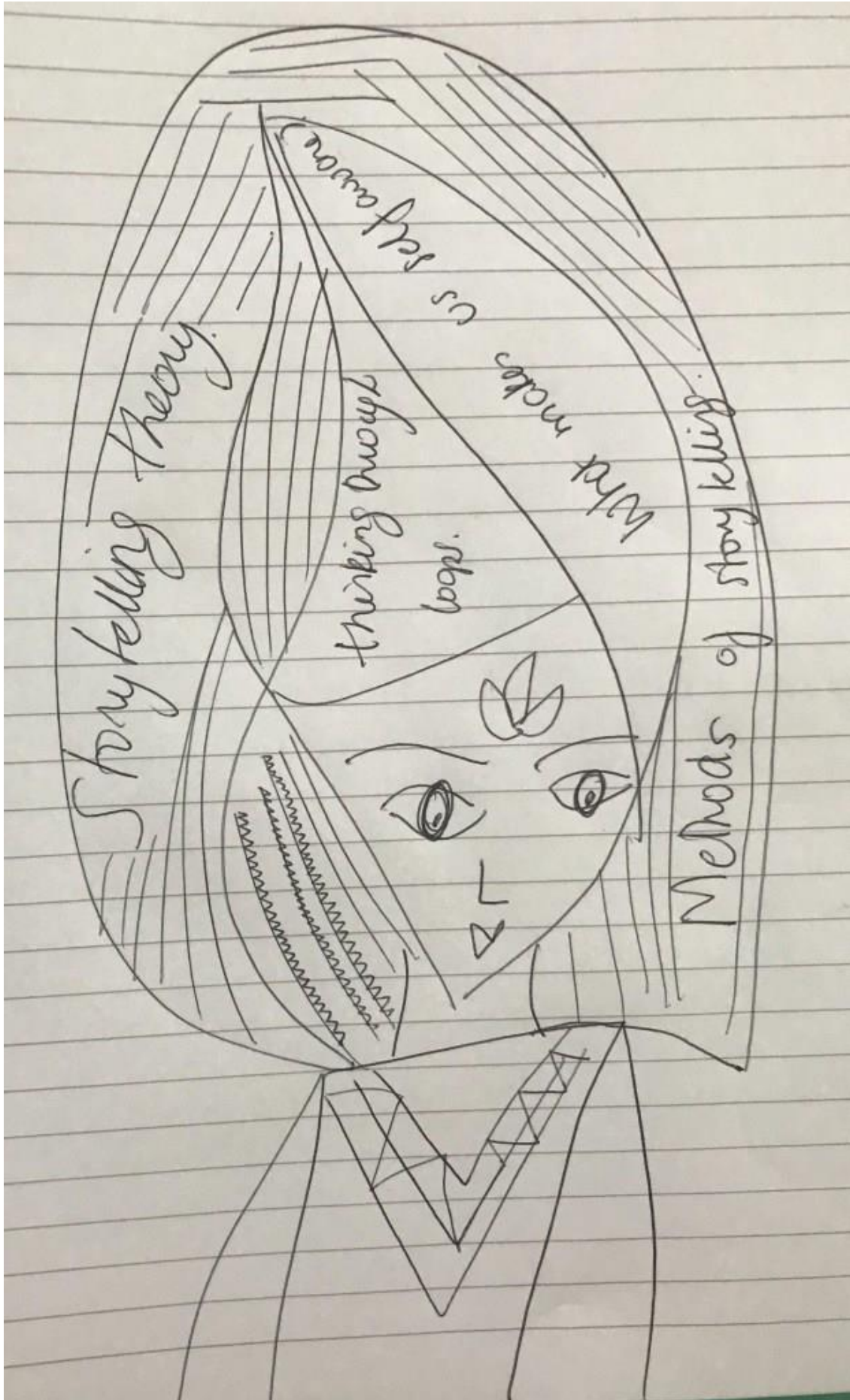
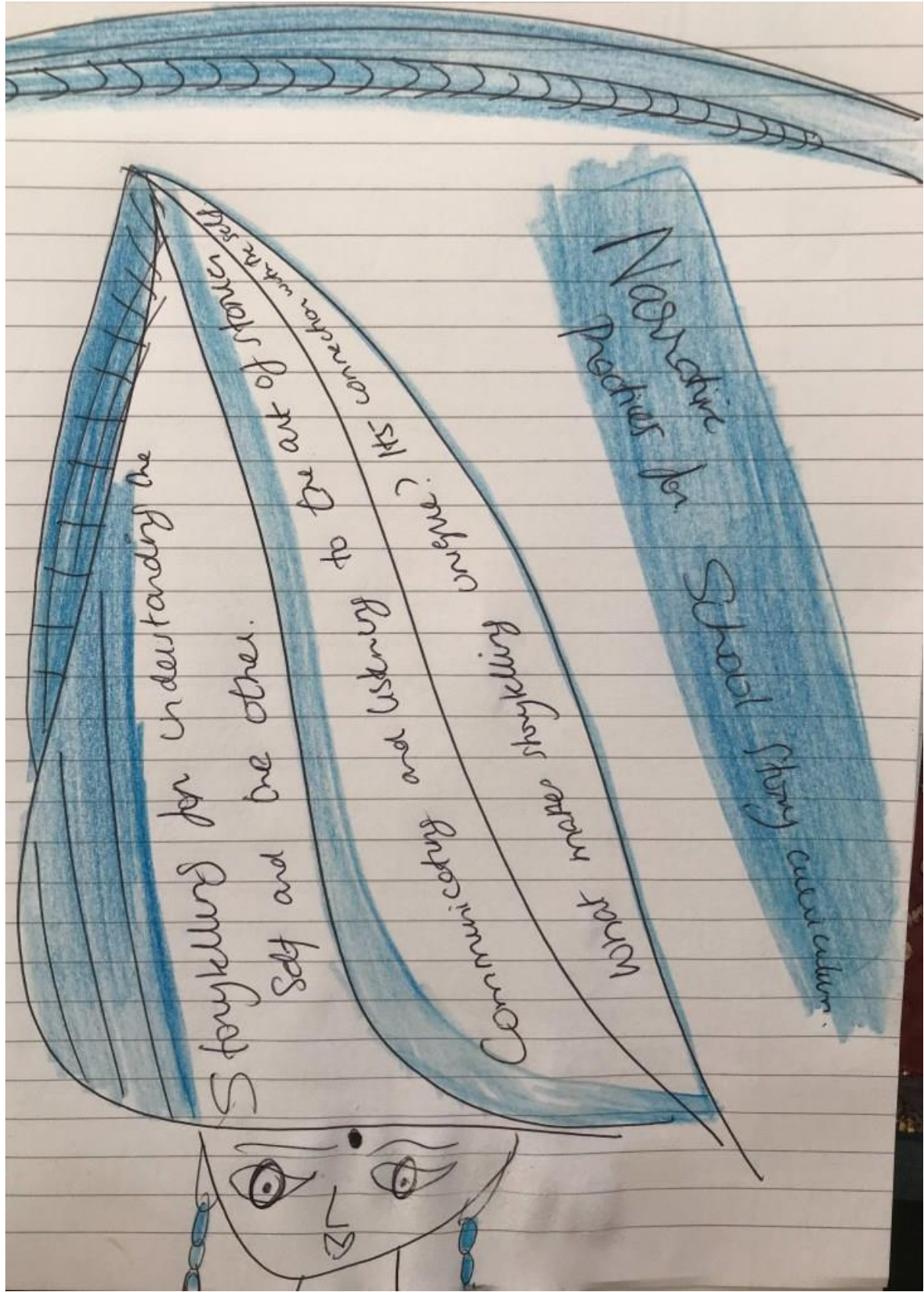


Concepts in Special Education –

Art and Stories Book







The story of the owl

Subject – Mathematics

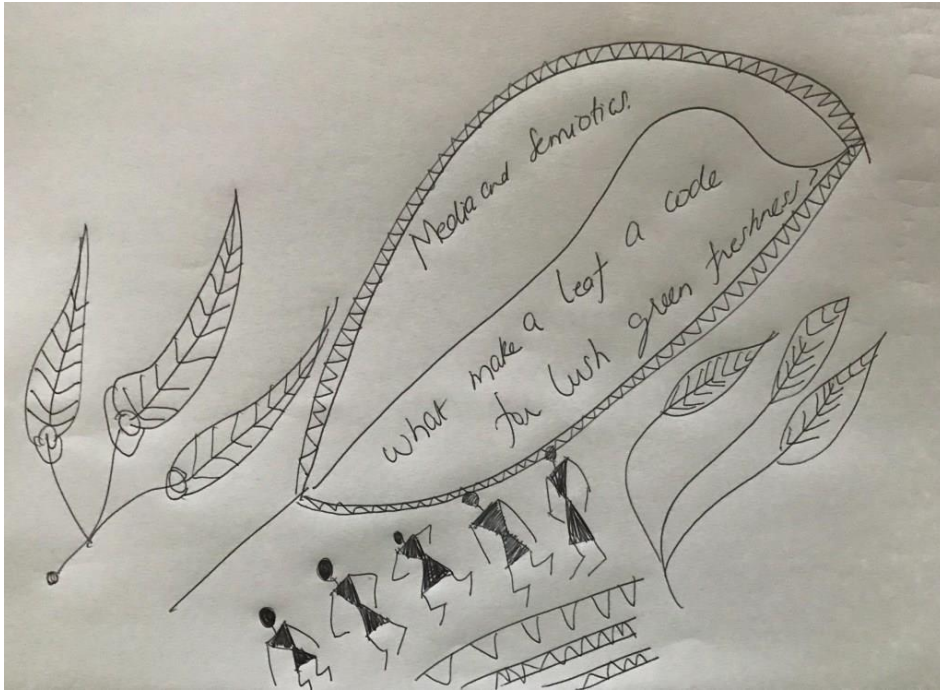
Concept – Pi

Definition – Pi is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter. It is $22/7$ or 3.14.

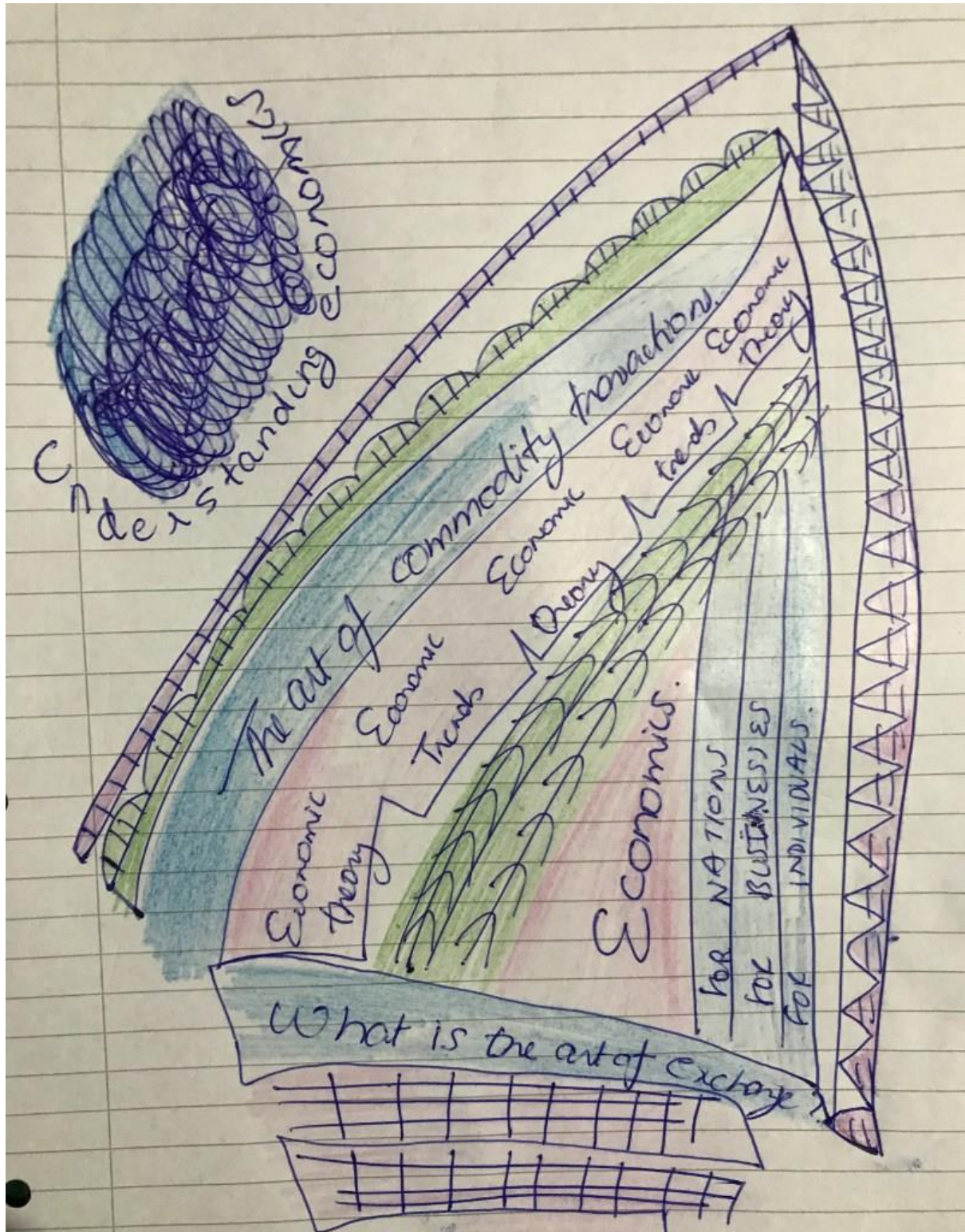
Once upon a time, a fish was swimming in the sea.

