

The Relevance of Profound Indigenous Thought Based on “Upanisad”, “Bhagavad-gita” and “Patrabali”

Paper Submission: 10/10/2020, Date of Acceptance: 27/10/2020, Date of Publication: 27/10/2020



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Abstract

India has been known to other nation as a land of wealth and philosophic wisdom. Indian culture is based on the ancient Vedic Teachings of spiritualism. Indian culture in its long career has experimented with life in its diverse aspects and levels. It has not neglected any of the values of life, but it has concentrated more in the field of Philosophy and Religion. Politics, Economic, Art, Science, Mathematics, Astrology, Ayurveda, Music etc. all these have been enriched by its contributions;

But its greatest and most unique contribution is in the wide area of Religion and Philosophy. “Culture means the total accumulation of material objects, ideas, symbols, beliefs, sentiments values and social forms which are passed on from one generation to another in any given society”.

(Quoted in the article on “the future for traditional cultures” by Prof. K.A. Nilkanta Sastri in the Unesco Chronicle for May 1959)

The teachings of the “Gita” presents recorded evidence of ancient Indian culture and civilization. In “Shreematbhagavad-gita” Sri Krishna says that one who possesses knowledge and humility is a perfect person. Honesty, generosity, non- violence, knowledge, truthfulness, self-restraint - all are the essential qualities of a truly cultured person. The elements and behaviours that make the community life more decent and worthy, build up the foundation of culture.

The “Gita” which is the part of the Mahabharata contains the essence of all the Upanisads. It is said-

“सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपाल नन्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधी भोक्ता दुग्धं गीता अमृतं महत्” ।।

-गीता महात्म्य ।

Keywords: Indian culture, philosophic wisdom, perfect person, Vedas, Puranas, indigenous interpretation of the Upanishads, Brahman, complete truth, Advaita school, Vaishnava school, real Krishna bhakta, holistic development of personality, spirit of social service, Radha-Krishna prem, Patrabali, spirituality, self-realization.

Introduction

It has been noticed by some modern scholars that the ancient civilization which flourished in ancient Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Phoenicia, Chaldea, Carthage, Greece, Rome etc., have a tendency of decay and die just like human bodies. No one remembers the Gods who were worshipped in these places. The religions have disappeared and the ancient language has been forgotten. The manners and customs have changed beyond recognition.

The tendency of wholesale destruction has compelled many western thinkers to think that whether western civilization will also perish like the ancient one. Compared with other civilizations, the Vedic civilization has revealed a wonderful vitality. While Vedic civilization is said to be the oldest civilization, it is still living with dignity. The Vedas which are the oldest literature in the world are still committed to heart studied and explained. Vedic

texts are recited by thousands of person all over world. "Vedic-Mantras" (Verses) are uttered during worship in temples and homes and while performing other religious ceremonies. In fact the Vedas are still the foundation of Hindu religion.

It is the opinion of all ancient scholars that the Vedas were not composed by any human beings. This is what is meant by the term "Apauruseya". In support of this view "Sayanaacharya" has quoted a passage from the Vedas in which the words of the Vedas are described as everlasting-

"वाचा विरूपनित्यचा" (Rg.-Veda Sanhita 8.75)

There is a distinction between words and sound. Sounds come into existence and disappear. But words may remain before and after the sound. Vedic words exist for ever. The vedas were revealed to the "Risis" who were engaged in austerities (*tapas*), "Brahma" imported to the "Risis" as per their eligibility -

"ऋषयो मंत्र दत्ताः" |Rg. veda.

(Quoted from "The Teaching of the Upanisad" by B.K Chattopadhyay.)

