



Consciousness Homeostasis for Psychotherapeutic Healing : With special reference to Jain Philosophy

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Abstract. The healing from any ailment entails the comprehensive management of the individual's bio-psycho-socio-spiritual context. The effect of psychological domains on one's physical health indicate the scope of study of consciousness. Scientific psychological research findings along with the prevailing ancient traditions (religion, philosophy, culture) of India, have given a green signal to the major role of consciousness in one's well being. The present study aims to analyze the scope of psychosomatic healing with the perspective of Jain philosophy, which covers a vast multifold understanding of consciousness with the word 'chetana'. Early canonical literature like Tattvarthsutra, Sarvarthasiddhi, Pravachansaar, Raajvaartik of Jain Philosophy have described 6 stages of Consciousness and 2 dimensions for its manifestation where cognition is a primary manifestation of the consciousness. It was seen that an absolute neutrality of all components of cognition and consciousness such as emotion, thought, comprehension, apprehension, feeling, perception, experience, etc. when measured and quantified as an absolute zero, reached the state of consciousness homeostasis; wherein a balanced level of consciousness leads to a balanced psychological state. The study presented a model of information processing of consciousness, as described in Jain philosophy for achieving consciousness homeostasis for psychotherapy, providing us ancient and novel principles for psychotherapeutics, and paving a way for an application-based consciousness theory that is transferable to a clinical setup in the dynamics of therapy.

Keywords. Consciousness, Homeostasis threshold, Jain philosophy, Psychotherapy

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Introduction

As the field of modern science is progressing, treatment approaches are shifting from drug based approaches to a management methodology based in psychology. A comprehensive understanding of illness is leading to a more evolved application of the principles of applied psychology. The concept of consciousness and its role in psychotherapeutic management is a pivotal requirement for this fundamental shift from present medical and physiological treatment methods to psychological and behavioral science of substance.

Conceptualization of human body as a mere biological machinery is not able to address illness in totality as Gendle (2016) [1] has clearly stated how reductionism in Western medicine has negatively impacted quality and efficacy of patient quality of life. Similarly, Tamm (1993), also supported the reductionistic nature of the biomedical model and its limitations as it excludes psychological, social and ecological factors [2], which are outside of conventional biomedical model [3]. For instance, pain is one phenomena which has several complicated aspects i.e. biological, psychological and social aspects, and includes pain threshold, interpretation of pain, mental attitude, belief system, emotional support and so on; which renders the conventional biomedical model inadequate [4].

Components like emotions, feelings, thoughts, cognitions, etc. differ in the form and intensity of the consciousness and contribute to mental and physical health. Vanhaudenhuyse et al indicated the role of consciousness in minimal conscious state, vegetative state and coma [5]. A research by Cannon suggested that some emotional states of a person affect digestion of food and how states of consciousness inhibit digestion, while the others enhance digestion of food [6]. Similarly, a research by Byrd showed that 393 congestive heart failure patients admitted to coronary care unit in San Francisco had reduced severity score with positive therapeutic effects when intercessory prayer were performed [7].

Consciousness has a pivotal effect on one's physical health. According to study by Anand, it has been seen that fever could be due to stress,

and is a psychosomatic outcome; when patients are exposed to emotional events, they develop extremely high core body temperature (up to 41°C) [8]. It is also seen in a research by Oka, T. that raised temperature could actually be a symptom of anxiety [9]; the rise in temperature due to stress or anxiety might be due to the role of hypothalamus, which is associated with both emotions and regulating body temperature.

Health psychologists have confirmed that negative emotional experiences cause vulnerability to physical and mental illness [10, 11]. Moreover, positive and negative affect has been associated with the release of secretory immunoglobulin A, the antibody considered as the first line of defense against the common cold. Thus, positive moods would appear to enhance immune system and how the immune system would be compromised by negative moods [12]. To quote Rogers (1996), ".....man as a unity of mind (spirit) and soma. Thus, interactions between these components of the organism influence the health (balance) of the organism. Psyche influences soma and soma influences psyche. Those who ignore this reality have a very incomplete view of factors influencing health." [13].

