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Beyond Structure to Communicative Function: The study of Embedded Storytelling in Kathasaritasagara

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ABSTRACT

Embedded narratives, tales told by characters within larger frames, define the structure of Somadeva's Kathasaritasagara. Computational models of embedding, however, record who tells a story to whom, but not what the telling is intended to accomplish. This paper applies Gervas's (2021) stack-based model of embedded narrative, which formalizes Genette's (1980) narrative levels, to selected tales from the Kathamukha ("The courtesan who fell in love") and Lavanka ("Guhachandra and His Celestial Bride and Indra and Ahalya") Lambakas of the Kathasaritasagara. Although the model captures the text's structure, it misses the purpose of each story. Drawing on Austin's (1962) concept of illocutionary force and Searle's (1969) taxonomy of illocutionary acts, the study treats each embedded tale as a communicative act. It extends Gervás's predicate: tell_story(narrator, narratee, story_id, purpose). The analysis shows that embedded stories with different structural designs can perform the same act: telling a tale with a purpose. The study thus offers a conceptual purpose-sensitive extension to computational narratology and demonstrates the value of Kathasaritasagara as a corpus for modeling nested narratives. Future research may evaluate the framework across larger corpora and examine its relationship with narrator reliability and reader response.

KEYWORDS
Embedded narratives, illocutionary, Kathasaritasagara, narrative theory, speech act, stories

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1. Introduction

Storytelling has been a fundamental part of human culture for thousands of years, serving as entertainment, education, and cultural preservation; it has never been a neutral act. As Zipes (2013) observed, stories have always been told to instruct, warn, amuse, explain, and persuade: the purpose of storytelling is inseparable from the story itself. This is particularly evident in Somadeva's *Kathasaritasagara*, or *The Ocean of Streams of Stories*, an eleventh-century nested narrative collection. It includes a wide variety of storytelling

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traditions, including folk stories, courtly anecdotes, romances, fables, and parables, all woven into an advanced frame structure. Its true meaning, "Ocean of the Streams of Story," perfectly captures the richness and fluidity of the text's narrative. This embedding method lets stories flow into one another, with characters from one story telling others, creating a multilayered text with several narrative levels.

The communicative richness of such narratives, however, has increasingly attracted computational narratology, a field that translates narrative concepts into formal, machine-readable forms. Rather than treating computational methods as substitutes for literary interpretation, scholars like Piper, et al. (2021) argue that narrative theory can also provide a proper framework for computational research and generate areas where narratives are structured and understood. Further studies open possibilities for reading narratives from a different perspective, leaving the question of "What aspects of storytelling should computational models present? (Ibid). However, when computational approaches attempt narratives, something fundamental is missing. Furthermore, Gervas (2021) proposed one of the most significant computational models for representing nested narratives using a stack-based mechanism that tracks who tells what to whom across narrative levels. This contributes to the literary field, but his model tracks only the structural design of embedded storytelling. His model omits the argument that storytelling is never a neutral act (Zipes, 2013).

Against this backdrop, this paper applies Gervas's stack-based mechanism (2021) to selected tales from the Kathamukha and Lavanka Lambakas of the *Kathasaritasagara*. To best support prior knowledge, this study also draws on Genette's narrative levels (1980), along with Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) speech act theories. Finally, it proposes a minimal theoretical extension by adding a purpose tag to Gervas's adapted tell_story(narrator, narratee, story_id) representation based on Gervas (2021, p. 25). This extension models storytelling's communicative purpose rather than its structure within an embedded framework. Furthermore, this study presents *Kathasaritasagara* as a rich tapestry of nested frame narrative for computational models of embedded storytelling. The following objective guides the study:

1. To examine the role of storytelling as a purposeful mode of communication in the embedded narrative of the *Kathasaritasagara*.
2. To extend Gervas's (2021) model by proposing a purpose tag based on Searle's (1969) speech act theory to capture why stories are told.

