THE PARSEE VOICE

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Kaun Banega Aglā BPP Trustee? Man Of The Hour Yazdi Desai

Less than ten days (dasmu) after BPP Trustee, Silloo K. Kavarana's sad demise, the remaining six trustees decided to hold the election for the seat falling vacant, on 10th December, 2005. Why this unholy haste? May be, some of the self-styled King Makers on the Board had a candidate ready and they felt that if the "opposition" was given less time to organise its ranks, their candidate would romp home without a fight!

But the question that many members of the virtually defunct Anjuman Committee (it has been in existence for more than 13 years!) are asking is, how can the trustees call for an election, when the new Electoral College, as per the order of the Bombay High Court, was to be formed first, which would have then elected the new trustee? In fact, the tentative month bandied about for the election of the new Anjuman Committee was February next year.

Now that the announcement for the next trustee election has already been made and some names of Parsee men and women are tossed around, it is worthwhile, at this stage, to consider who is the fittest for the post. Let's see what our "computer-jee" has to say.

Kaun Banegã Aglã BPP Trustee?)

\(\begin{pmatrix} \text{01 Nawaz Mody} \\ \text{02 Arnavaz Mistry} \\ \text{03 Yezdi Bhagwagar} \end{pmatrix} \(\text{04 Yazdi Desai} \)

Are you sure *Ratoojee*, your answer is Nawaz Mody?

O...O...O No! Ye galat jawab hai! Sahi uttar hai, 04 YAZDI DESAI!

It was Yazdi Desai, who, stood at the 11th hour in August-September 2003, took on **the** sitting trustee, D.K. Tamboly, and bagged 146 votes! Yazdi, then, was a total new-comer, but was determined that BPP cannot be allowed to be packed with people who think that their 3-dimensional thoughts are far superior to the millenia-old wisdom of prophets, sages and our sagacious ancestors.

Today, Yazdi Desai is the one man who is all set to take over from where he left off in 2003, when he was a virtual stop-gap candidate, who was given less than a month, to take on Tamboly.

In the last two years and three months, Yazdi has demonstrated beyond any shadow of a doubt that he has commitment, character and consistency. He firmly believes in accountability and transparency. He has the ability to take on boldly all issues that most others shy away from. He doesn't flinch, but stands upto those, who have made it their mission to destroy and decimate all that our worthy ancestors have handed down to us through the ages. Yazdi is the one person, who, alongwith his wife Anahita and a few others, galvanised the Anjumans of India, particularly of Gujarat, who were so far silenced.

Only those who have come in close contact with him, know about his sterling qualities of head and heart. He is not the kind who will tomtom about what he does for the downtrodden and the needy. In fact, he is the type about whom one can certainly say that his left hand doesn't know what his right hand does!

Above all, we have no hesitation in saying that, in the present scenario, Yazdi Desai is the only one, who has the guts to stand up to some *dadas* on the board of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. He is nobody's 'yes man'!

For us, and for all right thinking voters, Yazdi Desai is the man of the hour!

Male-Female Equation

At this stage, the male-female equation on the BPP Board about another female trustee taking the place left vacant by Mrs. Silloo Kavarana's passing away may be put forward. But that kind of an argument is not tenable.

First of all, there is no convention or rule, written or unwritten, that one of the seven BPP trustees has to be a lady. Secondly, in the past, there have been instances when there were two lady trustees at the same time on the Board.

Here is a brief history, which is at once interesting and important, because, may be in the coming weeks, there is a possibility of some scribblers talking about a woman candidate only to be considered for the vacant seat.

First Lady Trustee

The very first lady trustee in the Bombay Parsi Punchayet was Lady Navajbai Ratan Tata, who became a trustee on 15th September, 1939. She remained a trustee till 6th September, 1946. Thereafter, on 11th October, 1946, Lady Hirabai Cowasjee Jehangir was elected. Lady Hirabai continued as a BPP trustee till her death in June, 1976. She was the first lady – and, to this day, the last to become the Chairperson of the BPP. In the meantime, Dr. Ms. Nellie Noble had also become a trustee in July 1974.

Later, two other lady trustees followed Dr. Noble: Mrs. Silloo Kavarana and Dr. Mehroo Bengalee. Between 1993 and 1996, both the ladies were simultaneously trustees of the BPP.

