

# **AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?**

*Sudha's Song and Other Stories:*

A creative Senior Project and Contextual Essay

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## ABSTRACT

Process Work is a self-awareness paradigm. This thesis is an attempt to track my self-awareness whilst on a creative spree of writing short stories.

This creative project includes a collection of short stories along with a contextual essay. The stories are presented in a fairytale format and explore and examine various family sagas, which I have experienced and the life myths associated with them. The contextual essay discusses my experience during this creative endeavor. Together they attempt to demonstrate various Process Work concepts as developed by Arnold and Amy Mindell.

One of the central concepts of Process Work (PW) is Dreaming. It takes into account that everyday reality is only one aspect of reality and that other realities co-exist at different levels. We can use our dreams, both nighttime and daytime, to access these other dimensions. I believe that storytelling arises from such a dreaming state / place. I started writing short stories spontaneously, without much planning or thought. It was as if the stories came to me from another dimension. The contextual essay accompanying my collection of short stories shows how, as a result of my Process Work studies, I was able to consciously track my dreaming through the creation of these stories. I have gone on to explain how these stories help explain how dreaming has influenced me, and my life path.

PW adopts the teleological approach; that things happen for a purpose, and so called negatives, be they situations, circumstances, dreams, or symptoms, all come with their own solution. I have used this approach in the development and in the unfolding of

my stories. The contextual essay demonstrates how I used the low points in my life to access hidden talents and wisdom, and used the story format to communicate this.

Finally I have discussed how I plan to use story telling as a tool to teach and practice PW.

On October 14, 2006, I invited friends to a reading of my stories. This event was held at the Process Work Institute in Portland, OR. This experience greatly helped me access various parts of myself. This is discussed in the contextual essay.

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My study committee, Jan Dworkin, Stephen Schuitevoerder and Hitomi Sakamoto, consistently supported me in my learning process and put up with my story telling style of explaining and learning, and tolerated my affinity for melodrama. To them my deepest thanks.

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## INTRODUCTION

At school I was never considered a good student. Concepts presented in a dry, factual way could not hold my interest and I was easily distracted. But a good story, skillfully told could keep me enthralled. Even today I can recall quite vividly stories I heard as a child, including the person who told them. A part of me would listen to the story and another part of me would observe the narrator. I was interested in the language, their choice of words, metaphors and turns of phrase.

Long before I heard the term paralanguage I was aware of the way the words were spoken; the enunciation, intonation, pause, rhythm and emphasis, all were telling me a story about the narrator, in addition to the story being narrated. Gestures always fascinated me; the quickened breath, the widened eyes, the raised eyebrow, shoulder and arm movements, the torso, now leaning forward, now back, hands, legs, feet, all were talking to me.

As a child I recall the visit of two spinster grandaunts, who lived with an old retired father. They had no pension after spending a lifetime teaching in municipal schools. My mother was a real contrast to them. Not only was she young and beautiful, she had a well-off husband, children and a comfortable home to call her own. But the grand aunts had a freedom that my mother did not have. They did not need to be prim, proper and beautiful.

One of them told stories. She could put her whole being into the telling of a story. As a child I recall my siblings and I giggling hysterically when she told the story of how Shivaji, a local folk hero, had ripped his enemy apart by wearing tiger claw gloves. The

open mouth, the popping eyes, the hands raised as grasping claws accompanied by a deep growl – they all told me a story.

They also told me that the narrator lived through the story telling experience. At a time and in circumstances when the role of women and the experiences they were allowed were fairly limited, the telling of a story added to the richness of my grand aunt's life. The story and the characters she used provided a safe outlet for her to express, through words, her own inner world. The undivided attention of people, both adults and children, satisfied a deep need in her. Even then I knew that story telling was about much more than just the story.

The 'case study' aspect of psychology is like telling a story. In the 'case study' a person's life is viewed as a fabric, in which a thread is picked up in the weaving and carried throughout the length. At times the color of the thread appears faded and almost invisible and at other times the same thread stands out in sharp contrast to the other colors in the fabric. Though the color of the thread is the same throughout, it appears different when compared to what is happening around it. So too, with we humans. An extroverted person may be very comfortable and attract no attention at a football game, but may feel oppressed and anxious in a monastery where silence is the norm.

Stories have always helped me learn. Often concepts are clarified when presented in a narrative form. Reading about a case or seeing work 'in the middle of the class' always makes it alive and memorable for me.

Today, I often dream of one day teaching Process Work (PW) psychology to young students in my own country, India, and illustrating PW concepts by using popular Hindi movies. Psychology is not a popular subject in Indian universities. I want to teach

it in an exciting and interesting way. By using what bored, indifferent students are interested in – movies, I could bring psychological awareness into their lives. In this way the concept would have a life of it's own and even those who were reluctant to be involved in psychology would be drawn in, as the subject matter is so popular. Thus psychology would not be something that 'crazy' people needed but a part of everyone's daily life.

This is my high dream for myself in the world channel. I see myself greatly privileged to have had the opportunity to live and study PW in Portland, and feel the need to share what I have learned with others back home in India. PW's vast, universal and global approach to psychology, coupled with the contributions of ancient and current sciences and other disciplines, makes it especially suitable for drawing everyone in. It makes us all unified, a part of the human race, yet acknowledges each of us as unique and independent beings.

Last year, by some chance and in a fairly unplanned fashion, I attended one of Sara Halprin's "Family Fairy Tales" weekend seminars. I had some resistance participating fully. I felt that this was an exercise for 'old ladies' who wanted to be 'romantic' in some fashion, and I could not identify with these notions. However, once I allowed myself to participate, I was fascinated by how we could use our physical symptoms to recall our ancestors and use both to bring forth a story! I wrote a silly little story that weekend that everyone seemed to like. But more importantly, I liked it too! Before I knew it, I had started writing stories.

My niece was getting married in India, and I wanted to sing at her wedding. I wanted to use the occasion to commemorate my mother, my niece's grandmother, who

had died 24 years ago. I thought of singing a song for her wedding, something my mother, who was a trained singer, would have sung. As an untrained singer, it was a strange ambition, fraught with risk. I needed to research the music of her time, find and learn the right song.

I was hugely disappointed that for reasons beyond my control, I could not attend the wedding in India. I was also unable to buy her a nice wedding gift. From this place of anger and frustration I decided I would write her a book of short stories. And who better to write about than her grandmother, my mother, who had died when my niece was very young. I realized that my children's generation did not know this remarkable woman, and unless I put it down on paper, her story would be lost forever.

Once I started writing I also realized that my grandchildren yet to be born may not be entirely of Indian stock, and they may never visit my country, India, as anything other than visitors. And so it became all the more important to write details of the lives long gone by. Also life in India is changing very rapidly, and it is up to people like me to help future generations preserve their links with the immediate past.

From a personal, self-centered, emotional place, I had started thinking about my family of origin, most now dead, I wanted to give my generation a voice, find a place to speak to my children, and to their children, as yet unborn. I had moved from a personal place, to a local place and from there onto a global level. I was trying to weave the past, the present and the future together.

The stories came to me from different sources and inspirations. There were times when I would wake up in the middle of the night, compelled to write a story that seemed

to have fully formed itself during the dreaming hours. The next morning I could never be sure that I had actually written it, or had just dreamt that I wrote it!

Weeks after I had written some stories, I realized that I had used the format to express my personal feelings and pain. Feeling my own feelings is not something I am 'good' at. Something in my personality / upbringing discourages this. Feelings are somehow an unnecessary indulgence, an extravagance I cannot afford.

By using the story format I was able to exaggerate the feelings and polarize them to build up an effective story. And I had the freedom to speak through the mouths of the characters, be they huge, ugly effigies, or delicate flowers.

Somehow I have come to know myself better through my own stories, and to feel my feelings in a safe environment. And I felt safe to share them, not worrying about creating offense. Maybe, in this way, I can help others get in touch with their own feelings!

I decided to use my stories as part of my learning in the Diploma program for Process Work. Following my experience as a listener of stories, I wanted to read my stories out loud. I was aware they would mean different things to different people. I had not anticipated how different it would be for me in the role of the narrator.

This essay, which accompanies some of the stories I have written, is an attempt to bring forward the inspiration and imagination that helped me write and the personal insights and learning that came with the experience.

## CONTEXTUAL ESSAY

### *History of Storytelling*

Storytelling as a means to impart information is an ancient tool that has existed since prehistoric times. Examinations of ancient cave paintings indicate that the drawings illustrate the stages of a story. For example, drawings of a hunt will show how the animal to be hunted is identified, tracked, attacked and killed, followed by community celebration. The drawings are a narration of events.

My own cultural heritage includes the great epics the Ramayana and Mahabharata, both long stories that have been passed down through the ages. The stories are an education in every aspect of life including morals, wisdom and common sense, as well as understanding human nature and accepting the twists and turns of fate in the form of world events. So, even though Indian society may be divided by class, caste and education, the tales of the ancient epics are known to all and make for a common, universal reference point.

The ancient Greek Myths served the same purpose in the western world. The naming of a particular character immediately draws to mind a personality profile. Hence the term Adonis immediately evokes the image of a young, beautiful and virile male. Oedipus tells us of a man who was fated to love his mother and kill his father and evokes the ancient taboo of incest.

When the Tortoise and the Hare is invoked it brings to mind the struggle between doing things slowly and steadily and achieving one's goals or rushing and failing to produce results

In India, Panchatantra were a collection of tales for children much like the Aesop's fables of the western world.