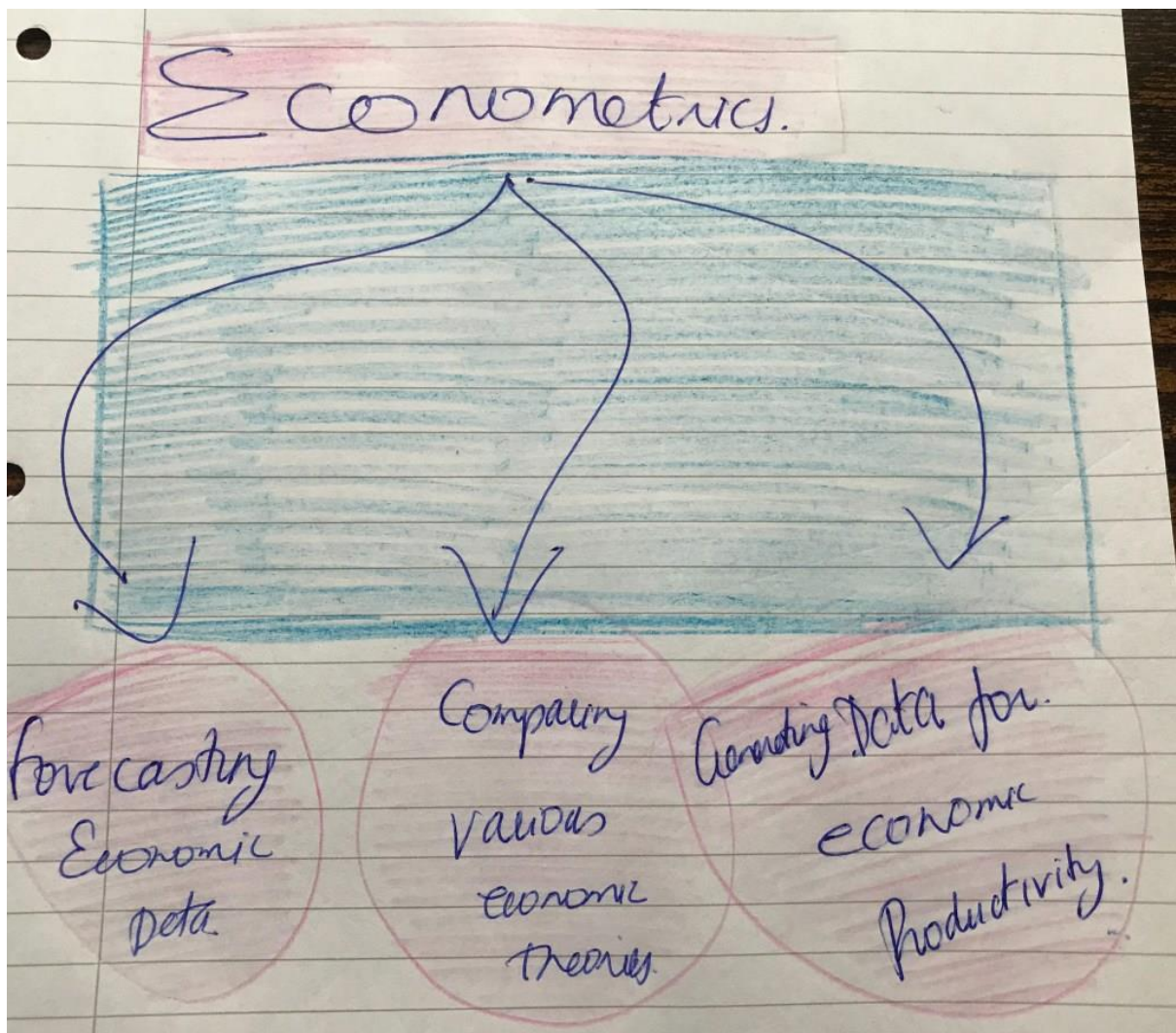
And at that time, an owl was flying above. It had spotted a leaf with strange markings. There were circular patterns inside the leaf. This leaf fell into the water, where the fish found it. The fish was spotted with the leaf by the owl who swooped down and took the leaf with circular markings

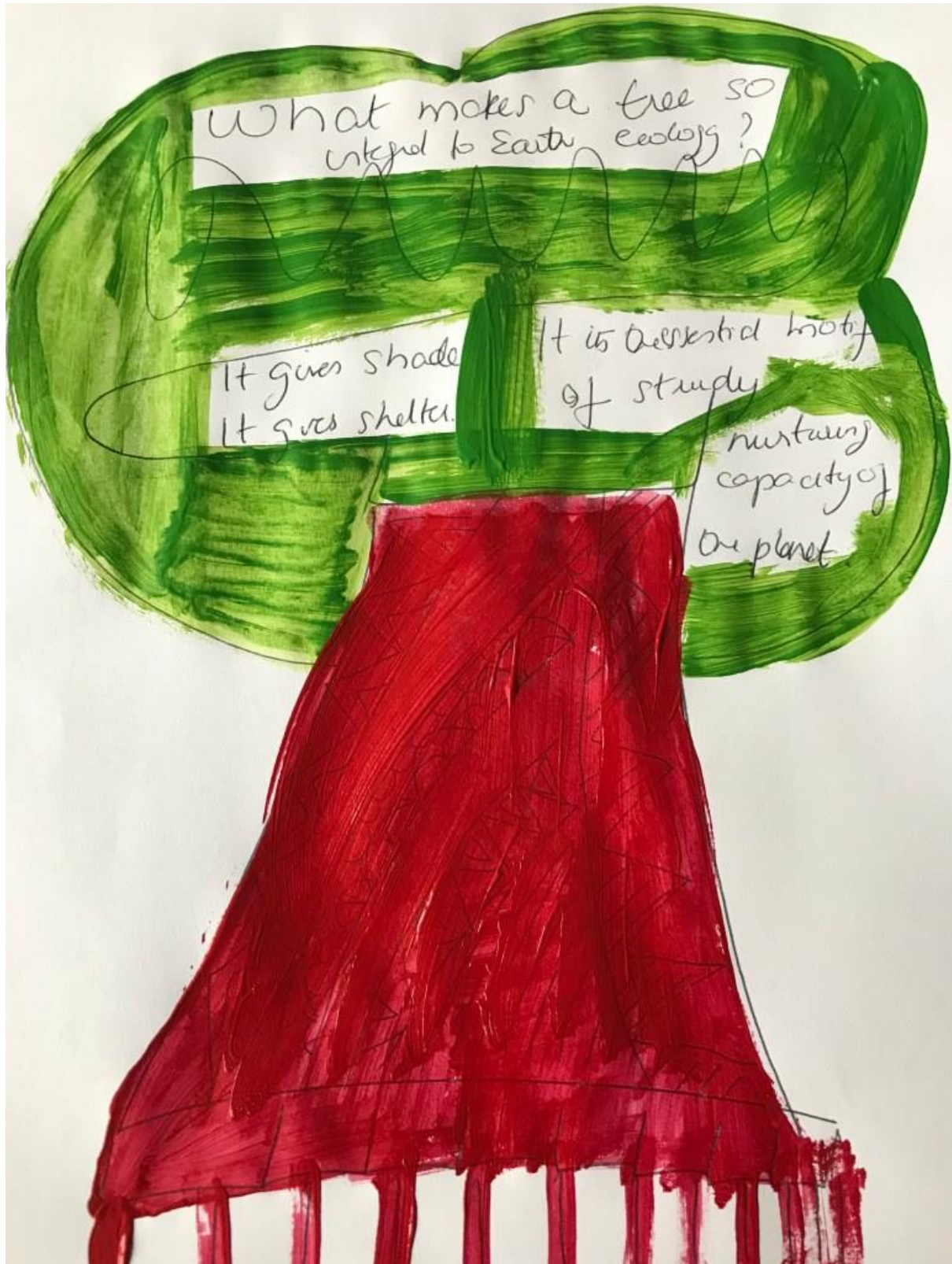
away. The owl took the leaf to her nest and the found out that the circles seem to be created through a compass. Some child who had a geometrical compass has most likely made the markings. The owl was looking for children with such geometrical compasses which made a circle and made it easy to calculate using pi. The owl had once been an ardent mathematician. Once he had calculated the value of Pi, for he had been there for a long time on Earth, as $22/7$ or 3.14. Pi was the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter.