Thus, there is absolutely no convention of always having one lady trustee in the BPP.

On all counts, therefore, it is obvious that Yazdi Desai is the man of the hour. Onward Parsee soldier!

* * *

Question of Questions:

Will the BPP Trustee election be held as scheduled/postponed/cancelled?

No prizes for the right answer.

Confusion & Obfuscation - Name Of The Game

Ever since the BPP trustee election was announced on 30th October, 2005, the mandarins looking after the editorial side of "Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly" began their game of confusing the readers in general and the voters in particular. The strategy is simple: throw a number of names of prospective candidates, at the voter, juggle with them and subtly suggest some or deriding others.

This tactic should cut no ice with the intelligent voter, who, by now, is used to such cheap gimmicks.

The average voter has seen through such supine strategies in the past and is not going to be fooled by them. At this stage, we invite the attention of those voters, who are carried away emotionally by such false propaganda. Please note that till the 6th November, when two issues of Jam-e-

Jamshed Weekly had mentioned the names of such individuals, who had not even dreamt of contesting the election, and when the writer of the front-paged articles, "Worthy candidates" had let his imagination run riot, under the pen-name of "Ed", not even one of them had filed his/her nomination!!

At this stage, we caution the voters not to fall into the trap of committing themselves to any prospective candidate, without taking into consideration his/her merits and qualifications to be a responsible, independent trustee of the biggest Parsee trust in the world!

In our future issues, we shall inform our readers and voters of the Electoral College, why Yazdi Desai is the most appropriate and ideal candidate for the BPP trusteeship, in the present circumstances if the election is on!

Community Capers

(1) Jame's Editor Convicted Of Criminal Offence

The Editor of Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly, Rusi A. Dhondy, was recently convicted of a criminal offence by the 33rd Metropolitan Magistrate, Ballard Pier, Mr. M.B. Datye.

The Order, passed by the learned Magistrate read, "Accused Rusi A. Dhondy is convicted for having committed offence punishable under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act. His bail bond shall stand cancelled.

"For having committed offences punishable under section 138 of Negotiable Instrument Act accused shall suffer simple imprisonment for one month and shall pay compensation of Rs.25,00,000 i.d. shall, suffer rigorous imprisonment for one year."

The details of the case are that in 1997, Jame's Editor had issued eleven cheques aggregating

Rs.18.5 lacs for a loan of an equivalent sum taken from Phiroze H. Lilaowala. All the cheques bounced! Thereafter, Dhondy made several promises to the complainant, but failed to make any payment.

Six years later, in 2003, Dhondy issued further cheques to Lilaowala, which, too, bounced.

Mr. Lilaowala, in his letter to **The Parsee Voice**, rightly states that, "Our laws are lax and it takes many years of perseverance and a lot of stamina and cost to bring any rogue to justice... I pursued the matter in Court for almost 8 years, attending almost 60 sittings, sometimes waiting whole days in Court... sitting in hot and stuffy courts...

"Shri Rusi Adi Dhondy, the Editor of Jam-e-Jamshed has been taking short-term loans from various people, principally from his own community members, with pensioners and old retired people as his preferred victims! As security, he would give them his post-dated cheques which would invariably bounce. ...He would sweet-talk them into waiting a little longer... Most of his victims believed him... they were not aware that a Suit had to be filed against a bounced cheque within a particular time frame! In this way, several persons, mostly old and retired lost their life savings."

Jame's Precipitous Fall From Its One-time glory

In 1998, we were talking with a well-known Parsee personality in his office. Every few minutes the phone rang. The Secretary, sitting outside, would take the call and walk into her boss's cabin to say it was "R.D.". One wondered who this mysterious R.D. was. Shortly thereafter, seeing the quizzical look on our face, we were enlightened about the identity of R.D. The person concerned bowled us over by stating that a very huge amount was taken from him on loan by R.D., which was never returned.

The Parsee Voice truly feels sad that the image of both the Parsee community and Parsee journalism has been tarnished by the verdict of the Magistrate's Court.

Of course, Jame's Editor has gone in appeal in the Sessions Court and managed to get a stay. But that doesn't absolve him from his moral responsibility to the community.