2. Review of literature

Gerard Genette's Narrative Discourse (1980) has significantly shaped the study of embedded narrative structure, particularly through his formulation of narrative levels: the extradiegetic level, where the narrator stands outside the story world, and the intradiegetic level, where a character within the story becomes a narrator. This framework provides the structural vocabulary for understanding how one story can be nested

within another. Herman, et al. (2005) later formalized this understanding in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory, defining embedded stories as a distinct literary device, while Pier (2014) extended Genette's framework to account for complex multi-level narrative configurations. Yanli and Ganapathy (2024) further demonstrate the reach of Genette's model, applying it to Merimee's Carmen to show how narrative instances interact across embedded levels. Together, these studies establish a theoretical vocabulary for analyzing nested narration, yet all focus exclusively on structure. None addresses why a character tells a story or what the act of telling is intended to accomplish.

This structural orientation is equally evident in computational approaches to narrative. Cavazza and Pizzi (2006) note that computational storytelling draws on classical narratological theories and seeks to formalize them for practical implementation, while Mani (2013) builds on this by mapping narratological concepts onto computational frameworks and proposing formal representations for embedded narratives. Within this field, Gervas (2021) proposed the first computational model specifically designed to represent nested stories, using a stack-based mechanism that tracks who tells what story to whom across narrative levels. While Gervas's model marks a significant advance in computational narratology, it captures only the structural dimension of embedded storytelling: his notation represents a story told to deceive and a story told to warn identically. The communicative purpose of the telling remains invisible, and this limitation is not unique to Gervas; as noted above, Genette's (1980) foundational framework faces the same gap.

Speech act theory offers tools to address this limitation. Austin (1962) demonstrated in How to Do Things with Words that language is not merely descriptive but performative; every utterance constitutes an action in the world. Searle (1969) built on this by classifying illocutionary acts into five categories: Assertives, Directives, Expressives, Commissives, and Declarations, each corresponding to a distinct communicative purpose. Zipes (2013) supports this view, noting that stories have always been told to instruct, warn, inform, and persuade, and that purpose is inseparable from the act of narration itself. Recent scholarship reinforces this position from two directions. Devi and Bansal (2025) demonstrate that storytelling in modern literature functions as a transformative cultural practice that shapes identity, cultivates empathy, and preserves collective memory, arguing that communicative purpose is constitutive of narrative meaning. Pukhrambam and Devi (2025), through their study of digital folklore and oral tradition in Meeteilon, further show that storytelling is never a neutral act; the relationship between narrator and audience always shapes it, the social context of the telling, and the cultural purpose it serves, whether to preserve identity, transmit memory, or reimagine community. Both studies point to the same conclusion: purpose is not incidental to storytelling; it is central.

Scholarly work on the Kathasaritasagara has recognized its complex nested structure (Warder, 1972), but researchers have not yet analyzed its narrative architecture computationally. Piper, et al. (2021) identify cross-cultural narrative modeling as one of the field's most pressing challenges, arguing that computational models must move beyond the Western literary tradition. With its extensive system of embedded tales, multiple narrators, and varied communicative contexts, the Kathasaritasagara offers an

ideal corpus for addressing both gaps: extending Gervas's model to account for communicative purpose and demonstrating that computational narratology can engage productively with non-Western literary traditions.

This paper addresses the following research question: How can Gervas's (2021) stack-based computational model of embedded narrative be extended to formally capture the communicative purpose of storytelling as evidenced in Kathasaritasagara? Accordingly, the paper proposes extending grounded computational narratology for the Indian literary tradition to account for communicative purpose, using a purpose tag grounded in speech act theory.

3. Theoretical Framework

The paper utilizes three key theoretical frameworks to support embedded storytelling as both a structural phenomenon and a communicative act. First, it uses Genette's (1980) theory of narrative levels to identify nested stories within the narrative structure.

