

# ECO-CINEMA: AN ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL THEMES IN INDIAN FILMS NARRATIVES

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## **Abstract**

*Indian cinema has had a remarkable and legendary growth worldwide. Indian movies have a dedicated fan base that loves and adores them wholeheartedly. The journey of Indian movies is as diverse as India itself, with different cultures and languages every 100 km. Indian cinema has developed alongside India as a developing nation. It has evolved from a male-dominated field to showcasing women in different roles, from being used as props or victims to now being portrayed as representatives of Indian society. Through this research paper, researcher will analyze the narratives, portray and way of storytelling of various directors on environmental issues which started a conversation between audiences.*

**Keywords:** Indian Films, Environment issues, Analyze and Message analysis, Props.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important artistic mediums in the world is film. Films may inspire, educate, entertain, and challenge discussion because of their emotional impact and broad appeal. Modern film, especially in India, is increasingly being used as a means to raise awareness on important topics, despite the fact that movies have historically been linked with enjoyment. These days, movies are essential for educating viewers and influencing public opinion on anything from political corruption and mental health to gender inequity and environmental damage. Over the past twenty years, Indian cinema—once associated with escapist pleasure and song-and-dance routines—has experienced a dramatic change. Modern films, from commercial to regional productions, are increasingly addressing problems like caste prejudice, gender equality, environmental degradation, mental health, and political accountability. Although enjoyment is still a major component of Indian cinema, the use of the media as a vehicle for social change and awareness is becoming more and more prominent.

### **The Evolution of Indian Cinema**

In the early years of Indian film, movies served as a major source of creativity and an escape from the harsh realities of daily life. While *Mother India* (1957) and other classics addressed rural poverty and misery, they were more symbolic than overtly issue-based. However, the story has changed significantly in the twenty-first century. Indian filmmakers now use the media to highlight current concerns and inspire people to think critically and engage in dialogue. The audience's changing expectations are one factor contributing to this shift. Audiences are increasingly searching for realistic stories since streaming platforms give them access to content from all around the world. The rise of independent filmmakers and digital platforms has further encouraged experimentation with unconventional themes. Thus, in addition to telling stories, Indian filmmakers have started using the silver screen to tell social stories.

### **Cinema as an awareness tool**

Films are a persuasive tool for raising awareness of important issues in today's society in addition to being a source of entertainment. Addressing the socioeconomic, environmental, and psychological issues has become a greater responsibility of Indian cinema in particular. Many modern movies educate audiences and spark thought-provoking conversations in addition to conveying a compelling story. Pink (2016) and Thappad (2020), for instance, examine gender inequity and the significance of consent, which sparks extensive conversations about women's rights.

Similar to this, Jai Bhim (2021) and Article 15 (2019) draw attention to social injustice and caste-based discrimination while provoking viewers to consider structural injustices. Films like Dear Zindagi (2016) and Chhichhore (2019), which address issues like depression, emotional stress, and the pressure to succeed, have also reflected the increased awareness of mental health. These movies are essential for fostering empathy and de-stigmatizing mental illness. Additionally, regional films have made important contributions. For example, Kokoli (Odia) and Kantara (Kannada) examine environmental justice and the effects of climate change on rural populations. These films captivate audiences with their emotional storytelling and gripping plots, educating them at the same time. They aid viewers in comprehending difficult subjects from both a social and personal standpoint. Indian cinema's contribution to fostering constructive social change and expanding awareness is becoming more and more significant as it develops. Films have the ability to influence public opinion, develop empathy, and motivate action by fusing entertainment and knowledge. This is especially true for young people, who will be the change makers of the future.

### Hypothesis

**H1:** Indian films increasingly incorporate environmental themes in their narratives, reflecting rising public concern about ecological issues.

**H2:** Indian films that portray environmental issues through emotional storytelling have a greater impact on audience awareness than films presenting these issues factually.

### Methodology

For this research paper researcher opt Qualitative method and from that researcher elect Observation method. This method is concerned with more of description and explanation more than measurement and quantification. For this research, researcher took some popular movies which achieved an importance in audience's mindset and imprinted a mark. Movies selected from last decade (2015-2025) for this study are those which put an emphasis on Indian cinema which make India delighted with such a great audience. In this paper, researcher is analyzing: Storyline, Message and Props of each movie.

