get as close to the theatre actor as the camera can put us in a film. The actor can be seen from a long distance or can be filmed from very close. Also, while watching a film, our perceptions depend on what we get to see on screen which is not just what is being enacted, but, what is carefully chosen by the filmmaker. Apart from these we need to be careful to perceive tone of voice, accent and type of language that actors use while assessing their performance. Particular actors have their own recognizable style or type. Consider the stylized acting of Rajnikanth or unmistakably recognizable style of Amitabh Bachchan- the name of the ‘star’ itself brings expectations and filmmakers cash in on this.
* **Framing:** Framing of a still shot is derived from Renaissance painting the Quattro cento system – the system places spectators in the position of the central perspective. A ***frame*** is the border that contains the image. The edges of the image create a ***frame*** that includes or excludes aspects of what occurs in front of the camera. By focusing on a part of reality, **framing** determines both what is seen and what is excluded. Thus, framing is a means of control. A frame can be ‘open’ with characters moving in and out of frame or a frame can be ‘moving’. A moving frame is achieved using focus, tracking and panning. A frame can be ‘canted’ with unbalanced shot composition and at odd angles. In a canted frame, objects in the scene appear slanted. Often they are associated with the frantic rhythms of action films. Canted frames are also used in music videos and animation. The expressive qualities of framing include the angle of the camera to the object, the aspect ratio of the projected image, the relationship between camera and object, and the association of camera with character.

1. **Angle of Framing:** Many films are shot with a camera that appears to be at approximately the same height as its subject. However, it is possible to film from an angle that is significantly lower or higher than the subject being shot. In a **low angle** shot, the camera is below the subject and the viewer gets the perception that he is ‘looking up’ at the subject. The subject gains stature and is made more impressive; it often suggests power. For a **high angle** shot, the camera is placed above the subject and the viewer feels that he is looking down on the subject. In a high angle shot, the character appears diminished and subdued within the frame. A high angle shot suggests vulnerability and gives an impression of the character as a submissive one. Thus, angle of framing can be used to indicate the relation between a character and the camera's point of view. Or it can simply be used to create striking visual compositions as in the last scene in the following shot from the film ***The Cranes are Flying*** by Kalatzov. Not only the camera angle but the height of placement of the camera also may become a significant element in a film. A low-level camera is placed close to the ground whereas a high-level camera would be placed above the typical perspective shown in the cinema. Camera level is used to signify sympathy for characters who occupy particular levels in the image, or just to create pleasurable compositions.
2. **Aspect Ratio:** Aspect ratio is the ratio of the width and height of the frame. This ratio for the conventional format, called the academy frame, is 1.33: 1. It utilises the ‘rule of thirds’, which breaks the frame into three- both horizontally and vertically. For wide-screen formats, aspect ratio varies from 1.85:1 to 2.55:1. Cinemascope frame has wider screen format.
3. **Framing Scales:** There are seven basic shots with different framing scales and they are discussed here:
4. **Extreme close-up** usually is a face shot. It captures from mid-fore-head to just above the chin, or even closer. It is used to show details, emphasise expressions or to make the subject appear threatening.
5. A **close-up** (face) face, just above the shoulder, cuts just below the neck. Used to show emotions, enabling us to see facial expressions and what the subject is thinking/feeling; details are magnified.
6. **Medium close-up** has (head and shoulders). It is similar to a passport-size photograph. Cuts the body at the lower chest just below the armpit. Used to show reactions and indicate what the subject is feeling. Details are not as magnified as in a close-up.
7. **Medium shot** is a shot from the waist to the head. It cuts the body just above/below

the waist. Viewers can easily recognize the subject in the frame.

1. **Medium long shot** from head to below the knees or just above the ankle. It is used to clearly show gestures, especially the arms. Framing is such than an object four or five feet high would fill most of the screen vertically.
2. A **long shot** is a head to toe shot. It shows the entire body and a very short distance above and below. It is used to establish the location and enable viewers to follow action within the frame. Even 2/3 people’s whole bodies may be seen in the frame.
3. **Extreme long shot** has a framing in which the scale of the object shown is very small; a building, landscape, or crowd of people will fill the screen. In case of a single character, the background would be dominating the individual. An extreme long shot may be used as an establishing shot.

**d.** **Depth of field** (DOF): Depth of field is the distance through which elements in an image are in sharp focus. Bright light and a narrow lens aperture tend to produce a larger depth of field. A restricted depth of field keeps only one plane in sharp focus. A shallow depth of field is often used as a technique to focus audience attention on the most significant aspect of a scene. One more related aspect is **focus**. **Deep focus** involves staging an event on film such that significant elements occupy widely separated planes in the image. It requires that elements at very different depths of the image are in focus and it allows both foreground and background to be in focus at the same time. For deep-focus cinematography, a wide-angle lens is required as well as an increase in light and/or light sensitive film stock. **Shallow focus,** on the other hand, keeps only one frame in sharp focus. It is used to direct the viewer’s attention to one particular object/element in a scene.

