



# Herald Hindustan

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# Sushri akal!!

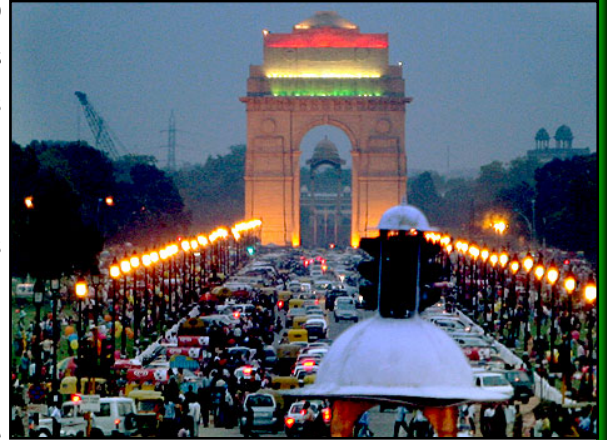
This might read like a sequel to my previous note but I think it was a part of my experience during the trekking that I failed to mention then. It was only when my colleague, Ian Birbeck, mentioned to me about the pesky turned friendly leeches, I realized how much of an impact it has creating post trekking. At first, it was all fear and panic with the very sight of this teeny tiny snake like creatures for the volunteers. Flicking them away constantly robbed the fun away for most of the volunteers. There was a trip to the same forest by another set of volunteers with a group of staff who were better equipped both physically and mentally this time. It was strange to see the staff who screamed previously at the sight of leeches started befriending them and the volunteers followed suit. The staff and volunteers probably understood that they were actually foraging into the leeches' territory and it is better to be friendly with the hosts. To see the Facebook pictures of our trekkers with leeches in their hands, it was great to notice that all that it takes is coping with the situation which makes the experiences more cathartic. Probably, some volunteers who were never bothered by leeches might feel that some great experience was missed, especially when they read the narration of others who enjoyed the pesky turned friendly leeches. After all, it never hurts and sucks a few drops of blood. There is even a prevailing belief that the leeches sucks blood which is impure and leaves you clear blooded and the scientific community is conducting research on this; watch this space. And to Ian and others who had developed a bonding with leeches, I am afraid the immigration is more rigid with you taking them, so you have to come back to meet your teeny tiny friends.

**"Ah, Summer, what power you have to make us suffer and still we like you." - RUSSEL BAKER.**

**JAGADISH KUMAR  
COUNTRY DIRECTOR - INDIA  
PROJECTS ABROAD**

## 65TH INDIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS...

India was a very rich country in the 16th and 17th centuries due to its agricultural minerals and products. Western nations always needed to develop trade in this country and after lots of efforts French, Dutch and British were capable to launch the deal with India. Each of these countries established their trading business in India to conduct their own trades. The most powerful out of them is the East India Company which was established by British in Calcutta. With time passing, the British gained more power and influence and by the end of 19th Century has India mostly under their colony. In 1946, the Labour government in Britain, decided to end British rule of India, and in early 1947 Britain announced its intention of transferring power no later than June 1948.



In the midnight of August 15 1947, India got its freedom from British rule. They became a free country again from that date onwards, after many years of British colonial law. India celebrates her 65<sup>th</sup> year of Independence during the year 2011. Cultural shows and flag raising rituals are the main affair of the moment as brilliant kites occupy the night sky to signify freedom. People pamper themselves in reminiscing the heroes of democracy fight and pay respect to



them. In all the colleges and schools across this country, no school work is made on Independence Day however all the staff members and students would be in their schools to rejoice the day. A type of social meeting is prepared in the learning institutions in which cultural plans are arranged. The flag raising ceremony takes place within their particular premises. Students sing their national anthem as the flag is raised by the head of the school and give respect to their flag and to support the power of the nation. Others at home spend this day by watching special programs on TV or going for an outing.