### Data Interpretation and Analysis

In this part of the paper we are going to analyze the indian movies based on the environment issues. The details of Films are as following:

| S.No | Name of the Movie | Director            | Year |
|------|-------------------|---------------------|------|
| 1    | Aisa Yeh Jahaan   | Bisbjeet Bora       | 2015 |
| 2    | Kadvi Hawa        | Nila Madhab Panda   | 2017 |
| 3    | Boomika           | R Rathindran Prasad | 2021 |
| 4    | Sherni            | Amit V Masurkar     | 2021 |

### Movie: Aisa Yeh Jahaan (2015)

#### Storyline

The story is about Rajib Saikia, an Assamese man who lives in the bustling city of Mumbai with his wife Ananya and their small daughter Kuhi, is the main character of the story. Rajib, who works for a multinational corporation, is growing more and more frustrated with the city's materialism and lack of connection to the natural world. In contrast, Ananya has assimilated into the competitive, fast-paced metropolitan life. Because of her ambition and desire for social standing, she and Rajib are emotionally at odds. Kuhi is growing up in a high-rise apartment complex with limited or no access to the outdoors. The housemaid, Pakhi, a kindhearted Assamese girl who infuses the otherwise impersonal urban family with a feeling of an ingrained and simplicity, is her sole real emotional support system and companion. Despite her youth, Kuhi starts to perceive how strange her surroundings are—no trees, no grass, no fresh air. Rajib, who is emergent more and more dissatisfied with his life in Mumbai, is adamant about returning the family to Golaghat, his hometown in Assam. Reluctantly, Ananya concurs. For Kuhi in particular, the visit proves to be transforming. She first encounters nature in Assam, where she finds open fields, trees, birds, pure air,

and a more leisurely, purposeful way of living. There, Kuhu meets the family's friend and local villager Nalia Kai (Yashpal Sharma). He turns into Kuhu's mentor, teaching her the value and beauty of coexisting with the natural world. Kuhu has a close relationship with the environment, and when she discovers that nature is almost nonexistent in places like Mumbai, her innate curiosity turns into worry. When Kuhu returns to Mumbai, she starts to worry more and more about the dead concrete jungle that she had previously accepted as the norm. She begins to pose challenging questions to her parents about why trees are being felled, why the air seems polluted, and what would happen if this keeps on. The adults in her immediate vicinity are forced to face their own detachment from nature as a result of her innocence serving as a mirror. Rajib rebels against the social and corporate demands of metropolitan life in the film's emotional and conceptual finale. Ananya starts to realize that one's individuality and surroundings don't have to be sacrificed for comfort and success. Kuhu's innocent, childlike concern serves as the impetus for the family to start reevaluating their way of life.

#### **Message Analysis**

Humans are becoming more and more disconnected from environment as a result of urbanization, which has both ecological and emotional repercussions. The film highlights how modern lives have caused people to become more disconnected from nature by contrasting the concrete jungles of Mumbai with the verdant Assam. Even a young child can understand the value of green places, fresh air, and biodiversity, as demonstrated by Kuhu's developing environmental consciousness and care. The film urges viewers to embrace sustainable lifestyle choices, lessen environmental harm, and reestablish a connection with nature.

#### **Props**

- **Forests, Trees, Rocks, and River Scenes:**

The film relies heavily on natural props to establish its eco-conscious and nature-centric narrative. Forests, trees, rocks, and flowing water are not just backgrounds but essential storytelling elements. They create a serene, untouched environment crucial to the story's emotional impact and message about nature and conservation.

- **Birds and Wildlife Elements:**

The interaction between humans and animals is emphasized by the use of props such as feathers, bird nests, and even actual or animatronic birds, which particularly highlight the protagonist's bond with the environment.

- **Plant Saplings and Gardening Tools:**

The film's eco-message is strongly tied to props like saplings and watering cans, which are symbolic of growth, nurturing, and environmental care.

#### **Movie: Kadvi Hawa (2017)**

##### **Storyline**

Kadvi Hawa, a gripping tale of climate change and its catastrophic effects on rural Indian villages, is set in the arid region of Bundelkhand. The movie centers on Heddu, an elderly blind farmer who has endured numerous droughts but now finds himself in a situation he cannot handle on his own because the environment is unpredictable and traditional coping mechanisms are no longer effective. Heddu is extremely worried about his son Mukund, a farmer who, like many others in the community, is heavily indebted as a result of numerous crop failures brought on by unpredictable weather. Mukund's debt mounts as irrigation fails and rainfall patterns vanish, and the stress of both money and emotions starts to take a toll on his mental health. Presenting Gunu Babu, a ruthless debt collector from Odisha. Gunu is known in the area as a "Yamdoot"—a death harbinger—because farmer suicides happen everywhere he visits. He stands for a system that puts payback ahead of people's lives. But Gunu, a man burdened by remorse and caught in his own cycle of duty and powerlessness, is not exempt from the suffering he causes.

