

## THEMATIC CONCERNS IN THE MEDITATIVE ARTWORKS OF PRATIKSHA APURV

**Navesha Dhariwal**

Research Scholar, Department of Fine Arts, Kurukshetra University,

Kurukshetra , Haryana, Email id: [Naveshadhariwal2323@gmail.com](mailto:Naveshadhariwal2323@gmail.com)

**Dr. Monica Gupta**

Assistant Professor, Department of Fine Arts, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana,

Email id: [monica.gupta81@yahoo.com](mailto:monica.gupta81@yahoo.com)

### ABSTRACT

Meditation is an essential part of human life, both mentally and physically. It is associated with art from ancient times as both art and meditation belong to the creative state of the human mind. Artists have never failed to articulate their inner meditative selves through their works. It is evident from the works of Biren de in the 1960s, whose Tantric diagrams were made to aid meditation or visual symbolization. Raza's Bindu series was likewise a consequence of his contemplation on a specific dot on the blackboard. Many contemporary artists are using meditation as a subject matter in their works. This present study explores the thematic concerns in meditative artworks of contemporary artist Pratiksha Apurv and is concerned with how she has emptied her heart into this introspective theme in her artworks. A brief introduction to her early life, education, style & methodology, art career and stimulation behind these artworks will also be discussed.

**Keywords:** Meditation, Gautama Buddha, Sufism, meditative art, Yoga.

Pratiksha Apurv, frequently perceived as Indian spiritual master Osho's niece, is one of India's most recognized and prestigious female artists. Her artworks are based on her uncle Osho's vision. She never followed him blindly but made her artistic creations after encountering the subject herself. She is perhaps the principal Indian artist to paint and deliver the vision of Osho. She had the qualities and blood of Osho and was favored with the spiritual grace reflected through her artistic creations. She portrays meditation as a subject in her canvases as she was acquainted with yogic meditation quite early in life. She has integrated her spiritual experiences while meditating before she begins to paint. Even though she began painting at 40, she successfully conveyed these significant subjects in such a short span of time.

### Early life and Education

Pratiksha Apurv was brought into the world to Osho's sibling Swami Vijay Bharti and his significant other Shashi Bharti in Gadwarwara, a small town of Madhya Pradesh, on 26th February 1964. At the point when she was born, Osho served the country with his spiritual discourses and meditation procedures. Albeit naturally introduced to a Jain family,

she never followed the Jain religion. She neither followed the Jain religion of her family nor did she follow the Brahmin religion after her marriage.

She spent her childhood in the environment of meditation and was presented with Osho's teachings from a very young age. Her young life had never been similar to a normal kid and had an entirely unexpected youth. It was Osho who sowed the seed of art in her. At the age of 11, she took *sanyas* and was the first youngster to have done this in her family. Osho perceived her ability in drawing and painting, about which she knew nothing. He gifted her 100 sketch pens and inspired her to draw. Osho has likewise perceived her interest and capacity to design at an exceptionally young age and requested her to design *malas* for youngsters in the *ashram*. Aside from painting, Osho also taught her how to compose letters to her mother. Presently she is also referred to as one of the most excellent spiritual writers in India. Being a self-taught artist, she considered Osho her teacher, saying, "Rather, I would say it is Osho who is my art teacher" (P.Apurv, personal interview, November 24, 2019)

Pratiksha's schooling was from Pune. She got no conventional training in the field of painting. Osho International Commune was an extraordinary school from all viewpoints as individuals from specific fields like doctors, engineers, teachers, and dignitaries came there after leaving their jobs in search of *dhyana*. She did her graduation in subjects like Economics and Political Science. Her meditative exposure in the ashram made her feel that *dhyana* is one of the most important things and is above all materialistic things in this world. Her constant companionship with Osho taught her to work in totality and alertness; she believed that everyone should do their work with total awareness, whether painting, writing, singing, or even our daily work.