In current times, the emergence of pop heroes / stars create living myths or stories, such as Ophra Winfrey, an African-American female from an underprivileged background becoming one of the most well known, well loved and wealthiest women alive. NewsWeek magazine recently mentioned how law professors and students keenly keep up with the gossip tabloids reporting the untimely death and divorce settlement of a young heiress married to a much older millionaire. The professors are happy to use real life examples to teach a dry subject and the students are happy to join in the gossip.

*Psychology and story telling.*

Mijares points out that though it is commonly believed that the brain is the storehouse of memory, memories could in fact be stored in the DNA. Carried by DNA, the stories follow humankind through the ages Thus some stories seem universal. Though the details of the stories vary in different cultures, most appear to have universal themes. Myths, legends, folklore, are all stories told to entertain and teach. They also have other important, less obvious functions. Listening to the same stories helps draw people together, creates group's identity, and provides common mores and rules of behavior. Thus story telling is a powerful tool that has always played a significant role in human civilization.

Memory is inherent within the genes and cellular structures of DNA. This memory contains the stories of our genetic ancestors and those of the collective unconscious. These memories also contain dramas depicting human pathos. They are teeming with narratives of destruction, power and beauty. These could lead to

“Repressed feelings, memories, ego-states, sub-personalities, and archetypal forces can be hidden in energy blocks. Jung described what he called the “collective unconscious” and said that it is motivated by instinctive primordial, universal mythological presences. He called these unconscious motivating forces, “archetypes.” Archetypes exist pre-consciously. They are psychic structures containing biologically related patterns of behaviors consisting of certain qualities and expressions of being. They are related to the instinctive life forces motivating the world’s mythological stories. (Mijares)

### *Different Styles of Story Telling*

Stories embellish our experience from the cradle to the grave. The context, content and style in which stories are imparted are all relevant and important. Stories are used to commemorate various stages of life and rites of passage, both at the personal level and the shared, social level.

Besides the narrative in spoken form, there is the song format, and the function of wandering minstrels and bards was to narrate events by singing them. Today the popularity of Rock and Rap groups, bands and individuals is based on their ability to narrate a relevant story powerfully and in a memorable way. One of my clients, a 30 old white male with a prison record who is *labeled* for life, tells me he listens to Rap music (Bone Thugs in Harmony, Snoop Dogg / N.W.A –Niggers with Attitude) whilst driving. He likes to sing along with the angry lyrics, keeping time with the pulsating, heavy beat of the music by thumping the steering wheel. The words help him express his anger and hopelessness regarding the future by saying things he would like to say, but is unable to.

Religions have universally used chanting and hymn to narrate the virtues of their gods and the high ideals that humans should aspire to. *Bhajjans* or religious chants traditionally sung in Hindu temples for centuries are today played over the airwaves and at a recent dance party at PWI. Even today they serve the same purpose; to create a trance-like state accompanied by sound and movement amongst a group. People loose their inhibitions and access different states that may otherwise be difficult to attain.

The popularity of current media, film and television are the modern versions of the ancient enactment around the community fire. Soap Operas on TV, or the current reality show “American Idol”, illustrate this point. Even though viewers are watching individually from their own homes, they are still connected to others in terms of content and simultaneity. The following day it is not uncommon for peer groups to crowd around the water cooler to discuss what happened on the show the previous night, and in this way it becomes a shared experience. It appears that somehow the story brings the group closer together and for the duration of the conversation, differences of age, economic status and cultural background are forgotten.

The medium of storytelling has been used in various ways and is related to various human needs. For the singing of lullabies to babies, sweet gentle themes are prevalent, of mother’s love, dreams and the gentle rocking of the cradle. The fierce howls of war cries by warriors are accompanied by equally bloodthirsty dialogue, of killing and maiming the enemy and putting to unorthodox use various body parts. Religious texts use stories to promote their gods and glorify them. Morals and codes of conduct are also woven in, to support the overall philosophy of the belief system.

*Memory and the written word.*

Stories are handed down from generation to generation through various means. In ancient India the tradition was to pass down sacred verses orally, and children were taught to memorize them. Even if the written language was well established it was still considered necessary to learn them by heart. In oral traditions the learning is beyond the fixed or the permanent word. The rendering of the tale may highlight different aspects depending on the time of day, season, the events of the day or week, the mood of the one who speaks and the one who listens; all influence the message that one takes away. At this point all the paralinguistic cues come onto play; the tone, the pitch, the volume, the tempo, and the tenor of the spoken word all heighten one's awareness.

This tradition is akin to the current understanding of the saying, the Tao that cannot be spoken. Different cultures relate to the Tao that cannot be spoken differently. The words that need to be written may not be the words that need to be remembered, it may be the more subtle non-words that have a greater impact. Till today many disciplines in the ancient Vedic tradition such as *Ayurveda* and Yoga are considered best passed down through actual practice and memorizing than through textbooks.

In fact, the current teaching methods employed by Process Work, which uses a personal, hands-on supervision style of teaching, is very much in keeping with the old, oral style of teaching, where memory and the dreaming in the present is relied upon more, or as much as the written text materials.

*Relevance to process work.*

Both Amy and Arnold Mindell (1989, 1993, 1995, 2002, 2003, 2004) use the story telling format in their books on PW, and also during classes and seminars. Army often speaks personally and recalls how he came to certain awarenesses and realizations through various events that were unfolding in his life. He is telling both himself and us a story in order to better understand and explain PW concepts and make them more clear, relevant and appealing to the reader /listener. Army recently told the story of a young boy who wanted to spit out his medicines, and refused to swallow them, much to the doctor's and family's dismay. By encouraging the little boy to spit more and spit larger and bigger and create great, imaginary spits that became as large as typhoons in the boy's mind, he somewhere along the way 'spat' out his illness and recovered. This is, for me a fascinating story, and even as I narrate it I am aware that I embellish it with my own style. This is part of the oral traditions' rendering, that the message is more than the words, it is the mood /dream of the narrator that creates it in the moment.

Carlos Castaneda (1968, 1971, 1972, 1974) relates his interactions with Don Juan Matus, a Yaqui Indian sorcerer, by telling stories about what happens at various points in their meetings while on his quest for 'knowledge'. He describes in some detail the various incidents that mold the shape of things to come in terms of his understanding and perceptions of life. To my mind, the narration keeps the reader involved in his journey.

In their book, 'A Path Made By Walking' (2004) Julie Diamond and Lee Spark Jones devote the first chapter of the book to 'The Story of Process Work'. They found it necessary to tell a story before they went on to discuss the various concepts, skills and techniques of PW.

In order to explain various PW techniques, the story of a 'case' is often presented in the classroom. At various times during my study of PW, I have used stories from my own life to better illustrate what I am trying to say.

In my practice as a therapist I often find myself telling my clients stories. The stories have come to me spontaneously, in the moment. I make 'use' of these stories in a number of ways. To show empathy, so my client does not feel alone in their situation, may be helpful. A story can help us take a meta-position, especially when it is simplified, as in a fairy tale. It can also be used to provide the hope that regardless of how difficult the circumstances the tale somehow finds a resolution.

Chicken like: A client, a woman in her late 20's, felt like a 'chicken with her head cut off'. We took turns playing the role of the chicken, and we both came to realize the deeply ecstatic state the chicken must have been in, when, without its head, and with its life blood gushing out, in the frenzy of its movements it was in a dance of ecstasy. Inspired by this interaction, I wrote a story about "The Chicken and the King" (page 35); how a king came to be jealous of a mere chicken. I shared it with my client in a later session. We decided that every state had both an up side and a down side. The headless chicken state was being marginalized, even though it was the more powerful, ecstatic state.. The dead chicken had higher rank than the king because the children loved it more than they loved the king.

Onion tears: Another client, also a young woman, chose me for a therapy session because, like herself, I was a cook. She loved her job, but was concerned that her deep involvement in the process was keeping her away from interacting with her peers. She felt this was preventing her from being in intimate relationships. A few months earlier I

had written a story entitled *Soup Friends*, in which a woman changes her life and makes new friends by making a large pot of soup. The aroma of the soup draws passersby to her home and helps her make many friends. My client and I discussed how meaningful our lives were because we enjoyed this deep connection to food, and, following her feedback, I encouraged her to continue cooking. We talked about how, by cooking, she was connecting to many people at the dreaming level. By being more aware of this sentient level of her job she was able to appreciate the deep connections she already had to many. She realized she was not so lonely after all and that the right intimate partner would emerge in the future,

My *Soup Friends* story came in handy with another client, a 50+, white, middleclass man who complained that his life was boring and that he lacked friends. He reacted quite emotionally to my story, and spoke of his life as a ‘comfortable rut’ and realized that it may be important for him to move out of his comfort zone if he wants more out of life. The onions that made the soup so delicious were the same onions that made eyes water. By avoiding the *onions* of life, he was missing out on the tears, and also the good taste.

Bird song: My client is a young woman, sincere, hardworking and dedicated to her job and education. She lives on her own, and leads a well-organized life. However, she is growing impatient with herself for not being perfect and occasionally doing foolish and self indulgent things that come in the way of her goals and ambitions. She is also looking for a focus and a clear goal to channel all her energies into.

As we sat together in therapy she was very upset and shaking with frustration and impatience. After she had had a good cry, I was at a loss for words to convey how I felt about her situation, and the following story came to my mind.