The Prime Minister's speech in Delhi at the Red Fort is the highlight of the Independence Day celebration in India. The Prime Minister's speech and nationalistic song and documentaries viewing excerpts from the independence struggle are televised on the local channels, whilst the private TV stations have enough programs to ensure their viewers are pleased throughout the day. They broadcast cultural shows and movies related to independence, as well as India nationalist songs which relive the patriotism in individuals. Shops across India are instructed to remain closed on the day, but you can see some small stores and groceries open starting late in the afternoon. All offices stay closed on 15th August. A nice and wonderful place to hang out in the middle of the night as the center of attraction on Independence Day is the India Gate because the formation is beautifully illuminated. The sky is occupied with kites of numerous colors and shapes. Overall, Indian Independence Day is certainly a festival much anticipated by a lot of people in the country of India each and every year.



During the month of August too, Projects Abroad | India organized many events at various projects. And below is the information regarding the events which has been organized. Most of the events will have the follow-up session in the upcoming months. Please don't forget to participate in those events!

- ✦ During the month of August, Care program organized a Workshop on Theatre/Drama for the



Care volunteers and useful tips were given to the volunteers to encourage the children at the placement towards the art of Drama. On the account of Indian Independence day, Projects

Abroad India organized some cultural competitions at the Care placements such as Anbarasi Social Action and Avvai Ashram for the children with the help of the volunteers doing Care project and the prizes been distributed.

- ✦ Model farm volunteers visited and completed the follow-up program in the children's home at Batlagundu. Also volunteers were taken for a visit to the market in the nearby village named Vaadipatti for buying some rare variety seeds and for the canvassing session in that village. Also the volunteers had an one-day workshop on Ayurvedha.



- ✦ Teaching volunteers trained and participated in the Cultural program held at the Schools namely Hayagreeva School and Trinity International School during the 65th Indian Independence day celebrations.



- ✦ Veterinary camp of the month been organized at the villages namely - Thenpazhanji and Vedarpuliur during which many of the local villagers and their pets got benefited. The Animal Birth Control (ABC) Surgery been held at Thirupparankundram University and our veterinary volunteers got a chance to observe the surgery for dogs.

- ✦ Journalism volunteers had a chance to attend the Voices of the Workshop which is being held at Madurai.



- ✓ Care and Teaching volunteers will be having a workshop on Fabric Painting on 16th of September 2011.
- ✓ Model Farm volunteers will be taken for a market visit on 14th of September to the village named Usilampatti. And the volunteers will be helping in learning about the importance of our environment and how to preserve that during 7th, 14th and 21st of September. Also the volunteers will be doing the follow-up program at the SJDT Children's Home on 6th of September.
- ✓ On 27th of September, the veterinary and model farm volunteers will be giving deworming medicines prepared from the herbs grown at the Model Farm to the veterinary animals in and around Chinnupatti.
- ✓ The medical volunteers will be taken for a one-day visit to Leprosy Clinic on 14th and 21st of September 2011 as well as to the Ayurvedha Clinic on 15th of September. In addition to these program, the medicine volunteers will be again taken for a one-day visit to the famous Mental Health Centre at Madurai on 29th of September and to the Place for Dyeing Destitute i.e., St. Joseph's Hospice on 27th September 2011.

All the above activities and their dates are liable to change. Anyhow our staff will be in contact with you if there is any change. So, please try to catch up with the staff members to enjoy your time in India.. And by the way please don't forget to celebrate the Ganesh Chaturthi and Pooja festivals during the upcoming month!

## BIRTHDAYS REMINDER

Projects Abroad India's heartfelt greetings to all the volunteers and the staff members who are all celebrating their birthdays during the month of August 2011..!

### *Volunteers....*

2<sup>nd</sup> September - Mrs Wendy McMILLAN

4<sup>th</sup> September - Mr Bruno FEVERHEERD

4<sup>th</sup> September - Ms Sophie ARNOLDY

7<sup>th</sup> September - Mr Thomas LACOTE

18<sup>th</sup> September - Mr Anthony KING

25<sup>th</sup> September - Ms Jacqueline KAUFMANN

30<sup>th</sup> September - Ms Katharina JONES

### *Staff....*

Ms Raisa Banu - 6<sup>th</sup> September

Mr Austin Sudhakar - 14<sup>th</sup> September

## DONATIONS FOR THE MONTH

### *Projects Abroad's Contribution*

- ◆ Projects Abroad India contributes 5000 INR to one of the student who is studying at TN Theological Seminary for the purpose of his Education.
- ◆ Projects Abroad contributes 3000 INR to the Care placement - Aum Pranava Ashram for the purpose of laying up of floor in the Children's home.

