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From Metaphor to Message: How Indian Literature and Media shape Climate Change Communication through Literature

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is most important topic for discussion of the current century. The main obstacle to understand is not only scientific but also how it impacts humans to human culturally and linguistically. Due to the changes happening in the 21st century climate change is now a threat to the humankind. It can be rectified only if it is understood based on language that is easily understood, related to culture, and the overall mentality of the people. India, is a diverse land where people following different cultures and traditions live together. Thus the awareness about the environment cannot be only spread in terms of scientific information and facts, but it needs to be understood with the help of stories, metaphor, and memories. The paper will show that the need for understanding of the changes that is the climate changes not only through scientific knowledge, but from the realistic point through empathetic language used in literature and media. The term 'Eco linguistics' best describes it, in which it tells about how words and the way it is narrated can together draw the scientific understanding of climate change in an emotional and ethical way. The works of writers like Amitav Ghosh in 'The Great Derangement', the soothing nature writings of Ruskin Bond, and the ancient ecological wisdom emersed in the Indian Knowledge System becomes a clear picture reflecting the connected relationship with nature. The media also strongly affects and explains about the environmental crisis. Media platforms like 'The Hindu', 'Down to Earth', and NDTV's environmental campaigns help in understanding of the Care required by the nature in a language easily and make people connected. When we compare literature. and media texts, it will show her figures of speech like personification, metaphors are used to convey message of environmental crisis. Thus the description of the scientific data and how much important is to save environment should be conveyed in a very compassionate language and also through cultural traditional stories that keep us awakened of our duties towards the Earth. Literature and media belong to different ways of expression, but the one thing common in them is the use of emotion, symbolism, and storytelling to make people aware of the climate change and their moral duties towards it. Thus language is the key that will bridge the distance between the scientific knowledge and the traditional knowledge which has been passed on through storytelling through decades. The main aim of the study is to explain that both literature and media communication plays important role to create awareness regarding climate changes in a wise and moral manner. This research focused on the discussion global conversation on climate communication has given this conversation a shift from metaphor to message .its the need of the hour as people need to understand but its transformation to shape public consciousness and inspires them to think about the future of the earth which is a major call of today.

Introduction

The best way to understand the changes in the environment that leads to the climate change is the way it is communicated. The scientific reports information the rising temperatures, melting glaciers, and the biodiversity lost due to the in human activities. These are not understand by all the people but if it creates the awareness of environment in in an emotional and ethical way, large group of people will be able to understand more clearly. The gap between knowledge and action is mostly based on linguistic and cultural traditions as to how language is framed, how it is interpreted and how human beings understand environmental realities. That is why it is very important to know the best form of language and its narration . The kind of language used not only describes the climate changes in the environment, but if it is used rightly, it will shape how people and society understand, feel and respond to nature. This paper explores that how literature and media together become a very powerful medium to explain about the climate change. This helps to create ecological consciousness among people in large groups.

In India the best way to explain climatic degradation is to make them, understand through deep cultural traditions which show devotion for nature, it is best way of climate communication. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has emphasized the interconnectedness of human life and the nature through concepts such as Prakriti (nature), Panchabhuta (five elements), and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world as one family). These philosophical concepts deeply rooted in the Indian knowledge system. These makes people relate more easily to environment through stories. In today's era where industrialization and global warming are at its peak, there should be evolvment of this conveyance of the message of saving the environment. And so media and contemporary literature should device communication in such a way to preach about the same . The interlinking of ancient ecological wisdom and modern linguistic communication offers a unique Indian contribution to the global narration of climate change communication.

The Indian media comprises of broadcast and digital platforms has increasingly engaged with environmental themes. Campaigns such as NDTV's Save Our Planet, Down to Earth magazine's investigative reports and The Hindu's editorials on climate policy illustrate how journalism and movements link with the linguistic expression. Media narrations depend on specific linguistic tools to evoke empathy towards environment and its urgent needs using metaphors to express the disasters ("the planet is burning"), personification of nature ("the Earth is crying for help"), or moral appeals ("we owe this planet to our children"). These linguistic devices translate the environmental science and express it emotionally to the people. Through repetition, framing and interlinking of text and visuals , the Indian media creates a linguistic ecology of awareness, where climate change is understood not only as information but as a moral approach.