How Dhondy's Predicament Spelt The Community's Doom

Just before the end of the last century, when Dhondy found the going getting out of control, in that, he was not able to keep the creditors at bay and editing and running Jame-e-Jamshed Weekly became next to impossible, the paper exchanged hands and was bought by a business tycoon. Dhondy continued to remain the editor, although steeped in debt. That provided an opportunity for the WZO man to take over as the 'Shadow' or *de facto* editor of Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly. Very subtly, from behind the curtains, this man started calling the shots. Even before the Doongarwadi controversy started, the *dramatis personae*, led by this same person, began the so-called "Opinion"

Poll", completely concocted and stage-managed by the shadow editor. As the whole thing degenerated into a farce, it was wound up!

A phone call would summon the editor, Rusi Dhondy, to his office. If word in an article or in a report was to be changed, the shadow editor's writ alone mattered. This state of affairs has continued to this day!!

Then, early 2000, came the revelation! A cheque of Rs.4 lacs was issued in the personal name of Rusi A. Dhondy, by the World Zoroastrian Organisation! The cheque, meant to be given for rural welfare, was signed by two trustees of WZO India, one of them being D.K. Tamboly! The publication of the copy of the cheque and a report in "Parsidom" of April 2000 created a furore in the community. It exposed the strange nexus between WZO, Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly and one of the creditors of Dhondy.

The point we are making is not meant to embarass or shame the editor, who can say that it was extreme bad luck that made him do what he did.

But, there are two very vital issues that have come up as a result of his actions: (1) He has very badly let down middle-class Parsees, who gave him a big chunk of their life's savings. Of course, their greed of getting a very high rate of interest played no mean a role.

(2) But, worse still, it's the former gulabyun that got a severe drubbing, because vested interests lurking round the corner, virtually took over the editor's chair, to promote their own nefarious propaganda!

The first, and perhaps the biggest, so far, was the Doongerwadi imbroglio in 2001. Jame Weekly swung to the other end to woo the extremists and the radicals. This was followed by the BPP trustee elections, where, too, Jame betrayed its traditional readers! This betrayal vein continues to this day, with the real editor made to play second fiddle to those who propped him up! The two casualties were: the Mazdayasni Zoroastrian religion and the Parsee community!

The Conviction & After

Today, Rusi Dhondy has managed to get a temporary reprieve from the sessions court. His lawyer, we understand, is senior counsel Harshad Ponda. Who pays for all the hefty expenses to bail Jame's editor out? The obvious answer is, vested interests!

In the final analysis, in the last five years, Jame has lost its credibility and dependability.

(2) Behram's Braggadocio!

Hardly had the ink dried on our last issue's writeup, **Behram-e boundary mari**, when we blinked in surprise to read here, there and everywhere about BPP's Behram's pen-pushing exploits that featured him in the Guinness Book.

The two functions at which he was felicitated were, the one at the Wankhede Stadium's (nothing to do with his "boundary") Green Room, Garware Club House, on Friday, 21st October, and the other one at Bandra's Tata Blocks, where Dastur lives.

The Wankhede Stadium function was organised by, hold your breath, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, which blew up quite a big sum on felicitating their employee!! (Remember our frontpage story in the May, 2005 issue wherein, we had said that Dastur and some of his BPP colleagues were taken on a jamboree all the way to London, to attend the 8th World Zoroastrian Congress?). And what did our Guinness record holder do for one whole week? Except for reading his own paper, most of the time he gallivanted around Blighty and was busy shopping!! May be, at his own expense? The fundamental question that arises is: can a public trust use the trust's money for frittering away on its staff entertainment?

The specially printed invitation card for the Wankhede function was also not without its bloomer: Dastur was mentioned as accomplishing his feat of scribbling less than 2500 letters in eight years flat (November 1995 to April, 2004, instead of November, 1955...!) The speakers were: Minoo Shroff, Homi Khusrokhan,

Sharu Rangnekar, Dr. N.H. Atthreya, Jehangir Patel (Parsiana), Berjis Desai (Bombay Samachar) and Vispy Dastur.

