

## Understanding the Narrative Structure in *Call of Life: Facing the Mass Extinction*

**Tania John**

Assistant Professor, Department of English  
Aquinas College, Edacochin, Kerala.

**Dr. Sheena Kaimal N.**

Associate Professor, Sree Sankara Vidyapeetom College  
Valayanchirangara, Perumbavoor, Kerala

### Abstract

The media has become an indispensable part of human life as a result of modernization. Now is the time of participatory media, which is a type of communication in which the audience can actively participate in the process of gathering, reporting, analysing, and transmitting content. Participatory culture transforms media consumption into the creation of new writings. In today's culture, the media plays a positive role in raising public awareness, disseminating information, and presenting people's perspectives on various issues. All processes of change that are media-induced across time are included in our notion of mediatization. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the documentary film *Call of Life: Facing the Mass Extinction* affects social change by urging people to take action. It is the first feature film to look into the mounting threat of biodiversity loss to Earth's life support systems. It considers how our cultural and economic structures have allowed this predicament to arise, continue to perpetuate it, and even dictate our response to it, as well as the causes, scope, and potential implications of the mass extinction.

**Keywords:** Ecology, visual narratives, narrative structure, econarratology.

There is no denying that we live in a time when digital content is shared at an ever-increasing rate, often without adequate recognition or pay for the creative producers and organisations that help inspire new ideas. The insights into how content creators, educators, curators, and archivists approached the subject of media arts at the turn of the century give us pause to examine the field's future directions. The basic rules of storytelling apply equally to documentary and

narrative fiction, namely: story, conflict, structure, and character. The factor that differentiates the characters from their objectives is conflict. There must always be an adversary in a conflict, which might be nature, as in the case of the selected documentary. Through interviews with leading scientists, psychologists, historians, and others, it looks beyond the immediate causes of the crisis to consider how our cultural and economic systems, as well as deep-seated psychological and behavioural patterns, have allowed and continue to reinforce the situation, and even determine our response to it. “Call of Life” depicts the story of a crisis that affects both the environment and human nature, posing a greater threat than anything humans have ever faced.

The use of mass media to disseminate information tends to cause a shift and has an impact on shaping community life patterns. Information, interpretation, instruction, bonding, and diversion are all purposes served by the mainstream media. The media alters public perceptions and how people should interact with the world in a subtle but effective way. The media can engage constructively in socio-scientific challenges by analysing a wide range of real-world issues and basing scientific knowledge on these realities. Global warming, genetic engineering, animal testing, nuclear testing, deforestation practises, and environmental difficulties are examples of such issues in today’s globe. In comparison to the other subgenres, the film has global appeal due to the addition of dubbing or subtitles that translate the dialogue into other languages.

Monte Thompson, the director of the fascinating and informative documentary film *Call of Life: Facing the Mass Extinction*, makes effective use of the media by providing an unusually rigorous, in-depth analysis of the importance of biological diversity and the devastating consequences of the current, frightening extinction rate. The *Call of Life* goes well beyond many environmental documentaries’ shallow jeremiads and delves into its subject in admirable depth. It depicts the ruin of the natural world as a result of man’s insatiable pursuit of self-interest, which ironically leads to his ultimate demise. It should be essential viewing for anyone with a vested interest in preserving the diversity of life on Earth, as it features some of the most well-known and outspoken names in ecology and environmental science.

The media can transform people’s attitudes, beliefs, and actions. Even if the media landscape is evolving rapidly and globalisation is accelerating, there are significant regional differences in the factors that influence how people perceive the media and significant issues. A common understanding of a norm is created by the information, which also improves social coordination because people are more likely to accept information if they think others are doing the same. This research examines whether the media’s societal mechanism has a greater influence on modifying aggressive attitudes toward nature than its individual mechanism. The selected movie opens with a clear query and the claim that “There is a mass extinction occurring on the planet today” (00:00:11-00:00:13). We learn about the obvious causes of mass extinction, the covert causes, and the necessity of responding to the call to conserve nature as we follow Monte Thompson’s investigative journey and his tenacious pursuit of the truth. An econarratological reading of the selected film enables us to contemplate what would be left for our children and their children.

Econarratology examines the mechanics of how stories use time and space, characterization, focalization, description, and narration to convey environmental values. Additionally, it investigates how readers’ emotional and cognitive responses to such depictions, as well as how

the experience of various settings in stories influences their attitudes and views in the real world. The practises of the environment are either strengthened or challenged by narrative views. Given the increasing popularity of apocalyptic narratives and the fact that the devastation portrayed in such narratives is internal to the viewer rather than external, econarratology is extremely important. The econarratological view of climate fiction emphasises narratives as important repositories of political and ethical principles; practises that alter how people interact with their natural surroundings; and practises that demonstrate the importance of environmental protection.

The fragile ecosystems of the world have suffered due to industrial activity and unchecked resource destruction. When carbon and other toxic compounds were released into the environment, the earth's ability to absorb them was no longer. It was obvious at the turn of the century that things could not continue as they were, and by the late 1970s, everyone could see that urgent action needed to be taken. Mass extinctions are a significant and intricate concern. They may develop slowly, taking millions of years. It appears that we are currently going through the sixth, which is unquestionably the repercussion of human activity, particularly climate change. In the selected movie, sixth-grader Reuben Jacobson expresses her distress by saying, "Personally I want to see lots of plants and animals. But like if they are not there then I may not be able to but to see pictures in real life" (00:19:59-00:20-10). Her distress is a stark reminder that we must make what may be the world's largest effort in history to lessen the human impact if we are to ensure the survival of our planet. The entire humanity must actively participate in this, which necessitates a profound adjustment of our values, attitudes, and behaviour.

