# "Stories As Knowledge Systems: Exploring Narratives For Problem-Solving In Koral Dasgupta's Works"

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***Abstract:***

*Stories have been at the core of human experience, shaping our understanding of the world and serving cognitive tools for problem solving. This paper explores how narratives in Koral Dasgupta's works as a robust knowledge system that guides decision making and offers innovative solutions to contemporary societal issues. By examining story telling through the lens of historiography and post truth, this paper delves into how stories serve as dynamic thinking systems that resonate with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

*Historiography reveals how stories act as cultural memory banks, preserving collective experiences that are essential for quality education (SDG-4) and the promotion of peaceful, inclusive societies (SDG-16). Narratives, by recording diverse perspectives and experiences, provide critical lessons that can inform actions towards a more equitable future. This fluidity is particularly relevant in reducing inequalities (SDG-10) by fostering diverse, inclusive voices in societal discourse.*

*In today's post-truth era, narratives wield considerable influence in shaping public perceptions, facilitating partnerships, and driving collective action (SDG-17). Stories, with their emotional impact and relatability, offer pathways for shared understanding that transcend mere facts. By exploring the intersection of storytelling, knowledge systems, and global goals, this paper underscores the potential of narratives as active agents in our pursuit of a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world. It invites scholars and practitioners alike to reconsider the transformative power of storytelling to drive educational, social, and cultural change.*

***Keywords:*** *Historiography and Literature, Narrative style, Storytelling for Problem Solving, Sustainable Development in Literature, Koral Dasgupta Narratives*

## I.     Introduction-

Storytelling has always been central to human cognition and culture, acting as a primary means of understanding and interpreting the world around us. Stories are more than just entertainment; they are cognitive tools that help us process complex information, it tells us about experiences, and builds empathy by sharing diverse perspectives. Narratives preserve cultural knowledge, passing down traditions, values, and collective memory from one generation to the next. Through storytelling, people can connect to history, communicate moral lessons, and find solutions to modern societal issues. The exploration of narratives as knowledge systems is increasingly recognized as a vital area of inquiry, particularly in the context of problem-solving. The literature on narrative research has evolved significantly, revealing diverse perspectives on how stories function as instruments of understanding and meaning-making.("What is narrative research?" , Squire, 2014) lay the groundwork by emphasising the intrinsic value of narratives in representing experiences and knowledge, while also highlighting the interplay between cognitive psychology and narrative forms. Their work suggests that narratives serve not only as vehicles for cultural transmission but also as powerful tools for political expression, reflecting the complexities of human experience in contexts such as trauma and state violence.In Koral Dasgupta's works, storytelling operates as a knowledge system that reflects societal structures, promotes inclusive discourse, and aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as education and justice.

"The concept of Pancha Kanya and sati both are of different religious construct, but philosophically they merge because both are representation of truth- personal truth of the women for which they are answerable only to themselves, irrespective of external judgements or popular interpretations"- a note to readers (Dasgupta, K. (2020). *Ahalya*. Her narratives highlight the multiplicity inherited from ancient stories, showing how her stories serve as a dynamic and constantly evolving system of thoughts  that inspire new perspectives and solutions too.

Koral Dasgupta being an influential voice in narrating the retellings of ancient Hindu mythology, she is also known for her diverse and innovative narrative style which explores the inner thoughts of characters with profound societal themes. Dasgupta elaborates complex issues, from gender biasness to cultural themes, providing the reflection of mythological characters as human beings with societal issues . Her retellings provide  an outline for problem-solving by shedding light on different perspectives and making a way for readers to question societal

and cultural norms. By adding elements of mythology, cultural memory and contemporary-day issues Dasgupta's works act as knowledge systems that aligns with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by United Nations (UN) for promoting goals that should be achieved by 2030 such as promoting quality education, reducing inequalities,peace and justice strong institutions and Partnerships to achieve goals.