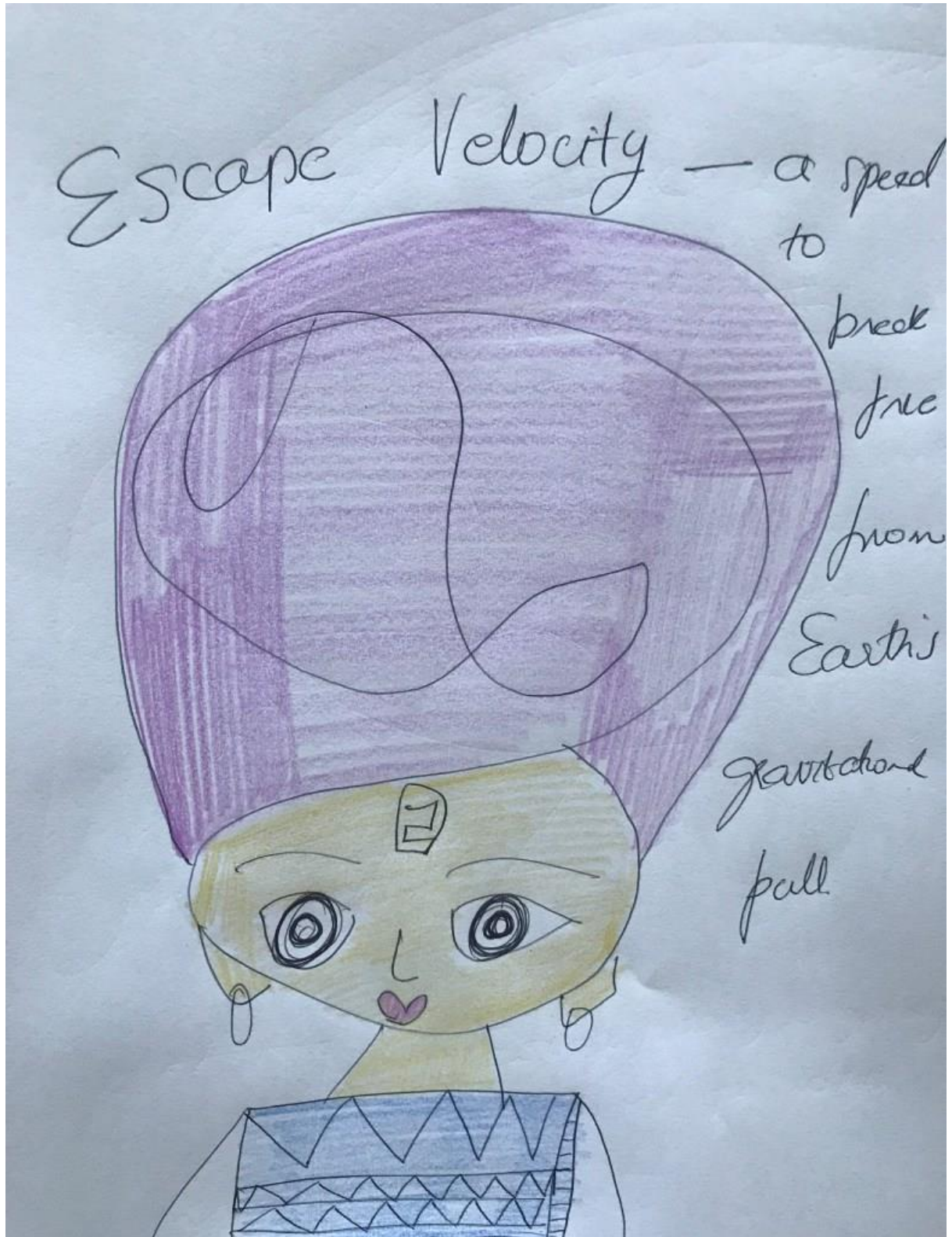


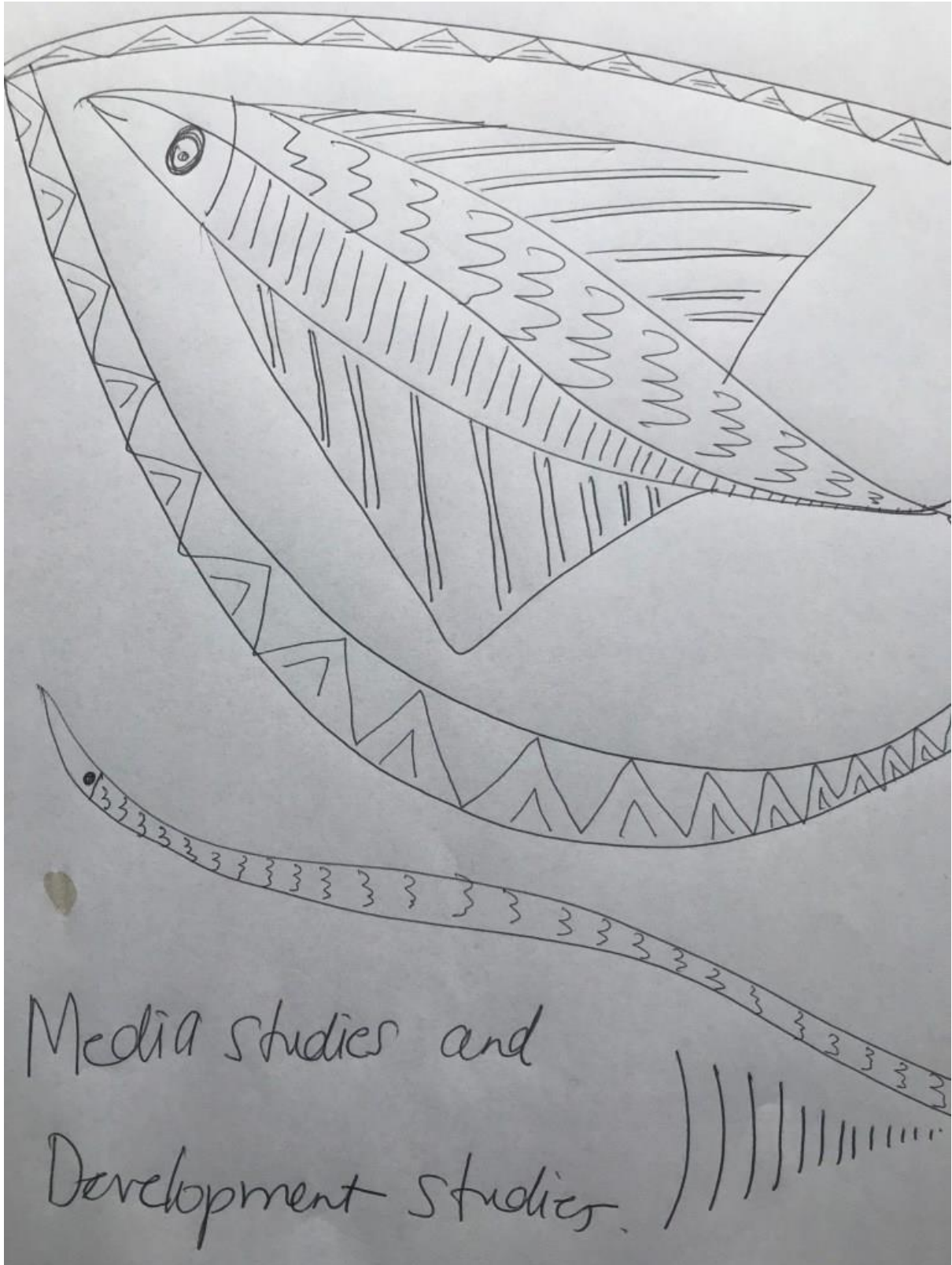
Semiotics or the art of sign making is a way of understanding the signs and language codes that make life meaningful. Studying the art of semiotics or the art of coding language based symbolic codes is an experience in language meaning making.

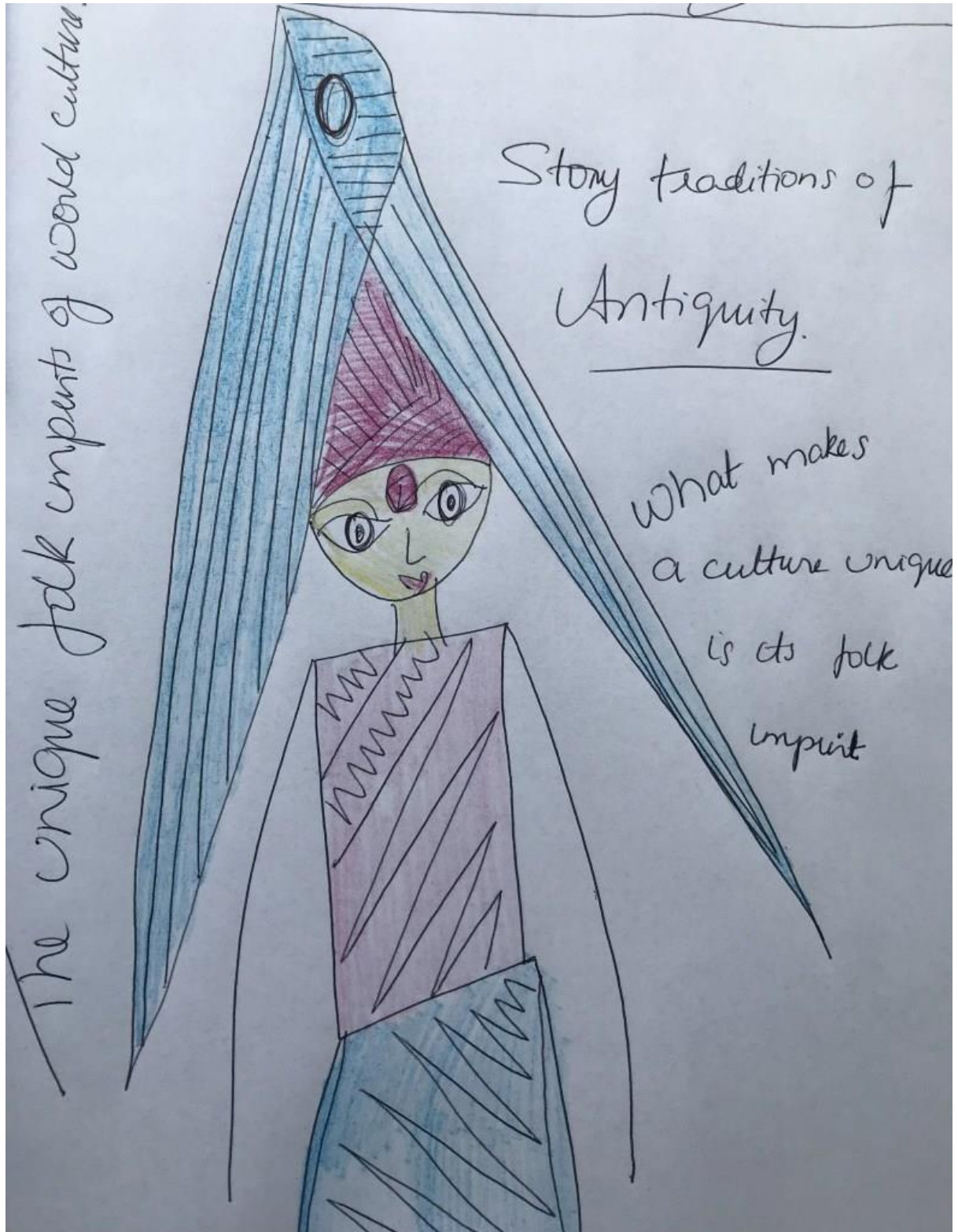


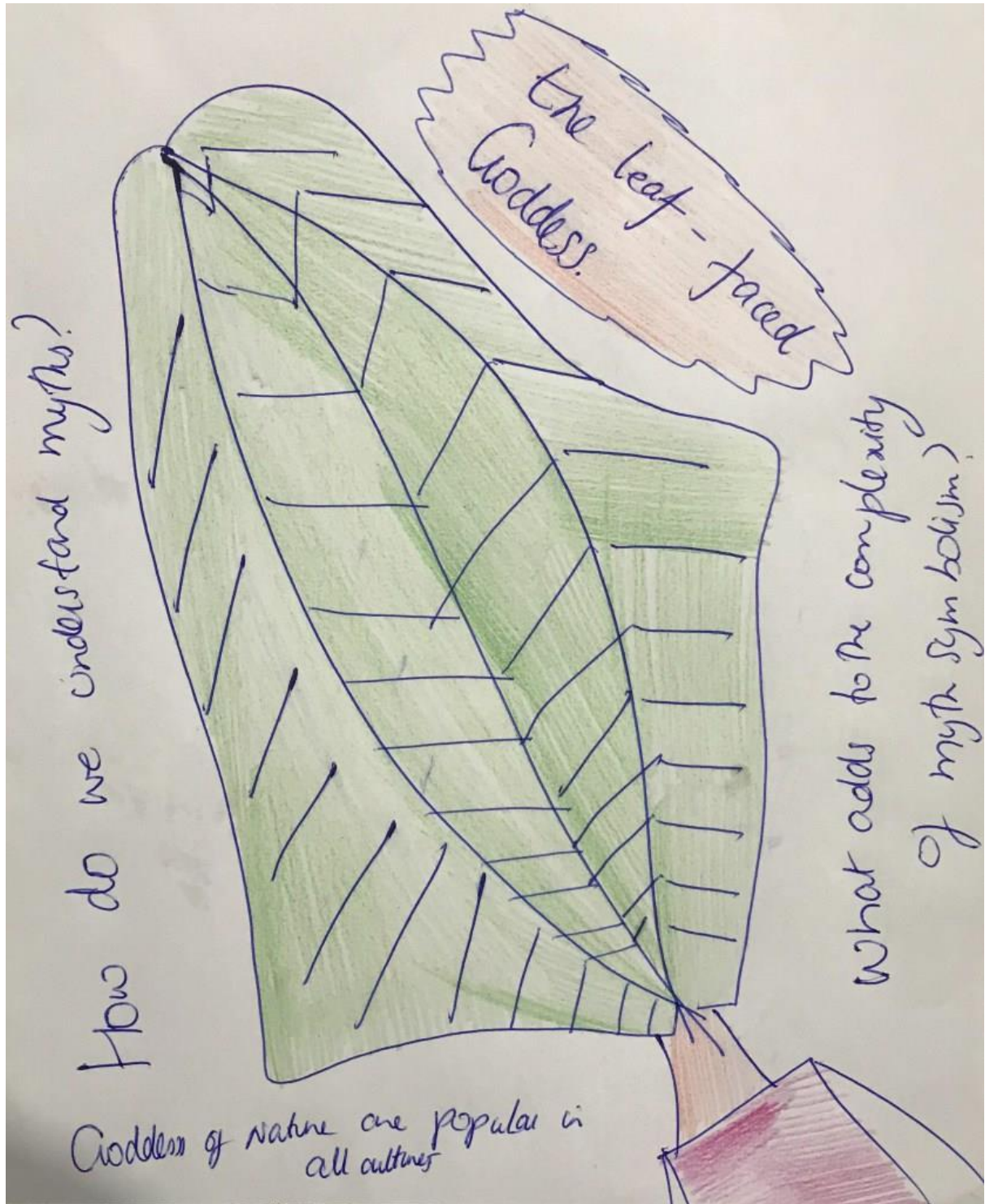












How Anansi brought stories to earth

August 25, 2025

Value: Ahimsa, nonviolence

“Nani, tell us an African folktale,” pleaded Moni.

“Ok,” said Nani.

“Anansi was a wise spider who lived with his wife

Aso. Though life had given him every bliss

possible he felt there was something terribly

wrong with life on earth. He thought and thought

about it.

“What is missing on earth, that I am so sad?” he

asked Aso.

“Are the rains on time and aplenty? Is the harvest good and ripe? Is there food for all beings?” Aso asked.

“Aso, the rains are good and the harvest of rice and corn is also plenty, all beings have enough to eat. But the problem is something else. We are no stories on earth. We have no stories to keep us company. We have no stories to make us laugh and cry. We have no stories to offer us relish. We have no stories to help us dream. We have no stories to teach us to care for others. We have no stories on Earth,” said Anansi sadly.

“True, we eat well and rest well but we have nothing to think about here on earth,” said Aso.

“I have an idea – I will go to father sky Nyame and see if he has any stories,” said Anansi.

“How will you reach father sky?” queried Aso, “why don’t you build a silken rope connecting the earth with the sky. You can then meet Nyame and ask him about the stories. I will help you make the rope.”

So, they both spun together a beautiful silverfish rope made of spidersilk. The rope was firm and held well. It connected the earth to the sky. Anansi

jumped on it and trotted all the way to the sky.

Once he reached the sky he saw the grim looking Nyame.

“Sir,” he enquired, “do you have a minute?”

“Who are you and how did you get here?” asked Nyame.

“I am Anansi, I come from the Akan lands,” said Anansi, “I and my wife Aso spun a silken rope from the earth to the sky. I climbed the rope and came to see you.”

“What is your purpose?” asked Nyame.

“I want to know if you have any stories? There are no stories on earth and this makes life very tedious,” said Anansi.

“I have a giant box of stories but why should I give them to you?” said Nyame.

“You have a box full of stories? How lovely!!! I will do anything to take them back to earth for all living beings,” said Anansi.

“Ok, but you must complete a task for me. You must convince the three most dangerous beings on earth to become compassionate and nonviolent towards other living beings. If you do so I will give you the box of stories,” said Nyame.

Anansi nodded in agreement and said, “I will turn Onini the python, Osebo the leopard and Mmboro hornets into compassionate creatures.”

Saying so, Anansi returned to the earth. He told Aso about the condition for getting the stories on earth. Anansi had a plan.

Anansi and Aso stood outside Onini the python’s home and had a loud debate about whether Onini would be as long as a palm tree branch. Onini heard this debate and came out to resolve it as his ego was hurt.

“How do I find out if I am longer than the palm tree branch?” asked Onini.

“Let me tie you to the branch and then we will know,” said clever Anansi.

So Onini agreed. Once he was tied up tight and breathless, Anansi laughed at him.