*One day a little girl was sitting on a bench on the side of a busy street impatiently waiting for her bus. As she anxiously scanned each passing vehicle, she did not notice a little bird that alighted on the bench next to her. Impatient, anxious, unhappy, she burst into tears. After she wept her heart out, a quite emptiness filled her, and in that silence she heard the melodious singing of the bird. Following the melody and herself, she began to dance with wild and carefree abandon and missed her bus.*

*She started to cry all over again. But this time, the girl watched for the next bus with her toes tapping to the music. The time passed quickly, the bus arrived, and she jumped aboard. People in the bus turned around to welcome at her with big friendly smiles.*

With the help of this story my client realized the need to go along with the flow of the river, sometimes it would be slow, and there was no point in fighting against the current.

I also use the medium of storytelling when I provide the client with an alternative point of view, in terms of ‘what if’, or ‘imagine that’. This helps the client to move out of her identified role and ‘take the other side’.

#### *Relationship Channel: Developing my own style as a therapist*

PW identifies a number of channels that people inhabit / use spontaneously to express themselves. Along with the commonly identified verbal, visual, auditory,

proprioceptive / sensory and movement channels, PW includes the world channel and the relationship channel. Channels are sometimes combined. Whilst exploring my own story telling style I realized that I was in the ‘verbal + relationship + world’ channel.

Needless to say this may not be the ideal way to relate to some clients as it may make them uncomfortable. Also clients do not wish to be in the relationship channel all the time. Therefore it is important to follow the client’s feedback. If the client does not give me positive feedback, I will stay away from the relationship channel.

Some teachers of PW refer to popular television shows in order to demonstrate a point. I use my stories in a similar fashion, to take us out of the current context of self, in the current moment, and view life as story which unfolds. The twists and turns of fate in the stories provide us with options and choices, thereby influencing the decisions we make about who we are and what we are to become. This also helps us to take a ‘metaposition’ because the story distances us from the sting of personal experience.

#### *Contributing New Learning to the Field*

By writing stories and discussing ‘then what happened’ with the use of PW concepts, I believe that I can popularize PW by introducing it to new audiences and thereby extend it’s reach.

Moreover, in this exercise I am demonstrating the universality of PW concepts. The stories are in reference to an Indian style of thinking and being, reflecting many ancient theories, modalities, practices and worldviews, yet PW (recent and western) is a good fit.

## THE STORIES AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO PW

This chapter includes stories followed by some basic PW concepts I believe they demonstrate.

### *SUDHA'S SONG*

*Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there lived a merchant prince in a far off land. His name was Zoba. He was tall, dark and handsome, full of fun and vigor, hard working and successful in his business. He owned a rubber factory and made balloons, and the streets would fill up with people wanting to buy his balloons for all joyous occasions.*

*Zoba married a young woman who was as beautiful as she was talented, efficient and intelligent. Soon a young daughter was born to them, named Sudha. And many more children followed, mostly sons, and the household was full of the sounds of children and babies, and smells of milk and other infant foods and cooking, comings and goings of extended family members and vendors. The yard was full of cows and calves, goats and dogs and cats and pigeons and minas and parrots in cages, and canaries and lovebirds, too. Oh! It was all busy, busy, busy, and every year a new child was born to Zoba and his wife, and the sturdy cries of infant wails would break the quiet of the hot summer's night and everyone would stir in their sleep, and then fall back to dreamland again.*

*In order to keep up with his large family, and as his rubber factory continued to do so well, Zoba decided to build a second floor to his modest home, and then yet another floor over it. He paved the front yard with stone so that the dark black clay soil would not turn into slush during the infrequent rains and be fine dry dust the rest of the year.*

*He decided to dig a well, but found that the only way to have a well was to share half of it with his neighbor, and so a half hemisphere of a well was available to the Goj family. Soon, after various things from the kitchen started disappearing and once a tiny pup was found floating in the well, Zoba decided it was time to cover the well and keep it locked, in order to save the waters of the well and save the lives of his family, and the various kitchen utensils from disappearing, and God knew what else.*

*Now imagine that busy household. If you were to visit, you would first have to knock on solid hardwood gates, taller than the height of a man as tall as Zoba, and he was tall! You might warily open the smaller door of the large gate, but soon a dog would snarl at you, and set up a loud barking. And that was a good thing actually, or else you may have spent the whole day waiting outside the gate. Sooner or later someone would tire of the dogs barking and try to shush them only then to realize that some one was at the gate and wanted to come in. Then they would chase away the dogs, who did not want to be restrained and kept lunging out to snap at the heels of the visitors.*

*Once you entered you saw the stone paved, irregular shaped front yard, with half the well at one end. It was always full of all kinds of things. You might find a cow or even a pair of bullocks feeding in a corner, with a heap of dung on the ground. The cattle would be busy swishing their tails to keep the flies off and the grassy wet aroma of the dung would cling to the warm air. The birds in their cages under the awning of the front porch would be very busy chirping away, a bullock cart with some produce or the other would be resting to one side half unloaded, as the coolie had taken a break to have his midday cup of buttermilk from the generous household. A goat might come and nibble at*

*your feet, and the pigeons, along with the sparrows and crows were always looking for a lazy fly or some bit of grain to nibble on.*

*Besides this, there were always the children, all ages, all sizes, running around in various states of undress and cleanliness. For though Zoba and his wife Mala took good care of their children, they were not averse to the children having a good time, and when they got too hot, and took off their clothes and smeared themselves with mud or other less mentionable substances, they were not ones to be unduly anxious.*

*And so it was a healthy, robust household. The boys were strong and daring, always challenging each other with feats of strength and courage that sometimes clearly seemed to lack intelligence, and arms and legs were broken as a matter of course, and fevers and various childhood ailments did not break the tempo of activity in this household.*

*However if you were a visitor at the hour before sunset, you would see another picture. The animals had been groomed and fed, and tied away for the night. The bird cages were covered, the dogs slept peacefully after their evening meal.*

*And what of the children? They were bathed and clean and forbidden to jump around in the yard. They now sat on a long strip of carpet facing in the direction of their teacher, who chanted the ancient evening prayers in a long forgotten language, and all the children were forced to learn these by heart. This was an old family tradition, and the teacher only kept up the challenge, for if you learned 20 verses, he taught you 10 more, and even if you knew a hundred of them by heart, he had another fifty for you to master, and so it went on. Some of the children were really good at this and from a very young age could commit to memory thousands of verses. Some others were not so good at*

*memorizing, but were lulled into a feeling of grace and wellbeing by the singsong chants and the slow, rocking motions that accompanied the chanting.*

*One of the stories doing the rounds at that time amongst the children was that there was a family ghost hovering around during prayer time, and if you chanted the verses wrong or did not pronounce the consonants just right, an invisible hand would reach out and suddenly spank you! And so, even though it was difficult at first for the restless children to settle down in one place for a few hours every night they learned to do it by habit, and became calm, centered and grounded before their evening meal, and soon after slept peacefully through the warm nights. And except for the wailing of the next newborn, the large family was lost to dreamland.*

*In this hustle and bustle full of life, charged with noise and action, Sudha was growing up to be quite a tomboy. Being the eldest she could match her brothers in all their physical feats, be it jumping off the running bullock cart, riding the farm horse, or chasing dogs and cats. She learned to swim like a river fish, and bathe in the deep well, with water snakes and weeds, without fear. She was quite a champion at kite flying and as fearless about falls and cuts and bruises as any tough young lad.*

*But Mala, being a good mother, insisted that Sudha learn to care for her younger siblings, to clean, feed and wash them and maintain the routine of the household. Sudha was also taught to sew, knit, sing and paint, as these were the womanly hobbies of her time and would ensure that she would one day make a good wife for some lucky man. Sudha was extremely talented and she could sew a fine seam and do beautiful embroidery, but what she did best of all was to sing.*

*She sang beautifully and when the singing teacher came to the house for her music lessons she enchanted the whole family with her melodious voice. It was surprising sight to see the sun tanned, pig tailed, scruffy-kneed girl sit down crossed legged in the lotus position, patting her knee in time to the music, concentrating fiercely on a distant point over the head of her teacher, and pour forth beautiful melodies that were intricate and complex, with ease and fineness.*

*Sudha's clear, melodious voice had a strange influence on the household. It was noticed that the animals in the yard would stop fretting and shifting as they went about chewing on the cud, and one could almost imagine the flies slow down and stop bothering the cattle. The birds in their cages seemed to cock their heads and listen intently, the dogs lay down their heads and sighed, and the whole family would slowly sway and swing to the music, keeping time, as they went about their business. The boys stopped yelling at each other as they played seven tiles or aimed their marbles, and the maids in the kitchen stopped banging the brass cooking pots. Sometimes some of the brothers and their friends would find an excuse to stop their rough play and just lounge around in order to hear Sudha's beautiful songs.*

*One evening Zoba came home to just such a scene. There was Sudha in the front porch practicing her music to the 4-string tambura, filling the whole yard with her voice. She was singing a passionate love song to the god of love, but the young boys lounging around were caught up in a fantasy that she was singing to each of them alone! Their faces were rapt with adoration and little did they know it, but Zoba saw that right away, and he felt his gut move with an emotion that was completely new to him. He suddenly saw his daughter as the beautiful young woman she was growing up to be, her dark,*

*thick, wavy hair framing her high cheekbones, fine small nose and dimpled cheeks and chin. The cupid bow lips and winged eyebrows over laughing eyes took his breath away, and at that moment he realized that life had changed for his large, boisterous family.*