Later *Puranas* etc., were composed by Vedic scholars to present the Vedic religion in a popular form. The growth of *Puranas* from the Vedas is something like the growth of a tree from seed. The ideas contained in a nut-shell in the Vedas have been elaborated and elucidated in the *Puranas*. The superficial observers may find discrepancies between the two. But the discrepancies are more apparent than real. The saintly scholars like *Vyasa*, *Valmiki*, *Shankara*, *Ramanuja* all asserted the fundamental unity between the Vedas and *Puranas*. The Puranic civilization is the same as that of Vedic civilization, is still living is proved by the appearance of saints like *Ramkrishna Paramahansadeva* etc. The actual form of worship adopted by Him when he first attained *God-realization* was *Puranic* as he worshipped "Kali". The knowledge attained by Him may be called Vedic as He realized man's oneness with *Brahman* as laid down in the *Upanisads* which are the parts of Vedas. It may be observed He was not the only saint of modern India who realized God. *Ramkrishna's* name is well known because of the preachings of his famous disciple *Swami Vivekananda*. But there were others before and after him. I am quoting from the book "The teachings of the Upanisads" written by Sri B. K Chattopadhyay -

"Swami Bhaskarananda and Tailanga Swami of Banaras were almost contemporary with Him. *Ram Das Kathia Baba* of Brindaban, *Bijay Krishna Goswami*, *Bama Kshepa*, *Santa Das* and *Pagal Haranath* of Bengal, *Shyama Charan Lahari* of Banaras, *Swami Bholananda Giri* of Hardwara came after him and so on."

Generally the students of modern Universities get their knowledge of Vedas not from the original text nor from the writings of saintly scholars like *Shankaracharya* and *Ramanuja* who devoted their life for the realization of the Vedic ideas, but from the writings of western scholars who in spite of their vast erudition

have not in many cases been able to find the true meaning due to mainly ignorance of Vedic tradition or prejudice against them. Sri B.K.Chattopadhyaya delivered several lectures on serious defects in the present methods of teaching the *Upanisads* at different Universities stated below, quoted from his book-

Name of University

1. Lucknow University: March, 1942
2. Benaras Hindu University: August, 1942
3. Madras University: April, 1943
4. Allahabad University: January, 1945
5. Nagpur University: March, 1945
6. Patna University: July, 1945
7. Travancare University: August, 1945
8. Punjab University: October, 1945
9. Delhi University: October, 1945
10. Calcutta University: April, 1946

This lectures were presided over or attended by many eminent scholars, some of them are mentioned below-

Sir S. Radhakrishnan, the Vice Chancellor B.H.U, Sir C.V.Raman Nobel laureate, Dr. K.S.Iyer Head Sanskrit Dept, Lucknow University, Sri P.V.Kane of Bombay, Dr. Iswari Dutta. Head, Sanskrit Dept. Patna University, Dr. Dharendra Mohan Dutta, Head Dept. of Philosophy (P.U), Dr. Kunhan Raja, Head Sanskrit Dept. Madras University, Late Dr. S.C Mukherjee M.A. D.Lit, Head Sanskrit Dept. (B.H.U), Mr Justice W.R.Puranik, Vice-Chancellor, Nagpur University and several renowned scholars all over India. The ideas, the views presented by the writer at different seminars were almost unanimously accepted and hence proved the authenticity of writer, his interpretation of the Philosophy of *Hinduism*. Sri.B.K Chattopadhyaya got purely indigenous interpretations of the Upanisads, from his teacher *late Mahamahopadhyaya, Pandit "Durga Charan" Sankhya, Vedantatirtha* of Calcutta, the well known editor of the *Shankarabhasyas* of main Upanisads, and also of the *Ramanujabhasya* of the *Brahmasutras*.

I personally think that he has a unique perception on Indian Philosophy and he has briefly and in profound manner elaborated that in his book- "The Teaching of the Upanisads."

"उपनिषद्" is derived from उप नि+सद् विवप्+प्रत्यय 'उपनिषद्' canbe interpreted in two ways - It is the knowledge by means of which the ignorance which is the cause of attachment to the world is quickly and completely destroyed or it is the knowledge by means of which one can quickly attain the Supreme Being "Brahman".