##### **Message Analysis**

The movie demonstrates how droughts in Bundelkhand and floods in Odisha are being brought on by warming temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns. These occurrences are now directly related to livelihood loss, displacement, and even farmer suicides, making them more than just environmental challenges. The characters, such as Gunu Babu, a loan recovery agent, and Heddu, an elderly blind farmer, represent the despair of those residing on the front lines of climate change. Their plight illustrates how populations that are economically disadvantaged are more susceptible to the effects of climate change. The cycle of agricultural failure, debt, and suicide is one of the most potent messages. As it depicts how farmers are driven to commit suicide when they are unable to repay loans because of crop failures brought on by climate change, the movie attacks institutional indifference. The movie gently calls for compassion, policy change, and climate awareness. In addition to criticizing short-term thinking, it highlights the necessity of collective accountability from global organizations, civil society, and the government.

#### **Props**

- **Walking Stick**  
It symbolizes not only his actual blindness but also society's obliviousness to the climate problem and the plight of underprivileged farmers.
- **Dried Crops / Barren Farmlands**  
The film's central crisis—the failure of monsoons, ecological destruction, and the demise of rural agriculture—is symbolized by dried crops.
- **Radio**  
In opposition to local realities of hardship and global narratives of progress. It also symbolizes how isolated communities are hardly aware of the larger climate debates that have the biggest effects on them.
- **Empty Pots**  
Pots that are empty draw attention to the lack of water and the struggle for existence. Hopelessness and an unknown future are suggested by empty cups.
- **Torn, Faded Clothing**  
It depicts a life of neglect, poverty, and dignity in the face of adversity. As mute props, the outfits highlight the unvarnished realism of the movie.
- **Suicide Letters**  
It symbolizes both the icy inevitability of a system that does not react to human suffering and the last scream for assistance from those who are at the very end.
- **Collapsing Houses / Flood-Damaged Structures**  
It stands for the displacement caused by climate change, the vulnerability of human shelter, and the destruction of both home and hope.
- **Prayer Beads**  
Prayer beads symbolize the cultural context in which supernatural intervention is frequently the final resort when the state fails, as well as the turn to faith in the face of powerlessness.
- **Funeral Pyres / Cremation Woods**  
The demise of life as a result of economic ruin and misery brought on by climate change is the tragic result of a system gone wrong.

#### **Boomika 2021**

##### **Storyline**

In the psychological eco-horror movie Boomika, child psychologist Samyuktha, her husband Gautham, their son Sidhu, and a few close friends arrive at an abandoned Ooty school. The government has awarded Gautham a contract to transform the school into an opulent eco-villa. Strange occurrences, such as unexplained power outages, cryptic phone messages from departed people, and sightings of an enigmatic presence, gradually convert what begins as a tranquil stay into an uncomfortable one. Gautham's friend and

the project's architect, Gayathri, gets signals from her deceased boyfriend, Krishna, who was killed in a car accident while doing an earlier site assessment. The group learns about Boomika, a young autistic girl who attended the school and had a strong spiritual and empathic bond with nature, as their terror grows. Boomika committed herself after going through the anguish of losing her father and seeing how quickly the forest was being destroyed all around her. But her spirit is still bound to the land, protecting it from more damage. According to the movie, Boomika's ghost is not evil but rather represents the Earth's natural defense mechanism, punishing people who endanger the environment. Echoing the Gaia Hypothesis, which holds that Earth acts like a living thing with the capacity for self-regulation, Samyuktha discovers that Boomika is a part of a greater ecological retaliation as the fatalities continue and the tension increases. In the end, the development project is abandoned and Samyuktha lives on, having been profoundly impacted by the event. Only when the earth and Boomika's spirit are left in peace and the natural order is no longer threatened does the haunting stop. The movie ends on a somber yet contemplative note, emphasizing the practical repercussions of environmental exploitation through fear.

