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The paper is an extract from the main thesis 2016 - 'Intertextual, Literary & Intercultural influence in the Urdu poetry of Perveen Shakir [A Pakistani Muslim female poet] (1954-1994)'. Perveen Shakir a 20th century Pakistani poet was born in 1952 in Karachi, Pakistan. She has four collections to her credit: *Khushboo* (Fragrance) (1977), *Sadburg* (Marigold) (1980), *Khud-Kalami* (Talking to Oneself) (1985), and *Inkaar* (Deniel/Refusal) (1990). She died in a Road accident in 1994, when she was 42.

Key Words:

Culture. Dialogue. Intertextuality. Transculturation. Hybridity.

Abstract

Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* states, dialogic work carries on a continual dialogue with other works of literature and other authors, even all language and all thought appeared dialogic to Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1981). In this paper, the short poem, 'Wasteland' (1977) selected from her first collection *Khushboo* (Fragrance 1977), has been chosen for primary analysis. The poem written by Shakir in the twentieth century, under the influence of T.S.Eliot's poem 'The Waste Land' (1971) also written in the twentieth century, gives Shakir a chance to have a dialogue with her own culture on the one hand, and with the English culture on the other. She revisits the same theme of sterility and futility, but she talks with reference to her context, as a suppressed woman, living in a hostile patriarchal Muslim society; a woman without love; without sexual fulfilment; her body is sterile and as such her existence futile. The paper is an effort to translate to English audiences how Shakir, in her role as a teenage lover, borrows a voice, such as T.S.Eliot's and argue that while Eliot's poem meant to reflect sexuality in the Modern scenario as a depleted force (Gibson 1988), and while the worldly claims clash with his religious aspect; Shakir on the contrary finds sexuality as a driving force and wrote the poem because the religious and cultural claims clashed with her natural desire as sex; a desire of a young girl inside her. The paper will look at the intertextuality used by Shakir to examine how it connects the 'Other' east with the west and bridges the invisible divide of cultures, framing, what Mary Louis Pratt terms as transculturation (1999). The paper will also underline how the dialogic engagement deconstructs the dominance of the European culture when Shakir incorporates English themes into her eastern Pakistani culture and thus

contaminates the supremacy of the west. The concept of hybridity, as framed by Bhabha, will also be applied as Shakir merges the western thought into eastern thought in the poem ‘Wasteland’.

The poem 'Wasteland' (1977), Shakir claims, ‘is written under the influence of T.S. Eliot’s poem ‘The Waste Land’ (1922).

Wasteland

(Inspired by Eliot’s famous poem of the same title)

The pleasant days of the cold season
are sad without you.
The air is rife with sadness.
The breeze is humming a melancholy tune.
The flowers’ lips are thirsty.
It seems
That the eyes of the wind have become dry
After crying a lot.
Both hands of the morning breeze
Are empty;
There is no trace of you in the city.
It is so difficult even to breathe.
Sadness, sadness everywhere.
Without you, all green shady trees
Have torn their robes to bits.
All trees are without robes.
Dry poles, dry leaves
Are wandering from street to street
In search of you.
Sadness, sadness everywhere.
Pink moonlight peeps into my windows every day.
But its eyes are devoid of the shine
That used to brighten the brow of the earth
When you were here.
The earth is like me:
Without you, its womb
Will never give birth
To another rose.
The earth has become infertile,
Just like the womb of spring-giving soul.
The oyster of my thought
Will no longer breed the pearl of my art,
Because I am all thirst,
And the cloud of union is nowhere in sight.
Between you and I lie
Lands of five oceans
(Even pots of raw clay are beyond my reach)
I can write poetry
Only if given growth to the body of my thought.
Without you I am just a wasteland.
(tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khushboo* 1977, p. 87).