### Art Career

In 2003, after completing her outer journey as a fashion designer and realizing the importance of the inner journey, she felt an urge to give visual shape to Osho's words. Whatever Osho has spoken in words, she is trying to paint it on her canvas. She depicts her inner personal meditative experience through a harmonious and soothing colour combination. Her paintings are full of rhythm. She had the first solo exhibition of her first painting series in 2007 with the title 'Spiritual Odyssey.' Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee inaugurated it. He was filled with spirituality and meditation by looking at her paintings. Her Second series of 'Spiritual Odyssey' was exhibited at NCPA Mumbai and was inaugurated by Nita Ambani. She has also created her painting series titled 'Reflections,' which Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated. Her collection of the painting titled 'Divine Art' was selected and exhibited at the 'soul of Asia' 44th International Film Festival of India in Goa in 2013. In one of her painting series, 'Mystical Moments,' she painted about whatever she experienced during meditation and how she found inner bliss. It was held at Rashtrapati Bhawan Museum in 2016, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated it. (Apurv, Pratiksha Apurv: Spiritual Odyssey, 2021)

### Painting style and Methodology

Her exclusive style has an assortment of contemporary and meditative art that has turned out to be her exceptional style. Her thorough selection of the subject matter and conveying Osho's subjects soaked in colours of spiritual depth using refined technique has made her paintings known as a meditative art. She said, "You can call my art meditative or

objective art. I cannot give them any name because my every painting is different, and every painting is a different experiment which cannot be called the style." (*P.Apurv, personal interview, November 24, 2019*) Her colours are never pre-decided. She always has a final look at the painting and the background of the theme in her mind. For textures, she uses the backside of her brush, paper, cloth, and even scratching with her nails. Almost all the colours can be seen in her paintings and usually starts with a bright colour. Her preferred medium is always oil, and she works in layers. When the first layer is completely dried, she moves to paint the next layer.

### **Experienced based art**

Before painting, she experiments it first on herself. In one of her paintings, 'Beyond Senses,' she explained the five outer senses and how we can connect to '*Ajan Chakra*' after shutting down these senses. She did this experiment on herself. She sat in the corner of her house and closed her eyes, ears, and mouth. She felt that shutting the other senses was easy but challenging to close her nose. According to Osho, the breath should not be held by shutting it with a clip but instead held only with fingers. She was not able to experiment and was unable to complete the painting for about six months. She was determined that she would not complete the painting until her experiment was complete. She was waiting for the day she could connect with the '*Ajan Chakra*' and could complete the painting. Another example is her painting 'Ek Onkar Satnam'; she only decided to paint until she heard the '*Naad*' herself.

### **Pratiksha's views on meditation**

Pratiksha believes that a person can live joyfully through meditation, oneness, balance, and harmony. All these things help a person to live life with a different approach. According to her, meditation is a way through which a person can get into the state of no mind and when the consciousness and 'being' works. Through her paintings, Pratiksha Apurv has explained how a person can attain godliness by doing meditation. In her view, there is no God, but godliness is present in the objects of nature. As a child, she was surprised at how the sun rises, how the moon comes, how a flower blooms, and how they give fragrance. All this is godliness which is present in the whole existence.

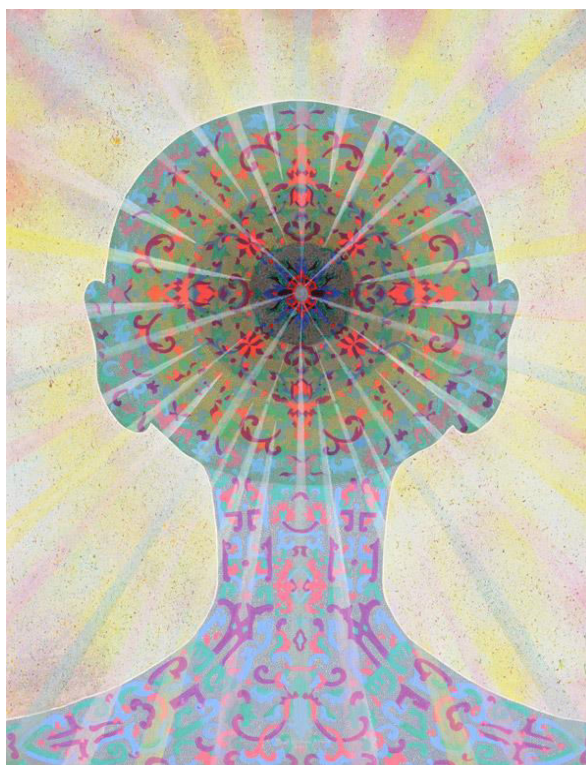
According to her, the total focus of Osho was to guide people on how to lead a blissful life. He talked about two paths, which are *dhyana* and second is *bhakti*. People consider the path of *dhyana* as complex and the path of *bhakti* as more effortless. She believes that feminine energy can go on the path of *bhakti* and masculine energy can go on the path of *dhyana*. Nevertheless, it is not a rule. She considers the path of *dhyana* as much easier than *bhakti* because in it person surrender to someone, but in *dhyana*, a person's total focus is only on himself.