*His immediate reaction was to loose his temper and send the boys home and his sons to their household tasks. He complained loudly that he had a headache, and demanded complete silence. Even though Sudha was quick to stop, the whole household erupted into pandemonium, the dogs barked, the cattle shifted around, the birds gave startled squeaks and the boys started bumping into things, dropping them and a sudden racket ensued, so that poor Zoba did indeed have a very real headache.*

*Zoba's headaches became a common occurrence thereafter, and he did not know the cause nor the cure of why they were happening. The headaches soon started bothering the sons, who started realizing that their friends visited more than ever before and behaved in strange ways. They hung around the front yard, dressed in clean clothes and refused to play the games that they were so fond of. They were also taking an unnatural interest in talking to other household members, their mother and sister.*

*As soon as the boys realized that their sister was the cause of this metamorphosis they turned merciless. They spied on Sudha and their younger sisters, watching them preen at their reflection in the dusty windowpanes. One of them discovered a small shard of mirror that Sudha had hidden under a loose brick in the wall of the upper rooms, and immediately reported to their father. Vanity, especially amongst young girls was not a virtue, and looking at one's self in the mirror was only approved of if you had something in the eye.*

*And so started days of stress and tension around this happy, busy household. Sudha grew more beautiful, and retained her sparkling nature. She continued being as good as the boys in all their games, and for weeks together they forgot to look at her beauty or the curves slowly growing in her blouse. But then something would suddenly happen, and the whole family would turn awkward and stumbling and fretful.*

*The music lessons were abruptly stopped one day by Zoba. When Sudha cried out about this Zoba told his wife angrily that it was because she was getting too good at it. If it went on like this she would want to perform on the school stage to an audience, and he would not stand for that. He could not have all the young men in the neighborhood ogle his beautiful daughter in the guise of listening to her singing; it was an affront to the family name and had to be prevented at any cost.*

*And so from that day on, Sudha could only sing in her head, and if she occasionally broke out into a hum, she had to be sure it was not around her father or some of her particularly possessive brothers, who would be quick to stop her by painfully jerking on her long, dark pigtails.*

*But Sudha was not one to be put down for long. She had many interests and talents and it was her bright smile and endearing nature that encouraged one of her aunts to invite her on a visit to another city. Sudha was delighted to visit and be away from her possessive family and noisy, nosey brothers. Here she delighted in all the new sights and smells, and her more liberal aunt encouraged her to enroll in a local sewing class, where she might meet other young woman her age.*

*One of them was Kumud, who was so charmed by Sudha, that she suggested her as a match for her brother, a handsome young man Madhu.*

*The story goes that when a formal proposal was made to Sudha's father, and Madhu was interviewed by Zoba, he was surprised that one so fair, light eyed, tall and handsome, well educated and from a wellknown family might be interested in his not-so-fair complexioned daughter. Again, in an instinct to protect his daughter he refused, saying that they could not take the proposal to his daughter, as they were sure to refuse her when they actually saw her. It took considerable negotiation on Kumud's part to convince the Goj family that she had indeed seen Sudha, and that she would be a perfect match for Madhu, who did not want a fair complexioned wife but one who was warm, vibrant and as multi-talented as Sudha.*

*And so Sudha and Madhu were finally married. Many heart broken young men attended the wedding, and they never really forgot Sudha, as Sudha's daughters would discover decades later.*

*As was the custom of that time, in a far away land, a long time ago, Sudha's name was changed to Madhuri. Many reasons were given to Madhuri's daughters when they asked why this came to be. One was the deep-rooted notion that a girl, upon her marriage should reflect the nature and culture of her husband's family, and so leave behind or forget her previous life. Another was that the couple should have complimentary or matching names, so Madhu and Madhuri were more poetic than Madhu and Sudha. Anything to make the match look, sound and be good. It was a source of deep satisfaction to one of Madhuri's daughters that her name continued to mean the same – sweet, as both Sudha and Madhuri indicated qualities of sweetness. And both Madhu and Madhuri were indeed sweet people.*

*Sudha's song found no encouragement in this new life. She was smart and multi-talented, and I could fill a whole evening telling you stories of her many adventures. How she learned to drive a car, explored the various bazaars in the foreign city she lived in, cooked new and strange foods, brought up her three children, sewed many beautiful and original clothes for them, kept a beautiful home and generally had a full and happy life.*

*But her family never paid much attention to her singing talents and over the years her songs were lost in the daily chaos of family life. I wonder if Zoba realized that Sudha's song was not the only reason why people would fall in love with her. Well into her middle years, people would be struck by her beauty and grace. Isn't it strange, to have the daughter that anyone would long for, and then suffer headaches for that? Marriage had freed Zoba. Now it was Madhu's turn, He had inherited the headaches, and she was his responsibility.*

*For those in the know, Sudha was the one who cared for everyone and everything, without the luxury of headaches. She just chose to die, early and fairly quietly.*

*It was only a few days before Sudha died, did her song find a voice. As she lay dying rapidly of a fastgrowing cancer, it was in music that she found her solace. In one of those rare moments when she was transformed and transported to a state of musical bliss did she confess her dreams that were to remain forever unfulfilled. She wanted to sing and sing, and never stop singing and fill her whole being with song and pour it out on to the whole world in a long, continuous, flowing stream.*

*In those days, in that far away, ancient land, so long, long ago, it never occurred to Sudha or her daughters to question why they had been given the song that was never to*

*be sung, in a world that had no ears or space for it. But Sudha died and her song remains unsung.*

*Dreaming* is one of the central concepts of PW. Mindell distinguishes between Consensus Reality and Non-consensus Reality (CR and NCR, respectively) and also refers to it as ‘first attention and second attention. ‘The second attention is the key to the world of dreaming, the unconscious.’

In Sudha’s Song, the well is a place to dream at, as in the classical concept of the ‘wishing well’. In the story the well is a place that fires the children’s imaginations, and from a very young age they dream into what and where the well could take them, and they start this exploration by dropping objects into it.

The chanting of prayers at sunset have the effect of removing the children from their everyday selves and their restless bodies into a different place and mood of calmness and centeredness.

The myth of the family ghost who spans those who make mistakes during prayer time puts the strict, critical teacher into an omnipotent dream role, hence the need for perfection is created in the dream figure.

Sudha’s song provides a dream door that many can access. Sudha herself is in the dreaming when she sings, and so are all those who listen to her song. The boys stop their play, the family, completely unaware of themselves, sway in time to the song. The servants in the kitchen stop banging the pots and even the animals in the yard, the cows and goats, the dogs, the birds and even the flies are put into a dreaming state.

Sudha's physical beauty is another dream door. Her beauty influences those around her in a dramatic and dreamlike way. The father's role is to be responsible for the safety and security of his daughter. Sudha's beauty makes him feel unsure about his ability to 'protect' her from 'imaginary' threats. This brought her father to an EDGE (explained later). Had she been less beautiful, it is possible he may not have felt the need to repress her singing. Sudha's beauty and singing talent did not serve her well, as they were used, to some extent, to inhibit and control her.

The song itself is a doorway to dreaming. As a young girl Sudha sang because it altered her being in some fashion.

At the end of life, when in pain, the song again helped her access this altered state and removed her from the place of pain and physical suffering that plagued her body. In the song she found solace.

"Life Myth ... frames the personal growth journey in an impersonal way, allowing for wider perspectives and new meaning to emerge. It not only locates personal history in a broader archetypal drama, but also adds a spiritual dimension to self-exploration by addressing questions such as, 'Why am I here? What am I meant to learn or do? What is my purpose in life?' A Path Made By Walking - Julie Diamond and Lee Spark Jones.

Sudha's song tells of a young girl who wants to sing, but for various cultural and family reasons she is unable to do so. Her life takes her in a different direction. Her passion is marginalized. However, just before her untimely death she expresses her love for song and music and immerses herself in music in her last living moments.

Unfulfilled personal myths can go on to be family myths. Her myth somehow became my myth in a different way, and I was able to change it. In my attempt to tell her story and acknowledge her talents, I found my own gift as a storyteller.

My mother was not able to sing in public to an audience that would consist of the local community. I read my stories to an 'international and foreign' audience in Portland, Oregon. By stepping across well defined and protected boundaries, I was able to do what she could not have dreamt of in her lifetime. By the telling of her story many felt her song did not go unsung, as I was now doing the 'singing' for her. By putting her story out, I was acknowledging both her great talent and love for music, and my 'freedom' and ability to do the same.