In the scientific literature, the effects of psychological aspects on one's health are quite evident which indicate the scope of study of consciousness. Understanding consciousness would aid in the rise of a new course of psychotherapy. Indian culture has defined consciousness in the vast literature of Jain philosophy which considers the role of psychosomatic potential, role of consciousness in affecting physical health, and potential of development of fundamentals in applied psychology. The present study aims to analyze the potential of consciousness in psychosomatic healing with the perspective of Jain philosophy.

Consciousness and Jain Philosophy

Definition of Chetana Conventional concept of consciousness has been conceptualized as the function of the human mind that receives and processes information, crystallizes it and then

stores it or rejects it. However, Schrodinger quotes “Consciousness cannot be accounted for in physical terms. Consciousness is absolutely fundamental. It cannot be accounted for in terms of anything else.” The adoption of a materialistic view to understand consciousness runs into insuperable difficulties to comprehend consciousness [14].

Shanta defined life as essentially cognitive and conscious. Consciousness manifests itself in all sentient and insentient nature [15]. Hence, it is the consciousness that characterizes a state of health or state of illness. Consciousness has been

operationalized by the elemental composition of awareness and wakefulness. In another word, awareness is defined by the content of consciousness, and arousal is defined by the level of consciousness. Awareness contains self-awareness, which perceives the internal world of thoughts, reflection, imagination, emotions, dreaming as well as external awareness, which perceives the outside world with the help of the sense organs [16]. Since consciousness and life coexist, hence, consciousness manifests explicitly in the conscious state and implicitly in the unconscious or coma state.

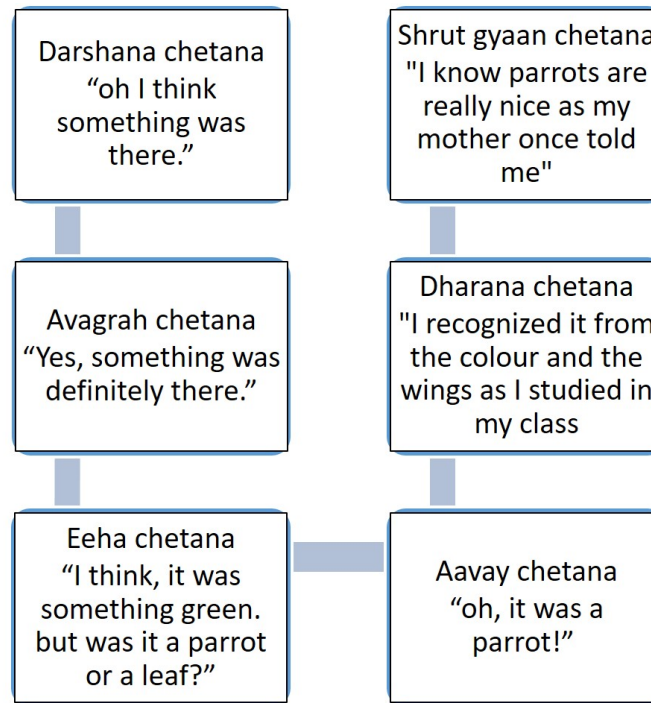


Figure 1: Stages of Chetana for information processing in Jain philosophy

Jain philosophy covers a vast multifold understanding of consciousness with the word ‘chetana’ (Cetanā). ‘Chetana manifests itself in several ways: intelligence, knowledge, intuition, bliss, perception (cognitive elements), emotions, will, attitude and behavior, awareness of pleasure and pain and so on. As per Samaysaar 271 there are 8 forms manifestation, and as per Raajvaartik there are 15 forms of manifestation [10]. Also as per Kachhara in his article “Conscious-

ness: Quantum and Jainism”, there are degrees of explicitness or manifestation of consciousness in different organisms [17]. Additionally, as per Tattvartha Sutra Adhyay 2 Sutra 8-

उपयोगो लक्षणम् | | -Tattvarthsutra 2/8 Upyogo Lakshanam - It translates as consciousness is the characteristic of the soul.