### **Subject matter in her paintings**

Pratiksha's paintings showcase her quest for truth and the journey she has undertaken to know herself. All her works blossoms like a flower, and she desires to light a candle for humanity through her works. She believes that man is unaware of how unconsciously he is living. She focuses on guiding the future generation about how a person should live with a balance of both the outer and inner journey. If a person has only lived outer, he will only get external happiness and not inner blissfulness. However, if he is only living inner and doing meditation without having food to eat, it is also impossible to live a blissful life. A person cannot concentrate on meditation until he is not satisfied with the outer journey. So, According to her, balance is essential in life. She has painted on several subjects in her works. Some of them are; Conscious and unconscious layers, body chakras, marginalized female mystics, Gautama Buddha, Lord Krishna, Yoga, Sufism, Guru Nanak dev and so on.

### Conscious and unconscious layer

She painted 'Beyond Psychology I'[Fig.1] on this subject, exhibited in 2011 by ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) in Delhi. A scientist attended the exhibition and asked how she knew that when a person comes from the conscious to the unconscious layer, these colours are experienced. The artist told him that it was her inner experience. The scientist was surprised who was researching as precisely the same colours were found. Consciousness, in total, has seven layers, three on the upper side and three on the inner side. The first layer is a conscious layer, the second layer is unconscious, the next is collective unconscious, and the fourth is a cosmic unconscious layer. She claims to have experienced these layers and experimented on self-hypnotism. According to her, when a person is in meditation, he can go



**Figure 1.** Beyond Psychology I, Pratiksha Apurv, Oil On Canvas, 40''x 30'', 2011.

<https://www.oshonews.com/2013/07/05/treasure->

on the upper three layers; super conscious, Supra conscious, and cosmic superconscious, which are the fifth, sixth and seventh layers. When a person reaches the seventh layer, he gets enlightened. These are the seven layers of consciousness. (*P.Apurv, personal interview, November 24, 2019*)

### Body Chakras

Pratiksha has painted about body chakras in her paintings 'Transcendence'[Fig.2] and 'the Inner Reality'[Fig.3]. Her painting discussing this subject shows different colours that play an essential role in balancing the energies of our bodies. She has considered the green colour supreme, which helps balance all the body chakras. She has painted the seven chakras with seven different colours obtained from the sun's rays. The first chakra, which is the Base Chakra (*Muladhara Chakra*), is shown in red colour. It depicts sexual energy, passion, success, vigor, and excitement, and all of them are balanced through the red colour. The second chakra, known as Sacral Chakra (*Swadhisthana Chakra*), is shown with orange colour. It involves joy, socializing, optimism, playfulness, and warmth. The third Chakra is Solar Plexus Chakra (*Manipura Chakra*) which is shown in yellow colour and depicts fear, creativity, inferiority complex, optimism, intellect, and confidence. The fourth chakra, the Heart Chakra (*Anahata Chakra*), involves emotional stability, purity, jealousy, envy and isolation, harmony, and trust and is associated with green colour. The fifth chakra is the Throat Chakra (*Vishuddhi Chakra*) which is represented in blue colour and shows expression, communication, reliability, wisdom, justice, depression, and anxiety. The sixth chakra, known as Third Eye Chakra (*Ajna Chakra*), is shown in indigo. This chakra shows intuition, a sense of unity, faithfulness, tension, and fearlessness. The Seventh Chakra, the Crown Chakra (*Sahasrara Chakra*), indicates spirituality, intuition, meditation, wisdom, and mental strength. (*Apurv, The Mystic and Her Colours, 2018, p. 17*)