#### *THE WRITING ON THE WALL*

*Once upon a time in a faraway land there was an ancient village. The village had been there for many generations and everyone knew who their parents, grand parents and great grand parents were and how they were related to one another. The village was full of wise old people who knew what to do and what not to do, and the young people grew up knowing that one day they too would be wise and know all there was to know.*

*However, in the middle of the village was a wall that no one knew any thing about. Even though the oldest person could recall what his greatest grandmother, who had lived the longest time and had much to say about everyone and everything, had said, there was no memory of the wall. And since no one knew anything about the wall, how it came to be built, by whom or when or even why, they all decided to ignore it and pretend it never existed, and indeed it did not. When babies bumped into the wall they learned to toddle around it, children's questions were ignored, and so they grew up ignoring its*

*existence. The whole village went on with their lives and daily businesses and never spared a thought for the wall.*

*One day a stranger traveling through that part of the world came to the village, and all the people crowded around him, full of curiosity and eager to see someone new and different. When it was discovered that he was a medicine man everyone lined up for his cures. Being a wise old man, and knowing that timing was closely related to success, he played his cards carefully. He insisted on eating the evening meal in the house of the 'patient' he was to treat the next morning. In this way he learned all the family's secrets and made effective suggestions for cures. When Ammadi complained of sleeplessness, he knew it was because her husband snored incessantly all night long, so he gave her a magic wax to pour into her ears at night, and for the first time in decades Ammadi had a sound night's sleep!*

*One day the medicine man saw the wall and when he asked the people about it, they had no answer, for they could not see it. They did not know it even existed. The medicine man became curious. How was it that such clever people in such an ancient land were blind to this huge relic that stood right in the middle of the village? One day at the stroke of noon when the man was gazing at the wall, he suddenly saw the writing on the wall. It was as clear as daylight. The message on the wall said that the chieftain's son was about to die. The medicine man was confused. He looked around, but none else could see what he saw. How could he warn the chieftain without causing offence and what if the writing on the wall were not true? The medicine man thought about this predicament for a long time. Then he made a plan. He wrote the message on a piece of paper, sealed it and gave it to the chieftain, asking him to open it after he had left the village. If the*

*message were false he would be well on his way and if it were true, maybe he would never leave.*

*Now, the chieftain's son was prone to drinking and was a boastful and conceited young man, who got away with bad behavior only because of his father's high position. He insisted on privileges that he was not ready for, and so, the next day when the seasoned warriors went out for the traditional annual hunt, he insisted on joining them. Not being skilled enough to hunt the great lion, he was killed by the mighty beast.*

*The writing on the wall had predicted that one so ill prepared as him would flounder and perish!*

*The medicine man was astonished by this discovery. Everyday at noon he sat near the wall and as the sun went directly overhead the writing was clearly visible. With this knowledge he became very rich and powerful in the village. Everyone came to him for his insights and wisdom and his uncanny ability to see into the future. The traveling medicine man gave up his wanderings and slowly started to imbibe the local culture. And though he was a complete stranger and no one knew where he came from or who his ancestors were, he was soon assimilated.*

*Many seasons passed, and the stranger sometimes neglected to read the wall at noon. He grew lazy and complacent, and gradually the writing started to fade and eventually did not appear at all. By now he was well entrenched in the local society and did not really care about the wall and over time he and his children born in the village came to ignore the wall, as did all the others around him.*

Years later a ragged youth staggered into the village in search of alms, and as he rested his weary bones against the wall at noon, he too could read the writing on the wall.

After blurting out a few truths the youth hurried away, for it was not within his scope of understanding or ambition to be a soothsayer. The village people begged him to stay and in order to escape, he promised to return a few years later.

It was thus that a stranger not knowing the ways of the people or the land became the most sought after figure, simply because he could read the writing on the wall. Security, safety and stability had blinded local eyes to the wall's wisdom, and it was only a person free of agendas and ambition who could ever read the wall. But who would pay attention to such a person?

The legend of the magic wall spread far and wide, and many traveled in all directions of the globe in search of it. They roamed, following rumor, dreams and supposed sightings. And though they searched high and low for this magic wall they never found it. Little did they realize that every village, every community had its own magic wall, where the writing was always visible at noon. You just had to develop the eyes to see it.

Primary and Secondary Process. The primary process corresponds with the known and acknowledged identity of a person, group or organization. The secondary process is less known, 'not me', or is further away from conscious awareness.

In The Writing on the Wall the village people identify with being 'all knowing' and 'wise' (primary process). Yet they are blind to the Wall, and are unaware of its very

existence in the very middle of their village (secondary process). There is a complete disconnect between their primary process and the secondary process.

The Edge is the place of discomfort where the Primary and Secondary process meets. The denial of the existence of the wall and the inability of the village people to 'see' the writing on the wall is the shared edge. Believing in its existence would expose them as being 'not all knowing and not all wise'

The traveling medicine man is the dream door, and they are willing to see the wall through someone else's eyes.

### *HOLY TERROR*

*Mummiji was a holy terror, quite literally! For four hours every day, come rain or shine she prayed to her Gods. And the rest of her waking hours she terrorized her household. Mummiji had many fine sons, strong lads raised on her excellent cooking in her regimented household. All the good food had built up the wax in her son's ears, and they heard only what they needed or wanted to. Other words just rolled off their eardrums like water off a duck's back. Though her daughters-in-law complained, they soon realized that their words were falling upon waxed-up ears, and decided that the best way to go through life was to simply obey.*

*So Mummiji lived in her kingdom by the sea. The house was no more than a shoebox, really, but she was the reigning queen and everyone did her bidding. And that set the tone that made you think of kings and queens and all their obedient servants.*

*Now Mummiji had not always been so queenly. As a young girl she had loved to roam the mustard fields of her father's village. The village folk grew fond of the tall dark,*

*willowy lass who dreamily roamed the mustard blooms, dressed in her colorful garments. They were not sure whom to admire more, the sight of the girl in the fields or her beautiful garments, for she had impeccable taste and careful grooming. She draped her flowing garments with care and wore them with ease. Roaming the fields she looked like an exotic bird of paradise floating around on a hot summer's day.*

*Soon it was time for her to marry and she was sent away to live with her husband in a far away city where it was dirty, humid, crowded and the roads were full of noisy cars and buses and there were people everywhere, hundreds of people, as far as the eye could see. But worse, the people were all weird, dressed in strange ways and spoke unheard of languages, had different customs and worshipped different Gods. All this confused her. Even the great sea on whose shore the city resided did little to comfort her. She longed for the mustard fields of her childhood and grew more sad and unhappy as the years went by.*

*After the birth of her first child, a girl, all the children born to her were boys, and that was when, for ever after, she came to be known as Mummiji. Her sons were full of beans and rapidly grew like bean stalks. Mummiji kept a strict and well-oiled household by sheer willpower and the magic she could create in the kitchen. Each time the boys returned from school, tired, hungry and as jumpy as mustard seeds in a pan of hot oil, Mummiji ministered to them with warm foods that soothed and calmed them and turned them into bleating sheep ready to do her bidding.*

*And so the years passed. As soon the eldest child, the girl, came to maturity, Mummiji took care to marry her off. Her blossoming femininity had started upsetting the many sons. With her ripening womanhood, the very smell of her sent them sniffing,*

*spying and curious to feel and touch. Alarmed by this disturbance amongst the troops, Mummiji took the only recourse available to her. And though she was sorry to see her only daughter go, she was hugely relieved.*

*And so many more years passed. Mummiji was the only woman in the household and she took her position seriously. She made rules and decisions and expected everyone to follow them. Sometimes the boys would get angry, and run away from home, for she could be quite tyrannical. But they did not get far. As soon as they got hungry, which was quite often, the strong lads found their stomachs moaning in hunger, thus forcing them back home. Mummiji never worried too much when the boys disappeared, she knew they would soon get hungry and return home before long.*

*As the boys became older a new breeze began to blow through the shoebox house in the city by the sea. The boys began to fall in love, and they had such a variety to choose from!*

*The shoebox city was a bustling port where many ships docked, and besides exotic cargo they also brought many foreigners from strange lands. The young men, as has been the way of all young men since time immemorial, grew disgruntled, distracted, moody and confused and seemed to lose the ability to do simple everyday tasks. But what worried Mummiji most of all was that they sometimes forgot to eat, and just sat about, without appetite.*

*In another cluster of shoeboxes in a distant part of the seaside city, there lived an old crone who was actually a witch. She was Mummiji's only friend, both having grown up in the same mustard field village. They would meet whenever they could, and spend hours with their heads close together, singing the songs of their childhood, remembering*

*the hot sun and the fragrance of the mustard blooms and feeling the hot desert winds of home.*

*Mummiji was in the habit of consulting her friend Gigi the witch whenever she was faced with a problem that would not go away when it was ignored. And so she ran yet again to Gigi, who after consulting her books, and casting a few spells, decided that the best remedy for the young men with no appetite was to find suitable matches for them and get them married. She also advised Mummiji about the urgency of the matter, otherwise some city girl would lure away one of her fine lads. This seemed like an excellent suggestion, and Mummiji went back to her home feeling quite resolute, strong and brave. That evening after a wonderful feast, she announced her intention. She was surprised by the reactions of her young sons. They looked distracted and wandered about like mules that had suddenly been told to relax. They didn't know what to do and how to feel! This all male household was now to have an equal number of females in it? Well, that would take some getting used to. And so the young men continued their daily business, but now a new buzz had entered their minds. Each time they saw a young woman, they no longer looked away shyly, but their eyes would linger over her features. Sometimes their hearts skipped a beat and they felt a warm flush suffuse their minds and bodies, at other times they looked away hastily and their blood ran cold.*

*The two older sons were more imaginative than the rest. They soon began to have nightmares. In their dreams they were in a beautifully decorated bridal chamber, full of flowers and incense, and when they reached out to unveil the bride, the face of a frog or a slug would stare back at them. This terrified the young men beyond words. Pale from these nightmares they went to the city to go about their business. As luck would have it,*

*they fell in love with the first young women they set their eyes on. They looked amazingly beautiful in comparison to the toads and slugs they had dreamt of. When Mummiji heard of her sons' loves, she grew enraged as this was not part of her scheme and when the boys grew stubborn she banished them from her shoebox home forever.*

*Little is known of these young men and their foreign wives. Did they live happily ever after or did they pine for mother's cooking? Well, that would be another story.*