Gervas's stack-based computational model from "A Model of Interpretation of Embedded Stories" (2021) as the formal foundation. Second, it relies on Gervas's stack-based computational model from "A Model of Interpretation of Embedded Stories" (2021) as the foundation for the notation. Third, it incorporates speech act theory, originally developed by Austin (1962) and expanded by Searle (1969), to integrate communicative purpose into the formal model. These frameworks are used in combination, rather than as independent theories, to explain why stories are told that way rather than how they are structured within the narrative.

3.1 Genette's Narrative Levels

This paper's narratological foundation draws on Genette's Narrative Discourse (1980), particularly the concept of narrative level, which describes the structural relationship between the storytelling act and the story world. (Genette, 1980) focuses on the extradiegetic level, where the narrator is outside the story, and the intradiegetic level, where a character within the story becomes the narrator; his framework provides a structural analysis of each tale before the notation is applied.

3.2. Gervas's Stack-Based Model

The second framework is Gervas's computational model for understanding "embedded stories"-stories told by characters within a larger narrative. These are common in storytelling and pose a significant challenge for narrative interpretation models (Gervas, 2021, p. 23). The model fills a gap in current computational narrative approaches, which typically focus on a single discourse and lack a formal way to represent nested stories. It employs a stack-based system along with Genette's narrative levels (1980) to detect embedded narratives. The essence of Gervas' model is the concept of narrative levels: when a character recounts

another story, a new, separate narrative context emerges, distinct from the original story. This new context may involve different characters, settings, and plots. Embedded stories are usually self-contained but serve a specific role within the larger narrative. To formally represent this nested structure, Gervas proposes a notation with three elements: a start_story statement to mark the beginning and assign an identifier; predicate-argument statements to describe the events (who does what to whom); and a tell_story statement that indicates who told the story to whom and marks the embedded story's end. However, his model captures only the structural dimension of storytelling, stating the facts of the narration but not the communication. For consistency, the following blocks use an adapted parenthesized syntax rather than a verbatim transcription of Gervas's notation. start_story(story_id) opens a context; tell_story(narrator, narratee, story_id) closes the matching context. Embedded contexts must close before the enclosing story. Names and story identifiers use lowercase letters and underscores; purpose labels use uppercase letters. The event predicates are illustrative summaries, not executable code.

```
start_story(story_id)
event_predicate(argument_1, argument_2)
tell_story(narrator, narratee, story_id)
```

3.3. Speech act theory

Speech act theory provides a framework for examining language as action. Austin (1962), in How to Do Things with Words, distinguishes locutionary content, illocutionary force, and perlocutionary effects. Searle's (1969) speech act theory informs the interpretation of what a narrator does through telling. The five purpose labels used here are analytical labels, not five equivalent illocutionary categories. ENTERTAIN denotes an intention to amuse and a possible perlocutionary effect; it is not automatically an Expressive, which would require evidence that the utterance expresses a relevant psychological attitude. The framing statement establishes intended amusement, but does not by itself establish the audience's actual response. Similarly, DECEIVE denotes an intention to induce a false belief. In the selected example, this intention is pursued through assertions presented as true despite their fabrication. Assertive form, deceptive intention, and successful deception must therefore be distinguished. INFORM concerns assertive content; SEEK_HELP may indicate an indirect directive, subject to contextual interpretation. Table 1 specifies these distinctions.

The three frameworks are applied in sequence: first, the paper studies the paper's structure at Genette's (1980) narrative level; second, Gervas's (2021) notation is applied to formally encode the structural relationship between narrator, narratee, and story. To deepen the analysis, this paper also introduces Speech Act Theory as an additional framework that Gervas's (2021) model does not draw on.