The poem underlines the theme of desperation for physical love, as is revealed in the language through imagery, metaphor, simile and hyperbole. Talking about the anti-feminist (because of sexist themes) standpoint of *ghazal* (love poetry), Arifa Farid states that in *ghazal* poetry there is always extraordinary language describing the lover’s longing for the beloved, his lamentation at her unfaithfulness and betrayal, and her refusal to acknowledge even the existence of the lover, portrayed through powerful metaphors, similes and hyperbole (1994, p. 53). The poem is analysed in this frame alongside Cixous’s theory of the feminine language, a strategy to subvert patriarchal dominance. Shakir ‘select[s]’ and ‘absorb[s]’ the idea of the wasteland and re-writes with her ‘own’ political slant to criticise cultural and religious suppression (Pratt 1992, p. 6). Language for Cixous presents a major obstacle to her as a feminist because she perceives it as the root cause of patriarchal dominance. Cixous urges women to locate their identity using their feminine *jouissance,* (enjoyment, sexual pleasure) a strategy opposed to the philosophical method of inquiry appropriated by de Beauvoir (Cixous 1981,

1996; Kristeva 1980, 1986). Talking about women's writing, Cixous says a woman must write herself: writing about herself as a woman and bringing women to writing, from which she has been driven away so violently, as from her body (1981). Cixous states that when a woman writes herself, she 'must' make sure that her body is heard in her 'text' (1996, p. 79; Kristeva 1980, 1986), because, she argues, 'female desire, what women want, is so repressed or so misinterpreted in a phallocentric [male-dominated] society, its expression becomes a key location for deconstructing that control' (Cixous 1981, p. 246; Eagleton 1986, p. 205). Shakir has written about herself as a female, bringing her 'most intimate feminine touch' and 'experience' (Naim 1995, p. 7) very openly, and there may be very few (Baksh) in her culture who can write so boldly (Naim) about such a prohibited topic as female sexuality (Baksh 2007; Naim 1993).

The poem is direct in the usage of 'I' and 'you' pronouns: she and her beloved, re-emphasising both confessional and subjective elements which is the hallmark of Shakir's poetry. It begins with an image of sadness reflected through words like 'melancholy', 'sad', 'crying'. The image of thirst is shown by the depiction of 'dry lips', and without mincing words the poem directly states that since 'you', the beloved, is not there the world of the lover (Shakir) is empty.

The poem maintains the colour imagery: the 'pink moonlight' peeping through the window, and the rose, both of which emphasise the romantic aspect of Shakir's poetry, but at the same time, moves ahead to sexual implications, indicating, as Iftikhar Arif notes, that Shakir goes 'beyond romance' (1995, p. 201). The sexual thirst of this young speaker is reflected in the words 'flower's thirsty lips', and her difficulty in breathing without her love. This is further enhanced by the depiction of nature personified as one who is naked [trees]; the tearing of robes to bits, the need to quench the thirst and the unavailability of the stimulus symbolised through the green leaves turned dry and fallen. There is a sense of contradiction in the image of spring in autumn. Although her condition symbolically depicts the autumn season it underlines her thirst caused due to the absence of her beloved who is signified by spring: her beloved is 'nowhere' to be seen. The juxtaposition of 'spring' and 'autumn' represents the complexities and the diverging and converging points in her life, but also reveals the natural order where there is spring, followed by summer, then autumn, and then winter. It can also be a reference to Shakir's physical and poetic growth from youth to maturity.

The crazed 'dry leaves' 'wandering from street to street' are a symbolic projection of her desperation for the beloved; a picture of her madness, of unrequited love depicted through nature. Moving from nature she comes to her physical description, her eyes losing shine, shine which reflected when he was around. The narrator is very outspoken and is saying without shame that without physical union there can be no birth from her womb. The image of fertility is very significant in the poem. The female body and nature keep intermingling as both are symbols of productivity. Shakir's productivity is on two levels, one as a poet who produces literature and the other as a woman who produces children. It is important to note here that symbolically she is talking about her poetic creativity as she says, towards the end, that her art will be barren without him. It frames the two-in-one formula of Donne, rephrased by Mernissi in the Muslim context that if the body is 'not' fully 'sexual[ly]' 'contented' there will be no advancement, refinement, no creation or reproduction (Mernissi 2003, p. 498-499).