All life on Earth is intricately entwined. Throughout millions of years, this delicate balance has developed. Multiple ecosystems are in danger of collapsing as a result of one species going extinct since it affects so many other species. Extinction occurs naturally over hundreds or even thousands of years, giving nature time to gradually replace the lost species. But because of human activity, this process is now moving at a risky pace. As Tyrone B. Hayes, Prof. Integrative Biology, University of California, mentioned in the selected film, "To look at amphibians, more than fifty percent are endangered to threaten. There is now a global decline" (00:25:36-00:25:42).

There has not been a dramatic occurrence, like a meteor impact, to identify the Holocene Extinction. Instead, it consists of the practically continuous series of extinctions that have shaped the last 10,000 years or so as humans began to dominate the planet. Given the part that humans have played in the ongoing loss of biodiversity worldwide, some have even suggested that the Holocene Extinction should instead be renamed the Anthropocene Extinction. Thompson artfully illustrates in the selected short film the impacts of mass extinction. In Indonesia, forests are being cleared. However, no one is certain about Earth's carrying capacity, but it is now under debate. Before the middle of the twentieth century, people had a negative perception of the environment. Nature was a force that might be battled against, tamed, or subdued. We changed from being anthropocentric to being biocentric once we realised that we were a part of this planet and that learning to appreciate life and the environment just required a rejection of the desire to dominate nature. Consumer society has advised humans to consume in order to be felicitous. However, Paul R. Ehrlich, President, Center for Conservation Biology, Stanford University says,

“Our society is driven on the basis of consumption... your happiness is not related on consumption if you check the happiness in U.S. it decline in the last forty to fifty years during which time consumption was at its peak” (00:40:31-00:40:54).

Humans consider the natural world as just another collection of resources to be controlled and used, and we assume there is a technological solution for every issue. Ignacio Chapela, Associate Professor, Microbial Ecology, University of California, Berkley, clearly puts it, “The danger of techno fix is very dangerous one because we are not taking up the responsibility for what we have done or our ancestors have done and simply keep passing the ball to the future generation” (00:44:42-00:44:59). Thompson questions the materialism that poses a double threat in impeding humans from sensing the needs of their souls and distracting them from their chosen path. Even though the technology is necessary for our survival, we have overused and misused it, which has contributed to our environmental issues. While technology will undoubtedly be a part of any solution, we can be certain that no new invention will appear that will somehow make our current way of life sustainable or permit us to continue utilising the Earth in the manner we do today. Every technology uses some form of natural resource, and all such resources are limited.

Extinction may occur naturally as a result of calamity, ongoing environmental stress, or ecological interactions. However, since humans have emerged as the planet’s dominant driver of environmental change, extinction rates have dramatically increased. Thompson aptly discusses it in the selected short film, thus: “More than species extinction it is more than species themselves. It is diversity within species and beyond species going extinct. As we know it is not only quantity but quality of relationships is questioned” (00:18:04-00:18:16). Norman Myers, Professor of Environmental Science at Oxford University, clearly mentions the situation in *Call of Life*, “This mass extinction is different from all other environmental problems. We clean up pollution, we can replant the forest... all these problems are reversible...but if a species is gone it is gone forever” (00:59:41-1:00:00).

All of the earth’s natural resources, including clean water, flowing rivers, lush meadows, pristine oceans, and natural energy sources, are limited and vulnerable to depletion and destruction. Future generations will have virtually nothing left to use if present generations continue using these resources at the same rate. The selected short film explores the idea of sustainable development. It was blunt in its assertion that all nations would have to make difficult decisions, and as a result, it stated that political will would ultimately determine whether sustainable development would take place. In *Call of Life*, Melisa K. Nelson, Professor, American Indian Studies, San Francisco State University, says, “All the problems we see in our outer environment whether it is racism, casteism, poverty, starvation, pollution. The entire crisis we see economically, globally, socially could be traced back to the flaw of human thought or human thought process and consciousness” (00:57:26-00:57:53). It serves as a reminder, demonstrating to the world that we are the only species capable of preserving other species. She further opines, “There is an invisible thread of compassion between people who are finding with each other, people who are creating alliances, people who are creating organizations, people who are creating movements, movements of survival, movements of recovery and it is happening all over the world” (01:10:47-01:11:07).

The filmmaker explains that the entire humanity is on a train that is travelling toward a tunnel as the film comes to a close: “We are going to be in a deep trouble. Difficult times are coming ahead and the question is where you choose to locate with, who you choose to be with, what you choose to be doing. When we come out of the other end of the tunnel the world would be the world you desire to be” (01:02:48-01:03:20). An econarratological reading of the selected film is a continuous and flexible medium to present ecologically conscious ideas. Beyond merely mediating previously acquired information that is brought into the field of narrative from other fields, its function is far more complex. This article is predicated on the notion that narratives are not simply a series of symbols encoding a story, but also elusive and intangible representations. Every time there is a shift in the natural models we live by, the environmental consequences of these intricate ecological/narrative concerns become more obvious. It gives insight into how narratological and environmental issues interact. It proceeds to urge and ponder the ecological links, shifts, and epistemologies brought about by the media narratives for a new beginning.

### **Works Cited**

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