

Story, theatre, film and creative arts: mediums of cultural expression for climate awareness with special reference to SYNERGY 2025

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is a global crisis, and technical language alone is insufficient to convey scientific understanding to the general public. Global efforts like SYNERGY 2025 underscore the need for coordination between science, society, and sustainability. This research paper analyzes how storytelling, theater, film, and other creative arts can play an effective role in spreading climate awareness. The need to reawaken environmental ethics through Indian cultural traditions and artistic expressions is emphasized.

KEYWORDS: Climate change, Synergy 2025, creative arts, storytelling, theatre, film, environmental ethics, Indian culture, sustainable development, public awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION

As important as it is to understand the scientific aspects of climate change, it is equally important to present them within social and cultural contexts. SYNERGY 2025 is a novel initiative in this direction, seeking to empower the dialogue between science and society through creative mediums. Synergy 2025 is a multidisciplinary cultural campaign that works to understand and address global crises like climate change through local arts, traditions, and creative expressions. Synergy 2025 aims to:

- Understand climate change with cultural sensitivity
- Bring together local arts and global concerns
- Connect education, policy, and public communication through creative expression

This campaign works towards climate justice by integrating theatre, folk art, visual arts, and cinema. Film, theatre, and the creative arts are not only vehicles for spreading awareness but also bridges between policy, education, and public communication. In the Indian tradition, mediums like storytelling, drama, painting, and music have been used for centuries to build social consciousness. This article redefines the role of these mediums in the context of climate action.

2. KEY POINTS

2.1 The Power of Stories and Folktales: A Cultural Medium for Environmental Awareness

- The Panchatantra, Jataka tales, and folk songs clearly emphasize compassion and coexistence with nature.
- Rereading these stories can develop environmental sensitivity in children and youth.

In the Indian knowledge tradition, stories, folktales, and songs have not only been a means of entertainment but also an effective medium for transmitting social values, moral education, and sensitivity to nature from generation to generation. In particular, the Panchatantra, Jataka tales, and folk songs deeply embody the spirit of coexistence, compassion, and conservation with nature.

2.1.1 Panchatantra and Environmental Ethics - Panchatantra stories teach human values and social behavior by featuring animals as characters.

For example, the story of "The Crow and the Fox" conveys a message of cleverness as well as the prudent use of food and resources. These stories give animals the ability to speak, think, and make decisions, which fosters empathy and respect for them in children.

Educational Context: These stories can be used in primary education to teach children that all life is valuable and that every element of nature needs to be protected.

2.1.2 Jataka Tales and the Spread of Compassion - The Jataka Tales of the Buddhist tradition are stories of Lord Buddha's previous lives, in which he is born as various animals and birds. In the "Shibi Jataka," King Shibi agrees to sacrifice his flesh to save a pigeon. This story not only teaches nonviolence and sacrifice, but also demonstrates that it is the duty of humans to protect nature and living beings.

2.1.3 Use in Research and Policy Making: Jataka Tales can be included in higher education as examples of environmental ethics, especially in courses on philosophy and moral education.

2.2 Folk Songs and Folktales: A Source of Regional Consciousness

Folk songs and folktales from different regions of India depict the importance of nature. The folktale of Pabuji from Rajasthan depicts a deep connection with camels and desert life. Folk tunes like Sohar and Kajri from Bihar express gratitude to rain, rivers, and trees. Community Awareness: These songs and stories can be used to convey messages about climate change and environmental protection in rural areas using local language and expressions.

2.2.1 Need and Impact of Retelling:

These stories need to be reinterpreted in today's context to connect them with modern environmental crises. For example, the story of "The Crow and the Pot" can be taught in the context of water scarcity and water conservation.

The story of "The Lion and the Mouse" can teach that every living being contributes to the ecosystem.

2.2.2 Incorporation into Teaching Methodology: Teachers should be trained to present these stories in an environmental context. This will develop children's understanding of sensitivity, coexistence, and natural balance.