In other words, Chetana is a natural characteristic property of a living being just like heat is the nature of fire and sweetness is that of sug-

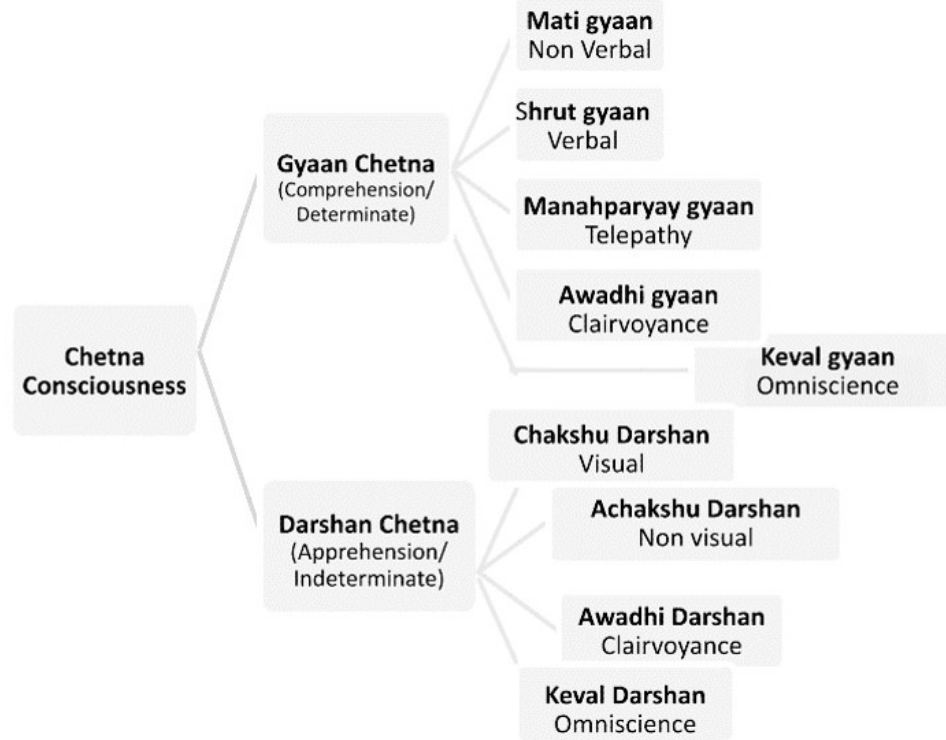


Figure 2: Dimensions of Chetana in Jain philosophy

arcane [18].

Stages of Chetana There is an unfathomable length of canonical literature in the ancient scriptures like Tattvarthsutra, Sarvarthsiddhi, Pravachansaar (1st century), Raajvaartik (7th century), etc. that explain the minute and subtle processing of knowing and feeling (to be aware in psychology) function of Chetana consciousness in 6 major stages (Raajvaartik pg.13-30).

अवग्रहे हावाय धारणाः || - Tattvarthsutra 1/15
Avgrahе Havaya Dharanah – It translates as Avgrah, Iha, Avaay and Dhaarna are the four types of Mati Gyaan (Non verbal comprehensive consciousness) [18].

Brief description of the main stages in the information processing by Chetana are previously described by Jain [10] and are depicted as in Figure 1.

As per the Dravya Sangraha, उवओगो दुवयप्पो, दंसण णाणं च दंसणं चदुधा | चक्खु अचक्खु ओही दंसणमध केवलं पेयं || णाणं अडुवियप्पं मदि सुद ओहि अणाण णाणाणि | मण पज्जय केवल मवि पच्चक्ख परोक्ख भेयं च || Dravya

Sangrah 4,5

Uvogo duvayappo, dansan naanam cha dansanam chadudha. Chakkhu achakkhu ohi, dansanmadh kevalam neyam. Naanam atthviyappam madi sud ohi anaan naanani. man pajjay keval mavi pachchakkh parokkh bheyam cha.

It translates as, there are two types of consciousness - Darshan and Gyaan. There are four types of Darshan Chetna - Chakkhu, Achakkhu, Awadhi and Keval. Whereas there are five types of Gyaan chetna - Mati, Shrut, Awadhi, Manahparyay and Keval.

Simply, there are two types of dimension of Chetana i.e. 1) Gyan –(Comprehension, determinate), 2) Darshan (Apprehension, indeterminate) living being is defined as the substratum of the faculty of cognition (upayoga) (Figure 2) [19].

Cognition as described in figure 2 such as verbal, visual, clairvoyance, etc. is nothing more than the manifestation of consciousness in a par-

ticular form i.e. Gyan and Darshan (dimensions of consciousness). With such deep understanding of consciousness i.e. stages and dimensions, Jain philosophy aids current understanding of human consciousness in the field of psychology for better development of comprehensive therapeutics.