Table 1

Purpose Tag	Relationship to illocutionary form	Purpose and qualification
ENTERTAIN	Contextual aim; not automatically Expressive	An explicitly stated intention to amuse. Expressive classification would require separate evidence of a psychological attitude; actual amusement is a perlocutionary outcome requiring separate evidence.
INFORM	Assertive	An account presented as true to supply information or answer a question. Informing is distinct from requesting assistance.
SEEK-HELP	Possible indirect Directive; tentative	Provisionally preferred for Guhachandra because the wider problem-oriented context suggests an appeal for assistance. The quoted exchange directly supports INFORM, which remains an alternative or concurrent function.
WARN	Assertive content; possible indirect Directive	A caution about adverse consequences. Intended caution does not establish an actual change in audience behavior.
DECEIVE	Deceptive intention pursued through Assertive form	fabricated account presented as true to induce a false belief. Deception is an intended purpose, not a separate illocutionary category; success requires evidence of audience belief.

Austin (1962) demonstrated that every utterance performs an action in the world and that the illocutionary force of an utterance what the speaker is doing by speaking is constitutive of its meaning. In Gervas's notation, a story told to deceive and a warning story may look structurally identical. However, they perform fundamentally different communicative acts within the narrative. Drawing on speech act theory, this paper identifies five contextual purpose labels across the selected stories from *Kathasaritasagara*. These labels distinguish intended functions without assuming that each is a separate illocutionary class or a demonstrated audience effect. It proposes a minimal extension to Gervas's notation: the addition of a purpose tag to the tell_story statement:

Tell story (narrator, narratee, story_id, purpose)

This extension makes visible the communicative dimension of embedded storytelling which Gervas's model fails to demonstrate.

4. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative close-reading approach, drawing on Gervas's (2021) stack-based model of embedded narrative representation and Austin's (1962) speech act theory to examine how communicative

purpose functions within the nested frames of the Kathasaritasagara, primarily Sattar's (1997) translation, the most widely cited contemporary English translation, which preserves the structure of the original Sanskrit text without any interruption.

Three stories were selected from two Lambakas of the *Kathasaritasagara*, translated by Sattar (1997): "The Courtesan Who Fell in Love" from the Lambaka Kathamukha, and "Guhachandra and his celestial bride" and "Indra and Ahalya" from the Lambaka Lavanka. These stories meet three criteria: first, they share the same primary narrator, Vasaantaka, who narrates them for distinct communicative purposes. Second, each story exhibits different structural complexity, ranging from a simpler two-level narrative to more extensively embedded narratives. Third, together, these tales instantiate the purpose labels used in this study - ENTERTAIN, SEEK_HELP, and WARN - whose relationships with illocutionary categories are interpreted separately. ENTERTAIN records a contextual aim, and SEEK_HELP remains tentative; neither is treated as proof of an audience effect.

The unit of analysis is the individual tell_story, in which each character narrates a story to another. Narrative levels are identified using Genette's (1980) framework, so that each narrator acts as the outer frame narrator at level 0, and each narrator acts within the frame at various levels. We apply Gervas's (2021) notation at each structural-level transition and ask why the story is being told. Third, we extend the notation to include a purpose tag, as this paper asks, to capture the communicative purpose of each act in the nested narratives. Purpose tags were assigned through repeated close reading of each tell_story event. Textual cues concerning the narrator's stated intention, the narratee's response, and the narrative outcome were used to resolve ambiguous or overlapping communicative functions. Intended purpose is coded separately from illocutionary form and observed outcome. Explicit statements of purpose take priority over inferred effects. Where functions overlap, the dominant contextual purpose is recorded with a qualification, and the alternative is discussed. SEEK_HELP is used provisionally for the Guhachandra disclosure because its wider problem-oriented context suggests an appeal for assistance, while the immediate exchange directly supports INFORM. No actual audience response is inferred solely from a purpose tag.

5. Analysis

This section analyzes three embedded narratives selected from the Lambaka Kathamukha and Lavanka of the *Kathasaritasagara*. The analysis proceeds in three steps. First, we closely read each story to identify its structural complexity. Second, Gervas's (2021) notation is applied at each structural transition, and the question is asked why the story is told. Third, this paper extends the notation to include a purpose tag that captures each act's communicative purpose in nested narratives.