Each took his turn to eulogise Dastur's feat. What is of interest to us is what some of the Parsee speakers said: Parsiana Editor called his magazine a "well-balanced and most informative Zoroastrian (not "Parsi") publication". He should have used, the past tense to describe it so. He proclaimed, "Behram is a world-class individual"! BPP Chairman Minoo Shroff bungled in stating that Dastur was "the only other CEO of BPP to receive international recognition", the first one being Dr. Sir Jivanji Modi. Minoo Shroff was not aware of Dr. Jal F. Bulsara who was the BPP Joint Secretary from 1930 to 1941!

Dastur himself said, "Success should not go to one's head!" (Ahem!) and "My humble mission is to leave the place a little better than I found it". Which "place"? He didn't mention. Surely, he was not referring to the BPP CEO's chair?

But it was at Bandra's Tata Blocks Welfare Association, Dastur's home ground, that he was in his elements and started flying at a tangent, talking in favour of inter-faith marriages and conversion!

Both the hosts and the audience were stunned! It was left to a young lady gynaeologist, however, to show genuine spunk. She went up to the dais and told all concerned that Dastur, who is the CEO of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, had no business to make such irreligious statements. She advised that Parsees must marry in their own community and, produce children. We applaud you, ma'am!

(3) Double Standards Practised by BPP!

A renegade priest, Framroze Mirza, who has been treated as an outcast at our Agiaries and Atash Behrams for his anti-Zoroastrian beliefs and practices, was given a form by the staff of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, for candidature at the next election of a BPP trustee.

But the same staff, we learn, declined to issue a form to a former employee of the BPP, who served as a **Khandhia** for nearly 30 years at Doongerwadi. Dinyar A. Irani, who, earlier, had worked in different Agiaries, was refused the form, with no reason given!

BPP trustees must strictly instruct its staff that, according to Clause 53 of the Scheme for Election, any member of the Parsee community of "not less than 30 years of age is eligible to stand as a candidate." This fact was rightly mentioned in BPP's own 'Public Notice', published in a section of the Parsee press on 30th October, 2005.

Time and again, the orthodox section of the community, which is doing its best to preserve the priceless legacy left to them in trust by their worthy ancestors, has been thoughtlessly derided by the so-called "liberals", for maintaining a respectable distance from all those, who, daily touch **Nasa** (putridity) as enjoined by their scriptures. Today, ironically, an ex-pall bearer is refused a form for the forthcoming BPP trustee election, by some of those, who, without knowing anything about the laws of purity in the Zoroastrian religion, had lampooned the traditionalists! ("Parsiana", Please Copy).

(4) Warning Notice Served on "Parsiana"

It is reliably learnt that Bennett, Coleman & Co., Ltd., proprietors of the **Times of India** group, have sent a warning notice to the **Parsiana** magazine for publishing a derogatory "Editorial Viewpoint" in its issue of 21st October, 2005. It was insinuated therein that Times of India has persons sympathising with WAPIZ, that Times of India is biased against liberal Parsees, etc.

The Notice warns **Parsiana** that serious view has been taken of such baseless write-ups and hopes that saner counsels would prevail and that such stuff should not be repeated in future!

(5) Thodisi Lift Kara De Criminal Negligence Of Builder and Otis Elevators

Sunday night in October 2005. About 2.00 a.m. Lalbaug's Wadia Agiary's buiwalla, Ervad Dinyar Vajifdar, had slept a little longer than usual. He was slightly late for the *Ushahin bui* ceremony. So, he rushed out of his flat in Hilla Towers and took the Otis lift to the ground floor. The lift started and then decided to give up the ghost! The priest was stuck between two floors in pitched darkness. The lift doors, as in all modern lifts, were not collapsible. Imagine the scenario: a lone individual in no man's land, not even a tiny ray of light entering the lift, not a whiff of fresh air and the mobile phone network showing, "no network available"! A perfect case for gradual asphyxiation, panic and finally, collapse!

Yes, death would have come to anyone, particularly an old person in such circumstances. In all high-rise buildings, if there is a total powerfailure, the elevators are operated manually. But Hilla Builders, who have given out flats up to seven storeys only, have not yet had that alternate arrangement made!

Ervad Vajifdar banged at the lift door, shouted for help but not a soul stirred. His ordeal lasted for full 2½ hours!! It was the Agiary chashniwalla, who wondering why Dinyar had not yet turned up, who came up to the building, and shouted for help!