In conclusion, stories and folktales are the soul of Indian culture. Their use should not be limited to literary or moral education; they should be made an integral part of environmental education. In the context of global efforts like SYNERGY 2025, it is clear that cultural expressions can play a vital role in bringing climate action to the masses.

2.3 Impact of Theatre and Drama: A Medium of Cultural Dialogue for Climate Awareness

In the Indian cultural tradition, theatre and drama have not only been a means of entertainment but also powerful tools for social change and public awareness. Theatre is a vibrant and interactive medium that directly connects with audiences. Street plays, puppet shows, and traditional theatrical forms such as Swang and Bhavai can be used to raise climate awareness in rural areas. When scientific facts are presented emotionally and visually, they become more impactful. Especially in rural and semi-urban areas, street plays, puppet shows, and traditional theatrical forms such as Swang, Bhavai, Tamasha, and Yakshagana can be highly effective media for climate awareness. Furthermore, interactive theatre allows audience participation, thereby building collective consciousness. The RPwD Act and environmental policy can be integrated into teacher training through theatrical adaptations.

2.3.1 Street Play: A Confluence of Dialogue and Emotion

Street play is a short, interactive, and audience-friendly theatrical form. It is performed in public spaces, conveying a message to the general public.

Example: In the street play "Dharti Ki Pukar," the climate crisis is presented as a mother's anguish, where the Earth itself pleads for protection from her children (humankind).

Educational Use: Such plays can be staged by students in schools to help them emotionally understand the climate crisis.

2.3.2 Puppet Shows: The Impact of Visual Learning

Puppet shows are extremely popular among children and rural communities. They present dialogue and storytelling through characters. For example, the puppet show "Water Story - From Drop to Drop" conveyed the message of water conservation.

2.3.2.1 Community Awareness - Puppet shows can be organized by local artists on occasions like Water Day and Environment Day.

2.3.3 Traditional Theatre Forms: An Opportunity for Cultural Rereading

Traditional theatre forms in various regions of India depict the relationship between nature and life.

2.3.3.1 Swang (Haryana/Western Uttar Pradesh): Presents social issues through humor and dialogue.

2.3.3.2 Bhavai (Gujarat): Awakens social consciousness through female characters.

2.3.3.3 Yakshagana (Karnataka): Provides moral lessons through mythological stories.

2.3.3.4 Need for Rereading: These traditional forms can be presented in modern environmental contexts, such as linking the "Govardhan Story" to mountain conservation and ecological balance.

2.3.3.5 Emotional Connection and Behavior Change

The greatest power of theatre is to generate empathy. When audiences feel the suffering of the earth, water crisis, or deforestation through a character, they no longer remain mere spectators but become participants.

2.3.3.6 Use in Policy Making: Such theatre productions can be presented in local administrations, panchayats, and policy forums to increase public participation.

2.3.3.7 Inclusion in Teacher Workshops

Teachers should be trained on "Environmental Playwriting" and "Using Theatre in Teaching." In workshops, teachers should prepare short plays based on local environmental issues. A "Climate Theatre Week" should be organized at the school level. In essence, theatre and drama are not just visual mediums, but vehicles of sensitivity and awareness. In the context of global efforts like SYNERGY 2025, it is clear that when science is presented through art, it deeply penetrates society. The Indian theatre tradition is a powerful cultural resource in this direction, which can be incorporated into education, policy, and mass communication to transform climate action into a mass movement.

2.4. Film and Documentary: Visual Vehicles of Environmental Awareness

Visual media plays a crucial role in communicating complex topics like science and the environment to the public. Films, documentaries, and digital shorts not only provide information but also create emotional connection and inspire behavior change. Global efforts like SYNERGY 2025 underscore that the confluence of art and science can transform climate action into a mass movement.