5.1 The Courtesan Who Fell in Love

Vasaantaka narrates this tale to entertain Vasavadatta during her difficult journey with Udayana. The story

follows Rupinika, a courtesan in Mathura who fell in love with a poor Brahmin named Lohajangha. Her mother, Makaradamstra, disapproves of their relationship and drives Lohajangha away. After fleeing, Lohajangha reached Lanka; there he acquired wealth, returned disguised as Vishnu, took revenge on Makaradamstra, and lived happily with Rupinika.

The story operates at three narrative levels. At level 0, the extradiegetic level, Somadeva narrates the frame story of Udayana's flight with Vasavadatta. At intradiegetic level 1, Vasaantaka tells Vasavadatta the story to cheer her up. At Intradiegetic level 2, two embedded stories appear: first, Lohajangha's fake story about being sent by Lord Vishnu to Vibhisana; second, Vibhisana's story about why Lanka is made of wood, told to Lohajangha. The stack sequence is as follows.

LEVEL 0 (extradiegetic) – Somadeva narrates the frame story

↓

LEVEL 1 (intradiegetic)- Vasaantaka tells the courtesan story

↓

LEVEL 2a - Lohajangha's fake story about lord Vishnu.

↓

LEVEL 2b – Vibhisana tells the ground story of why Lanka is made of wood.

To formally encode this narrative structure according to Gervas's (2021) model, a notation has been applied to the story below to capture three elements, which are the story, the narrator, and the narratee:

The notation is as follows:

start_story(courtesan_fell_in_love)
expel(makaradamstra, lohajangha)
start_story(fake_vishnu_story)
claim_divine_instruction(lohajangha, vishnu)
tell_story(lohajangha, vibhisana, fake_vishnu_story)
start_story(lanka_ground_story)
describe_branch_fall(vibhisana, garuda, kalpavriksha)
tell_story(vibhisana, lohajangha, lanka_ground_story)
tell_story(vasaantaka, vasavadatta, courtesan_fell_in_love)

This notation identifies the telling relationships and preserves the embedded stories within their parent story. Vasaantaka aims to amuse Vasavadatta after her flight with Udayana; this is an intended function, not proof that she is amused. Lohajangha presents a fabricated account as true to obtain hospitality and wealth: the form is assertive, while the contextual intention is deceptive. Vibhisana offers an account intended to inform Lohajangha. These purposes are not separately encoded in the three-argument representation.

Therefore, the extended notation proposed in this paper addresses this gap by adding a purpose tag to each tell story statement.

start_story(courtesan_fell_in_love)
expel(makaradamstra, lohajangha)
start_story(fake_vishnu_story)
claim_divine_instruction(lohajangha, vishnu)
tell_story(lohajangha, vibhisana, fake_vishnu_story, DECEIVE)
start_story(lanka_ground_story)
describe_branch_fall(vibhisana, garuda, kalpavriksha)
tell_story(vibhisana, lohajangha, lanka_ground_story, INFORM)
tell_story(vasaantaka, vasavadatta, courtesan_fell_in_love, ENTERTAIN)

This notation captures the structural nesting of the three narrative levels to tell the story. When Vasaantaka tells the courtesan story to Vasavadatta, he aims to entertain, as the framing explicitly states: “When Udyana and Vasavadatta had run away as part of his minister’s plan, they were often despondent. On one such occasion, Vasaantaka told a story for Princess Vasavadatta’s amusement, a story that was funny and included great many things.” (Sattar, 67). Similarly, when Lohajangha tells the fake Vishnu story, he attempts to deceive Vibhisana through a fabricated assertion to gain hospitality and wealth, as Vibhisana asks his purpose for coming to Lanka. He replied, “I am a Brahmin named Lohajangha, and I come from Mathura. I was very poor, so I went to Vishnu’s temple and propitiated him… Vishnu came to me in a dream and said, 'Go to Vibhisana today! ' When I woke up… I have no idea how I got here.” (Sattar, 71). By telling the story of Lanka, Vibhisana performs assertive behavior to inform Lohajangha: " Listen, and I will tell you about this since you are curious.” (Sattar, 71). ENTERTAIN records the stated aim; it does not establish an expressive illocution or a measured change in Vasavadatta’s mood. DECEIVE records the intention attached to the asserted account, rather than a separate speech-act class or an independently assessed audience belief.