## II.     Review Of Literature-

Storytelling as a knowledge system has been widely acknowledged in literature and Cultural studies. Scholars argue that it wasn't made merely to entertain us but to provide a structure needed for cognitive and social understanding, focusing on moral lessons, cultural norms and survival strategies. Research in cognitive studies suggests that storytelling withholds memory and decision-making, making it a basic and essential component of human thought. In her works, storytelling serves to educate, empathise, and engage readers in problem-solving, making her narratives valuable resources for readers facing similar circumstances.

*Narrative Theory* , this article from Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature explores the narrative as a mode of world- representation and its impact on literature and culture. It focuses on the dual function of narrative as both a literary and a social phenomenon. The article states examples which adds more weight to how narrative style can impact the story, shaping it as a study of narratives' role in shaping thinking and problem solving in modern times.

*Linking Scholarship and Practice: Narrative and Identity in Science- Frontiers in Psychology* provides information into how storytelling shapes public understanding and supports identity formation in science, showing its cognitive and emotional impact. The article explores the effectiveness of storytelling and in communicating complex ideas with the idea of narrative as well as empathy in educational context. The article *"The humanities as a compass: Navigating a Post-Truth Era"* explores how storytelling and humanities can combat misinformation by fostering empathy i.e how to build a connection with the readers keeping intact the archetypes of historical tales with adding the food for thought for the readers to readapt the transition via post truth, the article also critiques evaluation-based histories. It draws parallels between historical inquiry and addressing conflicting narratives in modern context.

*The Role of History in the Age of Post Truth Era* discusses the application of Historiography in the post-truth era, emphasizing the critical evidence-based histories, focusing on how historical archetypes hold essence of cultural history and how it can be given a directional knowledge with the application of post truth . It draws parallels between historical inquiry and addressing conflicting narratives in modern contexts.

### Research Objectives
1) To examine how Koral Dasgupta's "The Sati Series" function as knowledge systems that facilitate problem-solving and enhance cultural understanding in contemporary societal contexts.
2) To explore how Dasgupta's stories serve as a source of historical cultural understanding in contemporary societal contexts.
3) To analyse the application of historiography and post-truth within Dasgupta's narratives, focusing on how these theoretical frameworks shape diverse interpretations and challenge traditional cultural narratives.
4) To investigate the potential of Koral Dasgupta's storytelling in promoting Education, Inclusivity, and Partnerships Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), through her text - "The Sati Series"

### Research Questions-
1) How do Koral Dasgupta reimagined Panchakanya's serve as a framework for readers to address and understand contemporary social issues?
2) In what ways do Dasgupta's stories encourage problem-solving by prompting readers to reinterpret cultural and social narratives?
3) How does Dasgupta employ historiography to create layered interpretations of traditional stories, challenging conventional cultural narratives?
4) What role does post truth play in Dasgupta's storytelling approach, and how does it encourage multiple, often conflicting, interpretations of the Panchakanya characters?
5) How do Dasgupta's narratives support the Education, Inclusivity, and Partnership Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by facilitating a deeper understanding of cultural and historical contexts?

## III.     Methodology -

A qualitative approach is applied to analyse Koral Dasgupta's " The Sati Series" which consists of in-depth exploration of Panchakanyas- Ahalya, Kunti, Draupadi, Mandodari and Tara. This paper allows an intense study of thematic elements related to Historiography and Post-truth. Historiography perspective shows how stories in Dasgupta's work reflect cultural heritage and collective memory and  Post-truth highlights a storyline in Dasgupta's work that resonates with societal issues or collective goals. By mapping each character's story with

the Sustainable development goals (SDGs), the study offers a deeper understanding of how storytelling drives social change.

**Theoretical Framework-**
The theoretical framework is analysing and application of historiography and post-truth in the context of Koral Dasgupta's works. The narrative she provides provides a multidimensional lens for understanding how her reimagined mythological storytelling serve as cognitive frameworks for addressing modern-day issues, promoting problem-solving, and supporting Sustainable Development Goals like Education, equality, Inclusivity, and Partnerships. The outline of this theoretical framework is as follows-

**Historiography: Narratives as Cultural Memory and Layered History**
Historiography, the study of how history is narrated and how it holds memory. It is important for highlighting Koral Dasgupta's "The Sati Series" and emphasise on how she preserves cultural memory and reinterprets traditional narratives through her retellings . The application of Historiography in Dasgupta's narrative serves as a warehouse of collective memory which reflects and challenges historical interpretations of Panchakanya- a group of five iconic women from hindu epics , Ahalya, Kunti, Draupadi, Mandodari and Tara. Dasgupta's study can be seen as  a dynamic framework which offers insights into gender, agency and social justice. The historical layering allows readers to connect with the past wisdom collected from ancient mythological epics like - Ramayana and Mahabharata and while critically reinterpreting it. Dasgupta talks about the concept of Panchakanya and Sati and then elaborates that the character's journey is  relevant to contemporary social dynamics.