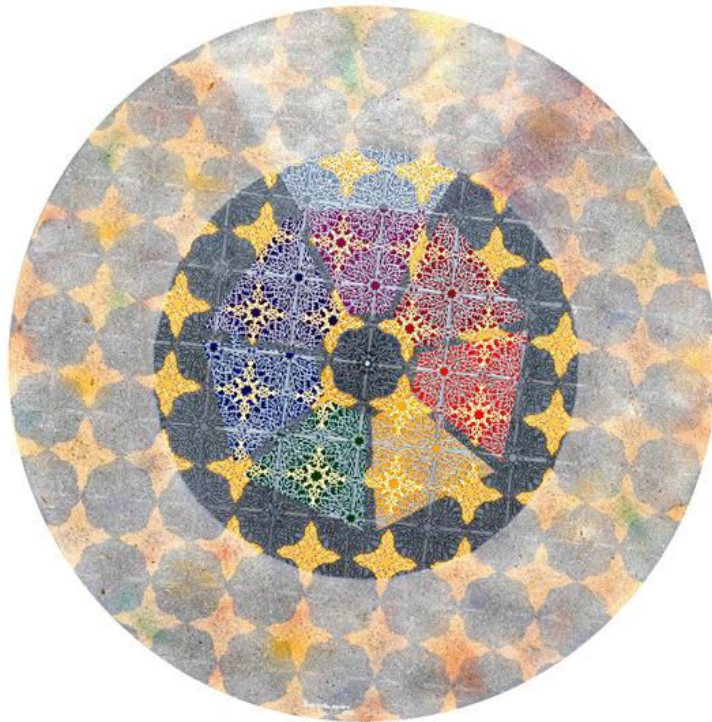


Figure 3. Transcendence, Oil on Canvas, 60” diameter, 2010.

<https://www.oshonews.com/2011/03/20/pratiksha-art/>

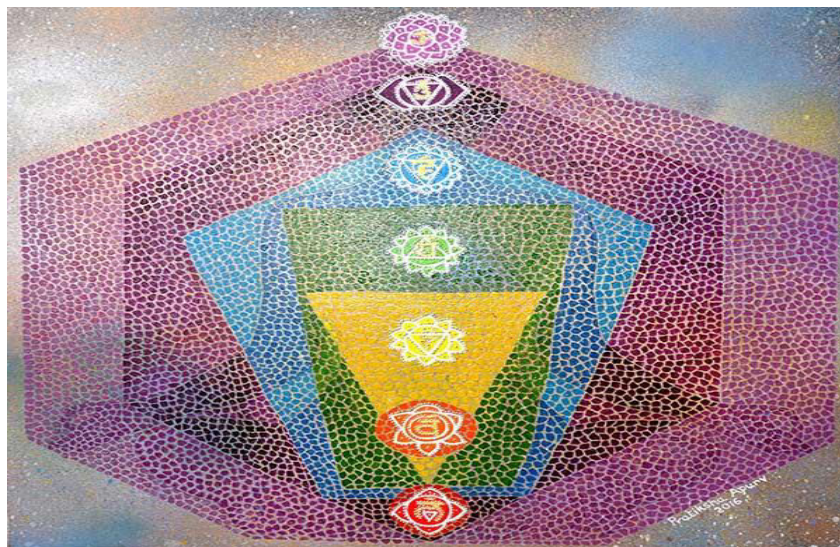


Figure 2. The Inner Reality, Acrylic on Canvas, 18”x18”, 2016.

<https://www.oshonews.com/2018/11/20/mystic-art-pratiksha-apruv/>

### Marginalized female mystics

Pratiksha has also painted about the female mystics who have not received much attention compared to males. She has tried to bring forth the idea that our society is gender-biased. Great masters like the Buddha, Kabir, Guru Nanak, and Mahavir are given more attention. However, the women who have become enlightened are not considered great masters by the society like Meera, Rabiya, Sahjo, Mallibai, and Daya. She painted about great mystic Meera and discussed her love in the painting titled 'Divine Love' [Fig.4]. Meera had never seen Krishna and considered him as her constant companion. The painting shows the image of Lord Krishna depicted in the center of the painting. His clothes are shown with yellow colour. On the lower right corner, at the feet of lord Krishna is painted the image of Meera worshipping and looking towards him. The artist has also painted about her in the painting titled 'Power of Love.'



**Figure 4.** Divine Love, Acrylic on Canvas, 39”x29”, 2008.

From artist’s personal collection.