Adding on to this Indian literature conveys both contemporary and cultural communication which serves as a deep sea of ecological thoughts. Writers such as Amitav Ghosh, Ruskin Bond, Arundhati Roy, and Mahasweta Devi use narrations and linguistic language in a very creative form which displays the delicate relationship of human and nature . Ruskin Bond's simple and lyrical prose in stories like Rain in the Mountains narrates the intimate beauty of the natural world in a language that transforms environmental awareness into emotional experience. In a same manner the folk stories from Indian traditions orally transferred linguistically that explains ecological ethics and uses personification for rivers, forests and mountains which deserve respect. These comparisons not only explain that literature like media which uses language to represent nature and at the same time maintains the reader's relationship with it.

When literature and media studies language acts as a linking bridge for knowledge, emotions and action required. Using these frameworks from ecolinguistics and narrative theory it

analyses how metaphors, symbols and the language used in the way that has a imprint on the human mind. The ecological information is devised in such a way that they they turn metaphors into messages which enables cultural understanding and moral realization of the climate change crisis.

In this manner , the research contributes to the collaborating field of climate change communication and the role of Indian linguistics and cultural traditions. It points out the sustainable futures depending on how we speak about climate change and the way we act upon it. The interrelationship of linguistics, literature and media helps in the examination of the way words, stories, and symbols foster not only awareness for the environment but also the way we are accountable for the same. As a result understanding the language of climate change in India is not only an academic requirement but also it is a step towards redefining communication as a way for environmental transformation.

Literature Review

Climate change communication has evolved from just being a scientific notion to a multidisciplinary exploration which shows how language, culture, and its narration help in environmental understanding. Scholars across ecolinguistics, media studies, and literary theory explain that it helps in understanding the reality in a metaphorical way which is easily understood. This helps us to understand how Indian literature and media use language to explain climate change, and this can be done by conveying scientific facts that people can relate.

The research is on climate change communication which is mostly based on 'information deficit models'. According to this model, people were not able to take action on climate change because they did not had enough information or knowledge about Science. And the main cause of not taking the action was ignorance of the people. So the model assumed that if people were given more facts information and the scientific reports, they will be aware what's actually happening and what could be done for the upliftment of the environment. For example, if people understood how carbon emission increase global temperature and give rise to global warming, they would certainly reduce pollution and protective environment.

The scholars such as Moser and Hulme challenged that human beings not only respond to facts and figures, but people are deeply influenced by emotions, their traditional beliefs, cultural values, their social identity, and also there lived experiences. A scientific chart showing the rising sea levels field to emotionally affect people but on the same note if a story about the coastal village losing homes due to floods stirred lot of emotions and empathy in people. So the conclusion of this research was that effective climate communication, plays an important role in connecting people with a nature.

The change in thinking late to a number of climatic narrations like stories, symbols, and images that helped people understand large and complex environmental problems in a more meaningful way. For example, if we say 'global warming is increasing by 1.5°' and on the other hand, we say 'our planet is getting sick' or 'our earth is crying', these slogans or seeing all the stories made out of these make people relate to them easily.

Nisbet explain the concept of 'framing' and it refers to how an issue is presented through language, use of metaphor and word choices. He was of the opinion that the way of problem is framed. Strongly affects people to understand it and what solutions they can draw to support or solve the situation. The best example being if a climate change is framed on the basis of scientific knowledge, the people think that only scientist can solve that problem. But if it is framed in a moral or explain it as a social problem, people strictly take its responsibility. Metaphor such as "earth is our home" or "nature is our mother" emotionally connect more to the people than giving them just scientific data or charts.

In the field of linguistics scholars like Halliday and Stubbe created a new area of research called ecolinguistics.