This desperation for the physical in *ghazal* love themes is seen by Ralph Russell as a prelude to marriage. Of course Russell speaks with reference to Pakistani and Indian Muslim women, where he states 'with me [western] courtship precedes marriage; with you [India and Pakistan], courtship follows marriage' (1969, p. 117). It is either, he states, because it is a romantic love which is generally assumed to be before marriage and it is revealing a state of desperation because of the 'purdah [veil] society' or the beloved is either married or betrothed to another man or woman who can never be his/hers. The desperation of the lover portrayed in the conventional *ghazal* is therefore desperation founded upon all the real life experiences of love in modern poetry (Ibid.). In the poem 'Wasteland', we see Shakir's desperation because of the restrictions of 'purdah society'; keeping in mind Shakir's position as a young unmarried girl there is a sense of desperation, and also the desperation of lost love. She cannot marry the man she loves and she knows he can never be hers. This is signified through the unavailability of the pitcher ('pots of raw clay') later on in the poem and the projection of inclement weather. In that sense, in Russell's words *ghazal* poetry is a 'licensed form of protest' against the world in which the poet and reader alike are confined (Ibid., p. 120). Shakir's radical love themes therefore touched the hearts of all her young male and female readers as they shared her protest against cultural oppression. *Khushboo* is something 'new' (Naim), a 'changed perception' of woman (Naim 1995, p. 11; Mohsin 1995, p. 172; Malik 27 Dec 2015, p. 7) in Urdu literature and was in Shakir's own words greatly loved by all, especially 'my' younger readers, she said, who identified with her. 'Either they find themselves like that girl in *Khushboo* or they want to be like her' Shakir stated (Shakir quoted in Salim 1994, p. 87). She intentionally chose this age *larki* (girl) because she knew there was a need among the new generation to receive her poetry, as no other female poet had written about female desire from such a personal perspective. It was her ground breaking collection, attracting large audiences (Farrukhi 2004), winning many awards (Agha 1995), and going for second prints within six months, 'a rare honour' for any book in Urdu literature (Naim 1993, p. 182) which gave her status as one of the poets of the post Faiz era (Hameed 1995; Naim 1993, p. 185). To speak of sexual

pleasure from a personal confessional feminine perspective was not only new but totally absent in the older generation of poets (Baksh 1996, 2007; Mohsin 1995; Naim 1993, 1995) though she was ruthlessly and bitterly criticised by her 'senior poets (male and female), predatory critics and intellectuals' for openly exposing female sexuality (Naim 1995, p. 12-13). Such poetry, Russell says, disrupts the social order and brings drastic penalties (1969). Shakir received her penalty as she was criticised for being openly sexual in her *ghazal* poetry in *Khushboo* and compelled to change her poetic style.

Female sexuality in the poem is further emphasised through the image of tilling the land. The image reflects both the sexual act and growth as a result of tilling the land. The image of fertility and tilling in the poem is also in keeping with the nationalistic struggles which sanctify the conventional engendered image of motherhood suggested through the symbols of birth, land, creativity; 'women as custodians of cultural values' (Moghadam 1994, p. 9; Boehmer 1991; 2005). Her desire for the physical positions her in a typically assigned nationalistic role, where she fits into that ideal construct (Irigaray 1992; Rich 1986). Tilling, however, is meant to reflect the outspoken radical confession of this young poet in love, who admits that her body needs tilling, both physically and spiritually, in order to be a balanced person. The womb, a place of creativity, is linked with tilling, and is biologically the place where a child is before it is born. The fertility of the womb is metaphorically used for the fertility of the soul, and also used literally for the quenching of her sexual thirst. This mixing, in Rich's terms, traps her in the traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* image, while the outspoken unconventional feminist ideas liberate her as well (Rich 1986, p. 57).

The use of the metaphor of 'oyster' and 'pearl' is significant. Thought is personified as a thinking and feeling person, one who can breed and create; in that sense, a female. This is what Shakir is doing as a female poet; in her female voice she is talking about her female needs and desires. Linked with that is the metaphor of 'oyster' and 'pearl'. A 'pearl', being an object of beauty, is a precious gem, and remains hidden as long as it is inside the oyster (Yaqin 2001, p. 174). This metaphorically projects the object status of woman in her cultural male-dominated construct as long as she is used only as an object of beauty and sexual pleasure, silent and confined to this role only (Ibid.). However, another reading underlines the radical feminist voice re-emphasising that she can only create or write as a result of a sexual relationship.