#### **Message analysis**

Boomika emphasizes the negative effects of environmental exploitation and neglect while delivering a potent message about the interaction between humans and nature. The movie represents nature's proactive protection against human harm through the ethereal presence of Boomika, a spirit closely associated with the land. It presents Earth as a living thing that self-regulates and defends itself when threatened, based on the Gaia Hypothesis. The characters' deaths and disruptions serve as a reminder of the perils of sacrificing natural equilibrium for advancement or financial gain. Additionally, Samyuktha's comprehension of Boomika's motivations exemplifies the film's emphasis on empathy and environmental appreciation. Boomika encourages people to listen and live in harmony with nature rather than viewing it as a resource to be managed. The film ultimately reminds us that nature is a strong force that deserves respect and serves as a warning about the irreversible effects of environmental exploitation and the pressing need for sustainable living.

#### **Props**

- **Abandoned building**

An feeling of neglect and lost history is created by an abandoned school, replete with dilapidated desks, dusty blackboards, and outdated classrooms; this is a reflection of how nature is frequently disregarded or mistreated. These tangible relics stand in for the historical pain associated with Boomika's narrative and the suffering of the land.

- **Natural Elements**

While broken electrical equipment adds tension and represents nature's opposition to human intervention, natural materials such as plants and soil samples support the ecological message.

#### **Sherni (2021)**

##### **Storyline**

Vidya Vincent, portrayed by Vidya Balan, is a recently hired Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) in a rural area of Madhya Pradesh at the heart of the Hindi drama *Sherni* (2021). Tension in the area is brought on by a tigress known as T12, who has allegedly attacked people and animals, causing anxiety and unrest among the local populace. As the new DFO, Vidya must manage the tension between wildlife and humans while attempting to safeguard the tiger and the local community.

Vidya takes on her duty with compassion and tenacity, working to strike a balance between the safety of the villagers and conservation. She faces many obstacles, such as pressure from a politically driven local MLA who wants to take advantage of the issue to increase his chances of winning office and frequently calls for hasty and harsh resolutions. In addition to this political meddling, Vidya has to contend with a seasoned hunter who has been recruited to seek down and kill the tigress, which goes against her goal of securely capturing and relocating the animal.

The movie examines the intricate realities of wildlife conservation, presenting it as a socio-political problem entwined with gender dynamics, bureaucracy, and community livelihood in addition to being an ecological one. Vidya's path is also personal, as she makes her way through a male-dominated workplace and gains recognition for her moral character and tenacity.

### Message Analysis

The film conveys an intricate message regarding the difficulties of protecting animals and balancing human needs with those of the natural world. The movie emphasizes that understanding the sociopolitical, cultural, and economic realities of local inhabitants is just as important to conservation as preserving animals. The character of Vidya Vincent emphasizes the value of compassion, endurance, and moral judgment in resolving disputes between people and nature. The movie examines how bureaucratic obstacles and political meddling frequently impede successful conservation initiatives, demonstrating how temporary benefits can jeopardize long-term ecological equilibrium. It also highlights gender relations in professions that have historically been dominated by men by showcasing Vidya's tenacity in overcoming social and professional challenges. The film makes the point that real conservation necessitates striking a balance between the safety and requirements of people and wildlife, encouraging cohabitation rather than dominance. It emphasizes that empathy and comprehension are essential to resolve problems between people and the natural world and advocates for respect for communities, wildlife, and the people who toil diligently behind the scenes.

### Props

- **Local Village Artifacts**

Grounding the human aspect of the struggle, simple everyday objects like farming implements, animal cages, and home goods show the peasants' strong ties to the land and their means of subsistence.

- **Official Documents**

Government orders, reports, and files all show the bureaucratic procedures that influence conservation choices.

## CONCLUSION

Movies are a persuasive tool for raising awareness of important issues in today's society in addition to being a source of entertainment. In this paper, the tense relationship between humans and nature is analyzed through these films \*Aisa Yeh Jahaan\*, \*Kadvi Hawa\*, \*Boomika\*, and \*Sherni\* via a variety of perspectives, including ecological terror, urban alienation, climate disaster, and conservation politics. Each tale demonstrates the emotional, financial, and spiritual toll that environmental deterioration takes on people. The films solicit viewers to consider their part in environmental degradation, from the innocence of a child to the misery of a farmer, from the retaliation of a ghost to the moral stance of a forest officer. They remind us that nature is not distinct from us—it is vital to our survival—by highlighting the importance of empathy, coexistence, and sustainable living through potent symbolism and likable characters.

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