Consciousness Threshold

Consciousness threshold in the view of conventional theories

Conventional definition of consciousness holds an underlying assumption of the term ‘unconscious’, which stems from theoretical conceptualization based in cognitive psychology. However, many other theorists took an unconventional route to define it and helped the present study to bring forth the ideology from spiritual consciousness.

Laureys (2005) said “Death, which is defined as the loss of the capacity of an organism to function as a whole as a result of the irretrievable cessation of its critical functions (circulation, respiration and consciousness)” [20]. The statement indicated considering living beings and the human individual as a conscious being, specifically at continuously varying consciousness levels including unconscious, at all times and all conditions except the state of being dead. As mentioned above, Jain scriptures explain consciousness as inevitably present even in the psychological terminology of the ‘unconscious’. In another word, if a person is really ‘unconscious’ i.e. state of being devoid of consciousness, as per definition of Chetana (consciousness), the person would be considered devoid of life itself. According to Jain philosophy, chetana’s characteristic is sensitivity i.e. to sense and to know. It feels, it knows anything and everything that comes in contact with it.

In addition, the neurological perspective of consciousness by Krick and Koch states that, “the problem of consciousness can, in the long run, be solved only by explanations at the neural level” [21]. It suggested a rather boastful and desperate approach reducing the ‘problem’ of consciousness in spite of defining consciousness as a conceptual term ‘phenomenology’ by

Husserl a century ago [22]. Krick and Koch further concluded their research regarding the oscillatory operations of visual awareness, which they considered as the most significant explanatory component of consciousness, by stating “A striking feature of our visual awareness (and of consciousness in general) is that it is very rich in information, even if much of it is retained for only a rather brief time. Not only can the system switch rapidly from one object to another, but in addition it can handle a very large amount of information in a coherent way at a single moment.....When we can both construct such machines and understand their detailed behavior, much of the mystery of consciousness may disappear ” [23]. Here, their research took a reductionist approach to create a narrative of consciousness in the terms of a machinery, specifically a computer. Whereas, the present research intended to explain consciousness with an analogy of a mirror and acknowledged that it was merely an analogy and not the definition itself. Additionally, it reflected whatever exists in ‘its’ (relative term) atmosphere. This explained that there is a rich amount of information that consciousness seems to hold.

Consciousness threshold in the view of Jain Philosophy

With the perspective of Jain philosophy, consciousness threshold can be defined as a momentarily limited capacity of self to focus the consciousness to sense and to be aware of the weakest stimulus of external, internal, object, abstract, concept, emotions, etc. either in the external or the internal environment. Similarly, Jain philosophy also defined ‘Consciousness Range’ as the range of the external or internal stimulants from the strongest to weakest stimuli that consciousness can detect at a point in given time [10].

Jain Philosophy draws an analogy of the concept of ‘consciousness threshold’ with other sensory thresholds. However, consciousness threshold is flexible in nature unlike the fixed range of sensory thresholds. Additionally, consciousness threshold as derived from Jain philosophy, can be stated to be different and varying from one

individual to another and from one moment to another moment [10]. This flexibility can be explained with an example of speech therapy for stammering.

In a research on the mental aspects of stammering, the theory of stammering Bluemel discussed the nature of thought first and then various disturbances of thought and consciousness, and finally the mental and emotional difficulties leading to stammering [24]. Similarly, Medical News newsletter published an article named 'Stuttering: All you need to know' by Nordqvist, which mentioned 'stress, embarrassment, and anxiety can make the stutter more pronounced'. The report also stated that in a scenario, when a psychotherapist provides therapy to a person presenting with stammering due to low self-esteem, at that time the patient's consciousness for self-awareness is at a lower level. In this scenario, when the therapy is successful, it can be said that that the patient was therapised in a way that patient's consciousness threshold shifted from a lower level to a higher level of consciousness and as a result patient can attend to his speech requirements adequately, consequently, thus, supporting the hypothesis 'Consciousness threshold' as derived from Jain Philosophy.