### *Volunteer's Contribution*

✓ Our Teaching Volunteer - Mrs Saraswathy FRY and Medical volunteer - Ms Mirella FRY together sponsored Special LUNCH to the children for a day at ASV Home which is located at Madurai.



✓ Our Journalism Volunteer - Ms Hazel MANUEL sponsored slippers and sweets to the Children at ASV Home.



✓ Our previous Medical volunteer - Mr Akihito HAO sponsored the required Aluminium Utensils and Buckets to the Children at Love & Care that costs around 10000 INR. Well done Aki!!!



## VISIT MADURAI



The best time to visit the Meenakshi Amman temple is from 09:00 to 11:00 am & from 06:00 to 07:00 pm..

Traditional Dance Show available at Madurai – You can watch Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi during the weekend evenings and the name of the place is Kadambhavanam.



Gandhi Museum - the museum where one can see the monuments of Mahatma Gandhi (the great Indian Freedom fighter and leader). The museum will be kept open from 10:00 AM to 13:00 PM and from 14:00 PM to 17:30 PM on all days except during National Holidays!

The rock-cut temple- Thirupparankundram is open from 05:30 am to 01:00 pm and from 16:00 to 21:00 pm. This is the place where you can see White peacocks, a rare variety Indian Bird.



*My days with Projects Abroad*

It is without hesitation that I can say that travelling is my biggest passion. For me, immersing myself in a different culture and learning a new way of life is an experience that is both truly exciting and rewarding. It was in the winter of 2011 that I decided that I wanted to embark on an adventurous journey. My main desire was that I wanted to take part in a trip where I would be able to do some volunteering while also being able to "back pack." I was lucky enough to have a friend who had already travelled with Projects Abroad. After having met with her, I realised that it was the perfect organisation that would permit me to have that mixture of volunteering and travelling. I then started to prepare myself for what would be one of the best experiences of my life...

To get from Canada to India, I had to endure a gruelling three days of travelling. First was a flight from Ottawa to Frankfurt. Afterwards was a flight from Frankfurt to Chennai. When my flight was approaching landing time in Chennai, I was so excited but a bit nervous. I had done a lot of research on India but I couldn't believe I was actually here. After I cleared customs, I had to find a place to spend the night because I had a flight in the morning for Madurai. As soon as I stepped out of the International Airport, the incredible Indian heat that I heard so much about hit me. It was like an invisible wave of



something thick, humid and sticky had invaded the atmosphere. Beads of sweat were dripping from my face uncontrollably. The second thing that hit me instantly was the immense crowd of Indian men who were all waiting outside the airport. Some of them were picking up passengers, others were taxi drivers, others were operating little food stands, others were trying to sell you cheap hotel accommodations, etc. It was just incredible that the streets could be so filled with people at 1.30am. I ended up spending the night in the airport dormitory. The next morning I left Chennai and arrived in Madurai after a short hour and half flight. There I was greeted by Austin, a Projects Abroad worker. He took me and a German girl, who had arrived in Madurai at the same time as me, for a breakfast at a nearby restaurant. It was here that I had my first taste of Indian food.



Austin ordered everybody a dosa. It was this very long thin cone that was very crispy. Around the dosa were various spicy substances in which you dipped your dosa. It was an extremely odd thing to eat for breakfast but it was delicious. For the first couple of weeks, I would be eating something different every day. The common meal I ate during my volunteer work was plain white rice with spices and a thick sauce that you would mix together. In restaurants, there was always a large variety to choose from. My favourite dishes, among many others, were chapatti,

dosa, idly, poori, sambar, rasam and masala. It is important to note that Indian dishes are always spicy and hot!

My volunteer placement was called Amar Seva Sangam. It is a care home for children with physical and mental disability. There I worked with one Australian and two Danes. My first encounter with the children was a heart-warming experience. They all ran towards me, surrounded me, grabbed my hands and asked for my name. They radiated joy. Happiness instantly took over my body because I saw how my simple presence made them so cheerful and lively.