The Upanisads are full of references to the Supreme God (*Brahman*) "सच्चिदानन्द ब्रह्मन्" the ultimate reality and the means of attaining Him. According to Upanisads at first "Brahman" alone existed and nothing else. The Universe was created by *Brahman* out of Himself. At the time of Universal destruction (*Pralay*) the Universe disappears in *Brahman*. The

material or ingredient with which *Brahman* created the Universe is nothing but *Brahman*. *Brahman* is both the "Nimitta" and "Upadan" *karana*, just as the spider creates the web and devours, just as the plants come out of the Earth. The Earth does not suffer any loss or change by the growth of plants. The same particles of matter which existed inside the Earth existed inside the Earth come out in the shape of plant, when the plants die the same particles go back to the Earth. So *Brahman* does not suffer any loss or change by the growth of the Universe. I am quoting here from

‘वृहदारण्यक उपनिषद्’
 "ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णं मुदच्यते ।।
 पुर्णस्य पुर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ।।
 ॐ शांति शांति शांति ।।"

"वृहदारण्यक उपनिषद्"~

5th Chapter, 1st ब्राह्मण)

"That (the primeval cause) is Full, This (cosmos) is Full, The Full (cosmos) comes out of the Full (the primeval cause), (At the time of Deluge) taking the fullness of the Full (cosmos) the Full (the primeval cause) remains."

The complete whole, or the supreme Absolute truth, is the complete personality of Godhead. The Supreme personality of Godhead is - 'सच्चिदानंद विग्रह'

The complete whole, the personality of Godhead, has immense potencies, all of which are as complete as He is, this phenomenal or material world is also complete in itself. The substance out of which Universe is created is *Brahman*. But it has been given a separate name i.e. *Maya*. *Maya* is the power of *Brahman*. It has been called *Maya* because of its wonderful action, other Synonyms for *Maya* are *Prakriti* (cause) *Pradhan* (main ingredients), *Avyakta* (Unmanifested), *Avidya* (ignorance), *Maya* consists of three qualities - *Sattava*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, "The Universe functions on its own time scale, which is fixed by the energy of the complete whole and when that time schedule is complete, this temporary manifestation will be annihilated by complete arrangement complete arrangement of the complete."

From-Sri Isoppanisad, page-2 by-A.C. Bhaktivedanta, the Founder Acharya of ISKCON

(He is the author of more than sixty volumes of authoritative translations, commentaries and expositives of the philosophical and religious classics of the Vedic tradition. Because of the authority, depth and clarity of the author, his books are recommended as standard text books in numerous Colleges and Universities around the world.)

Isoppanisad is the first of the 108 principal Upanisads. It's eighteen verses lead us to understand the completeness of the Absolute Truth, personal and impersonal aspects of God, man's position in Universe, going beyond the shining light of *Brahman* and attainment of spiritual success.

According to the Advaita Philosophy of *Shankaracharya* the world has no real existence, it is due to ignorance that the objects of the world appear to exist, when we realize the ultimate truth, we can perceive that the world does not exist. The analogy is given of rope mistaken for a snake, when the light is insufficient a rope may be mistaken for snake. The snake does not really exist. Its appearance is due to ignorance. Shankar's doctrine of creation is called *Vivarta*, while doctrine of other schools called *Vikara*. When one object is mistaken for another it is called *Vivarta*, when one object actually changes into another called *Vikara*, as when milk change into curd.

It is observed that the Vedic Philosophy alone has propounded a theory of knowledge by which it is possible to obtain complete truth, while the Philosophy of other religions contains partial truth. The superiority of Vedic philosophy is clear in the Vedic doctrine of the nature of soul. The Vedic Philosophy declares that the mind is inanimate, while the soul is animate. As the mind is very closely associated with the soul, so the mind appears to be conscious. But consciousness really belongs to the soul. Consciousness is an attributes of soul. According to Shankara, it is identical with soul.

According to Sri Chattopadyaya - In Hinduism "the diversity in creeds satisfies the diversity in human temperament. Some would like to worship God as father, some as mother, some as child, some as husband. There are different creeds in Hinduism suitable for these different temperaments. While the path of devotion is suitable to some, the path of wisdom satisfies others. The devotee loves to contemplate on God with a definite form and definite qualities. Even when he attains salvation he would not like to merge in God but would like to remain in constant and unending communion with God in that form and with those qualities. There is the *Vaisnava* school to satisfy such a devotee. The wise man might love to merge himself in Unmanifested *Brahman* without any qualities, the *Advaita* school would satisfy him."