Media plays a very important role in connecting scientific knowledge with what people understand easily. Most people do not read scientific journals, so they depend on newspapers, television, and digital platforms to learn about climate change. Studies in the Indian context (Billett, 2010; Boykoff & Rajan, 2007) show that report of climate change is strongly influenced by political, economic, and cultural conditions. This means that media does not only present climate change as a scientific issue but it also reflects social concerns and emotions of people.

The comparison of Billett's of the Indian and British newspapers found that Indian media often "humanizes" climate change. This means that instead of focusing on global data such as rising carbon levels or melting polar ice, the Indian newspapers try to connect climate change with the everyday problems which includes issues like failures in farming, irregular monsoons, water shortages, increase in heat waves and food insecurity. For example instead of telling people that global temperature has increased, newspapers often describe how farmers are losing crops due to drought. This type of framing of the information makes climate change easier to understand and easily understood by common people. However, this approach sometimes reduces scientific depth and accuracy.

Recent research (Gupta & Raghunath, 2020; Narula, 2022) shows that digital media in India has increased use of visual images, emotional language and storytelling to spread awareness of the environmental issues. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube rely on slogans, hashtags, and short videos to attract attention. Hashtags like #SaveOurPlanet or campaigns such as NDTV 'Greenathon' use powerful words and emotional appeal to the people. These platforms interlink movements in a particular style that makes climate change communication more effective and appealing.

Indian media uses repeated metaphors like "planet in danger," "Earth as mother," and "war against pollution." These expressions create a strong emotional impact. For example, when Earth is described as a "mother," people feel a moral duty to protect her. When pollution is described as a "war," it creates a sense of urgency and action. These metaphors do not only share information; they also shape feelings, values, and ethical responsibility.

Thus, Indian media communicates just more than scientific facts. It creates meaning through emotional language, cultural references, and moral storytelling. In this way, language becomes a bridge between knowledge and conscience. It helps people not only understand climate change but also feel responsible for it.

Apart from just media communication, Indian literature has also used a lot of environmental themes in the form of language. Scholars like 'Huggan' and 'Tiffin' write about 'Postcolonial Ecocriticism' which says that literature often connects ecological concerns such as issues of social justice, colonial history, identity and cultural memory. Also in the Indian literature many literary works present nature not only as a physical space but it appeals to people in a moral and spiritual way.

Indian literature not only describes environmental changes but also explains how they are linked with nature to ethical values and human responsibility. It often treats rivers, forests, and animals as meaningful symbols rather than just objects. This approach reflects a worldview in which nature is not separate from human life but is deeply interconnected with it. Such writing encourages readers to feel emotionally involved with the environment instead of looking up to it as a natural resource.

Amitav Ghosh's 'The Great Derangement' gives a strong reflection on how traditional literary faces struggle to represent climate change. According to Ghosh conventional realism cannot fully express the unpredictability and non-human forces of environmental disasters. He is of the opinion that literature must develop new forms of expression to represent climate

realities. This means language should move beyond human-centered stories and also include animals, rivers, storms, and landscapes. His novel 'The Hungry Tide' explains the linguistic and new ways of narration. The novel uses multiple voices, vocabulary and various empathic descriptions to express the fragile relationship between humans and the natural world. The setting of the Sundarbans becomes more than a background, it acts as a living force that shapes human life. Through the use of local terms and detailed imagery, Ghosh creates a deep sense of ecological interdependence and that Nature is not passive but it acts, resists, and transforms.

Similarly, Ruskin Bond's writings reflect a strong emotional connection with nature. His simple language, gentle rhythm, and personal tone make the natural world feel closer and easily understood. He not only presents environmental issues as political or scientific problems but shows how nature shapes everyday human emotions and memories. His descriptions of rain, trees, hills, and animals carry a quiet ethical message that humans must live in harmony with the environment.

Scholars such as Mukherjee and Sharma observe that Indian English fiction frequently uses symbolism and anthropomorphism that gives human qualities to natural elements. Trees may be shown as speaking, rivers as mourning, and mountains as remembering. These literary techniques create emotional closeness between humans and nature. They also challenge the modern mechanical view of the world, which sees nature as lifeless matter meant for use.