Realising the trick the frightened Onini said, “Let me out,”

“I will once you see this is how small creatures feel when you trap them and kill them. Promise never to hunt again and you are free,” said Anansi.

Onini realised his error for good and apologised.

Anansi let he out and he remains vegetarian till this day.

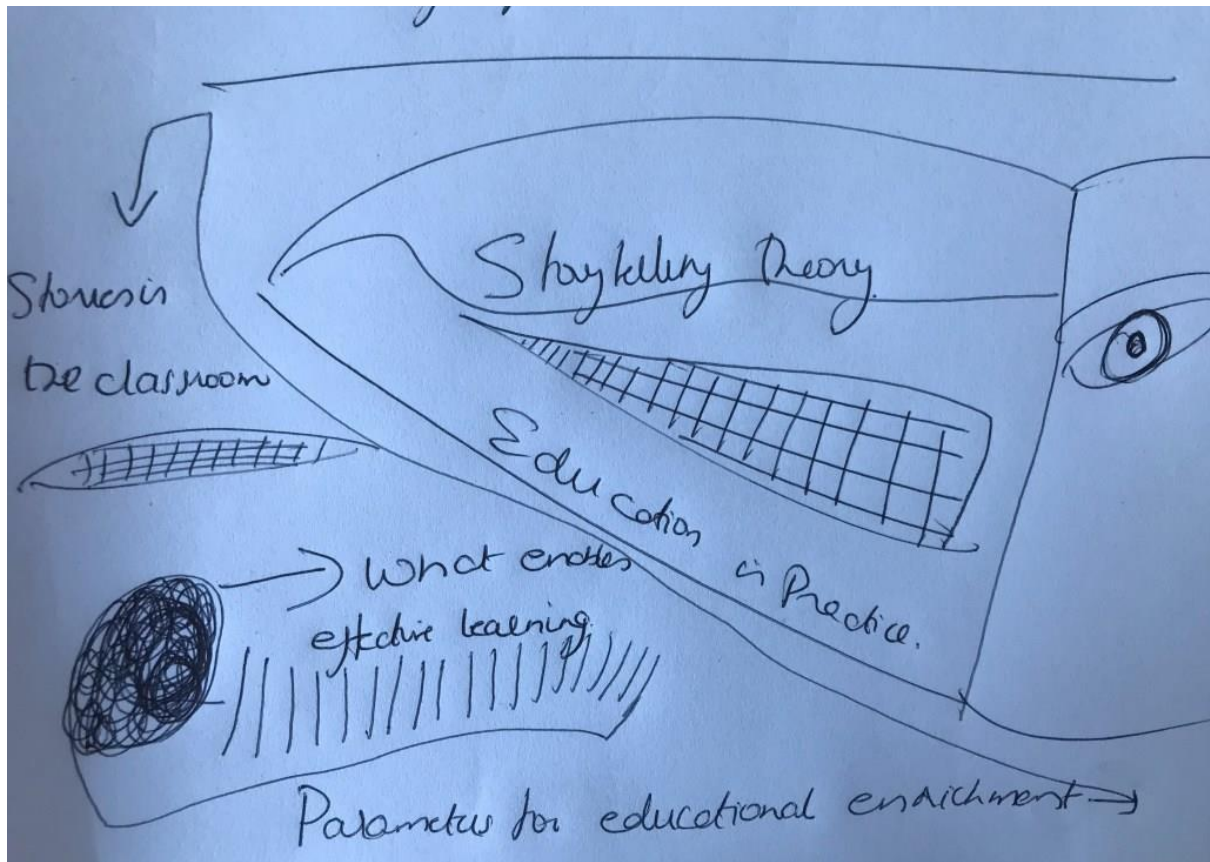
Similarly Anansi converted the Osebo leopard and Mmboro hornets to a life of nonviolence and compassion. Having done this Anansi went to the sky once more.

“Nyame, I have accomplished the task you set for me. Can I have the stories?” said Anasi.

Nyame pleased with him handed him the box of stories.

Anansi carefully brought the stories to earth and spread them among all living beings. The stories were all about mutual love and respect for all living beings.”

“Cool,” said Natasha.



Why mangoes are sweet?

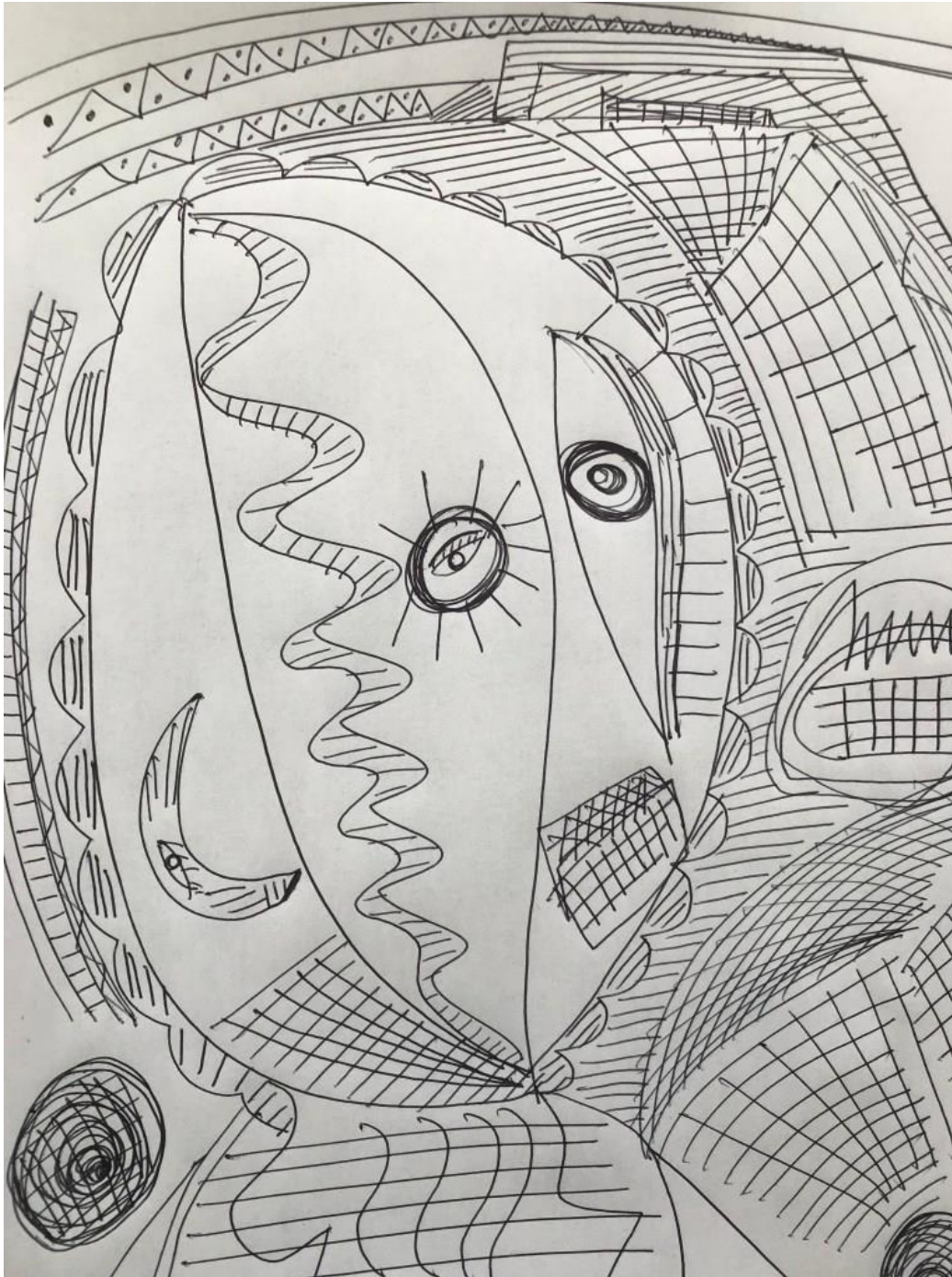
Once upon a time, there was a very hungry fox. He climbed a tree and tried to eat a mango. But the mango was very sour, so he cut the mango and poured some sugarcane juice in. Now the mango became very sweet and fox loved it. From that day all mangoes turned sweet.





In all of humankind analysis, wherein we try to find what unites the homo sapiens as a species —

we find the commonality of the folktale rooted in the art of storytelling.



World mythology shows us that while our ancestors lived a ritual based life this life was governed by the laws of myths. Myths determined

that thoughts, the behaviour and the actions of ancestral societies. People needed myths to understand the world they saw around them. There are solar and lunar myths for instance in every culture. The constellations when observed also found an essential bedrock of mythlife. Spacetime that was constructed was understood through the myths of our ancestors.



- Rare music for rarer narration – Interview
with Deepa Kiran, International Storyteller

August 10, 2025



About your background?

My background in education is a Masters in English Literature. Before that I did a Bachelors in Nutrition. Since 2000, I have been in the field of English Language Teaching. I have been teaching English in different schools. And I started using stories and storytelling for English Language Teaching. My background to storytelling is that I am trained in Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi and in Rabinder Sangeet. I have worked in the All India Radio. I was a part of an oration club in Secunderabad. I learnt the flute and the violin. My parents put me in Chinmaya Mission at an early age and here I learnt to chant the Bhagvat Geeta. There was an environment and culture of stories,

music and dance here. Formally I started telling stories to my students in 2000.

I grew up living in 13 states in the country.

Everyone in my family speaks 4 to 5 languages, extended family included. I have had a multilingual and multicultural upbringing.

On your journey as a storyteller?

I loved telling stories. In 2000, as an English teacher I realised that narrating stories was very useful for schools and children. I had done stories before in the All India Radio. I had recorded Alice in Wonderland as a series there. But this was chosen by my boss. But in 2000, I chose to tell

stories in the classroom because I thought it was beneficial. Children could relate to the stories better, be more enthusiastic about the language, talk in English and turn in homework. In 2005, I studied teaching English in the English and Foreign Languages University. I could connect the dots back. I could see what I was doing with storytelling in the classroom was working. And I could connect the dots forward. What I did at EFLU I could use as a teller and in the classroom.

Another milestone was, in 2010 I started singing songs in my stories. In 2011, I got a project for Dasaavatram for children of NRI. I sat with my Kuchipudi teacher and composed the story in

English and also with Sanskrit and in other Indian languages. The performance included narrating the story with music and dance – a style I continued since then.

In 2017, I founded the Story Arts Foundation as a trust to work with the Government and NGOs.

Starting 2016, I started travelling internationally for my work to do stories from the Indian culture and perform them for a global audience. My focus has been on stories found in the Indian culture.

Your favourite story?

This was one that my father told me. He was my first storyteller at home. He would often narrate

the story of Yellaam Nanmaikku. There was King and he had a trusted minister and he would keep saying Yellaam Nanmaikku Yellaam Nanmaikku.

The king would find this irritating some times to hear Yellaam Nanmaikku – everything was good.

One day the King ate a lot of Brinjal and got a little ill. Physicians were called in. And still all the Minister could say was ‘Yellaam Nanmaikku’. The King was furious and threw the Minister in jail.

Still all the Minister could say was ‘Yellaam Nanmaikku’. The next day the King and his troop went on a trip to the jungle. A thorn pierced the King’s hand and he ended up with a bandage.

Meanwhile, without the minister, the King and his

band got lost in the jungle. They reach a place where there are jungle dwellers who are going to make a sacrifice. The King realised he was going to be sacrificed. The drum rolls started for the sacrificial ceremony. But the sacrificers soon realised that the King was an imperfect sacrifice as his hand was bandaged. The king was released and he and his troop reach the palace safely and realised that Yellaam Nanmaikku, all was good. The King had his minster released. The Minster was still in a cheerful state of mind. The King asked how come the Minister said Yellaam Nanmaikku to being thrown in jail. The minster said, 'They didn't sacrifice you because your hand

was bandaged but if I had joined the troop and they would have seen I have no bandage and sacrificed me.

The King agreed – Yellaam Nanmaikku.

I had heard this story from my father and narrated it frequently to my children. Once when I was disappointed with something my younger son said Yellaam Nanmaikku. So, the story came back to me. My father, me, my children and from my child to me – that's how the story travelled.

Your favourite Indian story collection?

Stories from the folklore of India and our Itihasa Puranas. I feel deeply connected to stories of our land. It has something to do with my style of

narration – which is very Indian. I like narrating stories from the Ramayana for children. For myself, i like reading the Upanishadic stories.

Any world geographies, whose stories you enjoy?

I enjoy listening to all narratives – Norwegian stories, African Stories, Australian Aboriginal stories. I find that stories from Africa have a lot of music and are extremely lyrical. They have a special quality of language and orality in them.

When I had been invited by the University of South Africa to visit six schools in the municipality I realised that reciting African poetry

was a part of the African culture and tradition. This was apparent as child after child recited African poetry in a particular manner. They have a tradition of oral poetry recitation. Even if you don't understand the language, you will feel the power of the cadence.

How would describe your connection to storytelling?

Just like some people like cooking and specifically cooking for others. Storytelling for me is like that. I like to cook a story and share it with others. With storytelling, we sit down, share a story and listen to it together.

You use a lot of rare musical instruments in your narrations, could you talk about these?

I look for instruments whenever I travel. They are not new in my life. I started playing a palm sized piano when I was 10 years old. I learnt the flute for one year. I learnt musical instruments at Bal Vihar and Bal Vikas, the majeeram, harmonium, cynabal are all used in Indian bhajans. I have a very interesting musical collection. Many of my musical instruments are from distant and far off places. This bird made from clay is hollow inside. You have to fill this water inside. With the water, the bird will make a chirping sound. I got the Xutuli from Assam.