(The Teaching of Upanisad-Page No 250) In the beginning the first living creature was Brahma. He received Vedic knowledge and imparted it to *Narada* and other disciples and sons, and they also distributed it to their disciples. In this way, the Vedic knowledge comes down by disciplic succession.

There are six kinds of evidences (*Pramana*). Vedic knowledge is called "*Shabda Pramana*". Another name is *Shruti*. The Vedas instruct that in order to understand transcendental knowledge, we have to hear from the authority. One class of transcendentalist is called impersonalist, *Mayabadi*. They are generally known *Vedantists*, led by *Shankaracharya* and there is another class of transcendentalists called *Vaisnavas*. Both the *Shankar sampradaya* and the *Vaisnava-*

sampradaya have accepted "Krisna" as the supreme personality of Godhead. *Shankaracharya* is supposed to be an impersonalist who preached impersonalism, impersonal *Brahman*, but it is the fact that he is a covered personalist. In his commentary on the Bhagavad-gita he wrote - 'Narayana, the supreme personality of Godhead, is beyond this cosmic manifestation, that supreme personality of Godhead *Narayana* is *Krishna*. He has come as the son of *Devaki* and *Vasudeva*'. So *Krishna* is accepted as the supreme personality of Godhead by all transcendentalists."

(*Sri Isopanisad (Introduction XI)*
by A.C. Bhaktivedanta

The general motion of birth and death does not apply to the lord Supreme. He only manifests himself at times whenever he feels necessity of it. Sri Krishna says-

"Oh, *Arjun*, whenever there is degeneration of '*Dharma*' and increase of '*Adharma*' - I manifest myself."

'यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

(*IV th chap-7 th stoka*)

The play of God is inscrutable. He performs without attachment, the role of the creation, maintenance and destruction. He remains hidden within the hearts of living beings. He is completely independent. These matters can not involve Him.

Krishna consciousness movement is completely authorized from Vedic principles. In Bhagavad-gita *Shri Krishna* says, "The actual aim of the Vedic research is to find out *Krishna*." In the *Brahmasanhita* it is also stated- "*Krishna, Govinda*, has innumerable forms, but they are all one. They are not like our forms, which are fallible. His form is infallible. His form has no beginning and has no end. (*Anadi, Ananta*). He is all prevailing.

In the *Gita* which is the kernal of the all Upanisads the lord says - "In whatever way one may try to attain me, in that particular way, I show favour to the devotee". It is clearly stated that different religions are, but different means of attaining the same God, the means being different because of the mentalities of different persons are different.

The characteristic of a real *Krishna Bhakta* is a dedicated person, who hates no one, who is friend of all, who is free from egoism, who is evenminded in pain and pleasure, who is forbearing, whose self has become controlled, who has silent thoughtful mind, who has no lust for luxury and who is steady in ideas.

Spirituality helps us enriching our lives. By spiritual practice and concentration, the mind can be made pure and free from desire and it will experience greater joy and bliss. When a desire arises, our mind becomes restless. Devotion is a state of mind resulting concentration towards supreme, concentration is the quality of 'सात्त्विक' state of mind.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu established an atmosphere of intense love for God through singing, dancing and chanting.

Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the pioneer of a great social and religious movement that began in India in the early sixteenth century and that directly and indirectly influenced the subsequent course of religious and Philosophical thinking not only in India but through out the world.

Mahaprabhu had no mundane desire like wealth, lust and fame. All He wanted was His self-submission towards Almighty. He says-

"न धनं न जनें सुन्दरी कविता वा जगदीश कामये ।

मम जन्मनि जन्मनौश्वरे भवतात् भक्तिरैहतुकी त्वयि ॥

If we follow the valuable teachings of *Mahaprabhu*, we can lead a peaceful dignified life and also can achieve eternal happiness. "*Vaisnavism*" is the ideal way by which we can maintain integrity, brotherhood and restore world peace.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) strongly advocated a holistic development of the human personality. This indicates physical, mental and above all spiritual development of the people. Mental development is the means for spiritual development, for the manifestation of the divinity of the soul. "Each soul is potentially divine, the goal is to manifest the divinity."