*Now Mummiji grew even more anxious and with the help of her witch friend Gigi, a number of brides were found for the remaining sons. And without much ado the marriages were arranged and executed. Soon after it was noticed that the very air of the shoebox house changed. The brides were everywhere, even if they were nowhere to be seen. They seemed to color the very air and alter the sweep of the breeze.*

*Mummiji continued her reign of strictness and firmness. But in her confusion of being surrounded by young women so unlike her boys, she started becoming more dominating and rigid, and the household rules started becoming tyrannical. The daughters-in-law had to start adhering to strict codes of dress, diet and behavior. They were admonished, one for being too pretty and therefore vain and self centered, the other for being plain, therefore ill groomed and unkempt. The young women were kept guessing everyday, for no one knew what was the right thing to do. All they knew was that Mummiji was not to be pleased at any cost. The sons were quick to fall into this tyrannical trance. Mummiji made all the decisions and no arguments were entertained.*

*At this time it was noticed that Mummiji was becoming more and more religious. She prayed for longer hours, spent more time in the kitchen preparing foods favored by her favorite Gods and made the rest of the household follow strange rules and rituals in*

*order to appease her deities. No one realized that Mummiji was becoming more and more insecure in her everyday life. Her grown sons and their wives had changed the household so much that she soon began to feel a stranger in her own home. No longer did her sons lay their heads in her lap after dinner, but scurried away into their bedrooms as soon as they were able. She sometimes found one or the other of them glaring at her in an angry fashion, and she could never understand why. After all, she was doing the best she could to keep the household together, safe and unchanged as it had always been.*

*In her discomfort Mummiji found great solace in prayer. The incense from the burning herbs would put her into a trance, not unlike the mustard fields she roamed as a young girl. The images of the Gods and Goddesses spoke kindly to her, and she felt safe in their eternal smiles and half closed glances. Soon the daughters-in-law noticed that all the gods she had were not enough. If Mummiji spied a new god walking down the street, she was quick to bring them in and adopt them as her own.*

*This was how Azzadi, the Goddess of freedom and spontaneity had found her home with Mummiji. Looking back, one has to wonder, did Mummiji know what she was doing? Could such a Goddess be content to be worshipped with ritual alone? Or would She seek greater expression for the values She stood for?*

*Soon a new chapter opened in the shoebox home. Grandchildren began their arrival. The sudden wailing of robust infants and the shameless exposure of milk filled breasts confused Mummiji and made her more uncomfortable than ever before. So she grew more strict and more rigid, and more rules and regulations followed. She now decided which colors could be worn and by whom, what food could be consumed when, and how leisure time was to be spent, if any was ever available.*

*The grandchildren grew up under these strict laws. They never knew any other way of living, so they obeyed. But one grandchild was somehow different. She resembled her grandmother and from the cradle she would glare out at the world with the same dark, steely, unwavering glare. As she grew up, she toddled around the house mimicking her grandmother. The sons and daughters-in-law quivered in gleeful fear at the sight. Mummiji and her miniature double were a source of great amusement, and it took considerable restraint to maintain a straight face in her presence. As soon as Mummiji's back was turned, everyone fell apart in helpless mirth.*

*The years rolled by. Soon Mummiji and Baby were the same height, and frequently they would stand face-to-face, arms akimbo, glaring at each other. Each was testing the other's will. Mummiji began to pray more and more, louder and harder. And Baby was growing up to be as tall and strong as Mummiji in every way.*

*Quite early for her age, or so the family insisted, Baby was making cow's eyes at all the men around, sometimes cousins included. Moreover, she was quite shameless about it. Whilst other young women her age were coy and simpering, our Baby made no bones about what she liked or what she was thinking.*

*As was Mummiji's way she became more strict and made more rules. No one can remember the exact hour or even the day on which the tables turned. Baby refused to obey. Maybe it started gradually and slowly built up to a crescendo. But before anyone knew quite what was happening Baby had become the next tyrant.*

*Oh it was a clash! The two tyrants, one now old and grey and quite weary, the other young, lush and full of rebellion. It was like a great storm had hit the shoebox*

*home. Thunder and lightening, and everyone trembled not knowing what would happen next.*

*For decades no one had gone against the smallest wish or whim of Mummiji. They had never considered the possibility, or that it was something they could do. And here was a young slip of a girl showing up all the strong men in the family! She stood eyeball to eyeball with Mummiji!!*

*Well, this stormy climate did not pass. This was no hurricane, and it was not in a hurry and had nowhere to go. Soon the family realized that the storm was here to stay and they would all have to just live with it. It did not take any special observation powers to notice that any rule Mummiji made, Baby had to break. If Mummiji demanded modesty in dress Baby would parade the home and streets in the costume of a village slut. If certain foods were forbidden on certain days Baby made a point of nibbling on it all day long, generously offering it to whoever happened to be around, including Mummiji. The tension in the house became unbearable. Fear quaked in the hearts of all, no one could guess what new sacrilege baby was about to commit and no one knew what to do after the deed was done. The family became desperate for some resolution. All they could do was scurry away into corners and pretend to turn blind and deaf.*

*In complete desperation for some sort of normalcy in life, Mummiji and her friend Gigi decided to visit the great wizard of the mustard field village. This Baba was reputed to be a powerful wizard who could call down the very Gods to do his bidding. Mummiji and Gigi together decided this was a moment for godly intervention and that no stone was to be left unturned to achieve it.*

*So, to the utter astonishment of the shoebox family, Mummiji declared that she would be going to a far off land on a pilgrimage. The sons were confused. Their mother had never let them out of her sight before. How could she do this to them, especially now that Baby was going completely out of control? The daughters in law smiled secretly but burst into public tears, saying they would never be able to manage without Mummiji. For a few days Baby's shenanigans took a back seat, as everyone was focused on Mummiji.*

*Soon it was time to depart and Mummiji and Gigi boarded a train with a steam engine. The steam engine huffed and puffed and blew great clouds of black soot and smoke as it pulled out of the station. The whole clan had come to the railway station to give the great Matriarch a glorious send off. Arms waved, tears were wiped and smiles veiled and Mummiji was on her way.*

*The great old wizard Baba listened to Mummiji's problems and paid careful attention to all of Gigi's failed remedies and spells. After asking for many gifts and cows and goats to appease the gods, Baba meditated for 3 days and 3 nights of the full moon and after much effort, came up with a solution for how Baby could be saved from herself and how the family could be saved from Baby.*

*Mummiji and Gigi took the train back home. Amongst their belongings were 2 round, linen-wrapped packages. One of them was distinguished by a discrete brown mark. Mummiji and Gigi dozed off into the night as the steam engine huffed and puffed over the distant horizon. Early in the morning they were rudely awakened. The train had rocked to a screeching halt. A lone rogue elephant was roaming the tracks ahead and would not let the train pass. The engine driver tried pulling on the shrill train whistle, billowing black plumes of smoke, making the steam engine hiss and pant, but nothing was*

*working. Finally he decided to approach the elephant with short bursts of speed, and managed to pull past the furious tusker.*

*In the melee the passengers were thrown about like pebbles in a tin can. But in the end they were happy to be on their way, as no permanent damage had been done to anyone. Mummiji did check on her two linen wrapped packages and was happy to see them safe and unharmed, if a bit tossed around.*

*When the two old crones reached the shoebox city they were calm; a solution had been found for Baby and the family. It was just a matter of time before things would be right and normal, and life would soon be like it always was in the shoebox home by the sea.*

*The family wept tears of joy to see Mummiji back from her pilgrimage. They had spent many nights discussing all the trials and tribulations that could befall one on such endeavors and how many pilgrims were known to have just vanished into thin air. They tried to convince themselves that they were happy that such a fate had not befallen Mummiji.*

*That evening before dinner, the whole family clustered around Mummiji to receive their portion of the sacred food blessed by the Baba. Mummiji took out the two linen wrapped parcels. Each contained a large, luscious pomegranate. When cut open, its pods burst forth in ecstasy; deep, dark, gleaming and luscious ruby red. The tiny seed inside each pod gleamed with a white fire. Mummiji carefully checked the linen napkin, and as this one was marked with discreet brown spots, she distributed the fruit to each and every single member of the large family. Everyone was included, the household servants and the family pets. Each one put the few pods reverently into their mouths and*

*swore the fruit tasted like the sweetest nectar and as if to prove this, their tongues were dyed a deep red hue for days.*

*Now Mummiji called out to Baby and opened the second linen package. This fruit was meant for Baby alone, to be eaten a few pods at a time for the next many months. The Baba, over three days and three nights had called down the Gods to infuse the fruit with Polarity, to make whoever ate it the opposite of what and who they were.*

*A part of this fruit was lovingly and exclusively fed to Baby alone and as the rest was for later use, it was carefully folded away in the linen. As she was doing this, Mummiji suddenly turned pale, for she had noticed that this bit of linen too had brown marks. Unbeknown to her, the elephant episode in the train had tossed the fruit around, mildly bruising it, so that both the packages now had similar markings, and you could not distinguish one from the other. Nobody could understand what caused Mummiji to faint and go into a comatose state, and even after she recovered she never spoke another word for the rest of her long life.*

*Whilst everyone was busy worrying over Mummiji and doctors and witches and wizards were being brought in to cure her, something strange had started happening in the shoebox home.*

*First it began with the household pets. The birds in their cages started to chirp at night and one afternoon the dog actually barked at the cat. Now everyone knew how strict Mummiji was about barking. No one was allowed to bark ever – not even the dog! So when he actually barked and growled both at the same time, one of the daughters-in-law turned around and yelled at the dog to shut up and stop! The silence that followed this command was deafening. No one had ever raised his or her voice ever in Mummiji's*