From the Haridasus, who are Harikatha performers in the state of Andhra Pradesh, I got this musical instrument the Alandu. My friend came from Australia and was attending a Haridasu performance and got this for me from them. These are not available commercially in shops.

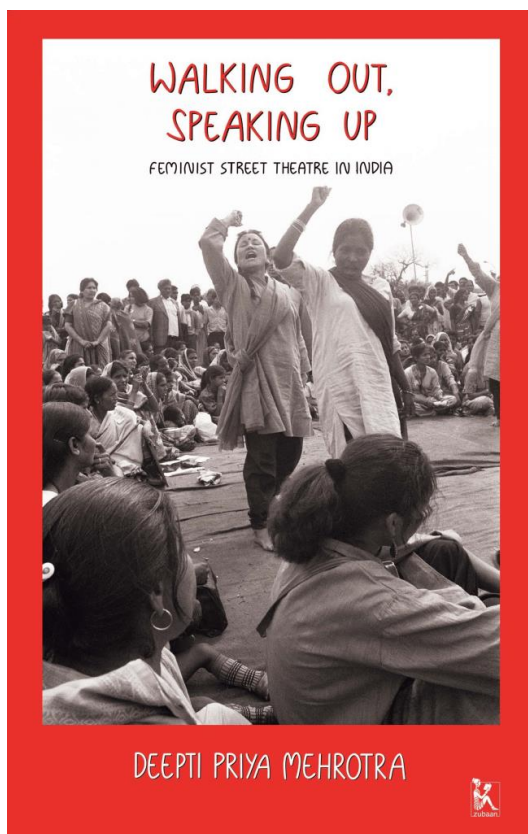
I got the Dapu from Malaysia, it is made from monitor lizard skin. I soundscape my stories. I am a storyteller and not a musician. While narrating stories my focus is on the storytelling not a musical or dance performance.

I used a rattle in the Banyan and the Sparrow story. Rattles are common for children and are available

everywhere. My focus is in getting the right music for the storytelling. I have the damaru. It is played with the rope, not the hand or the stick. I got this Shaker from Pondicherry. It is made of dried seeds. All cultures have such musical instruments. I got cymbals from Dharmashala with typical Tibetan patterns embossed on them. From Bengal, I got the Duitara – which has two strings. Baul storytellers use this instrument. I got this from Baul singers when I was attending a children's writing residency in Bholpur, Shantineketan. In Nepal I got a meditation bowl that has a nice resonance. In Kolkata, I got the ocean drum, which creates sounds of water. From Northeast Thailand,

I got the flute. I was visiting a music department of University where I had been invited. The flute has to be rotated to create the sound – a sense of sadness or happiness depending on what you want for the story.

How do we respond to news? How do we react
to news? – Intense Writing and Self-Aware
Structures – Book Review: Walking Out,
Speaking up – Feminist Street Theatre in India
by Deepti Priya Mehrotra



A book on theatre and dissent, *Walking Out Speaking up – Feminist Street Theatre in India* by Deepti Priya Mehrotra is a book which is at once academic and rooted in social reality. *Walking Out Speaking up – Feminist Street Theatre in India* is a book made of fragments, fragmented as our lives are by dowry and social lies. The fragments comprising this book are quotes from interviews, extracts from plays in Hindi and English, photo documentation, news excerpts, feminist activism as a lived experience etc.

The book is a study and a very very meticulous study of the methods and formulations of the street

theatre in North India that started with a wish to stop dowry deaths and other crimes against women. *Om Swaha* is a play on a dowry death, made personal and immediate through the commitment and agency of the method of street theatre.

Ehsas, a feeling and a street play, can be sensed so clearly and evocatively through the means of this book. The book almost takes us through a video journey of brilliantly apt images that bring *Ehsas* to life.

Images stark and real, images of death and murder, images colourful and on the dangerous invocations

of fire in India today that would have made our ancestors from the prehistoric era who discovered the many positive uses of fire shudder, images of that which can be understood and images of that which has to be explained – images of feminist street theatre in India.

Feminist street theatre in India is an important part of the woman's movement in India. Delineating the structure of the same is this book, a ready manual of intense writing which is at once self-aware and socially conscious. Feminist Street Theatre in India is both a subject of deliberations and actions.

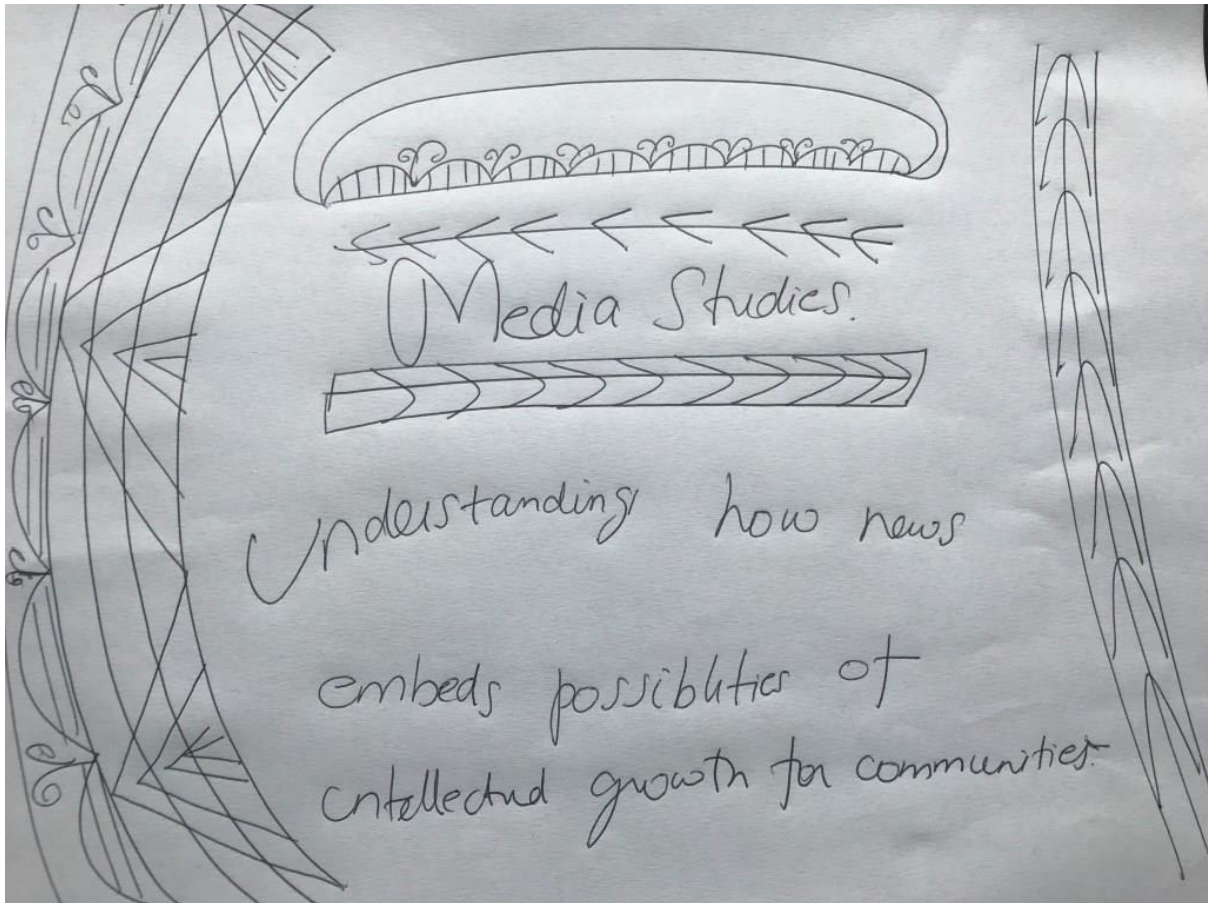
Feminist Street Theatre can be understood as a grassroots movement led by scholars, academics, working class women, activists, varied professionals, students etc,. – central to our understanding of how to respond and react to that which is the content of our daily newspapers.

Feminist Street Theatre in India is a collective and movement led by the chance and often lifechanging meetings of actors, feminists, activists, directors, scriptwriters, theatre coordinators over the outrageous and enraging contents of daily news. News – short and impersonal, hardly evocative and image based but

full of reality as we never want to know it forms the basis of feminist street theatre in India.

News and journalism if the backbone of a society and culture, then theatre especially feminist street theatre is its secret mystical kundalini or serpent power – magical and powerful at once.

Watch the news and experience its horror and discover solutions for the realities it photographs and who better to help in this than feminist street theatre – a magical portal of learning and democratic processes?



The growth of storytelling in India – Interview
with Deivanayaki

Kathalaya Impact Series



How did you first associate with Kathalaya?

In 2011, my cousin saw an Kathalaya advertisement in the Hindu newspaper. We wanted to enquire about and do the course. She was in Madurai and I was in Bangalore. I just dropped into the office and enquired about the team. It was nice meeting Geeta Maam. I did the first level beginners' course with my cousin in 2011 January. It was a five day half day course.

I became a storyteller and started telling stories at a local school.

In 2011, my cousin came across a Kathalaya advertisement in The Hindu newspaper. We were both interested in learning more about their courses—she was in Madurai and I was in Bangalore. I decided to drop by the office to enquire, and that's when I first met Geeta Ma'am. My cousin and I enrolled in the beginners' course in January 2011. It was a five-day, half-day program.

After completing the course, I began storytelling at a local school. Although I enjoyed it and worked until 3 p.m. each day, I still had some inhibitions.

One day, Geeta Ma'am asked if I would be interested in working at Kathalaya. I thought it would be a good opportunity and decided to join initially for three days a week. Since 2012, I have been a permanent employee at Kathalaya, handling administration. Over the years, I have listened to countless stories—shared by students during their courses and narrated by Geeta Ma'am herself. Being fully involved in administration has helped me shape my career at Kathalaya.

My journey with Kathalaya began in 2011, and it continues to be a meaningful part of my life.

You started your association with Kathalaya in 2011. Since then, what are the changes you have seen in the field of storytelling?

In every field these days, you can see a huge change. In the initial years, Kathalaya was the main centre for storytelling and then there were not many people who could tell stories. Now every place be it Indranagar or Koramangala is developed in storytelling. There are many storytellers and storytelling centers are being opened regularly.

People used to come to Kathalaya to learn storytelling. But we also saw that online storytelling became very popular. Online storytelling and podcasts became very popular. There was a huge change in this sense is what we felt. Except during Covid, Kathalaya did not prefer the online model for teaching storytelling. Storytelling is an art that requires personal connection. While people ask for online classes, we ask them to come for our in-person workshops. We can see how storytelling careers revolve around what we experience with people. Hence offline storytelling classes are better.

Another change we have seen is that earlier teachers, homemakers would attend storytelling classes. Now people in all fields, entrepreneurs, media people, corporate employees – people from different background learn storytelling to apply in their fields.

How has working with Kathalaya, which founded storytelling in India and many parts of the world, developed you personally?

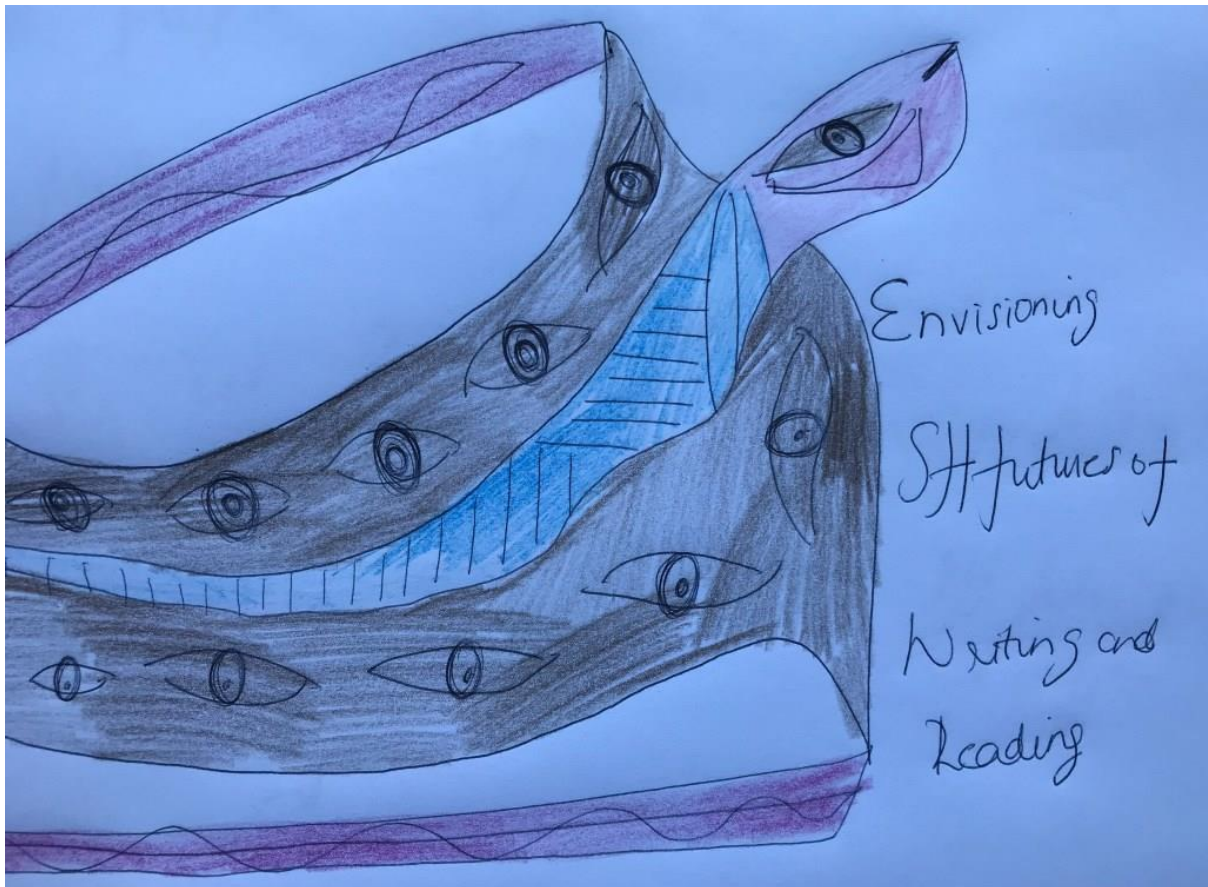
It's not just a course. Each one would come with their own feelings, their own anecdotes, their own wisdom, their own stories. You need someone to listen to your stories. People like being listened to.