A typical day at Amar Seva Sangam included a handful of different duties I could do. The three other volunteers and I would usually start our day by bathing the children and getting them dressed. During the morning, we would help them with their school work. The only subject in which we could provide real assistance was English. Usually, you would sit with the children, show them a picture of an object and make them repeat the English word for it. This was always a rewarding experience as most of the children are so determined to learn new English words. They always wanted to improve. This was also a very enriching experience because it permitted them to teach me a few Tamil words. They usually had the rest of the day to enjoy themselves since it was summer holiday for them

at the time. I could therefore spend the majority of my day playing with them. One thing that both the children and I adored was when I would pick them up, throw them in the air and make them fly like airplanes. They would always laugh loudly and that would just melt my heart. Every time they wanted to be picked up, they would point their finger in the air and say "up". It was always so precious when they did this.

Another popular activity among the children was cricket. It is a hugely popular sport in India that I had never really watched before stepping into



the country. Having never participated in a cricket match, I was by far the worse player. In spite of this, the children always insisted on having me on their team and always wished for me to bat first. Finally, one of my favourite things to do with the children during the day was to participate in their prayer time. Every day, in the late afternoon, the children would gather in this long room and sit in the line for boys or in the line for girls. At the front of this room, there were statues and pictures of various Hindu Gods. The children would hymn prayers while playing various instruments. Although I didn't understand what was being said, it was beautiful to listen to. To feel more part of it, I would always ask one of the boys to paint my forehead with the traditional religious markings. The other three volunteers and I always took time to leave for weekly excursions and we would always seem to have wild stories when it came to the modes of transportation. For our first trip, we decided to go to the west coast to Cochin. Since we had not been properly informed about the departure time of our bus, we were stuck at the Tenkasi bus stand at 3am. Luckily for us, a man, with whom we could negotiate a price, came out of nowhere and offered to drive us all the way to Cochin. This was a strange concept because never in Canada

would someone accept a stranger's offer to drive you for hours but in India, these kind of un-regulated services are very common and safe. Scenarios like these were common. During another excursion, our night train got an engine failure and we were stuck in a field for 2 hours (until 1.30am). Also during this same excursion, we had been yet again misinformed on the departure time of a night bus and were consequently forced to spend the night at a noisy and smelly outdoor Madurai bus stand.



During our excursions, we got to see magnificence of India. I got the chance to

swim in all the major bodies of water that surround the country (Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea). I explored the epic beautifulness of the country's landscape that consists of beautiful beaches, forests of tropical trees, vast fields of tea leaves and other herbs and spectacular mountains. I particularly enjoyed the tea fields in the mountains of Munnar. Furthermore, we got to immerse ourselves in Indian history by exploring different ancient landmarks. For example we went to visit various Hindu temples, all of which were still in use. In the temples, we could witness people getting blessed by holy water and elephants, religious parades, group prayers, etc. Moreover, we got to learn so much about the Indian people by just walking through the cities. The first thing you would observe is the insane traffic and constant noise of the cars, motorbikes, buses and animals sharing the same road. You have vehicles that have to swerve out of the way to avoid hitting each other. Another thing you'll observe is the street life. The streets are always packed with vendors selling everything one could need or desire. You'll see one selling fruit and another one selling ankle bracelets. There was just always so much energy and life on the streets of India.



The five weeks I spent in India was truly a magical time for me. I have developed a strong connection with the country that will stay with me forever. Never will I forget the people I met and the experiences I lived. The volunteers I worked with were more than just travel companions, they became great friends and every Indian I met had something to teach me. It is safe to say that India changed me for the better. It gave me the chance to see things in a whole different light.

**Stephane McCARTIN | Canada**

## Journalism project in India

I took part in the journalism placement at the Madurai Messenger magazine in July 2011 for one month. The best part of this placement was that I was completely thrown in at the deep end! I was asked to do the cover story, and with only a little journalistic experience to my name, it was quite daunting at first. However, as my stay was a relatively short one this allowed me to get the most out of my placement and I appreciate a good challenge! I learnt many new skills that I know will be useful in the future. As well as improving my general communication skills, interviews were a great help to me as I need them for my university dissertation next year! Interviewing also gave me the opportunity to meet new people, unearth amazing aspects of their life and explore small, rural villages that I would never have seen otherwise. For example, whilst accompanying another volunteer to an interview, we met a woman who was a pioneering and

influential figure in the field of Indian medicine and constructed a programme to give rural children adequate healthcare. I also developed skills I didn't think I would be good at, such as photography and creating titles, photo-captions and lead-ins to articles!