**Figure 5.** The New Dawn, Oil on Canvas, 60”x48”, 2008

<https://www.oshonews.com/2018/01/12/the-new-dawn/>

### Gautama Buddha

Pratiksha has painted about the teachings of Gautama Buddha in her paintings titled 'The New Dawn.' [Fig.5] The painting shows Buddha at the moment of enlightenment and godliness one witnessed at the time of the new dawn, which has not only the outer significance but also the inner significance. A person can only experience enlightenment if he is receptive. It depends on how one can receive the grace that existence is continuously showering. She also painted Buddha having a thousand hands as it was believed that he showered compassion and sympathy upon the world with his thousand hands. She has also painted Buddha, having eleven heads, in her painting 'The Splendour of Compassion' and Buddha as an observer in her painting titled 'Witnessing'.

### Lord Krishna

In the painting 'Leela: Play of Divine Energy,' [Fig.6] Pratiksha has painted about Krishna's *Rasleela*-the dance of celebration. It is a divine dance in which Lord Krishna is shown dancing with Radha and *Gopis*. All of them are immersed in the mesmerizing sound of his flute. This painting conveys the message of Krishna about the total surrender of a disciple to his master. The artist believes the dance of *Rasleela* is not an ordinary dance but a complete surrender of a devotee who is absorbed in the divinity of this dance. It is symbolic of one's devotion to his master.

### Yoga

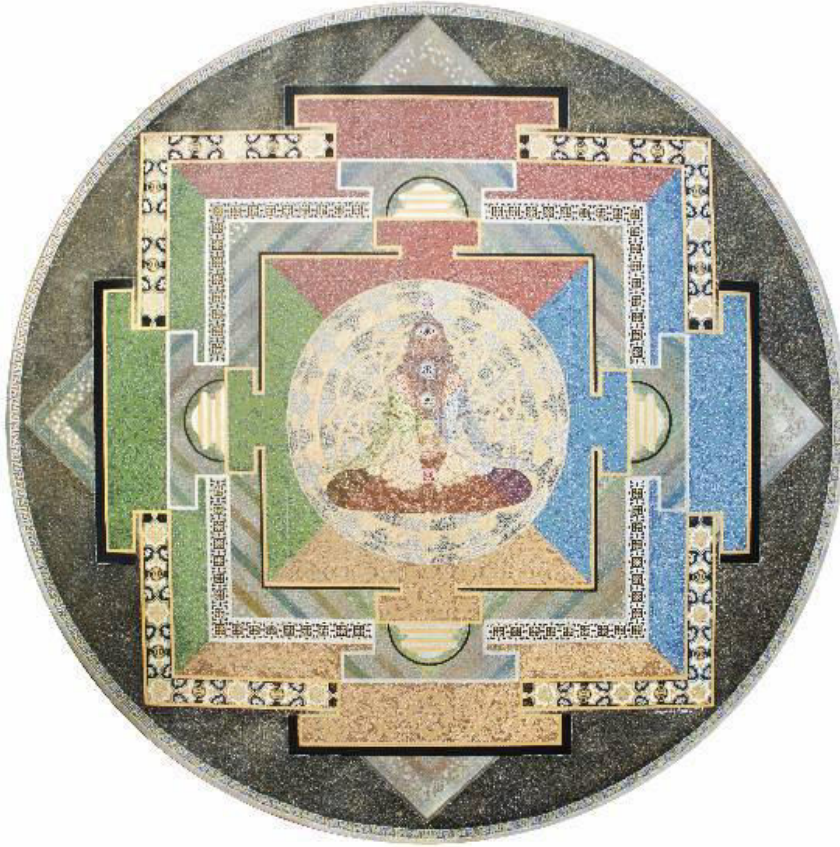
Yoga is also a significant theme in Pratiksha's paintings. Yoga, according to her, is not that is done by everyone in form of exercise. Patanjali, the Father of modern yoga and the man who assimilated the various forms of yoga into a system, was talking about something else. In her painting 'Patanjali- the Great Inner Scientist,' [Fig.7] she painted the five bodies he characterized. It is only when these bodies correspond to the five elements like air, water, fire, sky, and earth then only a person can become a yogi. According to her, when a person eats, his body becomes a food body. After eating, he gets energy, and his body becomes an



Figure 6. Leela: Play of Divine Energy, Oil on Canvas, 36"x72, 2015. <https://www.indiaart.com/Art-Marketplace/painting-details/17050/leela-play-of-divine>



energy body. Then there is the mental body, the intuitive body, and the bliss body.