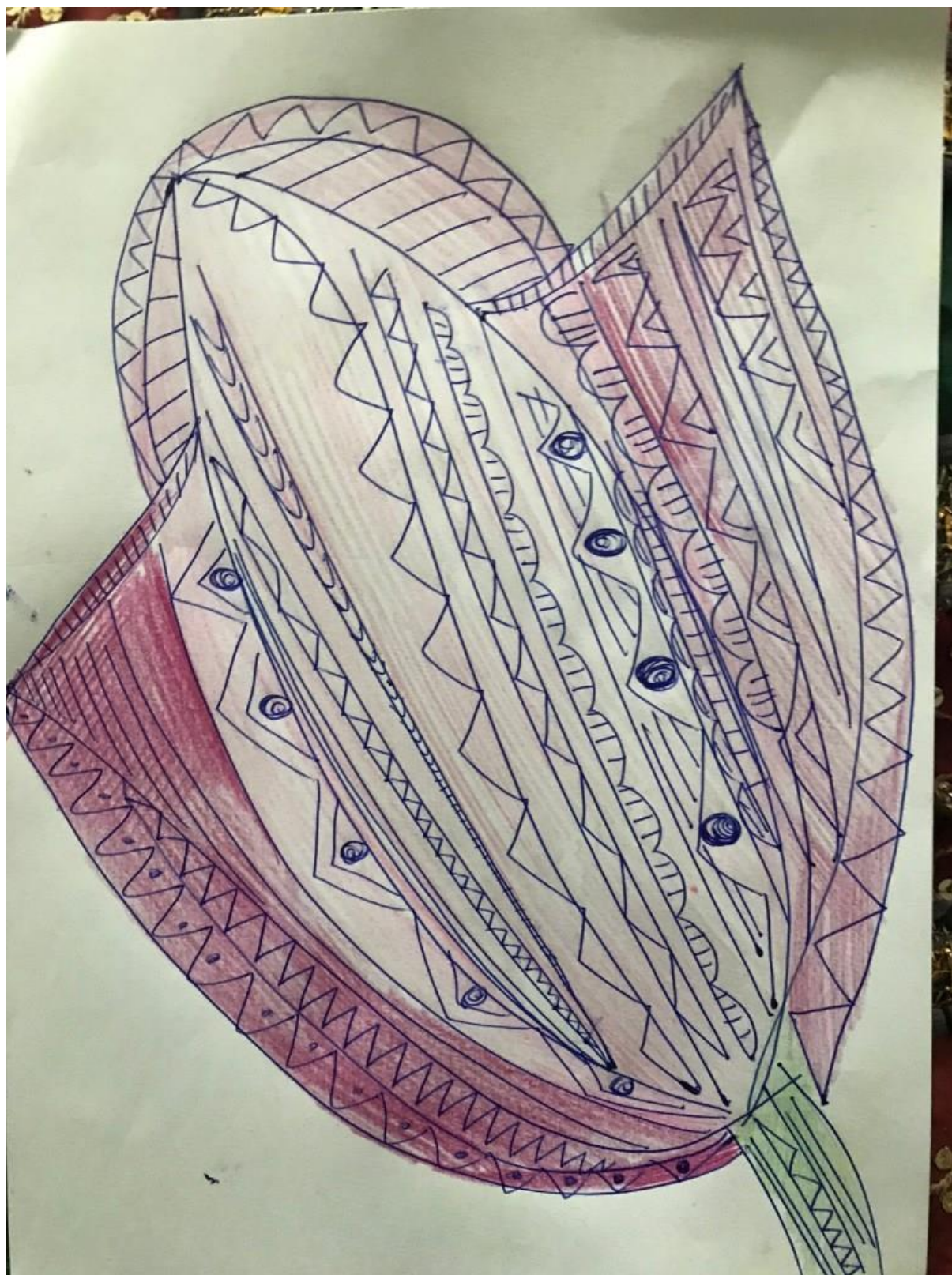
Their stories being heard. They need a person to hear the stories. Storytelling plays a very important role in sharing what happened yesterday.

Could you talk about the key achievements of Kathalaya?

Kathalaya which was founded by Geeta Ma'am, has spread the art of storytelling nationally and globally. Storytelling has spread everywhere. We have been conducting storytelling festivals all over India and the world. We have been in the Limca book of records. We have taught storytelling India and abroad. We have impacted more than 5,00,000 children. Many children who grew up listening to

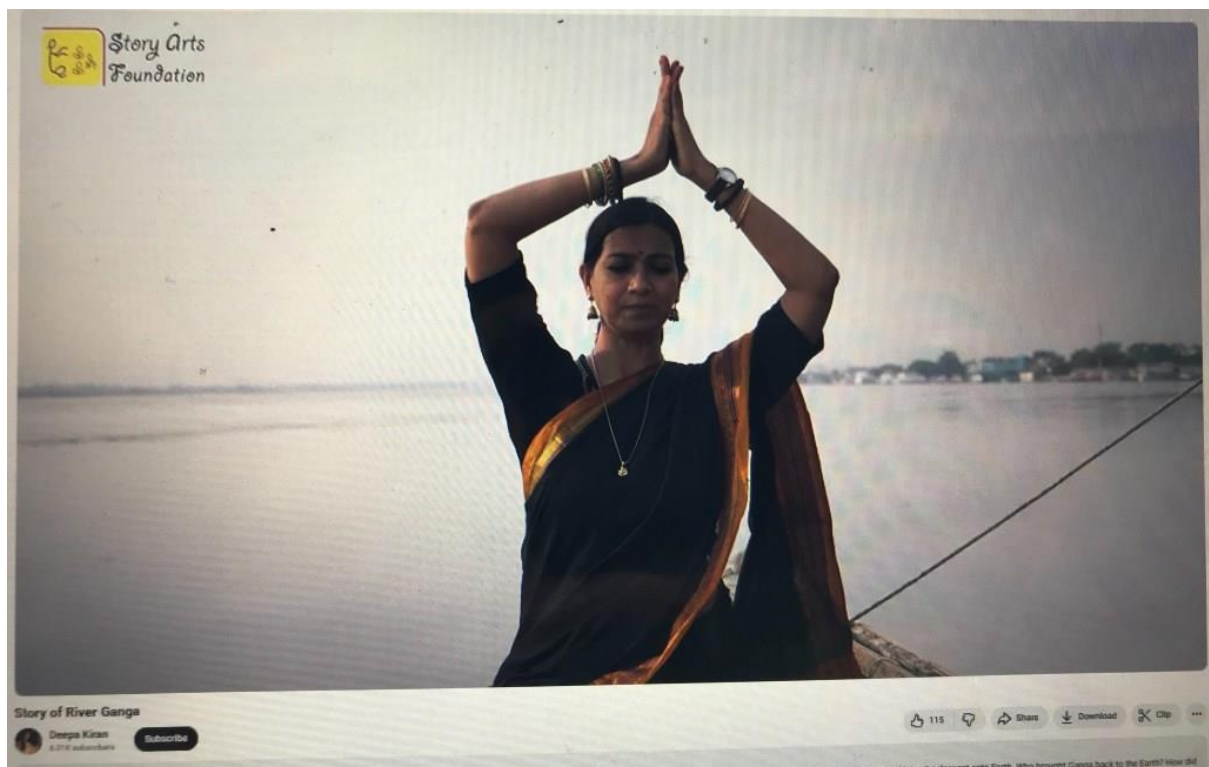
Geeta's stories have now grown up and affectionately call her Story Ma'am.





- The story of Ganga – A storytelling video by Deepa Kiran

November 4, 2025



A myth or a sacred story holds much significance for a people and their culture. It is the lived belief system, a way of veneration. When a performing artist and international storyteller as proficient as

Deepa Kiran performs the Ganges story – all one can do is stand up in applause. This story is performed on a boat in the Ganges in Varanasi.

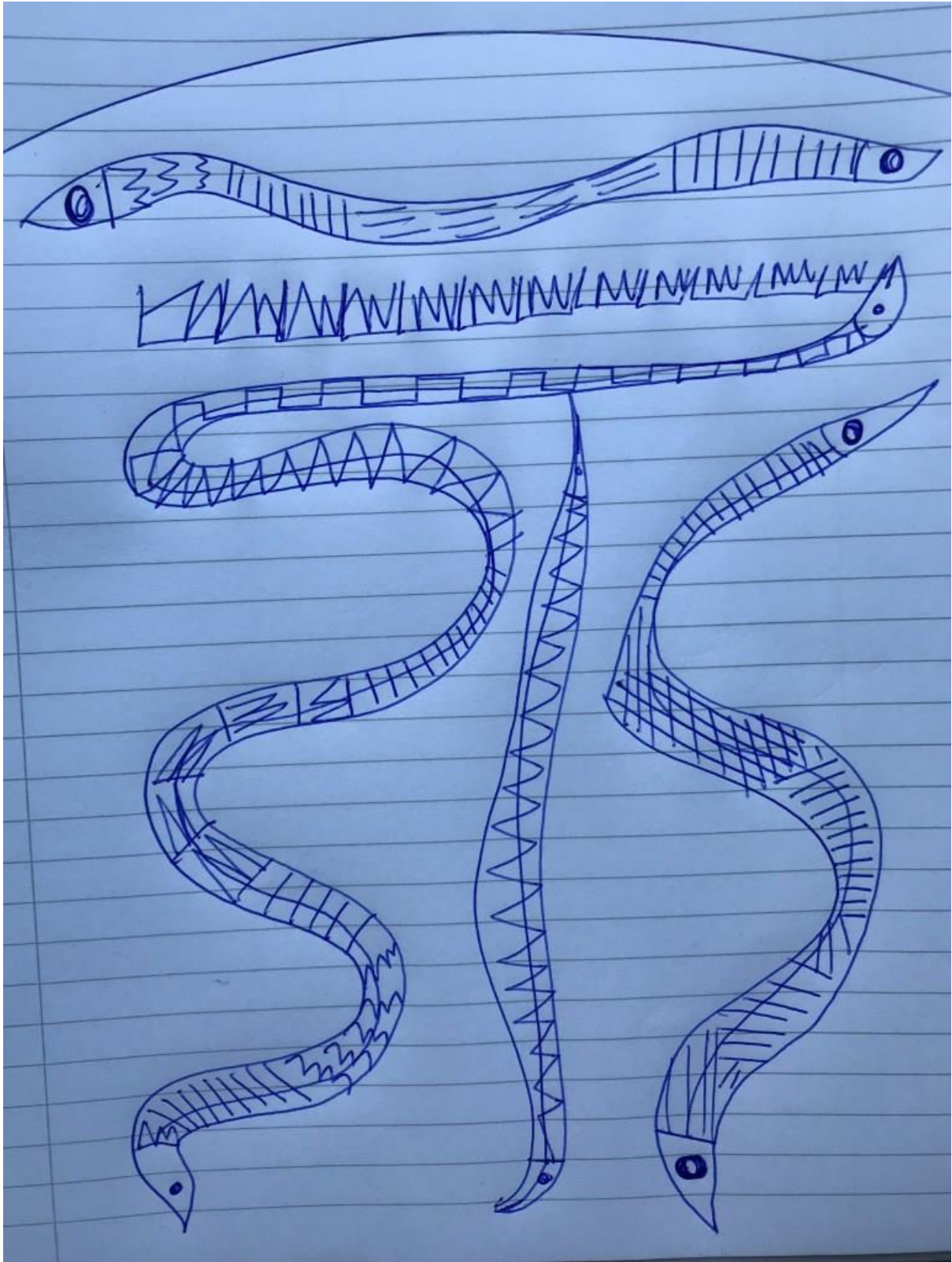
The boat sways gently in the river and Deepa Kiran seated in it tells us and the river the story of Ganga Devi. The power of Indic storytelling lies in the fact that the more we repeat our stories and the more we transmit them in a tradition approved method, the deeper we sink into yoga and a yogic experience of our culture. In Indian storytelling traditions it, the act of storytelling can be therapeutic for the audience where they attain salvation or Mukti through bhakti. Storytelling is one of the traditional forms of Bhakti yoga. This

narration helps us the audience experience a Ganges like purification process, an attainment towards nirvana.