Causative relationship of an mental illness with consciousness

The present study attempted to indicate causative relationship of illness, inability, disturbance, etc. with a lack of consciousness. Considering the case of intellectual retardation, one's consciousness does not match with the requirement of consciousness range needed to perceive, understand and be aware of certain things coming in contact with consciousness. As per Jain philosophy, in the case of a coma state the consciousness acts 'implicitly', falls down to a level below the minimal consciousness threshold and hence cannot detect almost anything coming in its contact. This mechanism can have an analogy of a gradual increase in the level of sugar in milk resulting in detectable taste. i.e. increase in the amount of sugar granule by granule in the milk with precise amounts, eventually

reaching a threshold that activates the ability to taste sweetness of the milk indicating presence of sugar.

Another example of increasing the level of consciousness threshold is through music therapy. Decent number of patients have benefited from music therapy in cases of cardiovascular surgery, grief, parkinson's disease and even lifestyle problems like stress and headache. As Dr. Veer Sagar Jain, professor of Jain philosophy in a central university of New Delhi says, "We listen to music once when we want to, we enjoy and it's the end of the story. But in therapy the client is made to work with music making and listen to music over and over again till the required time duration until the visible recovery" (personal communication, 4 October 2018 [25]. Everyday music is an act of choice, where one decides to listen to a song for some time and enjoys the activity for just that moment. Whereas with music therapy, one is made to work with music and made to listen to music repetitively on regular intervals of time till the expert can see the recovery for the patient. This is an aspect of music therapy that shows music therapy takes time because the goal of the therapy is to increase the level of consciousness within an individual to the level of efficient working.

In addition, psychogenic fever is related with stress and anxiety [26], where the patients develop extremely high core body temperature when exposed to emotional events [27]. The fever is caused due to stress and anxiety which is due to a disturbed state of mind; the moment the individual starts to expand consciousness knowing one's healing potential by understanding a particular situation's consciousness requirement (here, fever), the alleviation of the person's distress begins the very moment. Hence, there is a vital role of the levels of consciousness in the occurrence of illness.

Consciousness Homeostasis and illness

Considering the vital role of the levels of consciousness in the occurrence of illness, it is an inevitable inference that a balanced level of con-

consciousness leads to a balanced psychological state which can be termed as consciousness homeostasis. Since cognition is a primary manifestation of the consciousness, in the consciousness homeostasis, there will be an absolute neutrality of all components of cognition and consciousness such

as emotion, thought, comprehension, apprehension, feeling, perception, experience, etc. when measured, and it would be quantified as an absolute zero, which can be depicted as in Figure 3.

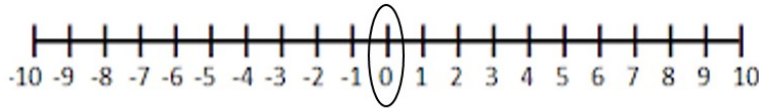


Figure 3: Numerical representation of quantified consciousness homeostasis. Zero representing consciousness homeostasis.

As per Jain philosophy, वत्थु सुहावो धम्मो || - Kartikeyanupreksha Vatthu Suhavo Dhammo - It is translated as the reality or dharma of any object is its true nature [28]. For instance, the reality or the dharma of water is to cool and the reality or the dharma of fire is heat. In the same manner, the essential nature of the consciousness or chetana is to seek self-realization and spiritual elevation. Consciousness homeostasis or vitragta is achieved when this true nature of reality is perceived which leads to psychotherapeutic healing.

Consciousness homeostasis can further be understood with an analogy of an individual experiencing chronic feelings of distress, dysthymia or aggression due to the perception of the loss of an object that belonged to them. However, the same individual seems unaffected or momentarily affected when they read about the loss of an object that was unrelated to them in a daily newspaper. Here, a sense of belonging leads to a vast difference in the emotional and intellectual reactivity and therefore a variation in the level of consciousness.

This limited capacity to perceive objects in their true nature is affected by one's consciousness relative to their environment. This relative state of consciousness is constantly influenced by the information it gathers and its own environmental context. If the object that is being perceived is dirt, the brain also perceives dirt and attributes it to a value of unhygienic and ugly.

The consciousness is hence extremely sensitive to the information that is being perceived by its own tools which is the brain. The more the value attribution, the more is the influence on the consciousness, and hence the more is the deviation from the absolute zero or the consciousness homeostasis.