It is important to note here that Shakir's contemporary Kishwar Naheed also uses the metaphor of 'a pearl-oyster with sealed lips', in her poem *Kishwar Naheed* (Bakht et al 1991, p. 30). The traditional woman in the poem is a 'woman of the past', whereas the 'woman of today' has the power of speech which can 'move the feet of the mountains' (Yaqin 2006, p. 59). Another poem by Naheed is '*Ghas to mujh jaisi hai*' (The Grass is Like Me) (tr. Bakht et al 1991, p. 34). The poem has tradition and modernity mixed. However, the traditional is used to tell her rulers that she is not traditional anymore. Naheed metaphorically talks of herself as grass which is moist and comforting, but the more it is cut the more it will grow: symbolising that the more she is controlled the more she will fight back. Towards the end of the poem she is transformed from the ordinary metaphor of grass as a woman who is a symbol of sexual pleasure to an extraordinary resilient woman overtly projecting her clear feminist sensibility (Yaqin 2001; 2006, p. 61-62).

C.M. Naim states that, 'admission without shame', of the desire for sexual relationships and the emphasis on this in Shakir's love poetry of *Khushboo*, makes her contemporary feminist poets '[un]sympathetic' towards Shakir (Naim 1995, p. 14). Shakir has been ruthlessly targeted by both feminist and male critics for bringing themes of open sexuality into her love poetry of *Khushboo,* not that the feminists find that the open sexuality disrupts the image of pure and submissive Muslim woman, but because sexist values make her un-feminist; male critics, on the contrary, feel inhibited by her openly sexual poems as they think it taints the Islamic image of woman as pure and modest and also disturbs the male order of power. Amina Yaqin in her comment on the poem 'Wasteland' says that Shakir has used a 'new way of writing' having been influenced by western poets (Yaqin 2001, p. 113). Elsewhere Yaqin states that Shakir is a representative of a 'new' generation of female poets who have brought a modern approach to classical love poetry with 'ease' (Yaqin 2001, p. 65).

What irritates her contemporary feminist poets is that Shakir is always seen in relation to man; this, however, is critical and an important point for Shakir's poetry: the beloved is always unfaithful, and cruel, and Shakir, the poet-lover, is always subject to that cruelty, but still keeps sacrificing everything for him. This, of course, is a classic theme of *ghazal* which Shakir brings in her modern poetry; one of the reasons is to satirise the nature of men. Rubina Shabnam states that Shakir looks at man (beloved/husband) as cruel, unfaithful, hypocritical and disloyal, and her work should also be seen in this context (Shabnam 2004; 2005, p. 47; 2006). The poem slowly moves towards the unfaithfulness and the hypocrisy of the beloved in particular and society in general. Words like 'search [ed]', 'everywhere', but 'no traces', 'nowhere in sight' as if 'beyond my [her] reach' are significant. They suggest her desperation as well as the absence of her lover. Keeping in mind that Shakir had already experienced love, which did not lead to marriage, that love, that she had once cherished, was always a source of inspiration of the love poetry in *Khushboo* (Agha 1995).

The one common symbol taken from folklore is the *Kachcha gharah* (a '*gharah*' or a 'pot[s] of raw clay' is a pitcher; '*kachcha'* means made of unbaked earth, raw clay – signifying brittle; not permanent). This allusion helps in two ways: it reveals the innocence and the quality of the girl who is sacrificing everything for

love. According to folklore the beloved was drowned as the pitcher dissolved.[1] In her poem 'Wasteland', Shakir speaks of her feelings of sacrificing her life to see her beloved swimming across on the '*kachcha gharah*'. 'But even pots – '*Kachcha gharah*' are beyond [her] reach now' she says in the poem. This phrase 'even [that]' as the last hope is significant; it encompasses the entire list of things which indicate that every direction is closed for her to meet him: nature is cold, empty, dry and windy, spreading leaves everywhere, earth infertile; there is not one but 'five oceans' to cross to meet her beloved, but the means, the pitcher, is not available. She might have accepted a raw pitcher knowing a lover's sacrificing nature and desperate need, but even that is not available. Shakir intentionally uses 'five' as hyperbole to exaggerate and give intensity to her agony and show the impossibility of meeting the beloved. What I am establishing is, that on the one hand, we have Shakir's emerging feminist sensibility, but, on the other, the cultural and social controls and restrictions and difficulties she has to face as a young unconventional girl. Her last hope was to swim across on the pitcher and that too is not in her possession. Thus, the unavailability of the pitcher emphasises the hypocrisy and control of her society.