The story of Ganges as performed by Deepa Kiran offers a lens into the traditional Indian stories and storytelling. These traditional stories transport us back into the world of gods, rivers as goddesses and monumental crisis resolution through the tapas of yoga and determination. Told to the tune of the Shank, the sounds of the Ganges, Sanskrit Chants and traditional musical instruments, this is one compelling performance.

The story of the two headed serpent –

An analysis



Narrative Practices help us understand the meaning of spacetime dimensionality in the creation of an artistic experience. Stories like that of the mythical two headed serpent are found across cultures. The reason this story is important is that this story can be found through arts of various peoples. We do know such stories existed because we can find diagrams and sculptures of two headed serpents. But do two headed serpents exist in nature? They don't and this shows that all cultures across spacetime used motifs that came from the imagination rather than from physical reality.

A way of reimagining the two headed serpent's symbolic value in the collective consciousness –

The two headed serpent is a symbol of language itself which is having two levels of meaning – the obvious and the conversational one and the second symbolic one.

Storytelling and the Self – Interview with Vikram Sridhar

Your storytelling journey?

Storytelling for me, has been an amalgamation of three different intents –

1. Theatre, drama and the performing arts
2. Working with communities – children and different people
3. The world of nature

Looking back, these three intents developed during my school and college. I studied in the Padma Seshadri school at Chennai which had an art culture. There were group-based art activities, a chance to volunteer with children and also volunteer for dogs. My interests formed thus. In college I used to volunteer for animal rescue organisations. I used to watch a lot of lot of plays and performance. Given the Indian academic based system and also not being from an arts based

family (though my brother was a sportsman). So, all this started as a passion. But after spending several years in the corporate world I settled on this form called storytelling which is so widely used and widespread. Storytelling became the connecting point for the above three intents.

It became a singular journey which connected the three worlds of mine. With storytelling everything came together.

Storytelling also spans across 1. Folklore 2.

Heritage and 3. Mythology

Could you talk about folklore, mythology, and heritage?

In a country like India – we have a lot of ways of looking at the world around. The set of folklore, mythology and heritage gave me a way to consume the stories around me.

Heritage is that which was given from the past to me and I need to give it to the future. Someone's history is my heritage. Someone's heritage is my history. Heritage can be felt with the senses.

Heritage can be experienced with the heart.

Our mythology is our itihasas, puranas and beautiful stories that span bhakti, evolution and

science. The gamut of mythology we have is at once spiritual and philosophical.

Folklore is the flora and fauna of storytelling as well as about the flora and fauna of our land.

In mythology, the spiritual is the ultimate path. In folklore, is a journey into the natural world, emotions, and psychology. Heritage is a cultural journey.

About India's ancient tradition of storytelling and sharing stories?

India's boundary is large. It is very organic. Stories are about what happened to other persons and us.

There is this story of the origin of the Panchatantra – a person from Iran comes to India in search of Rasayana – the magical life extending substance. He is told that the Rasayana is not a medicinal herb but a collection of stories called the Panchatantra. The power of stories – not physical sheets of paper. Nothing to Nothing to Something. It is given in a bowl. Once you consume the bowl the content is empty. Storytelling is carrying something, a bit like electricity. Each story has different versions. We question, we think – in a story it is shared. Stories are shared. They are in each of us.

Ancient India used the mythology, folklore and heritage streams. Education systems have changed – in libraries we don't just stock books – these are spaces for humans. Stories are a way of conversation. Stories are a way to agree to disagree.

Storytelling has always been there in this country. We have tremendous faith in oral words. Trust, belief are very important in storytelling. If we don't believe in the other person – why do we listen to the other person – trust is what the teller shares with the audience.

Stories always have local references. Stories from Tamil Nadu refer the palm leaf. Those from Rajasthan – the camel. Those from Kerala – the Banana leaf.

Storytelling is not one sided. Storytelling is both sides. The teller is one who is transformed before the next session. This is the power of traditional storytelling.

Could you talk about the idea of the antagonist in Indian stories?

In the western world there is more of an emphasis on a physical villain, which is not true in the

Indian context. I define the antagonist as someone who gives you conflict. The question is where is the conflict? If there is no conflict, there is no story. There is war and peace here. Peace is also a conflict. War is also important to cleanse and unbaggage ourself. When there is a conflict the question is how does the conflict get resolved?

Which Indian story collections do you like to work with?

I like working with regional stories that reference local ecology. Stories have reference to local flora

and fauna. The Panchatantra in Gujrat is not same as the Panchatantra in Assam.

I like animal tales as we can give them to children and adult audiences. I like tales which can be told to anyone – any agegroup, something for everybody. These are the tales I love doing – Panchatantra and moral stories – these can be told to a spectrum of people.

Could you talk about the wisdom in the Panchatantra stories?

Panchatantra is the most translated collection of fables across the world. The stories span psychology, wellness and therapy. The first section mitra bheda is all about Remove, Remove, Remove. Similar to the message in the Bhagvad Geeta. The Panchatantra through simple characters appeals to various people. It appeals to me. Only when we work to remove things, we have the space to add things. There is a war and peace that is going on.

We tend to be hasty in our response to things and that affects future outcomes. We are still discovering how the five segments of the Panchatantra can be discovered in therapeutic

processes. The Panchatantra can serve many purposes. People have not changed. Psychology has not changed. Because of this Indian stories still work. We as people are still the same. The Panchatantra is still useful in its philosophy to children, corporate people, and parents. It still appeals to everyone.

It helps us remove action. Removal is somewhere there in all of us.

Could you talk more about removal or the Sanskrit concept of Vairagya or detachment? A story perhaps?

There is a story I heard from Cho Swaminathan in 2000. Once upon a time there was someone who went to a learned person and asked him “how should I become detached?”

Kuppuswamy was a miser. He possessed a very old cap. This cap became his identity. He was known as Topiswamy, topi being cap in Tamil.

Everyone knew Topiswamy and his friends offered to buy him a new cap. He would say, “I don’t want another cap. This is the only cap I want.

His job was to sell old bottles. Once, in an auction he got a huge bottle of perfume. He filled a little

perfume in all his bottles and kept them by the window.

That very day, a companion came and suggested, “Lets take bath in a lake.” Same day, a judge was taking bath in the same lake. The judge had also been wearing a cap which he had left on a stick by the lake. Now by mistake Topiswamy mistook the judge’s cap for his own and took it back. His own cap was left in the lake. Someone recognised his cap and they came to home looking for the judge’s cap. He was fined 1000 rupees and his own cap was returned to him.

Finally, he thought it was time to get rid of the old cap which had caused so much trouble. He threw the cap out of the window and a man on the street caught it and threw it back. All the bottles of freshly packed perfume broke in the process.

Next, he threw the cap in the watertank and it caused a blockage. He was fined Rs 2500 for causing sewage blockage.

Next, he tried to douse the cap with a fire. Soon, the fire brigade rushed to his street!! But this time, as luck would finally have it this time the cap was done for. Because of this Kuppuswamy finally got rid of the hat. This teaches about the importance of

not being attached to things. The moment we attach our emotions to things – there will be opportunities that leave us. Like Kuppuswamy, we are all attached to some cap in our life. It becomes our identity. And it should be thrown away.

How do stories lead to inculcating inner strength and imagination?

Storytelling is a process; it is a journey. There is no output in an artistic process. No imagination is imagination. It leaves you on a journey. The best story leaves you in a place you can go to in any direction. You can go north, south, east, west. Till

you stop and then the transformation begins.

Storytelling is at once a basic and eco-friendly and organic way of sharing.

Today, we have all the reason to feel good. But we have forgotten to imagine.

How does storytelling help inner strength?

Storytelling is a journey. It is invisible. It is visual at the most vulnerable times. It helps you find a door to an inner world. We are all living more and more in the outer world. Strength becomes an output when we try to measure. To give an example when we pour water into the soil – the soil becomes fit and ready for cultivation.

Could you talk about storytelling and the self?

In storytelling the goal is to sing the song and become the story. To find the self, the authentic self. Storytelling embraces the world and the self.

What we do when we are not telling – beyond the story between the story and after the story. To become ready for any art form – it happens outside the place. It is not in telling the story. It is how I become the story.

In the Gita and Puranas, it is the self which is described.

It is a process, it is a long process – how the self reacts is how we respond. The self has emotion, we can't hide it. Let the self flow, let it go with the story.

Can you talk about your experience of Indian enlightenment traditions?

It will take 1 million janmas to experience Indian enlightenment traditions. What is hidden in the Indian system – in our kolam, in our warli, in the way we walk, in the way we address people. The whole Indian focus around Ahimsa. India has a tradition of embracing nature, of not hurting

nature. Everything goes back to the soil. The tradition makes it going back to nature, easy and possible. All this is a part of our culture. We see in in every region of India – from Gujrat to Assam. We see this eco-friendliness in the architecture and buildings. We see it in our ancient technologies – like that of burning coal instead of using electricity.

Have you been influenced by ancient Indian knowledge systems?

In ancient Indian knowledge systems everything was rooted in psychology. Our artistic practices

were in themselves a therapeutic practice. The whole Indian practice was based on accept the self, accept the community, and accept other species.

It was a system that worked on goodwill. We are all fragile emotionally. It is different for both men and women. Ancient had developed a set of psychologically evolved processes to help people live their life better. They accepted that emotions changed as the seasons changed, as moon changed and as life changes. It was accepted we are prone to damage.

People were encouraged to do nothing. The theory went – don't need to react, need to take a pause.

The ancient Indians believed that there was a force that was beyond the human realm. This force is hard to describe in human conditioning and vocabulary. What you realise is the realisation. There is no one single path to explore. There are many paths for everybody to follow. Every spiritual path is rooted in the larger something for everybody. Once you evolve, there are so many problems, so you move on.

Could you talk about the Indian cultural traditions that have influenced you?

I am, for instance, interested in how the Mahabharata is enacted, depicted, performed by people in different regions. There is on single version that is cited as the ‘only tradition’.

In every traditional space in India there is a legend, a myth (that cant be verified), folklore which is rooted in real happenings. So many snake shrines have been turned into temples. In the Panchamukha Anjaneyar temple was built in a place where a monkey had been buried.

Could you talk about your work on heritage?

It became a question for me – how do folktales work as heritage? We all, in India, know of the Ganga and Jamuna, but do we know of the Adyar river in Chennai. The question that often arises is, “do I know things in my own culture?” Another question is, “How do you look at heritage beyond history?” and “How can you storify it?”

For instance, there is this story behind the Bombay Vada Pav. I look for such information, storify them and perform them.

This is a constant journey. What is the story behind a statue? The constant question is “What can I storify?” Heritage is a part of the cultural journey

– it gives a sense of ownership. In history we don't have this sense of ownership. These stories can be shared with children and they teach a lot about kindness and general values.

The Storytelling Way with Priya Muthukumar

1. How did your start as a facilitator at a school influence you to take up storytelling as a profession?

I have always been ‘going with the flow’ throughout my professional journey. Time and again, there have been situations which have dislodged me from my comfort zones- situations which have left me restless, I call them as my moments of ‘blessed unrest’ Storipur was born out of this. The realization that stories need to be narrated more in our various spaces, need to be included in school timetables etc. helped me to pursue my storytelling journey.

2. On your storytelling journey

If I were to sum it, my storytelling journey has been a fulfilling one , filled with explorations and discoveries, with it's own share of ups and downs. Irrespective of the genre, I choose stories which appeal to me, which call out to me. When stories lead to discussions, questions and of course, actions, I know that I've struck a chord with my listeners. And it's always a delight to hear students say that they remember the story which I had narrated few years ago or that they miss such storytelling sessions !

3. When did you first start Storipur? What were the areas you wanted to focus on then?

2013 was when I started Storipur. Since then, Storipur's focus has been environmental & social responsibilities. Culture, heritage, history etc. are also areas we look into. However, 'love for Nature' remains the crux of Storipur. The logic is simple. When you love something, you want to take care of it , right ?

4. How has your work in Tamil translations been?

As a Tamil translator, I have a long way to go. I have translated around 12 children's books. Translations open new doors into another culture,

another world. I am definitely looking forward to contributing more through my translations.

5. How has been your work for and experience with Pachyderm Tales?

Recently, I got to collaborate with Pachyderm Tales — one was a workshop on Perfecting Sound & Voice at Bishop Heber Stagecraft festival the other was a panel discussion on translation at the Tamil lit fest- 2022 . Both the sessions were memorable and satisfying. Interacting with youth, reminds me always about the huge canvas of possibilities!

6. What are the themes you focus on in storytelling? And why?

I focus on environment, festivals, culture, concepts, conservation, climate change, art etc.. almost anything and everything which needs to be shared. In my current projects for colleges, I have been working on stories on themes like textiles, crafts, medical history, inventions etc. Being a learner and a jack-of-all-trades, variety and different topics always excite me!

7. Your favourite story that you like to narrate?

The story of Storipur. This is the starfish story — a little girl is walking on the beach, she sees a

starfish which has been washed up. She throws it back into the sea. She throws back as many starfishes she can find. A grownup says, “it is not going to make any difference.” The child replies, “It made a difference to that starfish.” I just want to continue to make a difference with stories.

8. Your experience with running a youtube channel for storytelling?

This is something which was not planned. Earlier, I hardly had a good video collection. They say necessity is the mother of invention. During the lockdown, I received many requests from, parents, teachers, students and schools for

storytelling videos. These videos were shared during online classes by various schools across the country. I started enjoying the process of conceptualising, choosing the story, scripting, recording and editing.