Implying conscious homeostasis in psychotherapy

Absolute state of neutrality appears an idealistic concept, and achieving a state of consciousness where every perception, affective reaction is free from value attribution. In absolute state of neutrality, an individual apprehends the weather as it appears stating it to be sunny in the near future instead calling it 'lovely'. It is essential to note that the application of such a concept in the psychotherapy setting would not be equivalent to achieving absolute homeostasis. Instead, the long term goal can be 'homeostatic psychotherapy' where the aim is to develop an understanding of consciousness homeostasis and to strive towards the absolute zero. The practical approach would be to conceptualize it as having dual properties i.e. comprehension of neutrality as a continuous process as well as a stage that can be reached. However, the process of bringing the individual into such an orientation has a prerequisite, i.e. honesty of therapist, wherein, the therapist acknowledges the limitations of them-

self as well as the client to reach and achieve this stage. However, making efforts to keep on striving to reach another level up the scale towards zero shall be the goal.

The major technique is to bring the consciousness back to its true, homeostatic, natural function of sensing and knowing anything that comes in contact with it. The age-old habituated internalizing of a value-attribution style of perception could be altered with an effort to bring it towards homeostasis just how the mirror reflects anything that comes in its field without any selective or valued processing. Exercising this perceptual style with the therapist in the therapy session and then individually till the time it becomes autonomic processing of information is the core technique of this model.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study introduced and acknowledged the literary and psychological wealth and potential existing in indigenous scripture of India. The study focused on increasing the consciousness level as 6 stages described (Figure 1) in Jain philosophy for achieving consciousness homeostasis (Figure 3) for psychotherapy. The study introduced two dimensions of consciousness (Figure 2) which aids in understanding information processing of consciousness. Thus, together - stages and dimensions of consciousness, as per Jain philosophy, provide us with ancient and novel principles for psychotherapeutic application. Canonical literature of Jain philosophy have contributed for foundational theories for the comprehension of human psyche holistically in integration with western theories.

Matthews and Litwack (1995) discuss the effect of cognitions on both feelings and behavior and how they can be changed to Ellis's more rational terms, to Beck's more concretely databased and reality tested conclusions, to Meichenbaum's more adaptive coping strategy and Glasser's more "real world" thoughts. This approach from cognitive behavior therapy, aligns with the therapeutic effect of the neutral perception of reality without value attribution [29]. Nevid (2007) mentioned about Kant's view that reality is filtered through a set of cognitive tem-

plates or categories, popularized in the concept of 'Kantian spectacles', is clearly foundational to cognitive and cognitive-behavioral psychotherapies, including Aaron Beck's cognitive therapy [30]. In the Kantian scheme, all one can ever know of the external world are the representations the mind constructs of it—representations that take the form of appearances or phenomena. Since one can never step outside our ways of ordering experience, Kant argued that experience cannot teach one about the true nature of things, or things-in-themselves, which he called noumena. Knowledge of the noumenal world, of things as they truly are, lies beyond one's ability to grasp. All one can ever know of the noumenal world for certain is that it does exist. This view is in synchrony with the homeostatic theory of the momentarily limited capacity of the consciousness bound by its own context.

Consciousness observation proposed in the present study can also be seen reflected in the previously published therapy approaches. Linehan [31] discussed the conceptualization of mindfulness as a technique for 'being placed in the environment with awareness' and 'accepting it as it really is', as opposed to the dogma of perceiving it as anxiety provoking. Also Hayes and Gifford [32] discussed the core principles of acceptance and commitment therapy, within the model of the hexaflex. They had discussed 'self as context' in the hexaflex model as the process of contacting the 'observing self', a part of an individual that is able to witness thoughts, feelings and actions at any moment. This part of an individual allows one to be mindful and in contact with the observing self, thus, being free from previously tightly held beliefs about oneself; the process of being aware of internal and external events. Through this practice, one recognizes the things that are out of control and the letting go of which, one can make decisions about the things that are in one's control.

As Csikszentmihaly quotes, "Control of consciousness determines the quality of life" [33] and also Jung's quoted "To find out what is truly individual in ourselves, profound reflection is needed; and suddenly we realize how uncommonly difficult the discovery of individuality is"

[34], both which support the potential of the present approach to be used as an efficient way of recovery in the therapeutic space.

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