It is hard to find the words to sum up my first impressions of India – chaotic, intoxicating, enriching and sensuous are to name but a few. Amid the hustle bustle of the streets, and the many stares you get as a foreigner, I found

there to be a peaceful slowness to the Indian people. At times this can be frustrating as we are used to working strictly by the clock in the West, but I soon adapted to the so-called 'Indian Time', and I soon found I quite liked it! In particular, I found the tailor market and the streets in and around the Meenakshi Temple to be the most fascinating of places. Muggy smells, teamed with soft aromas of the jasmine flowers sold by the street stalls and decorations in the women's hair, sift through the air, as well as the sweet smell of cooking at surrounding vendors. Yes, you will get hassled, and cries of 'Madam! Madam!' will become common sounds as people will try their best to sell you ankle bracelets, jasmine flowers, bindis, scarves, toys, and anything else you can imagine in a vast array of vibrant colours. I found it at first to be overwhelming and at times exasperating as you tried to weave your way through the crowds, but after a while, embracing it and remaining calm, cool and relaxed is the best way to ensure that you enjoy it.



My host family were one of the most welcoming and patient families I have ever met. Myself and some other volunteers arrived around ten o'clock at night and our host mother, Jeba, was standing at the front door ready to greet us with a giant smile. The family had two young children – Jesnitha who is five and Jeniss who is nine. I have fond memories of trying to teach Jeniss the board game, 'Cluedo', yet none of us had any idea and we just made the game up as we went along! I hope that he will learn the real rules one day –

I'm sorry Jeniss! Jesnitha was our own personal wake-up call every morning, I found it amazing how much energy she had and how happy she was all the time. The father of the household, Kani, was a patient and kind man, who always made humorous remarks if we did something silly or he thought was funny. For example, one morning we had slept in slightly and Jeba came to wake us up and I got such a fright I screamed really loudly! Although, I only stayed a month, I



really felt like part of the family after only a few days. I still laugh now, when I remember taking 'language lessons' with my French roommates, and I kept saying very stupid sentences in French that would make no sense and it kept us laughing all night. The family had a dog named Lucky, who I regret not taking for a walk. I love dogs, and he was the happiest dog I've ever met, I swear he was always smiling! His barking also made a good alarm, and also made for some sleepless nights, but I always knew I was safe with Lucky barking away at any dangerous chickens that happened to be wandering by!

One of my most treasured memories was myself and my housemates being invited to dinner by a lovely lady who worked at one of the stalls at the tailor market. We bought so many beautiful scarfs from her almost every day and then on my last night we ate a delicious meal at her home. We sat on the floor in front of big banana leaves loaded with food. The amount seemed to be endless as we kept being topped up! I still have the red nail varnish on my toes that her mother insisted on painting! The warm hospitality and generosity I will honestly never forget.

On my last day it was also my host mother's birthday. We ordered a birthday cake with all our names on it and sang happy birthday whilst waiting for the taxi to arrive. These are my final memories of India, and I am so grateful to have met and lived amongst so many amazing people.

**Jennifer BYRES | United Kingdom**

## A trip to Rameshwaram!!!

Rameshwaram (also spelt as Rameshwaram) is a pilgrimage centre of nationwide importance, as Rama is said to have worshipped Shiva here on his way back from Sri Lanka. The temple is on the island of Rameshwaram, the Benares of the South, connected to the mainland by a bridge. The deity here constitutes one of the 12 Jyotirlingas of India.

No field is ploughed or oil presses any where in the island. A magnificent railway bridge, over a kilometer long and constructed at the beginning of the twentieth Century, connects it with the mainland.



**The Great Temple Of Sri Ramanatha** - The temple of Sri Ramanatha, which has, over the centuries, grown into its present gigantic dimensions, stands on the eastern shore of an island, which is shaped like a conch, which Lord Vishnu bears in one of His hands. What is truly remarkable, apart from the sheer artistry of it which has so magnificently conquered problems of proportions, height and such like, is that all these stones must have been transported here over long distances and across the

sea by a causeway.

### Sacred sites outside the Temple:-

**Sethu** : There is a celebrated temple of Sri Anjaneya, and where, tradition holds, Sri Rama built a bridge to Sri Lanka. In Devipatnam, or Navapashanam, also by the sea, there are nine stones visible at low tide. It is believed that they were set up by Sri Rama to represent the nine planets, the Navagrahas.