Various concepts and themes have been worked on in this channel. One of my favourites being Nature Tales which features unknown stories about the trees and plants we notice in our cities. You'll find stories about Tabebuia, Akash Malligae . Poinsettia and so on here. And there several others which are to be included soon. Right now, I just can't stop admiring the parrot green leaves and the mildly fragrant flowers of the Hongemara (Indian Birch

Tree). I am planning to upload a video soon of this humble tree..and would only shoot in the balcony.

I loved working on the trees in Bangalore series.

Stories on food, Collaborators' Series featuring different stories by various authors, motivational stories, traditional rhymes in different regional languages etc. are some videos which you'd find in my YouTube channel. (Here's the link [\(5\) Priya Muthukumar / Storipur — YouTube](#))

9. Tell us something about your storytelling impact?

Impact is too big a word. I am just sowing the seeds ... through stories. That's my role. Some of

them would grow into healthy plants, some might not, some might take longer, some might get washing away in the rains. But, that shouldn't stop anyone from sowing the seeds, right ?

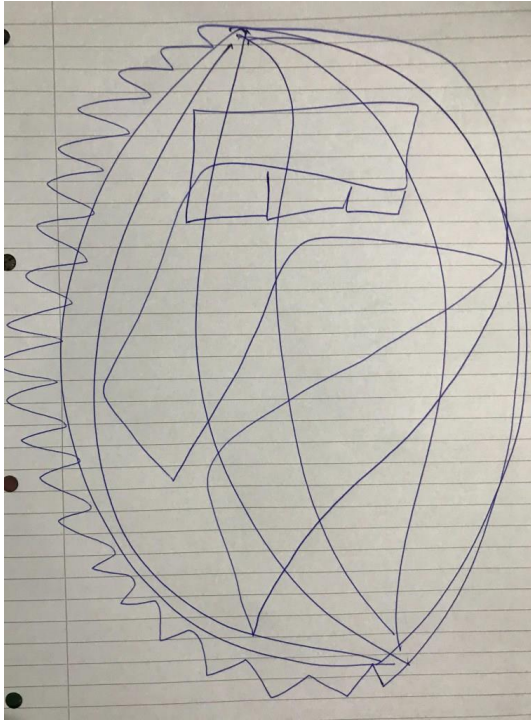
Storytelling-impact again to me, is all about spreading smiles, giving those triggers/ gentle reminders to think and act. And of course, the simple joy of coming together and listening to stories.

10. Anything else you would like to share?

Not all those who wander are lost. Do what makes your heart sing! It's okay to get lost to find oneself. I am grateful to the universe for

discovering myself every day, through this ancient
artform of storytelling.

Project – Stories of fruits



Collect 5 different types of wild fruits

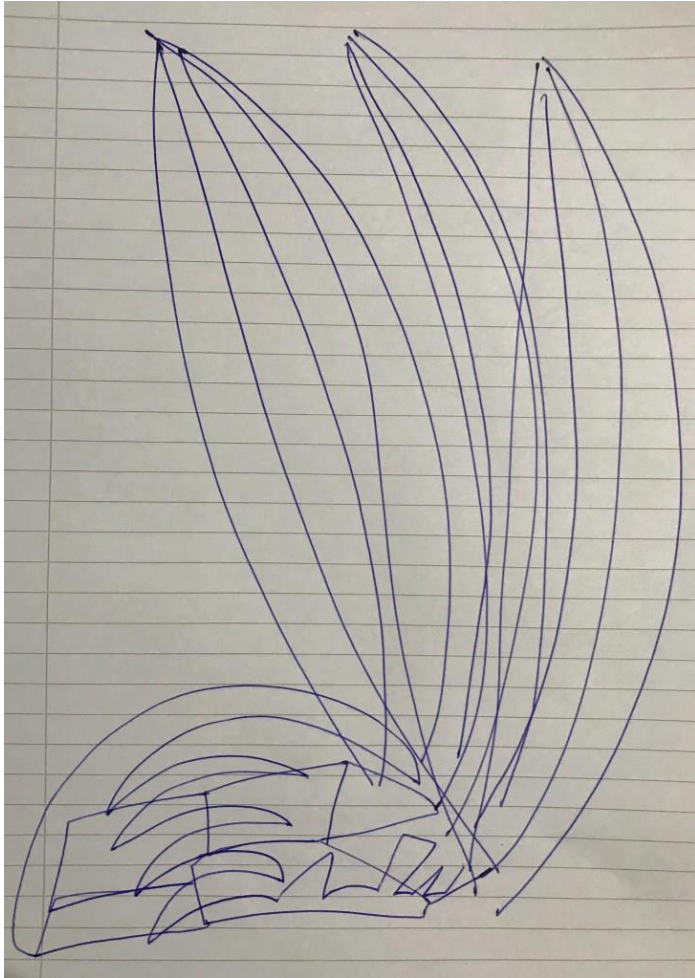
Draw them on sheets of paper

Colour them

Place the fruits on sheets of paper and trace their outlines

Compare both drawings

Project – Poetry Writing

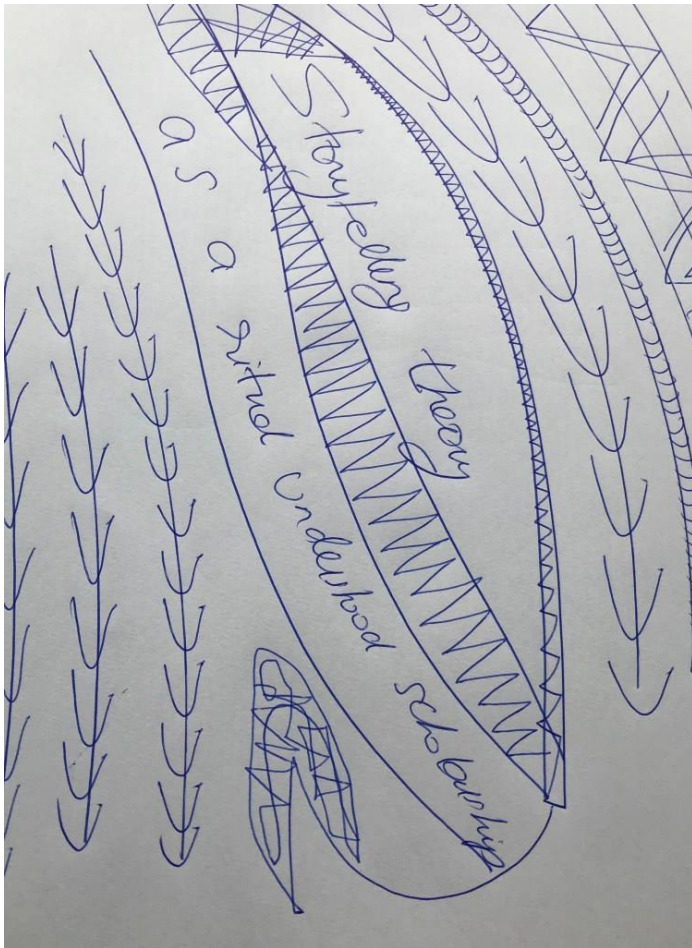


A tortoise hiding admist trees

Also, hiding inside its shell

Write a poem based on this theme.

Storytelling Theory



As we circle into ourselves we discover that the art of storytelling lies within not without. It is an act of introspection and introversion into narratives that is offered to audiences as a performance act.

The experience of yoga, Rishikesh and beyond – Interview with Vanessa

On your first encounters with Indian culture?

I read the Bhagavad Gita when I was 15. It was so different from anything I had read before – the thought that people have a dharma and a duty was familiar, but when Krishna says, “Arise, brave Arjuna and do your duty” even if it meant killing his family, gave me pause for thought. It seemed the antithesis of Western thought. Yet, I was fascinated by the thought of reincarnation and cycles of life; of a soul that kept purifying itself

until it escaped the cycle. I started looking at things a little differently. Much to my mother's chagrin, I became vegetarian and begged her not to wear fur.

I had a rather eccentric uncle who did extreme forms of yoga: he would hang out of windows by his knees to confront his fear of heights and contort himself into impossible shapes. He told me if I meditated every day and cleared my mind, I would have to study less. I started immediately! Who knows if it was that, but my grades steadily started improving and by the time I sat my IBs I

managed to set a school record for grades, never having even managed a B honor roll before. Who knows what I could have done if I had dangled myself out of a window?!

On your visits to India?

After university I finally got to go to India. I was amazed at this land of contrasts and superlatives. I couldn't believe the traffic and chaos, the colours and noise; sumptuous palaces but thousands of people living on the street in shocking conditions. I went to a Taj buffet. Armed bodyguards at a kid's party strode past a bent little man outside, begging

for baksheesh. I was astonished at this land of vibrant life. “I drink Limca because I like it” declared hand-painted billboards stuck to buildings older than most European nations. I remember taking a rickshaw, assuming I was hiring it for myself. A family with a toddler and a baby got in, two businessmen boarded and just as we took off, a sadhu with a trident hopped it. Already a squash and a squeeze, we disgorged passengers and picked more up along the way. The baby ended up on my lap, the sadhu’s trident bounced about perilously every bump, swerve and curve in the road. No one tutted when a man got in with a

massive sack of potatoes and, later, a woman with a chicken.

My first trip to India was overwhelming and crazy and I ended up in hospital in Goa. I didn't know families brought in food, bedding and utensils for their loved ones. I was there almost a week and I was bowled over by the kindness of strangers, who fed me, brought in sheets someone gave a fork and someone else a spoon. Everyone gave me kindness.

On your stay at Rishikesh?

It was a subsequent trip that I discovered Rishikesh. I was in Manali and met someone heading to Rishikesh. We travelled there together. Laxman Jhula was a crazy jam of people, cattle, donkey, monkeys, mopeds all jostling to get across the bridge. It looked more like a melee than a spiritual oasis. And then we got to the other side. Just a minute's distance from the bridge there was an amazing calm. Shanti. I can't pin it down, but something spoke to my very soul.

I found a yoga class and an amazing teacher. I had planned to stay just a few days, but spent three

months there, vowing to come back. In total, I ended up spent 28 months in Rishikesh over four years.

What attracts you to Yoga?

What I discovered and what kept me coming back was how integrated everything was. I was aware of Ayurveda, yoga philosophy, I knew about meditation. But it wasn't until I went to Rishikesh that I realised how integrated and holistic a system this was. It was a recipe for life. A blueprint for joy. These were practices that stretched back into the mists of time. The yogis were aware of gut

health, mental health, purification thousands of years ago. But also of the importance of eating right for your type; of balancing your diet and your physical body. I think it makes sense that disease first starts in your thoughts; so your aura needs to be healthy if your body is to stay healthy. I love the idea that there is no duality between body and mind, as though the body were a cloak the mind wears. Instead, our body reflects our state of being and we can grow healthier in mind, body and soul. I love the whole cosmology – Shiva Natraj or garudasana in yoga. It is a whole integrated system with Hindu thought and yet you do not need to be a Hindu or know anything about it, for

what yoga teaches you is to transcend the pain
body to get to the essence. Breath is life. Breathing
will teach you everything you need to know.

When I gave birth, it seemed to me that this was
the culmination of a learning journey. I wanted to
see whether I really could transcend the pain
barrier and breathe my baby into being. Two hours
of breathing and a drug free birth proved that it all
works. Breath is everything.

I used to practice yoga for hours every day. I
ended up leaving the film industry to teach yoga. I

would do between five to seven hours a day. Now, I simply do not have the time. However, I have taught my sons to breathe through pain and practice gratitude. Yoga teaches us to want what we have and be grateful for what we have, starting with being grateful for the breath of life. This is an essential lesson. There will always be someone richer, better looking, with a better job etc etc. It is easy to be disgruntled. However, to practice gratitude and to want what you have is to remove the stress of greed, of keeping up with the Jones'. When the kids were little, we used to do a "gratitude circle" most nights. We would sit in a circle and hold hands. Whoever had the Tibetan

chimes would ring them and would be the only person to speak. They would start with “Today I am grateful for...” . Even today, as teenagers, when something is bothering them, we sit down and think about what we are grateful for. We always close our circle with a round of Om.

On the global future of yoga?

It is so easy to be stuck on tech – pre-pandemic, we had a handle on tech. Now it is a life sapping addiction. I understand there is a place for it. But we must not forget that we are living, sentient beings. Yoga teaches us about cycles of lives and

enhances intuition. In-tuition – learning to go inwards. We all have innate intuition, but life gets in the way. And that is where having a practice that teaches discipline, compassion, joy, that pain is an illusion, the essence of life is being with your breath, here and now, calming the mind. Our kids are so mired in the realm of illusion that even their illusions are virtual illusory versions of illusion. Maya upon maya. However, I think this new tech generation might be screen addicts, but they are also much more awakened little souls to their connection to the earth and their roles as custodians. I find this incredibly hopeful. When I became a vegetarian, it was seen as a bit radical

hippie. I remember at university I was amongst a handful of people who recycled. I had a herbalist who made immune strengthening teas. Now these things are mainstream. Our kids are more tolerant. They do yoga at school, in gyms. I hope the idea of interconnectivity of life will keep growing. At a time when we look poised for years of war in Ukraine, we would do well to remember that positivity is just as strong as negativity and if we can imagine a world at peace, we can manifest it in a joyful, healthful manner.