2.4.1 Impactful Films and Documentary Examples

Films are the most effective medium for presenting climate change on a visual and emotional level. Documentary films like *Before the Flood* or *The Story of Plastic* have influenced policy and public awareness globally. In India, local filmmaking can present topics like water scarcity, deforestation, and agrarian crisis in local languages. For example, "Kissa Paani Ka" presents the water crisis through a human story. It depicts water scarcity, social conflict, and possibilities for solutions against the backdrop of rural India. The film compels viewers to consider that water is not just a resource, but the foundation of life.

"Jal Thal Vayu" – This documentary focuses on the pollution and conservation of three major natural elements—water, land, and air.

It presents scientific facts in conjunction with cultural contexts, helping viewers understand the depth of the subject.

2.4.1.1 Educational Use: These films can be screened in schools and universities as part of an environmental film week, followed by discussion sessions. Teacher training can be enriched by organizing discussion sessions along with film screenings in educational institutions.

2.4.2 Role of Digital Media and Short Films

Today's youth are more active on digital platforms.

Environmental messages can be spread quickly through Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and animated clips. For example, the short film "Autobiography of a Tree" depicts deforestation and climate change from the perspective of a tree.

2.4.2.1 Community Awareness: Training local youth in mobile-based filmmaking workshops and encouraging them to make short films on environmental issues can be an effective strategy.

2.4.2.2 Emotional Engagement and Behavior Change

Films don't just provide information; they also emotionally stir audiences. When a character struggles with a water crisis or suffers from pollution, viewers feel that pain. This experience transforms them not just spectators, but changemakers.

2.4.2.3 Use in Policy Making: Such films and documentaries can be screened at local administrations, panchayats, and policy forums so that decision-makers can understand the sensitivity of the subject.

2.4.2.4 Inclusion in Teacher Workshops

Teachers should be trained on "Environmental Film Analysis" and "Using Visual Media in the Classroom." Having teachers prepare short film scripts based on environmental issues in workshops can be a creative exercise. "Green Screen Film Festivals" can be organized at the school level. Thus, we can say that films and documentaries are not just visual media but powerful tools for sensitization, communication, and inspiration. Initiatives like SYNERGY 2025 demonstrate that when science is presented through art, it deeply penetrates society. Indian film tradition and digital innovation are powerful resources in this direction, which can be incorporated into education, policy and mass communication to take climate action to the masses.

2.5 Painting, Music, and Folk Arts: Cultural Expressions of Environmental Consciousness

Creative mediums such as painting, sculpture, installation art, and digital media present climate change visually:

- Posters, paintings, and installations created by local artists depict the climate crisis through cultural symbols.
- Organizing environmental art competitions in schools and colleges can raise awareness among youth.
- The concept of the five elements described in the Indian knowledge tradition can be reintroduced through visual arts.
- The depiction of nature in Madhubani, Gond, and Warli paintings becomes a spiritual experience.
- Environmental songs and hymns are instrumental in public awareness.

In Indian culture, art is not just a medium of beauty, but also a symbol of spiritual experience, social dialogue, and reverence for nature. Painting, music, and folk arts have expressed the connection between humans and nature for centuries. Global efforts like SYNERGY 2025 underscore that creative arts can act as a bridge between science and society.

2.5.1 Spiritual Depictions of Nature in Painting

2.5.1.1 Madhubani Painting (Bihar)

In this style, trees, birds, the sun, the moon, rivers, and gods and goddesses are depicted together. Nature is depicted as a goddess, instilling a sense of conservation. Example: The painting "Vriksha Vandana" depicts the Peepal and Tulsi trees as revered figures.

2.5.1.2 Gond Painting (Central India)

Depictions of tribal life and wildlife are prominent. Each creature's uniqueness is honored by depicting it in a distinctive color and form. This style is a cultural expression of biodiversity conservation.

2.5.1.3 Warli Painting (Maharashtra)

Circular human figures, animals, birds, and fields and barns are depicted. This style reflects the coexistence of humans and nature.