Through such imaginative language, Indian literature makes the communication of climate change as a feeling that environmental problems are not distant or irrelevant. By turning nature into a feeling, literature brings ecological issues closer to human experience. In this way literary language becomes a place of where there is care and reflection of environment.

Methodology

This research follows a qualitative and interpretive approach. This means that the study focuses on understanding meanings, patterns, and interpretations rather than just depending on data and statistics. The aim is to explore how language makes the way people think about climate change, not just how often certain words appear. By combining tools from ecolinguistics, communication analysis, and narrative studies, this research examines how Indian literature and media use language to create particular images, emotions and ideas about the environment.

The main purpose of this approach is to understand language not only as a tool for communication but also as a cultural and system which affects human mind. Language does not merely describe reality; it actively shapes how people perceive, feel, and respond to the world around them. In the context of climate change, this means that words, metaphors, and stories influence how people understand environmental crisis, responsibility, and hope.

Research Design Following the theoretical ideas of Halliday (1990) and Stubbe (2015), this research looks at how ecological ideas are embedded in language. It examines how word choices, sentence structures, metaphors, and rhetorical patterns express certain values and attitudes toward nature. For example, it studies whether nature is shown as powerful or weak, active or passive, sacred or exploitable.

Indian English Literature The literary corpus includes selected works such as Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement* (2016) and *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Ruskin Bond's *Rain in the Mountains* (1993), along with a few contemporary short stories and essays that deal with environmental themes. They represent different writing styles for a broad understanding of how literary language expresses ecological concern.

Indian Media communication The media corpus includes English-language sources such as *The Hindu*, *The Times of India*, *Down To Earth* magazine, and digital campaigns like NDTV's *Greenathon* and *Save Our Planet* initiatives. Articles published between 2015 and

2024 were selected that used a qualitative and interpretive method that focused on meanings rather than just numbers. It combines ecolinguistics and narration to examine how language shapes perception and response to climate change.

Analytical Framework Analysis was done at three levels: **Linguistic Layer:** Examines metaphors, personification and adjectives. For e.g. "nature fights back" or "it is the collective responsibility of the humans." **Narrative Layer:** Studies story structure, plots, and interactions of characters with nature in literature and explaining through causes and effect through media communication. **Discursive Layer:** Uses Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995) to uncover hidden ideologies showing how responsibility and morality are distributed between humans and nature.

Procedure and Data Interpretation Texts were thematically coded into clusters such as crisis metaphors, voices of nature, and sustainability frames. Comparative analysis examined shared patterns between literature and media. Triangulation (close reading, discourse analysis, secondary literature) strengthened the findings.

Scope and Limitations The study focuses on English-language sources for global comparability but excludes regional languages. The approach is qualitative and exploratory, aiming to reveal patterns rather than statistical trends.

Analysis and Discussion

Indian literature and media use similar linguistic framing to make climate change understandable and emotionally engaging.

Metaphoric Construction of Climate Crisis Metaphors like "the planet is burning" or "climate ticking bomb" make complex scientific phenomena easily understood. Ghosh's use of tides in 'The Hungry Tide' represents unpredictability in nature and human life showing metaphor as a cognitive and ethical tool. Nature is often personified in media ("crying" or "pleading") and literature ("trees whisper of old rains"). Personification make humans as moral and nature as living. This creates a conversation that promotes ecological responsibility and awareness.

Cultural Narration of Interdependence Indian communication frequently invokes cultural and spiritual references, e.g., 'Mother Earth', 'Prakriti', 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. Literature and media connect environmental concern to moral duty and values, combining emotion and ethics.

Linguistic Ecology of Engagement Language carries ideological and emotional weight. Repetition of metaphors like "Earth as Mother" and narrative continuity fosters familiarity and reflection. Literature offers introspection and media offers immediate action. Together they form a flow of language which creates ecological consciousness.

Integration of Media and Literary Linguistics Though media and literature use different types of communication, but their linguistic usage are same in representing climate change. Media usually aims at quick communication, mass reach, and immediate impact, whereas literature focuses on deeper emotional reflection and long-term meaning. Both media and literature use similar figures of speech such as metaphor, empathic and emotional appeal—to translate scientific information into meaningful human experience.