According to *Swami Vivekananda* the aim of the education is the development of the spirit of social service in man. He was deeply moved at the utter poverty and backwardness of the masses. 'Selflessness' is the essence of Indian Philosophy and its main concern is 'happiness for all', and function of education is to serve this end. *Vivekananda* calls a person '*Mahatma*' who "feels for the poor." He advocated that education must reach every home.

Those who are ethically sound, intellectually sharp, physically strong, religiously liberal, socially efficient, spiritually enlightend and vocationally self sufficient are truly educated.

Swamiji founded the Ramkrishna Mission which is engaged in the task of man-making. Hundreds of selfless monastic members and volunteers of the mission are working for the upliftment of the masses.

The devotees of lord *Kusumharanath* believe that *Lord Haranath* (1865- 1927) is the incarnation of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, advent at Sonamukhi (W.B) for doing his unfinished jobs. As mahaprabhu was *Sanyasi*, only *Sanyasis* and his associates were permitted to attend the religious gatherings and spiritual discourses. After *Chaitanya Mahaprabhu* became *Sanyasi* at His early age, mainly the females who are also a part of an important role to play in *Bhakti-marga* and acquiring knowledge of various Shastras, were deprived. The females were not allowed to meet the great *Sanyasi*, the incarnation of "*Radhakrishna*" as per the rule of a *Sanyasi* (संन्यास धर्म). Lord Haranath advised every one to take the name of Radha Krishna without

distinguishing sex, caste and creed. The ultimate target of all 'Jivas' is 'Radha Krishna Prem'. Purpose of His appearance is to preach, practice and make us realize the effectiveness of righteous living, repetition of the holy name, God realization and experience His constant presence. He has written numerous, precious letters to the devotees and those were published during His life span. The collection of the letters of Thakur Haranath which were published in five volumes is called "*Patrabali*." I am quoting few lines of the letters written by Him.

Jammu, 15.2.1908

"To Nathbhai
My dear brother

... I am much pleased to see that you have at last caught hold of the right and easiest path to eternal bliss, by being a devotee of Sri Krishnaji, who is above all and the master of everything known and unknown. You have read in *Gita* - "वहुनां जन्मान्मन्ते मां प्रपद्यते ।।" "*A man after being purified by repeated purging comes to understand the superiority of Krishna and tries to love and respect Him above all, you are blessed, you will not perish, as Gita teaches.*"

Latter No-87, patrabli part-III

Jammu, 6.3.1908

"My dear Maneklal,

All worldly ties are nothing but jokes which slacken easily and disappear

The tie that never looses is a tie between myself and *Krishnaji*. So know it certain and act accordingly. Patiently go on this way and you will be saved and taken to a region of everlasting bliss and enjoyment."

Latter No-89, patrabli part-III

Jammu 16th Jan-1910

"My Most Dear and Beloved Vithalbhai

..... Try to keep your heart always clean and pure, otherwise Krishna who is the purest of the pure will not come there. Evil thoughts turn the heart to hell, where Lords image cannot fall. Evil thoughts are worse than even evil deeds, so always try to regulate your thoughts and by doing so you will improve most speedily."

Latter No-96, patrabli part-III

Jammu 16 Jan 1910

"My dear Maneklal

..... God is universal and belongs to all national equally, so don't speak ill of any religion. Be pious to the core. Try to please all and everyone with your words and deeds." *Latter No-95, patrabli part-III*

All religions if correctly interpreted are universal in character. It has been the task of all sages, saints, prophets from time to time all over the world to show the ever forgetful humanity, that there is one Supreme spirit that governs the Universe and that all religions are but the means to realize and reach the Supreme God. The gospel and message of Lord Haranath, the latest and the most dynamic manifestation of Supreme is of universal love and love is the main factor and force in his play and teachings. Sri Aurobindo who was once veteran freedom fighter, retired as a saint in his later life, promoting *dhama*, (religion) at a higher state

of spiritualism. He made an *ashram* at Pondicherry where he lived till last days by meditating on God and writing numerous books on religion and Philosophy of the Hindus.

