The Evolution of Realistic Representation in Cinema

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Abstract: *Realism is an important term to study, review, research, or understanding film. Through it accurate perfection or truth of any particular subject, object, or human life could certainly be represented. In simple words, showing the life as it is. According to philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) who's also a critic-- as a mechanical reproduction only film can give an identical reflection of reality and it is the right thing film should do. Film has the connection with reality since its birth, in the year of 1895. Reality, where the characters search for a path of inspiration and hope at firm reality or truth has been brought forward into the films by so many people in so many years by turns, whether he is Vittorio De Sica (1901-1974) of 40's or our very own Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) of 50's; or even the inventors of cinema, the Lumière brothers. Needless to say reality in films doesn't refer to the splendid dramatic prestidigitation of usual Hollywood narratives, rather it is the depiction of social obstacles which are a part and parcel of our middle class society system where the sorrows and pleasures, laughter and tears, complexity and complications of life and relations of the characters' are portrayed through long pan or through uncut scenes.*

In my The evolution of realistic representation in cinema, I will discuss about how the idea of realism of the two renown 18th century philosopher Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) entered into the film and its gradual impact over the film in eternal creations. Realistic film makers like Jean Renoir (1894- 1979), De Sica, Jean-Luc Godard (1930--) or Satyajit Ray showed us how capturing discerned things and particular way of editing them make the characters' strong to create the actual appeal of the reality which fascinates the inhabitants of this terrestrial. And it is the genuine power of the realism or reality in films which is also discussed profoundly in my paper.

Keywords: *Evolution, Realism, Understanding film, Pioneer film makers, Representation.*
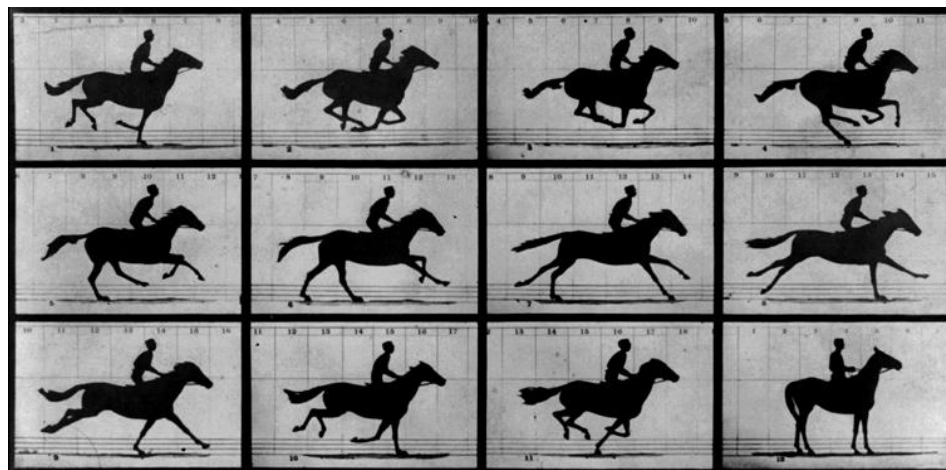
Photography is truth. The cinema is truth twenty-four times persecond.
Jean-Luc Godard

As an instrument of image projection, demand of the magic lantern was highly increasing in the Europe and America during 17th century. Everyone of that particular region had a desire to keep that device in their houses. Even it's been said that entertainment program of any night had never been finished without the presence of this magic lantern. Magic lantern was actually a primary instrument to project moving pictures through which hand drawn images were used to be shown.

Later, in France, in the year of 1824, a British physician *John Ayrton* (1785-1856) patented the world's first device of animated pictures known as *'Thaumatrope'*, through which hand drawn pictures or photographs could be shown as well. Afterwards almost similar kind of instruments used to be called motion picture toy were invented with different names such as *Phenakistoscope, Zoetrope, Praxinoscope* etc.

In 1872, Eadweard Muybridge started a research on giving motion to still photographs. Using a dozen cameras in a race track all triggered one after another with a set of strings Muybridge took photos of a horse and altogether the photos looked like as if the horse was running. Through such type of various experiments he invented a device called *Zoopraxiscope* by which an electrical display of static images could be made as like as the moving pictures or movies. One thing should be mentioned at this stage, in the year *1885,* George Eastman and William *H* Walker invented film reel which had been turned into celluloid within a short time. A while after that, through *Kinetoscope* Edison Co. successfully displayed a movie in 1891. And also almost everybody of us knows about the Lumiere Brothers who invented cinematograph in 1895 and startled the world by successfully exhibiting movies. What they filmed was actually reflex images of reality such as a *train is coming into the station*, *workers leaving from factory*, or *a boat is floating on* etc. Actually utter incidents had been filmed exactly the way they happened in front of camera. So it can be said that reality or actuality has been being a part of cinema since its birth. Only technique known and used in those early days was to shot a scene putting the camera in a single place. Thus their cinemas were nothing but the films of particular incidents of people's typical life and works. A few years after all these things, filmmaker George Milies brought some unbelievable thoughts and instrumental special effects in cinema (*A Trip to the Moon* -1902). In the year 1903, Edwin Porter made a film titled '*The Great Train Robbery'* which became believable to the audiences as a story through its characters, set, and the way it was narrated in the screen We see afterward so many movies had been made that society demanded or, demands. De Sica's *Bicycle Thief (1998)* is such kind of movie. In the movie, the protagonist needs a job for the survival of his family and luckily he finds one but to get it, he needs to manage a bicycle eventually which he does by selling necessary stuffs of his house. But he loses it as someone steals the bicycle on his first day at office. He needs to get his bicycle back otherwise he is going to lose the job as well. This is the first ten minutes of Bicycle Thief which had been shot in the streets of Italy where there's no star actor or instrumental exaggeration. Rather simplicity and reality got importance in it.