Re-writing T.S. Eliot, then, is not meant to acknowledge Eliot's theme: the modern world is a wasteland due to depleted sex, but re-writing western canonical poets from her eastern perspective as a suppressed Muslim girl, to emphasise the importance of sex and that all roads in her search for her identity in love are controlled by patriarchy. Theoretically it frames, what Mary Louise Pratt, in 'Arts of the Contact Zone' (1999) states, that borrowing 'does not simply mean to imitate or reproduce it, but select and adapt it along [your] lines, to express [your] interests and aspirations (Pratt, 1999, p. 9). Pratt further says, 'ethnographers have used the term transculturation to describe such processes whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant culture' (Pratt, 1992, p.6). Transculturation, she says, is a term to describe the phenomenon of merging and converging cultures (Pratt, 1999). Like ethnography, it is a phenomenon of the contact zone, she adds. A contact zone, Pratt states, is a term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in the context of highly asymmetrical relations of power such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today (Pratt 1999, p. 2). By marginal groups, Pratt means those who were once under colonial rule and now have lost this connection due to historical or geographical reasons (Pratt, 1992, p.6). Shakir, representing the postcolonial age, is representative of the marginal group, and as such, has benefited from the material transmitted from the west. Shakir has worked in a similar fashion, as theorized by Pratt: she borrows ideas from the west, such as the need of the union of body and soul as reflected in her poem 'Wasteland', and then re-writes and presents them in her cultural setting, in her own context as a Muslim woman in the twentieth century, living in a conservative male dominated Muslim society. Moreover, dialogism has helped Shakir to deconstruct the binaries of the colonial discourses, which formulated the idea from Edward Said's 'Orientalism' (1978) and 'Culture and Imperialism' (1993). Boehmer's interpretation of this idea of Orientalism and Imperialism is: 'to assume control over a territory or a nation was not only to exert political or economic power; it was also to have imaginative command' (Boehmer 2005, p.5). This is a development of Western thought which sees the world in terms of binary oppositions that establish a relation of dominance (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994). This transcultural merging of western thought into Eastern thought, through the poem which Bhabha terms 'hybridity', subverts the narratives of Colonial power and dominant cultures (Bhabha, 1994). The post-colonial theories of hybridity and transculturation break the certainties of colonial and imperial logic of dominance (Bhabha, 1994). Since the paper is structured around two diverse cultures, east and west, therefore, Bhabha's theory of 'hybridity', which results from borrowing ideas and themes from the west and merging them into one's own culture, signifies and stresses the interdependence, and the mutual construction of the colonized and colonizer, and helps to understand the logic of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha contends that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls the 'Third Space of Enunciation' (1994, p.37). Cultural identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space, which for Bhabha makes the claim to a hierarchical purity of cultures untenable (Bhabha: 1994). For Bhabha 'the recognition of this ambivalent space of cultural identity may help us to overcome the exoticism of cultural diversity in favour of the recognition of an empowering hybridity within which cultural differences may operate' (Bhabha, 1994, p.38). Hybridity can thus be seen, in Bhabha's interpretation, 'as a counter- narrative, a critique of the canon and its exclusion of other narratives' (Bhabha, 1994). It is ironic that on the one hand Shakir's 'dependence on the dominant culture to invent and create', sounds like what Bhabha describes as, 'the migration of yesterday's savage from their peripheral spaces to the homes of their masters'; but on the other hand it 'deconstructs the dominance of the dominant culture', and suggests 'that the colonialist discourse's ambivalence is a conspicuous illustration of its uncertainty' (Bhabha, 1994: Mimicry, Mimicry, Ambivalence and Hybridity: http://www.english.edu/Bahri/1WEBPAGE.HTML. (Accessed 1/12/08).

[1] For further reading see *Pain and Grace: A Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth-Century Muslim India* by Annemarie Schimmel. Lahore: Sang-e meel publications, 2003.