**Gandamadhana Parvata** : Outside the temple, on the island, there are a few sites also held sacred. In this Mandapa footprints of Sri Rama are enshrined. From the top of the Mandapa there is a fine view of parts of the island.

**Uttarakosamangai** : There is a renowned Shiva Temple of Uttarakosamangai. Manikkavasagar has sung of it. The Lord is Mangaleshvara and the Goddess Mangalesvari. The temple has inspired many Tamil works of devotion.

An exhilarating drive through the ocean on a sandy trail brings you to the town of Dhanushkodi forgotten in time. From here the trail of the Adam's Bridge is astonishingly conspicuous. Dhanushkodi is surreal and evocative; the

haunting silence of the place, the soft lapping of a crystal-clear sea that once turned dark and created mayhem, the glorious ruins, and bright sunshine, fill the visitor with immense sadness, as much as with hope.



**PAPANASAM**

Papanasam is a small village away from the tourist trail. This holy place is on the Western Ghats of Pothigai Hill. The river Tamiraparani flowing from the Western Ghats reaches the plains at Papanasam. While flowing down the rocky bed it forms into many falls. The Agasthiyar Falls being the popular one. This waterfall is believed to absolve all sins from people who bath in it. This has made Papanasam

(papa+vinasam, meaning absolution of sins) an important pilgrim centre. Fishes are found in abundance in the water. They are quite harmless and approach the bathers in large numbers. The devotees believe that these fishes are redeemed souls and harming them would bring retribution.

The River Tamraparni reaches the plains at Papanasam. Over the Papanasam junction, the Papanasam Hydro, Electric Plant with the Upper and Lower Dams has been constructed in recent years. There is a temple at Papanasam. The chief deity of the temple is Papavinaseswarar. There are several mandaparns, (halls) and choultries (resting houses) here. The river runs from Rocky Mountains on big boulders.

Fish of all sizes and of golden hue abound in the water and the pilgrims feed them during their visit to the temple in fulfillment of their vows taken for recovery from their illness.

The fish are quite harmless and they come in shoals very near the bathers as if wishing to be fed by them. Fried peas are readily available in



the shops close by for feeding them. Monkey, abound here in large numbers.

The Lower Dam on Papanasam is a picturesque spot giving a panoramic view of a wide area at the foot of the hill. It is an excellent place for a picnic party.

# Cauliflower Peas Masala

## Ingredients:

- 200gm (8 ounces) Cauliflower (florets chopped finely)
- 1 cup (250 ml) Green Peas (fresh, cleaned at least 5 times)
- 1 Onion (big, chopped fine)
- 1 Tomato, (finely chopped)
- 1 tsp Cumin Seeds
- 1 tsp Mustard Seeds
- 1/2 tsp Urad dal split
- 2 tsp Chili Powder
- 1/2 tsp Turmeric Powder
- 1/2 tsp Garam Masala or any Mutton Masala
- 1 tsp Ginger-Garlic Paste
- 1/2 tsp Black Pepper (powdered) (optional)
- 2 tbsp Coconut Paste (grinded with 1 tsp Saunf, 1 small onion and 1 garlic pearl)
- 2 tsp salt
- Curry Leaves (few)
- Coriander Leaves (few)
- 1 cup (250 ml) Water
- 2 tsp Oil (refined)



## How to make Cauliflower Peas Masala:

- ◆ Take a microwave bowl, add refined oil, chopped onions, cumin seeds, mustard seeds, split urad dal and some curry leaves.
- ◆ Microwave this on high temperature for a minute. Take the bowl out.
- ◆ Add all the other ingredients including 3/4 cup water. Mix all the ingredients well so that the masala gets equally spread and Microwave this (high) for 12 minutes.

**Suggestions:** Serve this tasty gobi-mattar masala with rice and curd or chapathi or idli.

Keep on reading our Country Newsletters from India, as well as from variety of Destinations and get to have a clear idea about volunteering in Projects Abroad. For the Newsletters, you can visit our website - **"Projects Abroad Official Website"** @ [www.projects-abroad.net](http://www.projects-abroad.net)

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