Both media and literature focus more on storytelling. Scientific facts are difficult for most people to understand or emotionally relate to it. Thus, media and literature transform these facts in the form of stories having characters, conflict and moral meaning. For example, instead of presenting data about rising sea levels, media narrate the story of a village being submerged on the other side a novelist depicts the emotional trauma of people losing their homeland. In both cases, narration becomes a bridge between knowledge and feeling.

Studies in multimodal communication which involves use of more than one mode for communication given by 'Kress & van Leeuwen'. Multimodal communication refers to how meaning is created not only through words but also through images, videos, and sounds. In

digital media, images of burning forests, flooded cities, or melting glaciers work together with language to create strong emotional reactions. Similarly in literature also the use of clear descriptions, rhythm, and symbolism to produce emotional depth. Both forms show that meaning is not produced by language alone but through a combination of narrations and visual imagination.

Recent scholars like 'Nayar' and 'Trexler' explained that climate communication must combine literary creativity and media accessibility. According to this literature helps people imagine the future, reflect on moral responsibility and understand complex emotions. Media on the other hand spread awareness quickly and also moulds public opinion. When literature and media work together to create a more complete and powerful form of climate communication.

In the Indian context the Indian writers take inspiration from real environmental activities reported in the media such as floods, cyclones, and droughts. In the same way journalists use metaphors, images and emotional styles from literary traditions. This exchange allows climate communication to become culturally rich and emotionally meaningful.

Thus, media and literature should not be seen as separate forms of expression. Instead, they work together to shape public ecological awareness. The similar linguistic strategies allow climate change to move beyond scientific to the moral imagination of society.

Research Gap and Relevance Climate change has received a lot of attention worldwide but the explanation of how language functions in both Indian media and Indian literature is not given that much importance. Most of the studies show them separately. Media usually examine news reports, journalism practices, political framing, and digital campaigns. Literary studies give a lot of importance to symbolism, narrations, themes and emotional representation of nature. This bifurcation of media and literature creates a major gap in understanding how climate changes meaning in different forms of communication. For example, a metaphor used in a novel may appear in media headlines, or a media narration which may influence the way authors represent environmental changes in fiction. The movement of language, images, and ideas between literature and media has not been explored in sufficient detail, especially in the Indian context.

This study aims to fill that gap by examining how linguistic and narration patterns move from literary imagination to media messages, and how both together shape human perception of climate change. So both literature and media should not be treated as separate fields but to treat them as a interlinked entity which allows a deeper understanding of how climate communication is created, circulated among people and emotionally experienced. Just as natural ecosystems are made up of interconnected elements, linguistic ecosystems are made up of stories, metaphors, values, and symbols that interact with one another. Through these interactions, climate change becomes more than a scientific problem it becomes a cultural, ethical and emotional issue.

This study explores the need for more ecolinguistics usage using cultural analysis and in turn this research will show that language does not only spread awareness but it actively shapes how people thinking, feeling and respond.

Conclusion

This study examines how Indian literature and media use language and storytelling to communicate the urgency of climate change. It shows that language is not just a tool for sharing information, but it can shape understanding, feelings, and moral responsibility. By using metaphors, personification, and cultural framing both literature and media transform abstract scientific data into narrations that are emotionally and ethically meaningful. Effective

climate communication goes beyond scientific facts and it must include and use creative language and cultural knowledge to give importance to emotions and values. The Indian Knowledge System provides ethical and linguistic frameworks that link modern knowledge and communication to local wisdom. The findings suggest that effective environmental communication must go beyond scientific facts alone.

In conclusion, the journey from metaphor to message highlights a realisation that language is the heart to express climate action. Every word, story or metaphor has the power to either distance people from environmental issues or make them them ecologically conscious. The future of climate communication depends on how societies choose to speak, write, and imagine the planet they wish to preserve. Thoughtful, creative and culturally grounded use of language can inspire action, ethical reflection and collective responsibility ensuring that climate change communication is not only informative but transformative.

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