**e. Camera movement:** Apart from these aspects of framing, **camera movement** may become crucial in keeping a moving object in the frame. To keep a moving figure onscreen, i.e. within the frame, the shot may require any of the following camera movements: **panning, tracking, tilting or craning**. The specific function of such framing is to direct our attention to a character or object as he/she/it moves inside the frame. A **pan** is the horizontal movement of the camera as the pedestal, say, the tripod, stays stationary. A vertical movement of the camera, even as the pedestal remains stationary, is known as a **tilt**. A tilt is used to give a view of objects lying above and below the field of view. Both a pan and a tilt are used to follow action, to show spatial relationships, to shift attention or to give a panoramic view. A **track,** also known as a dolly, is the combined physical movement of the camera along with the pedestal; the movement may be forward, backward or lateral. To achieve this, both the camera and the pedestal are mounted on a track and trolley. Tracking in or out from the subject alters the size relationship between objects in the foreground and background. **Craning** is when a change in framing is rendered by having the camera above the ground and moving it through the air in any direction. It is accomplished by placing the camera on a crane or a similar device. Craning lends the camera a sense of mobility and smooth movement through space; it often gives the viewer a feeling of omniscience over the characters. Craning is often used to have establishing shots. The following shot from *Shawshank Redemption* is one such example. When a **handheld** camera is used, film frames have an unstable and jerky feel to them; it also allows for a greater degree of movement and flexibility than bulkier standard cameras for a much lower cost.

Camera is a powerful director’s tool and it can capture an actor’s emotions; a filmmaker’s judicious choice of camera placement and camera angle would result in evoking the intended responses in the viewer. Emotions are conveyed through the actor's eyes and expressions. A close-up will fill the screen with emotion, and pulling away to a wide angle shot will dissipate that emotion. For eg., a sudden cut from a long shot to a closeup will give the audience a sudden surprise. Sometimes a strange angle above an actor may heighten the dramatic meaning. When you watch films in our watching sessions pay careful attention to the way in which the filmmaker manipulates the power of camera to get varied results.

1. **Sound Environment:** Sound is an important component of a film as without it, a film watching experience feels incomplete. The fact that live-music was played during the shows of a film even in the days of silent films is an indication of the importance of aural elements in a film. Though sound can be used in various ways, in mise-en-scene analysis, the focus is on the film’s **diegetic sound.**

There are two types of sound used in films: **Diegetic** and **Non-diegetic. Diegetic sound** is sound whose origin is located within the story/narrative world, i.e. it is heard within the film's diegesis. The voice of the characters, sound from objects that are in the story world. For example, film dialogues, a shot from a gun on screen, music that is being played within the diegesis, incidental sounds are all part of mise-en-scene. Diegetic sound may be on-screen or off-screen. Off-screen sound appears within the film's diegesis but not within the frame. Its origin is to be found in the off-screen space. **Non-diegetic** sound is heard outside of the film's world or its diegesis. The music soundtrack, voice-overs, film scores etc. are a part of non-diegetic sound. It is interesting to note that a soundtrack can be used as both diegetic and non-diegetic sound. One basic principle for the use of sound in films is its relationship to the visuals. There are many examples of films with brilliant use of sound/music within their diegesis. Consider how Tarkovsky has used sounds of natural elements like flowing water, blowing wind to give a musical and lyrical quality to the film ***Nostalghia.*** Examine the brilliant music which is in the entire diegetic world of Bergman’s film of ***Autumn Sonata.*** Use of songs in Satyajit Ray’s films lends richness to his films and appeal to our aesthetic sense. Use of music and other sound tracks, even when they are not a part of diegetic world and hence of mise-en-scene, needs a special mention as they have become extremely important in films. Apart from being aesthetically pleasing, music may be used to underline the unspoken feelings or psychological states of characters, to convey a convincing atmosphere of time and place, to accentuate the theatrical build-up of a scene. It may even serve as a kind of neutral background fill to the action. Sound tracks, music in particular, can be used to bridge two scenes. Such music or sound track that continues through the visual transition is referred to as **sound bridge**. The **music score**- the background music used throughout a film, can be very powerful and yet sublime. Listen to the score of Requiem for a Dream, for instance. It captivates the audience and connects them with the drama within the frame. So far we have discussed all the elements of mise-en-scene, including diegetic sound. While discussing the language of film, we have covered many aspects of cinematography. However, it is appropriate to discuss two more important concepts in cinematography- exposure and contrast.