Rabindranath Tagore, the great poet and Philosopher emphasised on the point of greater India where all the International streams of culture have met to exchange thoughts and ideas of one another for mutual benefit. He founded an International University under the name of Vishwa Bharati, at Santiniketan. He had learnt the great truth of universality of love from the ancient Upanisads which had always been guiding the seekers offer truth for the last 2500 years.

Mahatma Gandhi emphasised on the spiritual and moral regeneration of humanity in religion, and that realization of truth could be achieved through non- violence in thought, word and deed-with a sense of self-discipline, self sacrifice and love.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan defines *Bhakti* as the feeling of contemplative humility which accompanies the consciousness of absolute dependance on God. Selfless eternal love for God is the essence of *Bhakti*.

Our country is filled up by mainly religiously sound minded persons. From ancient Vedic-age numerous virtuous, pious sages, saints and scholars took birth and even God Himself manifested in different forms to liberate trouble facing, worldly attached ignorant fatuous materialistic masses by advocating them real motive of life and by guiding the ways and means to get free from worldly sufferings and miseries.

Spirituality is a broad and multidimensional concept which has many different meanings and interpretations. Definition of spirituality provided by the tenth edition of Oxford English Dictionary "the equality or condition of being spiritual, attachment to or regard for things of the spirit as opposed to material or worldly interest."

Aim of the Study

This paper is an humble attempt to bring in the virtues of our ancient Vedic knowledge and highlight its modern relevance. Vedic civilization has passed the test of time and is the oldest recorded form of knowledge and wisdom which is still celebrated in its full glory. Many great scholars and saints have demonstrated Vedic way of living and helped comprehend the concepts in a simple easy way. These teachings are a torch-bearer of our Indian culture that is highly regarded even in the western world. The teachings, when taught from childhood leads to character development on high moral and ethical grounds. The teachings are also extremely relevant for today's youths who struggle in realizing one's true self and try hard to find answers to the unsolved mysteries of life. The teachings are an equally useful tool for the elderly to gain knowledge of the absolute truth or to attain communion with God.

Conclusion

From above brief observation it will appear that the Vedic-civilization has survived longest and has contributed in a striking degree to the moral evaluation of masses. The truth proclaimed in Upanisads has evoked enthusiastic admiration from even foreign scholars of the modern age. The famous German Philosopher Schopenhauer declared "there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanisads. It has been the solace of my life. It will be the solace of my death" Max Muller quoting these words said, "If these words of Schopenhauer required any endorsement I should willingly give it as the result of my own experience."

(*Origin of Vedanta, P. 16*)

The Upanisads comprise the best portions of the Vedas, which are the basis of civilization, which has survived the longest in the world and is still a living force and the truths proclaimed in Upanisads are more profound than in any other system of Philosophy.

"Truth is one, sages call it by various names, the wise perceive it differently- "एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति।"

(*RigVeda Sanhita, 1.164.46*)

Sri Krishna says-

"ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तास्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।

मम वतर्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः॥"

(*Gita 4th cap-11*)

"Through whatever paths men come to me, I receive them through those very paths receive, all paths, O Arjun, eventually come to Me only."

Thakur Haranath says - "Take any name that melts your heart as God is one only and all holy names are the means to reach the goal."

The *Purush Sukta*, (the famous hymn of the Rigveda) describes the Supreme being as having infinite heads, unnumbered eyes and unnumbered feet. The Almighty is enwrapping the Universe on every side, he also transcends it.

The parents should teach their children the values and purpose of life, the divine chanting of any name such as 'Kali', 'Durga', 'Shiva', 'Ganesh', 'Sita Ram', 'Radha Krishna', 'Gour Nitai', 'Kusumharanath', 'Ramkrishna', 'Jagannath' etc, serving parents and poors and spreading selfless pure universal love. Everyone should realize the true value of life. Day once gone is gone for ever and no wealth of Universe can call it back.

Modern age is witnessing a growing urge in man every where to realise his true-self, he is keenly feeling the need to make his knowledge flower into wisdom, he is experiencing deep hanker for the eternal peace.

Religion and spirituality can serve as a coping mechanisms, alleviating pain and distress by providing significant knowledge of self - realization. Although spirituality and religion intimately interconnected through overlapping concepts, spirituality is much broader concept than religion.

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