*household. The son who heard this just burst out laughing and slapped his brother on the back, who was so startled that he toppled and fell over laughing, too.*

*It seemed as if a crack had appeared in the shoebox home and everyone appeared to be in a hurry to fall through it.*

*More and more strange incidents followed quite rapidly. After dinner, the family decided to listen to the radio and tuned into some raunchy dance music, considered too cheap and common by Mummiji. Baby's mother, a quite modest woman, borrowed Baby's thin, see-through chiffon blouse and harem pajamas. Whilst the large extended family sat around rapt in the cheap melodies, she startled everyone by swaying seductively into the room and gyrated her hips in a dance of abandon. Soon she was throwing off her veils and even thinking of unhooking her blouse to expose her large bosoms that swayed freely in their newfound independence.*

*At first everyone was stunned, but the children were the first to respond! They began clapping their hands, stomping their feet and formed a ring around her, and when she grew tired from her gyrations, took center stage in turns, making up new ribald verses as the songs ran out.*

*The neighbors in the surrounding shoebox houses were astounded. They ran out to their windows and threw them open, leaning out as far as possible to see what was going on.*

*Soon they heard strong male voices booming out with laughter and could see the leaping shadows of friendly wrestling as they grappled one another. The dogs barked, the*

*birds sang, the babies cried, the children screamed and yelled, running around in circles as if all had gone quite mad!*

*The only quiet person was Baby. She watched everyone behave like she normally did and had done all these years. In a household with very few rules and restrictions, where everyone was free to do as they pleased, Baby quickly turned sober and sensible. After all, it was no longer fun or sensational to do what your mother now felt free to do too.*

*And so Azadi lived on. No longer did Baby have to keep her alive. She now belonged to the whole family.*

*Extreme States and City Shadows* are the PW concepts highlighted in the story Holy Terror. Mindell explores these concepts as ‘roles in the field’ that help a person or group give vent to their feeling of anxiety and frustration. As the process does not happen in the moment, it builds up and is ‘picked up’ by others as ‘Roles’, and comes out in an amplified way, disproportionate or sometimes unrelated to the situation.

In the story Holy Terror, Mummiji has many unnamed and unexplored fears related to change. In her need for security, she uses rules to maintain order and guard against the unfamiliar. These rules prevent spontaneity and freedom that create extreme states in Baby who finds the need to channel and challenge Mummiji’s authority. It is assumed that had the sons and daughters in law rebelled in minor ways, the need for Baby to go into extreme states would not have arisen. Once the whole family embraced a more relaxed style in their day-to-day life, Baby no longer felt the need to act out.

## *THE JUNGLE OF DEEP DEMOCRACY*

*Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, in a deep, dark dense tropical jungle, there lived an elephant and an ant. Now everyone knew that the lion was the king of the jungle, but the elephant was running a close second. Both the elephant and the lion were just going about their daily business, and I do have to wonder if that included thinking very seriously about who they were and why they did what they did. They were too busy being themselves and getting on with day-to-day life.*

*Different beings in the forest responded to each differently. When the lions roamed, the tree life was relaxed and went about its business of swaying and growing and rooting and pollinating, and so on. The grass was happy to be crushed under the weight of the mighty lion, for the crushing was uncomfortably comfortable, like a massage. The trees were proud to lend their trunks to the great beast to rub against, even if they had to endure some scratching.*

*But all the other jungle creatures trembled – we do not know whether from fear or anticipation. What was going to happen? Would they be the lion's prey or would they feed off what the lion had preyed on? And so they lived in a perpetual state of tension. It was a stressful life out there in the jungle, no doubt, but it kept them on their toes, there was no time to be bored or turn lazy.*

*With the elephant it was entirely different story. Our huge mighty friend never hurt a fly. When she roamed the jungle, she sent out an alarm through ground vibrations that awoke and scattered all creatures great and small, and no one was ever crushed underfoot. But for the forest tree people it was an entirely different story.*

*The trees froze and the grass hushed their constant murmurings. Who would be the first to go? The mighty trees that had looked down at the young saplings that tried to grow in their shade suddenly grew jealous of their supple slimness. Maybe they, in their fragility would escape the elephant's notice. The lush, leafy, heavy branches of the large trees were surely more attractive to lunch on? The grass stopped its wild rambling. How far, how fast could they grow with the mighty elephant on the demolition track?*

*All the jungle creatures were relaxed however. The ants, snakes, lizards, hogs, cats and wolves, all loved the elephant dearly. And they did enjoy watching the fear of the tree people as they shriveled and petrified before the path of the elephant. One such creature was a tiny ant that had made its home in the thick folds of the elephant's neck. She loved the elephant dearly, and lived very happily in her dark, warm home. But she was prone to wandering, and when the sun was high in the sky and it got too hot to stay at home, she would wander the rocky elephant terrain. She even reached as far as the tail, and what a wild roller coaster ride that was!*

*One such hot day the ant wandered into the cave of the elephant's ear and soon got lost in the labyrinth of tunnels. And what pandemonium she created, The elephant heard her plaintive cries and waved her ears in sympathy, but the huge fluttering only caused the alarmed ant to grow more loud, anxious and frightened. So she cried out louder and louder. Now we all know the elephant has very sensitive ears, but the ant did not. In her anxiety she bit the elephant deep in her ear. Her incessant cries echoed a thousand times and became deafening to the elephant and her delicate ear lining was inflamed by the bites. So intense was her agony that she lay on the ground and rolled and*

*thrashed – anything to get rid of the horrid wail of the ant, and the red-hot sting of her bite.*

*All the jungle stopped and watched in astonishment. The mighty beast was rolling on the ground like a helpless babe with no thought for her majesty or dignity, just panic and pain. Now a slender branch, which the elephant had missed whilst browsing through the trees, decided to help. She softly and quietly slipped into the elephant's ear. The ant recognized the twigs fragrance, climbed on to it and made her way out of the ear into the sunshine.*

*It took a few moments for the elephant to realize that the plaintive wailing in her ears had stopped, and that the sting too was fading. She pulled herself up with the few remaining shreds of dignity, flapped her ears and trunk and tail to dust off and majestically moved on.*

*The branch that had saved the elephant's life, quickly moved out of the way. The branch knew it was too raw and tender for the elephant to relish, but she would be back to forage in the very same jungle at a later date. Till then, it decided to get on with its tree life.*

*Deep Democracy* is a concept unique to PW. It acknowledges the role and involvement of various parts of a group and encourages them to come forward and interact with one another in a conscious manner, especially in times of social disturbances and conflict. This acknowledges the relevance and importance of each side, regardless of whether the group has power or is being marginalized and is seen as a way of softening conflicts, making it less rigid, more malleable and creating a deeper sense of community. Different parts are interested and react to each other differently. For example though the

elephant is much larger and stronger than the lion, she does not hunt for prey. The lion on the other hand is loved by the flora, as he is seen as harmless, but all creatures flee at the sight of him.

In the *The Jungle of Deep Democracy*, we see how the ant can bring the mighty elephant to her knees, and how a slender twig can save the elephant's life. Even though the elephant and the lion are the ones with the obvious power or rank, they too can be both prey and victim.

*Rank* is a perception of power a person or group may have/feel whilst interacting with another. The groups at the fringes are the marginalized and often the mainstream may be unaware of their presence. People with higher rank are generally unconscious of their high rank. In reverse, people of lower rank are very conscious of their low rank, especially when interacting with those in high rank. This unconsciousness/consciousness creates/adds to conflict. However, each segment is directly interrelated to the other, and dependent on the other in various ways.

Though the ant, being too small and insignificant, is the marginalized creature in the forest, she has the ability to bring the might elephant to the ground.

The small twig, who was jealous of the larger trees, and feared being the elephant's next meal, was the one to help when no one else could save her. In this way we see how marginalized beings (ant & twig), have the skill and wisdom that those in higher rank may have difficulty accessing.

Rank can be reversed. When the Ant reduces the elephant to a writhing mass of pain on the ground, she has the higher rank, as also the lowly twig that rescues the ant

and saves the elephant. Once the crisis is past, the elephant resumes her high rank and the twig and ant their low rank.