5.2 Guhachandra and his celestial bride

Vasaantaka narrates the following story to entertain King Udayan's queens after his second marriage to Queen Padmavati. The story follows Guhachandra, a young merchant who falls in love with a mysterious, beautiful woman named Somaprabha during the spring festival. He marries her but is troubled by her strange behavior. Unable to understand her, he discloses his situation to a wise old Brahmin. This disclosure is interpreted here as tentative help-seeking. The Brahmin reveals himself as Agni, the god of fire in disguise, and explains Somaprabha's origin.

The story operates across three narrative levels: at level 0, extradiegetic, Somadeva narrates the courtly life of Vasaantaka, Vasavadatta, Padmavati, and King Udayana. At narrative level 1 (intradiegetic), Vasaantaka tells Guhachandra's story to both queens; at intradiegetic level 2, Guhachandra describes help by describing his wife's mysterious behavior. The stack sequence is as follows.

Level 0 (extradiegetic)– Somadeva narrates the frame story

↓

Level 1(intradiegetic)– Vasaantaka tells Guhachandra's story to both queens

↓

Level 2(intradiegetic)- Guhachandra tells the Brahmin about his wife's mysterious behavior

To formally encode this narrative structure according to Gervas's (2021) model, a notation has been applied to the story below to capture three elements, which are the story, the narrator, and the reader:

The notation is as follows:

start_story(guhachandra_celestial_bride)

marry(guhachandra, somaprabha)

disappear_at_night(somaprabha)

meet(guhachandra, brahmin)

start_story(wife_mystery_story)

describe_wife(guhachandra, somaprabha)

tell_story(guhachandra, brahmin, wife_mystery_story)

reveal_identity(brahmin, agni)

tell_story(vasaantaka, queens, guhachandra_celestial_bride)

This notation captures the structural nesting of the three narrative levels. When Vasaantaka narrates the story, he aims to amuse both queens, Vasavadatta and Padmavati. *"When Udyana and the princess Vasavadatta ran away together …Udyana marries the princes of Magadha, and both queens, Vasavadatta*

and Padmavati, lived together happily. One day, Vasaantaka told them the following story for their amusement" (Sattar 77-78). The framing supports an intention to entertain; it does not, by itself, demonstrate that the queens were amused or classify the telling as an Expressive.

Guhachandra's disclosure answers the Brahmin's question and therefore has a directly supported informative function. SEEK_HELP is provisionally preferred as the dominant contextual purpose because the surrounding narrative presents Guhachandra as troubled by his wife's behavior and the encounter develops into a situation of assistance. This reading treats the disclosure as a possible indirect appeal, rather than merely the transmission of facts. However, neither the later assistance nor the quoted reply proves a prior intention to request it. INFORM remains a plausible alternative, and both functions may coexist. The extended notation retains SEEK_HELP as an interpretive choice whose uncertainty is stated in Table 2.
The extended notation proposed in this paper addresses this gap:

start_story(guhachandra_celestial_bride)
marry(guhachandra, somaprabha)
disappear_at_night(somaprabha)
meet(guhachandra, brahmin)
start_story(wife_mystery_story)
describe_wife(guhachandra, somaprabha)
tell_story(guhachandra, brahmin, wife_mystery_story, SEEK_HELP)
reveal_identity(brahmin, agni)
tell_story(vasaantaka, queens, guhachandra_celestial_bride, ENTERTAIN)