This brief commentary on Eliot's *The Waste Land* is to show what Shakir has taken from this poem. It is significant to note that while Eliot finds sexuality in the modern (Emig 1995) scenario as a depleted (Gibson 1988) force, Shakir on the contrary, finds sexuality to be a driving force (Shakir, Foreword *Khushboo* 1977) in her poem 'Wasteland'. Moreover, Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* was meant to reflect how worldly claims clash with his religious aspect (Gibson 1988), whereas Shakir wrote the poem 'Wasteland', because the religious and cultural claims clashed with her natural desire for sex; the desire of a young 'girl inside her' (tr. Bakht, Foreword *Khushboo* 1977, p. 1).

Eliot's poem 'The Waste Land' seems fragmented, contradictory and confused, signifying discord in the modern world (Emig 1995, p. 73-87). Eliot talks of death and decay and the futility of life with reference to the 'hypocrit[ical]' 'crowd' over the '[u]nreal City' of 'London Bridge' (line 60-76); while Shakir's reference to the non-permanent aspect of the pot brings in the hypocrisy of her society, which stands in contrast to the innocence of a girl in love, where all the roads of rebellion lead to death, signified by the pot which dissolved and drowned the beloved, according to folklore. We also have in Eliot's poem 'fire' and 'water' which are both symbols of destruction and life. Shakir too, has, in her poem, both brightness (fire) and water (oceans). Eliot typically examines the prevailing sterility and the nature of the wasteland within individual modern lives and shows how these lives are barely lived at all (Kearns 1987). It is important to point out that, for Eliot, sexuality distracts modern man from spirituality, and is an important cause of dismay (Kearns 1987; Gibson 1988, p. 107-108).

This is reflected in the very first lines of 'The Burial of the Dead'; we see the futility of any 'stirring' of 'dull roots', of 'breeding', 'of the continual returns of spring and its vital renewals' (lines 1-4) (Gibson 1988, p. 111). In 'A Game of Chess', Eliot tells his readers that people still 'pursue(s)' their sexual pleasures, even though they are disillusioned (lines 1-102) (Ibid.). It is in the third part, 'The Fire Sermon', through the classical figure Tiresias, that Eliot universalises sexual disillusionment. He brings in the image of 'empty, futile sex, at the very heart of *The Waste Land*'. The fourth section, though very brief, then tells the reader not to bank on worldly things (lines 312-321). The last part, 'What the Thunder Said', is a reflection of Eliot's final exploration of the spiritual aspects of life (lines 322-430; Kearns 1987). There are two conflicting suggestions in *The Waste Land*. On the one hand Eliot suggests that the present world is waste land because sex has become a 'depleted vitality' (Gibson 1988, p. 110) while on the other hand, contradicting it, the poem suggests that the modern world lacks vitality, the sense of 'sexuality' as an elemental force which was evident in the ancient world (Ibid., p. 114). In that sense *The Waste Land* is more about a society or a culture than Eliot's other poems (Ibid.). Especially by contrasting the present with the past through references from history and mythology, literature and culture in *The Waste Land*, Eliot is critical about his own hollowness and the shallowness of modern sexuality, because in the classical sense nature is used as a sign of procreation, but modern man has exploited sexuality. Consequently, in his poem, all the five parts: 'The Burial of the Dead', 'A Game of Chess', 'The Fire Sermon', 'Death by Water' and 'What the Thunder Said' (Eliot 1963), Eliot tries to convince the reader that having sex in any form whether 'violation, cold seduction and callous exploitation are all aspects of 'waste land sexuality' (Gibson 1988, p. 111).

What the paper has established is, that by using this intertextuality Shakir had access to the other world and also formed a relationship, reconnected herself (the Other) with her colonial past (The Self), with which she lost connection, or "converged" due to historical and geographical reasons (Pratt, 1999 ; Bhabha, 1994). As Pakistan was disconnected with its colonial past, when it became an independent state in 1947, and appeared on the world map with a new geographical space and a new history. (Talbot and Singh 1999; Harrison et al, 1999). In that sense the paper helps to blur the boundaries of such terms as the "Other" created by our contemporary nations, societies and cultures.

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