On the other hand, Satyajit Ray made a film called '*Pather Pachali'*(1955) in the view of general humanitarian context considering the social needs in Bengal, where it's been shown that a poor family struggles throughout the life to live with dignity. This film narrates a story of early 20th century where Horihor Babu, the head of a Bramhin family lives with his wife Sorbajoya, son Apu, daughter Durga and a distant aunt Indir Thakuron in Nishchindipur-- a remote village of Bengal. He earns his livelihood through Brahma-Vidya (Knowledge about religious mantras and scriptures of Hinduism) which is not enough for his family and thus there are so many ups and downs in their life. And their struggle towards these is the main thing of *Pather Pachali*. Horihor Babu has to spend more time at the outside of the house because of his profession. Sorbajoya is always busy with his restless daughter Durga, household works, and Indir Thakuron. Overwhelmed by old age Indir Thakuron seems independent but sometimes it's seen that she is quarrelling with Sorbajoya which Sorbajoya finds irritating. When their son Apu is born, it seems like happiness spread all around in their house. Despite being a needy family, Horihor's family welcomes the new life warmly, this is actually a common scenario of the poor families in Bengal of that time period. Apu and Durga are very friendly and shares their happiness' and sorrows of typical days with each other. De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* and Ray's *Pather Pachali* has got the same ideology and spirit where relations, family crises, struggles of a common man's life has been depicted normally. And this depiction is a firm reality to the flashing lights, expensive glitz and glamorous stars of Hollywood, where there is no exaggeration, where humanity is the only prime thing portrayed carefully as like as the words are picked in poetries.

In fact *Realism* is a philosophical term which we've got from the philosophers *Schiller* (1759-1805) and *Schlegel* (1772-1829) at the end of the 18th century. Like *Pam Morris*, almost every critic believes that realistic representation in film is the believable narration of incidents and true characterization. According to *Rudolf Arnheim* (1904-207)-- *Film offered the possibility of "the mechanical imitation of nature" in which original and copy become indistinguishable in the eyes of the public.* André Bazin (1918-1958) completely agreed and also added-- *Would transform the mechanical reproduction of the cinematic image into aprophecy.* Probably most of us know it that as an historical movement in figurative arts and literature realism had attained its most coherent and consistent formation in France. Though gradually spread throughout the continent later along with England. It came as a reaction to the falseness and sentimentality of Romanticism. Now we find that this was a major movement till 1870-80 from 1840s. Its main objective was contemporary life's careful observation and a neutral and actual representation based on it. Realism is actually a term deeply involved with philosophy, in regard to arts which is considered an historical movement in literature, paintings, films and other creative sides.

The reality we are talking actually depends on the visual realism that adjusts in between expectation and reliability of an audience. Ancient Greek aesthetics theory also emphasizes on ' Mimesis'. Mimesis is a very ancient idea means imitation of nature, in regard to film whic is realistic reflection . First clear idea of it came from the Poetics of Aristotle (385 BC- 322 BC). According to him one of the eternal desires of a human being is to imitate and the possibility of imitation of works and activities is high in Epic Tragedy and Musical Drama. Its impact over poetry specially in the eighteenth century is also remarkable . Critic *Samuel Johnson* (1709-1784) considers Shakespear of this kind as every single play of his are actually a reflection of the life . Latterly philosopher *M. H. Abrams (1912-1915)* did more extensive experiments on mimesis which we find in his writings . And

on the perspective of his research, *David Bordwell* thinks that it is mimesis which actually influencing mordern day films in the attire of realism.

From the utter discussion we find that after the one or two reel film era when films or movies had started telling a story, reality in films got a transition which we can explain by two ways; usually what Hollywood classical films do, achieves the credibility of an audience by highlighting the authenticity of a story and characters through images which creates a kind of reality, the other one is the mechanical reproduction of a camera from the first shot to the very last one, maintaining a particular narrative structure reflects the actuality of the events and creates a credible reality in audience's mind.

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