Example: "Dancing Figures Around a Tree" – This painting considers trees as the center of life.

2.5.1.4 Educational Uses: These paintings can be incorporated into environmental education, giving children the opportunity to connect emotionally with nature.

2.5.2 Music and Bhajans: An Emotional Medium for Public Awareness

2.5.2.1 Environment-Based Songs

Songs like "Dharti Sunhari Amber Neela" and "Jal Hi Jeevan Hai" convey the message of nature's beauty and conservation.

Singing these songs during school prayer meetings or special events awakens environmental awareness in children.

2.5.2.2 Bhajans and Folk Tunes

Bhajans like "Hey Ganga Maa, Tera Jal Amrit Saman" convey the message of river purity and conservation. Folk tunes like Pabuji's Gatha from Rajasthan, Sohar from Bihar, and Jagar from Uttarakhand express gratitude towards nature.

2.5.2.3 Community Awareness

These songs and hymns can be used in village meetings, Environment Day, and water conservation campaigns.

2.5.3 Folk Arts: A Dialogue Between Regional Consciousness and Ecology

Folk arts like Pithora Painting, Kavad Yatra, tree planting on Hariyali Amavasya, etc., embody a sense of reverence for nature and collective participation. These arts are not only cultural identities but also a vibrant expression of environmental ethics.

2.5.3.1 Use in Policy Making: These arts can be presented under the "Every Art - A Message" campaign in collaboration with local administration and education departments. Therefore, painting, music, and folk arts deeply influence environmental consciousness in Indian society. These arts are not just aesthetic but also inspire compassion, reverence, and conservation. In the context of initiatives like SYNERGY 2025, it is clear that when science is presented through cultural expression, it leaves a lasting impact on the public mind. By incorporating these arts into education, policy, and mass communication, we can move towards a more sensitive and sustainable society.

2.6 Inclusion in Education and Policy: Reimagining Climate Education through the Creative Arts

- This initiative seeks to integrate science, society, and sustainability.
 - It places special emphasis on connecting creative expressions with scientific discourse.
- The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) has taken a historic step towards making the Indian education system flexible, multidisciplinary, and experiential. This policy recognizes creative arts as an integral part of the core teaching process, not just an ancillary activity. In this context, integrating climate education with creative mediums such as storytelling, theater, painting, music, and film can be an innovative and effective initiative.

2.6.1 Inclusion at the School Level – “Environment through Storytelling” Curriculum

At the primary and secondary levels, children can be taught environmental ethics through the Panchatantra, Jataka tales, and folktales.

For example, the story “The Crow and the Pot” can be taught in the context of water conservation.

Activities: Storytelling, illustration, dramatization, and dialogue sessions.

2.6.1.1 Arts and Environment

- Painting competitions such as "My Dream – Green India" connect children emotionally to nature.
- The importance of water, air, and trees can be creatively presented through music and hymns.

Impact: This approach develops a sense of coexistence, compassion, and responsibility in children.

2.6.2 Inclusive Multidisciplinary Curriculum Offerings at the University Level

Courses such as "Environmental Communication and Creative Expression" can integrate environmental science, media studies, Indian art traditions, and philosophy.

Themes: Cultural depictions of climate change, ecology in folk arts, film analysis, and playwriting.

2.6.2.1 Research and Projects

Students can be encouraged to prepare short films, street plays, or puppet shows based on local environmental issues.

Example: Presenting the play "Dharti Ki Pukar" in different languages and cultural contexts.

Impact: This approach inspires youth to actively participate in climate action.

2.6.3 Inclusion in Education and Policy Making

- Integrating creative arts with climate education under the NEP 2020 could be an innovative step.

-Courses like "Environmental Communication and Creative Expression" could be developed in schools and universities.