**Post-Truth: Emotion and Persuasion in Reinterpreted Narratives**
Post-Truth is an approach where historical subjective experiences and emotions often hold more weight than objective facts. Dasgupta's storytelling uses empathetic narrative to engage readers with the retellings, it appeals to readers' emotions, inspiring them to view mythological stories as relatable to current social struggles and challenges. "Philosophically the concept of Panchakanya and Sati is merged because both are representation of truth - personal truth of the women for which they are answerable only to themselves, irrespective of external judgements or popular interpretations." (Dasgupta, K. (2020). Ahalya - note to the readers)The Post-Truth lens highlights the influential power of stories in shaping readers' perception. Dasgupta's work transcends mere authenticity and makes ancient stories emotionally accessible and applicable in modern times. This method allows stories to act as instruments that align with the sustainable development goal of  Partnership by building empathy , with the combined approach of Historiography and Post-Truth. Dasgupta's writings emerge as complex tools that challenge readers to revisit traditional narrative for modern problem-solving. Together, these theories portray how Dasgupta's narrative not only enhances cultural understanding but also supports Sustainable Development goals by using storytelling.

**Analysis and Discussion Koral Das Gupta's Narrative as Historical Records**
In The sati series , Koral Dasgupta does commendable job of recreating the Panchakanyas- Ahalya, Kunti, Draupadi, Mandodari and Tara are studied as realistic human beings who went through ordeals because of the society they lived in. These five asterisks are laced with a dozen emotions while each one of them has a rich back story of their own. Aspects of  study of the inner psyche are beautifully narrated.The stories suggest a clear depiction of myth and history as tools of remaking a cultural narrative. For instance, Ahalya who is barely mentioned in the grand epic of Ramayana, Efforts should be made to rekindle the tale of this characteristic of the Ramayana who has been turned into a stone due to a curse."Since the limitation of man is always explained as the failure of his woman,I too stood there bearing the consequences, discarded and disowned like a barren rock, observing much more than what I did till a while back but feeling nothing! No anger, no hatred, no disgrace, no hurt." Dasgupta, K. (2020). Ahalya. (pg 182) Dasgupta's retellings express that Ahalya craved for affection from lord Indra despite of being married to Gautam , holding the agency to go against societal norms .she received it when Indra disguised himself as Gautam,but she wasn't aware of this and still accepted the punishment willingly. This challenges the readers to point out questions on traditional and rigid societal norms and encourages empathy towards those traditionally marginalised by these myths."Rama would heal me of the bruises left by Gautam's insulting allegations, cleansing those dirty scars of infidelity off my skin. No longer would I be remembered as the evil woman who diverted  the concentration of the righteous sage. The folklore would start singing hymns in praise of Ahalya mata, whose purity has earned the blessings of none other than the Gods" Dasgupta, K. (2020). Ahalya.(pg 191) Ahalya's story preserves cultural memory of Rama being the divine power who lifts up the curse and the narration also challenges the stigma of infidelity and victim blaming. This provides lessons on justice and ethical treatment of women, resonating with Quality Education by educating on gender biases and peace and justice and strong intentions by advocating for justice for Gautam's punishment for Ahalya, when she wasn't even

aware of eloping with Lord Indra."Keepers of Historical logs would name me as the first Panchakanya, five virgins. Not that would be any misjudged reference to prove my celibacy, but neither would there be any insult with allegations of infidelity" Dasgupta, K. (2020). Ahalya- epilogue (pg 196) By reframing Ahalya's story, Dasgupta critiques the history made by Hindu Mythology around sexuality, punishment and redemption, aligning with the research on how historical records can serve cognitive tools for contemporary readers to capture tension between societal norms and individual choices, promoting moral and ethical considerations.