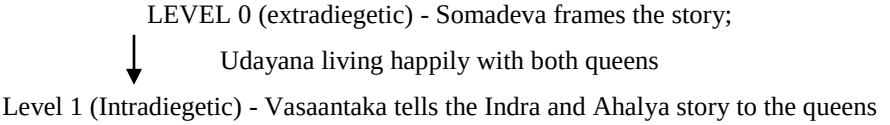
This extended notation distinguishes an explicit intention to entertain from a tentative contextual interpretation of help-seeking. The evidence for Guhachandra's telling is: *"One day an old Brahmin arrived to eat there, and he gazed with amazement at this woman who was a treasure trove of beauty; very curious, he asked Guhachandra in private who his young wife was. When he persisted with his question, Guhachandra sadly told him the whole story" (Sattar, 80)*. The quotation directly establishes disclosure in response to questioning, but contains no explicit request. SEEK_HELP therefore remains tentative, with INFORM acknowledged as an alternative or concurrent function. The notation records this contextual interpretation, not a confirmed directive or a demonstrated audience effect.

5.3 Indra and Ahalya

Vasaantaka tells the tale of Indra and Ahalya to both queens immediately after saying that misconduct brings its own consequences, *Celestial beings fall to earth as a result of their misconduct as a storm fells blossoms" (Sattar 82).* The story is about Sage Gautama, whose wife, Ahalya, was beautiful; after seeing

her beauty, Indra was captivated and approached her in secret. Ahalya, filled with passion, also encouraged Indra, but Sage Gautama, using his divine powers, discovered what had happened and cursed Indra into a cat. A thousand yonis will appear on his body because of his sinful desire, and Ahalya will be turned to stone, saying that she will become human until Lord Rama touches her. He concludes the story by saying that those who sow the seed of misconduct must also suffer from it.

The story's narration involves two narrative levels. At extradiegetic level 0, Somadeva narrates Udayana living happily with both queens, with Vasaantaka entertaining them. At intradiegetic level 1, Vasaantaka narrates Indra and Ahalya's story to both queens, and no further stories are embedded. The stack sequence is as follows:



To formally encode this narrative structure according to Gervas's (2021) model, a notation has been applied to the story below to capture three elements, which are the story, the narrator, and the reader:

The notation is as follows:
start_story(indra_ahalya)
desire(indra, ahalya)
encourage(ahalya, indra)
discover_affair(gautama, indra, ahalya)
curse(gautama, ahalya)
curse(gautama, indra)
tell_story(vasaantaka, queens, indra_ahalya)

This notation captures the structural nesting of the two narrative levels. Gervás's notation captures only the process of telling the story to both queens; Vasaantaka concluded the Guhachandra story and mentioned that "*Celestial beings fall to earth as a result of their misconduct as blossoms are felled by a storm" (Sattar 82),* and then immediately narrated the Indra and Ahalya tale to perform the illocutionary act of warning, *"When Vasantaka had said this to the queens, he continued. Listen to the story of Ahalya." (Sattar 83)* which was totally absent in the Notation (Gervas, 2021)

The extended notation proposed in this paper addresses this gap:
start_story(indra_ahalya)
desire(indra, ahalya)

encourage(ahalya, indra)

discover_affair(gautama, indra, ahalya)

curse(gautama, ahalya)

curse(gautama, indra)

tell_story(vasaantaka, queens, indra_ahalya, WARN)

This extended notation reveals Vasantaka's illocutionary act of warning about human moral misconduct. The purpose is to make the representation formal within the proposed notation and also to make the dimension of illocutionary visible in such a way that is not supported by Gervás's model (2021).