A "Creative Climate Education Model" could be developed through a joint effort between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment. "Arts-based environmental education" should be made mandatory in teacher training programs. A "Every School – A Green Story" campaign could be launched at the state level, with each school presenting a local environmental story. As an integrated approach to education, policy, and the arts, this is a golden opportunity for educators to integrate Synergy 2025 into CRE workshops, teacher training, and policy dialogues. Develop bilingual scripts, training PPTs, and sensitization modules. Link Indian philosophical traditions like "Rita" and "Dhriti" with climate ethics.

2.6.3.1 Indian Philosophical Traditions: “Rita” and “Dhriti”

Indian philosophical traditions deeply explore climate ethics, particularly through core concepts such as “Rita” and “Dhriti.” These can be understood in relation to climate ethics.

- **“Rita” (Cosmic Order) and Climate Ethics -**

Definition: “Rita” in Vedic philosophy symbolizes cosmic order, moral-social balance, and natural laws. It is not only a physical law but also a moral and spiritual discipline.

Relation to Climate Ethics:

- Following “Rita” means maintaining harmony with nature. When humans, out of greed or ignorance, break this order, environmental imbalance arises.

- The climate crisis can be seen as a violation of “Rita”—such as indiscriminate deforestation, pollution of water sources, and destruction of wildlife.

- “Rita” teaches us that environmental justice is not just a matter of policy, but a dharma—a spiritual responsibility.

Teaching Context: Teachers can connect climate education with the principle of “Rita” to teach students that maintaining balance with nature is not only a scientific necessity but also a spiritual duty.

- **“Dhriti” (Steadfastness) and Climate Ethics**

Definition: “Dhriti” means patience, self-control, and moral fortitude. It is the power to follow dharma even in difficult circumstances.

Relation to Climate Ethics:

- “Dhriti” is essential in addressing the climate crisis—such as long-term commitment, controlling consumption, and adopting a sustainable lifestyle.

- “Dhriti” teaches us that the fight against climate change is not an immediate solution, but a long-term moral journey.

- It promotes restraint, sacrifice, and tolerance at the individual and collective levels—such as saving water, judicious use of energy, and reverence for nature.

Teaching Context: Teachers can introduce “Dhriti” as a moral value in climate education—such as “Environmental Patience” or “Sustained Resolve.”

- **Suggestions for Teacher Training:**

- **Bilingual Module:** Explain “Rita” and “Dhriti” in Hindi and English, presenting them as moral pillars of climate education.

- **Narrative Activity:** Have students create stories where violation of “Rita” leads to climate crisis, and “Dhriti” leads to solutions.

- **Theater Workshop:** Stage climate conflicts with “Rita” and “Dhriti” as characters.

Impact: This will be a concrete step towards integrating creativity and environmental sensitivity at the policy level.

Based on the above, it can be said that NEP 2020 views education not only as the transfer of knowledge, but also as a medium for building life values and social consciousness. Integrating creative arts into climate education is in line with the spirit of this policy. This not only connects students to their cultural heritage but also inspires them to become sensitive, aware, and sustainable citizens. This integration into education and policy can lead us towards a green, inclusive, and creative India.

3.CONCLUSION

The theme of SYNERGY 2025—the confluence of science, society, and sustainability—reflects that the climate crisis is not just a scientific or technological challenge, but also a cultural, ethical, and educational question. Creative arts in the Indian knowledge tradition, such as storytelling, theater, painting, music, and film, have for centuries expressed reverence for nature, coexistence, and conservation. Reinterpreting and reintegrating these arts is crucial in today’s environmental context. By integrating creative expressions into the education system under the NEP 2020, we can inspire children and youth toward environmental sensitivity, ethics, and active participation. Courses like “Environment through Storytelling” in schools and multidisciplinary courses like “Environmental Communication and Creative Expression” in universities can be concrete initiatives in this direction. This holistic approach can not only disseminate scientific understanding to the public but also lay the foundation for a society that considers it its duty to live in balance with nature. The creative arts can be the catalyst for this change—where knowledge, empathy, and action go together.

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