**Figure 7.** Patanjali-The Great Inner Scientist, Acrylic & Oil on canvas, 60” Diameter, 2017.

<https://www.indiaart.com/Art-Marketplace/painting-details/17056/patanjali-the-great-inner-scientist>

All of these five bodies represent every five elements. The food body represents the earth; the energy body represents fire; the mental body represents water; the intuitive body represents air, and the bliss body represents the sky. When these bodies correspond with these elements, a person will not need any posture for yoga. (Apurv, *The Mystic and Her Colours*, 2018, p. 105)

### Sufism

Sufism means a love affair with God. A Sufi can be Hindu, Christian, Sikh, or Muslim. They only do whirling meditation. Pratiksha practiced whirling first at the *ashram* and then at her home, and made several of her paintings with this subject like 'Whirling' (2007), 'Whirling-1' (2010), 'Inner Joy' (2011), 'Celebration In Silence' (2012) and 'The Whirling Dervish' (2015). One of her paintings showing a girl whirling was also selected by

UN Peace Summit in 2010 for the cover page of the New Age Islam book. In Islam, women are not allowed to whirl. However, the artist has shown a woman doing whirling meditation. She was against the idea of allowing only males to do a certain thing and women not. In her painting 'Whirling' (2007) [Fig.8], she painted a girl who is whirling. The figure is painted in a flat black colour. It is a direct and simple composition. In the background, there is a sort of optical illusion with yellow and orange and black stripes with white dots from the center of the whirling girl. It is perhaps coming from the navel, where her energy is getting centered while doing whirling meditation. She has also painted the dance of Sufis called 'Tanoura.' It is generally performed by men wearing long colourful attire. It is not just a dance but a complete surrender to the divine. The individual usually removes clothes while whirling and dancing in the final clothes left. Their skirt becomes round while whirling. She has painted it in her painting titled 'The Whirling Dervish' (2015) which shows how when the whole energy gets centered, a person can do anything because it is impossible to remove clothes while whirling.

### Guru Nanak Dev

She has also conveyed the message of Baba Nanak, who is considered the founder of



Sikhism. He is also the first of the ten Sikh Gurus. He believed in unity and oneness. He gave

**Figure 8.** Whirling, Acrylic & Oil on Canvas, 33”x33”, 2007.

<https://www.oshonews.com/2011/03/20/pratiksha-art/>

**Figure 9.** Soundless Sound, Acrylic & Oil on Canvas, 60"x42", 2017. From Artist's personal collection.



his message through three words *Ek Onkar Satnam*. It means that God is one; he is Onkar and Supreme truth. Nanak taught people about one God. He believed that God could be found in every creation of the world. Her painting, titled 'Soundless Sound,' [Fig.9] depicts his message. Through her painting, Pratiksha is trying to explain how this cosmos's creator (God) created creations (human beings) and how they are part of the same branch of the body. They are not two distinct bodies. God should never be taken as a different body from his creations. The painting shows a symbol of *Ek Onkar Satnam*. The artist has presented it by painting numerous circles in yellow, blue, and black colour. A tree is also shown, which may refer to the creations of God painted in burnt umber.

Another painting, 'Sound of Inner Being,' is also based on this theme. In this painting, she has painted about the sound created within the inner self. The sound which is created is unhindered. It can only be heard while a person is in deep meditation.

### Conclusion

So, it can be safely concluded that Pratiksha Apurv's meditative artworks encompass themes from diverse aspects of life. Apart from the above-cited subjects, she has also painted on Islam, Upanishads, the five senses, love, sex, Zen Buddhism and so on. Her works

penetrate the very heart of existence, forming a synthesis between both the inner and external worlds. Her works reveal her search for the truth and her effort to understand herself. She is trying her best to bring forth the vision of Osho through her vibrant canvases. She has a wide-ranging knowledge of Indian history, literature, and mythology. Through her works, she tries to guide people in their spiritual journey by making it possible to paint on meditation.

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