6. Discussion

The analysis of three tales from the *Kathasaritasagara* reveals a pattern with broader implications for computational narratology. Gervas's (2021) model correctly captures the structural design of a nested narrative across all three tales, using the stack-based mechanism and Genette's (1980) narrative levels. It accurately depicts the story's beginning and narration. However, while it captures the details, it does not explain the story's purpose: why Vasaantaka recounts the story to Vasavadatta in the jungle, and why Guhachandra suddenly confides in an unknown Brahmin. In other words, Gervas's (2021) model omits the underlying reason for the storytelling. Moreover, when we examine the genre's narrative levels across the three tales, their structural designs differ: The Courtesan Who Fell in Love has three narrative levels. In contrast, the story of Indra and Ahalya is presented across two narrative levels. These differences demonstrate that the model can accommodate variations in narrative structures. The same functional limitation can emerge in the number of tales: the model represents how the story is told, but it does not explicitly explain why it is told. No matter how different the structural design is, the gap remains in all of them. Hence, the gap is not specific to any narrative configuration but spans different narrative examples. The selected tales also focus on illocutionary force, as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) argue, which is why the speaker performs the act. It then uses the five communicative purpose labels used in this study to present and justify the analysis of three selected tales from *Kathasaritasagara.* The five labels are not interchangeable with Searle's categories: ENTERTAIN identifies intended amusement, and DECEIVE identifies an intention pursued through assertive form. Actual amusement and successful deception require separate evidence. SEEK_HELP remains a tentative interpretation of an informative disclosure; retaining INFORM as an alternative makes the uncertainty explicit.

The table 2 brings the above discussion together, showing how the structure and communicative purpose vary across the stories.

Table 2

Story	Narrator	Narratee	Narrative level	Communicative purpose	Speech act category
The courtesan who fell in love	Vasaantaka	Vasavadatta	Level 1	ENTERTAIN	Contextual aim; no automatic Expressive classification
The courtesan who fell in love – fake Vishnu story	Lohajangha	Vibhishana	Level 2a	DECEIVE	Assertive form; deceptive intention
The courtesan who fell in love – Lanka ground story	Vibhishana	Lohajangha	Level 2b	INFORM	Assertive
Guhachandra and his celestial bride	Vasaantaka	Queens	Level 1	ENTERTAIN	Contextual aim; no automatic Expressive classification
Guhachandra's wife's mysterious story	Guhachandra	Brahmin	Level 2	SEEK_HELP (tentative); INFORM alternative	Possible indirect Directive; informative Assertive content
Indra and Ahalya	Vasaantaka	Queens	Level 1	WARN	Assertive content; possible indirect Directive

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that embedded narratives in Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara* are not merely structural additions but purposeful communicative acts shaped by their narrative contexts. Applying Gervas's (2021) stack-based model to three selected stories, the study shows that the model effectively represents narrative levels and the relationships between what is told and how it is told. However, it does not account for why a story is told. To address this limitation, the study proposes adding a purpose tag to the tell_story statement, thereby extending the model to include the communicative function of embedded storytelling. Drawing on Speech Act Theory, the analysis identifies Searle's (1969) five purpose labels, distinguished from illocutionary categories and actual audience effects. The SEEK_HELP assignment is tentative, and INFORM remains a plausible alternative. The study therefore contributes both a purpose-sensitive extension to computational narratology and a demonstration of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* as a valuable corpus for modeling nested narratives. This study presents a conceptual extension rather than a computational implementation; the purpose tags were assigned through close reading and carry interpretive subjectivity, and the extension has not been algorithmically validated. Further research may test this

framework across a larger selection of stories and explore how purpose, narrator reliability, reader response, and narrative structure interact computationally.

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Declaration

This manuscript is authors' original work and has not been submitted or published elsewhere in full or in part. The research, analysis, and arguments presented in this article are the authors own. AI tools, if used, were solely for language refinement, grammatical clarity, and formatting assistance. No AI tool was used for generating the core ideas, analysis, interpretations, or findings of the research.

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