### *THE EFFIGY*

*Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, in a small village by the sea there lived a beautiful people renowned for their charm, grace, beauty and delicacy. They were fair, slim, frail and tender as the first blossoms of spring, and they reminded one of morning dew on fine cobwebs.*

*As you might expect, these pure, petal-like people were extremely tender hearted. When the sun rose every morning they wept tears of joy and gratitude that the mighty sun god had not forgotten them, and every evening, when the sun set, they would cry as if their hearts would break, for they were never sure whether they would ever see the sun again.*

*In this land of beauty, sensitivity and delicacy the people were shocked when one day a shipwreck brought a refugee to their shores.*

*Their hearts broke for the woman's plight, and they all mourned her loss of her former life and family in the land so far away that few had ever been to. The village adopted her and took most tender care to nurse her back to health. They cried over her misfortune, and loved and tended to her with great devotion, affection and much generosity. Everyone wanted to adopt her and make her their own. However, as the foreign woman slowly began to recover, the village folk realized that she came from the land of amazons, for she was large and strong. They were astonished that they never saw her cry, for surely she had a heart and she must feel the loss of her loved ones. As no one*

*ever saw her so much as shed a tear, not even when the sun rose or the sun set, they began to fear her.*

*Slowly a feeling of alarm began to spread amongst the village folk. Who was this huge creature? Her wrist was as wide as the widest waist of the fattest person in the village. She could do the job of ten men single handed with never a tear nor a complaint. Even as the refugee became stronger and proved herself more and more capable, the delicate, sensitive village folk felt crushed and came to resent her more and more. Till one day they decided to kill her in a most delicate fashion. They stuck tiny poison darts into her veins as she slept the exhausted sleep that comes after hard work, and even as they wept for the crime they were committing, they continued to kill her quietly and efficiently.*

*One of the customs of the delicate petal people was to make tiny dolls of those who had passed on, and these dolls were kept in the village shrine. The dolls were miniscule, beautiful and skillfully carved to look almost life like in miniature form. If you walked past the shrine at sunset, you could almost feel the eyes of the hundreds of tiny dolls following you as you went past.*

*Now the sensitive petal people were a good people, it was just that the Amazon had disturbed their way of life. So when she finally died of the poison in her veins they had a grand funeral and declared a period of state mourning for her, and the village council met to decide how best to preserve her memory.*

*As a tribute to her amazing strength and size, they decided to build a huge effigy in her honor. So they put together a monstrous figure with huge, crude features and large bulging eyes and installed this next to the doll shrine of their own people.*

*As the village folk became used to this huge, horrendous figure they took to reacting to it in small, ugly ways. First the children started throwing stones at it, and soon the youth were slashing at it with razors and finally it became a public event to burn the effigy, but they never burned it to the ground, and someone always made sure to rebuild it, because it was too much fun to do away with entirely.*

*The whole village soon began to love to hate the effigy and their delicate emotions started to become strong and the arms with which they threw the rocks and slashed with the blades became powerful and muscular.*

*Now in the secret place where the sun and the earth kissed goodbye each evening, the spirits of the ancestors and of those yet to be born in the petal village had a conference. There were mixed emotions, as tears of sadness and joy mingled with one another, and even the wisest and oldest of them all could not tell the difference. For in this council, many moons ago, it had been decided to send the Amazon to the village. The ancestors feared for the survival of their delicate people, and those yet unborn were unsure that there would continue to be a community to receive them.*

*Together it was decided to send the brave, huge Amazon in order to help their people. For the spirits knew that the pulse that beat with love was the same pulse that beat with hate, and generosity and stinginess were two sides of the very same coin. The weak, frail and delicate could only see themselves for who they really were when compared to the strong, tenacious and tough. The light of day and the dark of night were complimentary to one another only because of the contrast.*

*The effigy in the land of the frail had made the delicate strong and taught them to love more deeply. In their hate for the Amazon the petal people became sturdy and*

*eventually grew some thorns to protect themselves and came closer together as a people and a community. In their love for the Amazon some of them became brave and adventurous, grew wings and drifted off with the winds to distant lands and new horizons.*

In The Effigy, the flower people both love and admire the amazon, but also hate her. As they identify with the love they feel it is the *primary process* and hate which is expressed through secret poison darts in the middle of the night, is the *secondary process*. The edge is to acknowledge their own inadequacies and weaknesses.

## PERSONAL LEARNINGS AND ROLES

I began to see myself occupying various roles through the medium of story telling.

### *AUTHOR*

I came to write these stories at a very low point in my life.

Even though I was doing what I wanted to do, I was deeply feeling the pangs of deprivation and wondering if the price I was paying to follow my dreams was too high or heavy.

All my stories were not about other people. I was writing my own story, unfolding every day, some times in sad and painful ways.

And I had no one but myself to council, blame, feel pity for, console and sooth. As one who had chosen to live life by my own rules, shunning the advice of friends, family and ancestors and challenging the very roots of my ancient culture, I was quite alone.

Being at the bottom is a great source of inspiration, and necessity is truly the mother of invention. From this low place I pulled myself together, and converted my hurt, pain and feeling of aloneness into stories.

Writing fairy tales gave me great freedom to detach from personalities, from any known time frame and make my feelings universal and timeless. My process work training helped me to take all sides and so I moved out of villainizing, finger pointing and blaming and took a metaposition to understand why people did the things they did and

behaved in the way that they did, and to acknowledge the hand of fate, the Tao, in the flow and direction of our lives. It also gave me great freedom to talk about feelings, and I could go inside the hearts of men and women and squeeze out their emotions in a fairly detached way.

I often cried as I wrote my stories, and would cry yet again every time I read them. I knew the stories were good, if only for their ability to make me weep again and again.

Writing fairy tales became for me a great way to integrate my personality, my emotions and my pain, and make something meaningful of the whole soggy mess that my life would sometimes become. As I kept writing, I started realizing how much my perspective had expanded and how inclusive I had become, and I realized my process work training was indeed altering the very fabric of my life, and the threads I picked up to weave into a story were new and magical and came in rainbow colors.

At various points, in my insecurity of being a first time author, I wanted feedback, and would read out my stories to some poor unsuspecting friend who happened to be around. Quite early on I noticed a dazed look that people seemed to develop around my reading. I realized that I had some influence on their thought processes, and from this point the idea of a reading began to take shape. I had the dream of having a community evening where we could all lounge around with some food and wine, listening to fairy tales.

*THE FACILITATOR / Organizer / Planner.*

In order to put together this evening of fairy tales, the facilitator in me took over. Given my considerable experience in organizing social events and research seminars from a pre-process work lifetime, I could do this fairly easily.

The venue was most important and had to be booked months in advance. The Big Room at PWI was ideal. I chose a date as close to term classes as possible, as I knew many teachers and students came from around the world to attend class, and I would like as many of them to be there. I also realized that many of them would not attend. The study and practice of Process Work is a deeply emotional experience that can be very exhausting and 'time out' is one of the best ways to take care of one's self.

I made it a point to invite everyone I had met in my four years in Portland, who I thought might be even remotely interested. Most of these fine folk had no relationship or specific interest in psychology or process work. Even as I made my invitation to them personal I left them free to refuse without causing offense.

My love for and experience with community and collecting people together helped me plan the event.

This was an evening event; I chose to start at 7 pm, after dinner. This would ensure hunger pangs would not make people fidget. When people meet and for the first few minutes they may not know what to say to one, some desserts and wine would give folks something to do as they milled about the room, deciding how and where they wanted to settle down. My choice of dessert was the classic chocolate cake, made by me from scratch and Sheera, an Indian sweet dish, flavored with cardamom and saffron,

made on auspicious occasions. Of course everyone knows chocolate cake, but to my surprise, people from Australia, Switzerland and Greece said they too had some thing sheera-like in their countries! Fruit, fruit juice and wine were also available.

### *THE NARRATOR*

I often read the stories aloud to myself to hear how they sounded, if the words were flowing easily and seamlessly, and on each reading I would find myself in tears. So as the day grew closer to narrate the stories I was worried about bursting into sobs half way through a sentence. A part of me loved that I could so easily dissolve into tears, as my stories were so evocative, but another part of me found this unacceptable, and I wanted above all, not to cry whilst I read aloud to a group of people. I had no clear plan or remedy for maintaining my own dry eyes, but I did meditate on my own need to cry. So a few days before the reading I gave myself a reading time, just for myself, so I could read and cry as much as I wished without holding back or reprimanding myself. I supported the need in myself to cry and went deeper into it.

The essence of that need was to feel connected to every one who had similar stories, in some way or the other, and allow all feelings to come through freely, with out inhibitions.

In order to do this I would have to be a narrator and nothing else, simply to be the instrument that put forth the story.

And a narrator I was. I was dry-eyed through out. Only when some very personal and least expected questions came up about my mother, did my voice wobble a bit.

As the narrator, I very quickly felt the trance the story was creating. The room was absolutely quiet and still. People did walk in late and move around but the spell was not broken. A friend who walked in late, later told me I had winked at her when she stepped into the room, I kept on reading. Somebody dimmed the lights. I could feel my voice drop and a rhythm set in. I felt completely relaxed. I do think I could have gone on and on, all night.

Having no clear plan on which story to read, I had decided to follow feedback. I started with a long and personal story about my mother. After that I moved on to shorter and less obviously personal stories.

People sat back and listened. As I was following feedback, I decided to keep reading. There were long pauses after each story and then the room would burst into applause!

Later on, when I looked back to the experience of narrating, I was surprised how detached I was from the author. The story somehow became an independent entity, and my only job was to carry it to the audience. No longer did I own it, nor was even responsible for it. My job was to deliver, and somehow it became a painless, freeflowing exercise.

### *THE LISTENER*

As this exercise was part of my diploma thesis for PW, I had taken care to record it. The following day I wanted to check if the audio recording had worked out. So I ran the tape and sat back to listen. I was surprised by my reactions. I too fell into a sort of trance as my own voice unfolded the stories. I had intended to listen to myself critically,

but found myself so absorbed by the stories that I was laughing and crying as they unfolded. The stories truly did have a life of their own, they just needed a voice. I had provided that, and now they will live on independently of me.

## CONCLUSION

As I come to the end of this project, I notice a reluctance to finish and finalize the document. Having no pressure of an external immediate deadline to finish, I am prone to put it on the backburner and let it stew. And whilst it cooks thus, it fades away from my consciousness and I am focused on other things. But, lest I forget entirely, unexpectedly in day and night dreams the mists suddenly rise and I see my project in a new light and with new insights.

The first and last sentences of this essay are my final comments. Hope you enjoyed the read.

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