Kunti, is often remembered as the mother of Pandavas in Mahabharata , is another Panchakanya who defines her identity and actions. Despite what the epic suggests, Dasgupta retells Kunti's personal struggles, ambitions and moral dilemmas she faces as a mother and as a woman. By portraying her decision making and moral dilemma of being caught between Duty and personal desire, Dasgupta preserves her story as per the historical record that tells her burdens of motherhood and which also describes her complex role as a single mother in a male-dominated narrative, this offers insights into navigating power and societal obligations and supports quality education through lessons on moral decision making including the sustainable development goal- Peace,Justice and strong institutions by addressing justice for women under societal pressure. It can be seen as an example when Koral Dasgupta empathises with Kunti as she says, " Pandu knows that I didn't need him, even for survival. None of my desires could be met by any of his capacities." Dasgupta, K. (2020). Kunti page- 159 This portrayal encourages readers to reflect on themes of sacrifice and loyalty of following the Dharma beyond personal ambitions just for the sake of following strict generational norms.While depiction of the third Panchakanya- Draupadi,whose public humiliation in Mahabharata is the pivotal moment in the epic. Dasgutpa explores themes of justice and revenge, while sustaining the cultural memory of her role as a Queen, wife and warrior. The narrative reflects the enduring struggle, embodying female empowerment and justice that resonate strongly on today's societal context. Through Draupadi's perspective, when she was moments before the public humiliation she says, " Not only did my body parts feature in Dushasan's lewd fantasy, but he also included crass comparisons with other women in the palace and beyond." Dasgupta, K. (2020). Draupadi pg 181.Dasgupta critiques patriarchal society, aligning with promotion of gender equality education and Peace,Justice and strong intentions as her story fosters an understanding of systematic oppression and resilience. The Sati series further explores Mandodari and Tara, characters from the Ramayana who were often overshadowed by the male heroes and villains in the epic. Dasgupta illustrates Mandodari with Creative intelligence of Architecture, "woman behind the beauty of golden kingdom" full of moral strength, showing her as the voice of reason in Ravana's court. Tara is portrayed with Political wisdom and emotional depth. Dasgupta states Tara as, "she comes with an enigmatic story that introduces the comedy and joy of animal societies until one mishap changes everything." These reinterpretations highlight the untold strengths of these women, showcasing how their perspectives offer valuable insights behind the loyalty they offered to their husbands. By emphasising these often overlooked dimensions of Mandodari and Tara, Dasgupta uses Historiography to preserve the traditional narrative and expand it by providing readers with frameworks to explore the complexities of love, loyalty and moral strength.Koral Dasgupta's "The Sati Series" functions as a historical record that preserves and interprets cultural memory through the lives of the Panchakanyas. By using Historiography, Dasgupta's narrative transcends traditional boundaries, presenting these mythological figures not as passive subjects of fate but as active agents whose struggles and victories mirror contemporary societal issues.

**Navigating Post-Truth and the Power of Storytelling**

In the current post-truth era, where emotions and personal beliefs often overshadow factual accuracy, storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool to influence perspectives to inspire collective action. Koral Dasgupta's narratives in The Sati Series holds the power by reinterpreting mythological tales, creating emotionally resonant and relatable stories that connect deeply with the readers. Her works demonstrate how storytelling goes beyond the limitations of factual discourse, highlighting empathy and understanding while challenging societal restrictions.The story of Ahalya resonates emotionally, challenging the audience to question the cultural judgements and societal belief systems regarding women's virtue."Taken back by the undeserving curse, I stared at Gautam with deep shock. But then what was so shocking? Hasn't power always made its best attempts to uproot voices? I lacked the strength to protest. He sat up and said 'May you forget all about the form you are so boastful of.'" Dasgupta, K. (2020). Ahalya. (pg 172) The emotional resonance of Ahalya's unjust punishment evokes empathy, shaping public perception and driving towards gender justice. In a post truth context, this reinterpretation allows the narrative to evoke empathy and encourage actions that foster collective compassion influencing modern gender discourses.