Zarir Bhathena of Hilla Builders gives full-paged multi-coloured adverts. in the Parsee press about Hilla Towers. In any other community in India, in a metro like Mumbai, there would have been a big hue and cry for putting the life of a human being in grave danger, because of sheer negligence! The builder would have been asked to pay heavy compensation to the aggrieved person. But, in our community, not a dog barks! Chalta hai, hota hai, Bada sahab sota hai!!



Nariman Mody Takes On The BPP!

Since When Have The Trustees Abdicated Their Religious Duties?

[Readers will recall extracts published by us from the letter of Nariman A. Mody and 220 others written to the BPP trustees, in respect of the anti-Zoroastrian acts of the trustees of "Association for Revival of Zoroastrianism" (ARZ) and BPP's CEO's terse reply to it.

Mody and his co-signatories were not to be put off by such a curt reply from B.T. Dastur.

We now publish extracts from Nariman's rejoinder dated 11th October, 2005, to which, so far, the BPP trustees, as is their wont, have not bothered to reply!]

"At the very outset we state that the said reply is very vague and the contents therein are totally absurd.

In the first paragraph it is said: "We are appalled to receive your letter of September 1, 2005." Your CEO has not sighted any reason, why you were appalled to receive the said letter.

In the 2nd paragraph it is written: "This is purely religious matter and should be addressed to the High Priests". We doubt whether the contents of the said reply were read and approved by the trustees before sending the same to us. Would the trustees dare to make such an irresponsible statement in a Court of Law? In our letter dated 01.09.2005 we had at length shown that it is not only religious matter but it also involves other vital isues such as physical security of our practicing priests and safe-guarding our religious institutions such as Agiaries, Atashbehrams, Dakhmas, from getting desecrated/damaged.

We would like to remind the trustees that two Agiaries and vast Doongerwadi land with five Dakhma built over the same are under their control and management. Is it not the duty and the concern of the trustees to preserve their sanctity? Have the trustees not dealt with purely religious matters in the past? Did not the trustees refuse to give any religious rights to Mrs. R.D. Tata (French Non-Parsi Lady) and making use and have benefit of the religious

institutions under their control? Did the trustees not fight the said case vigorously in the court of law?

In 1980 when the government of India wanted to introduce an Adoption Bill in parliament, which intended to give all the rights to the adopted child as if the child was natural born child of the couple who had adopted it. At that time samast Anjuman meeting was held at Sir Cawasjee Jehangir Hall under the presidentship of Late Mr. B.K. Bomanbehram, the then Chairman of board of trustees of Bombay Parsi Panchayet and the resolutions were passed for safe guarding our religious practice of not admitting the aliens into our fold and the representatives of the trustees were sent to Delhi requesting the government of India to totally exempt the members of the Parsi community from following Adoption Laws. These and many other instances can be found on the record of the Bombay Parsi Panchavet.

The statement of the second paragraph also compels us to believe that some/all trustees of BPP are directly/indirectly aiding and abetting the members/the trustees of ARZ whose discloser of its future plans to convert non-Parsi spouses of Parsis and their children into Zoroastrian religion and build Dadgah for their use and benefit has hurt our religious feelings and also that of the majority members of our Parsi community. We therefore request the trustees to use their good offices and prevail upon the trustees/members of ARZ to drop their future plans of converting non-Parsi spouses and their children into Zoroastrian religion and making a cosmopolitan fire temple.

In the third paragraph it is stated "The threatening tone is in very bad taste and strongly resented". It is worth bearing in mind that a stern warning should not be considered as a threat and your silence in such an important matter was in a very bad taste and for any resentment felt you have to blame your own selves and do some introspection."

મુંબઈની પારસી પંચાયત માટેનાં ટ્રસ્ટીની ચૂંટણી

શ્રીમતી સિદ્યામાય કાવારાણાનાં અચાનક મરણથી ઊભી થએલી પરિસ્થિતિ

શંભુ મેળા જેવાં વાતાવરણમાં ફ્રકત એકજ લાચક ઉમેદવાર – **યઝદી દેસા**ઈ

મુંબઈની પારસી પંચાયતનો કારોબાર હમેશાં મુજબ વિચિદ્રજ રહ્યો છે. બહેન સિલ્લા પી. કાવારાણાનાં ગુજર કરી જવાથી, એક ટ્રસ્ટીની બેઠક ખાલી પડી ગઈ છે.

ગયા એપ્રિલ મહિનામાં, મુંબઈની વડી અદાલતે જે ઓરડર આપ્યો હતો, તેમાં એવી જોગવાઈ કરી હતી, કે હાલની અંજુમન કમિટી, જેનાં સભ્યો ટ્રસ્ટીને ચૂંટે છે, તેની સમય મર્યાદા વર્ષો અગાઉ પૂરી થઈ ગઈ હોવાથી, એક નવી, વધારે મોટી અંજુમન કમિટીને ચૂંટવાની તાતી જરૂર છે.

તે છતાં મુંબઈની પારસી પંચાયતનાં ટ્રસ્ટીઓએ પેલી વર્ષો જુની અંજુમન કમિટીનેજ બહાલ રાખી એક જાહેર નોટિસ તા. ૩૦મી ઓક્ટોબરે, પારસી છાપાઓમાં આપી હતી, કે શ્રીમતી કાવારાણાની ખાલી પડેલી જગ્યા માટે નવા ટ્રસ્ટી માટેની ચૂંટણી, તા. ૧૦મી ડીસેમ્બર, ૨૦૦૫ ને દીને ચોજાશે!

પરંતુ, પેલા કોર્ટનાં ઓરડર, કે જેમાં નવી અંજુમન કમિટીની સ્થાપના થવીજ જોઈએ, એમ જણાવ્યું છે, તેનું શું? શું આ જુના વોટરોજ ફરીથી નવા ટ્રસ્ટી ચૂંટશે? શું આ કોર્ટનાં હુકમનો અનાદર ન કહેવાય?

ખેર, હજી તો ૩૦મી ઓકટોબરે જાહેરાત થઈ, તેટલાંજ કેટલાક સેવાભાવી નરનારોએ આ ચૂંટણી જંગમાં હોમાવ્યું! આ અંક પ્રેસમાં જાય છે, ત્યારે તો એક શંભુમેળા જેવી પરિસ્થિતિ ઊભી થઈ ગએલી લાગે છે! ચાર થી પાંચ નામો બોલાઈ રહ્યાં છે. એ તો ઠીક કે આ ચૂંટણી પર કોઈ સત્તો રમતું નથી!

શ્રી યુઝદી દેસાઇ

આ બધામાં જો કોઈ પણ એક યોગ્ય, લાયક ઉમેદવાર, એક આદર્શ ટ્રસ્ટી માટેનાં લક્ષણો ધરાવતા હોય, તો તે છે ભાઈ યઝદી દેસાઈ, જેઓએ પણ પોતાની ઉમેદવારી બહાર પાડી છે.

આ ભલા ભાઈમાં જે નૈતિક હિંમત, ગતિશીલતા, ઉદારતા અને જરથોસ્તી ધર્મને માટેની ચીવટ ધગશ, તેમજ ગરીબો અને હાજતમંદો માટેની સાચી દિલસોજી, જે અમોએ છેલાં વ્રણ વર્ષોમાં એમનામાં જોયા છે, તેવા સદગુણો આ નેક ભાઈને મુંબઈની પારસી પંચાયતની ટ્રસ્ટી માટેની ચૂંટણીમાં ઈંચે ઈંચ લાયક ઠેડવે છે! બલ્કે આવા ભાઈ જો ચૂંટાઈ આવે, તો અમને ખાવી છે કે તેઓ પારસી કોમ અને માઝદયસ્ની જરથોશ્તી દીનને માટે પોતાનાં તન, મન અને ધનથી સેવા આપશે.

અમને વધુ જણાવવામાં જરાએ સંકોચ નથી કે જવાન ભાઈ યઝદી દેસાઈમાં, ભવિષ્યનાં એક શેઠચા બનવાના બધાજ ગુણો છે. માટે જો આ વેળા ટ્રસ્ટી માટેની ચૂંટણી યોજાય, તો અમારી તમામ મતદારોને ખાસ વિનંતી છે કે આ સાચા સજ્જનને ચૂંટી, એમને કોમ અને ધર્મની સેવા કરવામાં જરૂર મદદ કરશો!



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