In the post-truth world, Kunti's narrative evokes emotional responses that encourage audiences to reconsider rigid expectations placed by women. For example Kunti was warned by Gandhari saying that, "stay prepared to be used or exploited as per the needs of the dynasty"Dasgupta, K. (2020). Kunti pg116. Her story influences discussions on women's ethical and social responsibilities, encouraging community action and policies that support diverse family structures and women's choices. Kunti's emotional struggle, especially regarding her

first born son of Surya- Karna, creates a powerful narrative from her perspective that influences public understanding of the complex motherly role."Why couldn't I live in the present like them? Why was I born to be a perennial caregiver? Why did I hear obnoxious voices in the air? Why was I fed with every minute information ,all that I was better off knowing" Dasgupta, K. (2020). Kunti pg 174. Belief systems surrounding her sanctity of motherhood shape societal responses, impacting policies and partnerships to support mothers who are bound by Dharma in challenging situations emphasising on Partnership to achieve goals.

The retelling of Draupadi's story engages the audience emotionally with struggles and resilience. Dasgupta states Draupadi as, "The fire-born cannot wait to see things happen, she makes things happen." Dasgupta, K. (2020). Draupadi pg 103 Her experiences challenge belief systems about gender equality and conflict resolution in contemporary settings. Her narrative challenges audiences to rethink women's role in society, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and inspiring social change movements where Draupadi is taken as a woman of great resistance, aligning with Partnership to achieve goals.

The emotional impact of Mandodari and Tara's loyalty and sacrifices generates a narrative on ethical leadership. Belief systems regarding loyalty, power and morality shape both the character's story and drive them to ethical governance and conflict resolution Dasgupta's reinterpretations encourage readers by fostering empathy and humanity in her narratives lay the groundwork for partnership aimed at Sustainable development, addressing Quality education, inequalities, promoting peace and partnerships. The Sati Series Exemplifies the transformative potential of narratives in the post-truth era emerging as a powerful tool for fostering empathy and facilitating partnership for global collaboration.

## IV. Conclusion

The research paper, "Stories as Knowledge systems : Exploring narratives for Problem Solving in Koral Dasgupta's works", illustrates how Dasgupta's reimagined narrative expands traditional storytelling to become a framework for addressing contemporary societal challenges. The application of Historiography in Dasgupta's narrative serves as a warehouse of collective memory which reflects and challenges historical interpretations of Panchakanya- a group of five iconic women from hindu epics , Ahalya, Kunti, Draupadi, Mandodari and Tara. By focusing on the retelling of Panchakanyas, this study highlights the transformative potential of storytelling as a repository of cultural memory and a force for unity in the post-truth era. Dasgupta states "she is the hoarder of divine secrets, she is the eternal giver and seeker of love" Dasgupta, K. (2020). Ahalya. This connection between past narrative and modern retelling aligns with Quality education by promoting cultural literacy and also supporting Peace and Justice by fostering a sense of justice through historical awareness.Through the lens of historiography, Dasgupta preserves historical records and enables readers to see the bridge between ancient wisdom and modern sensibility. Dasgupta highlights panchakanyas as, "Catastrophic secrets that challenge earthly boundaries linking the fates of the heavenly realms." Dasgupta, K. (2020). Ahalya. In the current post-truth landscape, Dasgupta's emotional storytelling connects readers and inspires them to engage in shared narratives. This approach supports Sustainable Development Goals - particularly Quality Education, Reduced Inequality, Peace, Justice and Strong intentions and Partnership for the Goals by promoting education, inclusivity and collaboration. With the combined approach of Historiography and Post-Truth- Dasgupta's writings emerge as complex tools that challenge readers to revisit traditional narrative for modern problem-solving. Together, these theories portray how Dasgupta's narrative not only enhances cultural understanding but also supports Sustainable Development goals by using storytelling.Ultimately, this research underscores the enduring power of storytelling as a knowledge system that fosters critical thinking, cultural understanding and global partnerships offering innovative pathways for special progress.

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