

INTEGRATIVE PEDAGOGY

A Case Study of the Lasting Legacy of India's Partition

By Mark Dennis

This article describes a case study from modern Indian history through the lens of “integrative pedagogy,” which is a way of teaching that challenges the tendency of many of our students to reduce, isolate, and oversimplify the myriad things of the world. This example of integrative pedagogy encourages students to think critically about historical context and make meaningful connections while engaging in “emotional and mental migration” to a region that has often been viewed in the West through such reductionist images.¹

In my World Religions classes, students do an extended case study that connects India's Partition in 1947 to the Mumbai attacks of 2008, two important events from modern Indian history that serve as the focus of this article. Near the end of the essay, I also offer possibilities for using integrative pedagogy with other India and South Asia-related topics and provide a brief explanation of how I've used the 9/11 attacks as a comparative integrative pedagogy case study.

Briefly, Partition refers to the division of India into the Dominion of Pakistan and the Union of India on August 15, 1947, marking the end of the ninety-year period of the Raj during which Britain had ruled India as a colony, starting right after the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857–1858.² In that uprising, both Hindu and Muslim soldiers (*sepoys*), fought to end the rule of the British East India Company. Partition into predominantly Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan was a cataclysmic event in modern South Asian history whose aftershocks, such as the Mumbai attacks, reverberate in the present.

Those attacks began on November 26, 2008, when ten heavily armed young men got off an inflatable speedboat in the harbor at the southern end of Mumbai (previously known as Bombay), walked deliberately into the city, and started killing. When the attacks ended, more than 150 victims and all but one of the attackers lay dead. The attackers targeted well-known icons of the city's elite: the Taj Mahal Palace and the Oberoi Trident Hotels, but also a crowded train station, café, hospital, theater, and Jewish center. Investigators discovered that the attackers had been recruited by *Lashkar-e-Taiba* (“Army of the Pure”), an Islamist terrorist organization in Pakistan led by Hafiz Saeed. Before outlining the contours of this case study, I offer a few comments on integrative pedagogy and critical thinking that will clarify the benefits your students can gain by working with the case study.



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Top: Taj Mahal Palace Hotel on the morning of November 27, 2008. Source: *ShrineNews.com* at <http://tinyurl.com/qjkkorh>.
Bottom: The World Trade Center, September 11, 2001. Source: *Wikimedia Commons* at <http://tinyurl.com/qhsnaop>.

Integrative Pedagogy and Critical Thinking

I imagine that many of you, whether teaching at the high school or college level, have become concerned, as have I, about unmotivated students who have difficulty thinking critically and writing persuasively about complex liberal arts subjects, whether political or economic, literary or artistic. And like many of you, I have experimented with different teaching methods to engage students while also honing their critical thinking skills. When I first entered my World Religions classroom, I had little experience teaching undergraduates, and so adopted a straightforward and safe approach that closely followed the course's textbook. I devoted a few weeks to each of the six religious traditions we would study during the semester in the order they appeared in the textbook: Islam, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism.

Over time though, as I recognized the limits of this approach and became more comfortable in the classroom, I experimented with integrative pedagogies that are meant to challenge the fragmentation of knowledge that our current educational system seems to promote by encouraging students to make connections across academic fields, social realms, and ways of knowing. For example, in my World Religions course, I now spend less time on the history and practices of each religious tradition and focus instead on modern and contemporary case studies, debates, and role playing games that promote this sort of inquiry. These and other sorts of creative assignments help keep students engaged while they think critically about how specific cases illustrate broader course themes, such as power, freedom, and “Otherness”—those seen to be different from “us,” but who also may be perceived as inferior, threatening, or strange.

For me, critical thinking—crucial to becoming a liberally educated person—naturally includes a set of intellectual and linguistic skills, but also, at least in some contexts, emotional and even spiritual dispositions. Students can develop these skills and dispositions in many ways. One useful way is to have them write a “this I believe” statement about those course themes, often framed as simple questions: “What is the value of human life?” or “Who is America's Other?”³ In answering these questions, they engage in rigorous self-reflection while going beyond the known to confront and investigate the Other, in whatever guise she, he, it, or they may appear.



Two Pakistani-controlled areas: Gilgit–Baltistan in the north and Azad Kashmir in the south. The Indian controlled state of Jammu and Kashmir is also shown. Source: United States Central Intelligence Agency at <http://tinyurl.com/ps9l62u>.



India/Pakistan Line of Control.

Source: *The Political Indian?* website at <http://tinyurl.com/ow4wyhb>.

Secretary of State John Kerry recently admitted in a White House speech, “If I went back to college today, I think I would probably major in comparative religion, because that’s how integrated it is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today.”⁷ This sort of integration is evident in this case, which connects India’s Partition in 1947 to the Mumbai attacks of 2008.

Partition and the Mumbai Attacks

To understand these attacks and their connection to Partition, my students begin by reading an op-ed piece in the British newspaper *The Guardian* by Arundhati Roy, a well-known Indian novelist and political commentator. Titled “The Monster in the Mirror,” the piece contrasts two common responses—Side A and Side B—to acts of terror like 9/11 or the Mumbai attacks. Side A sees terrorist violence “as a hateful, insane scourge that spins on its own axis, in its own orbit, and has nothing to do with the world around it, nothing to do with history, geography, or economics.”⁸

In support of this position, Roy compares some of the deep-seated animosity and incendiary rhetoric found on either side of the disputed Line of Control (LoC) that currently divides Indian-controlled Kashmir from Pakistani-controlled Kashmir (the remainder of the border is internationally recognized). She describes, for example, terrorist Hafiz Saeed’s hatred. He embraces the hardline Salafi tradition of Islam and founded Lashkar-e-Taiba, which planned and perpetrated the attacks. Saeed, she notes:

*Approves of suicide bombing, hates Jews, Shias and Democracy and believes that jihad should be waged until Islam, his Islam, rules the world. Among the things he said are: “There cannot be any peace while India remains intact. Cut them, cut them so much that they kneel before you and ask for mercy. . . India has shown us this path. We would like to give India a tit-for-tat response and reciprocate in the same way by killing the Hindus, just like it is killing the Muslims in Kashmir.”*⁹

The former sort of self-reflection asks students to consider their “starting points—who one is, what one believes, and why,”⁴ while venturing into the unknown requires them to investigate the broader lenses through which we may view and, in some instances, control or demean the Other. In our case studies, the late Palestinian-American scholar and public intellectual Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism is especially valuable in this regard.⁵ Said argues that the West created an image of an unchanging and selfsame Oriental Other upon whom was projected a set of negative qualities that inverted the virtues the West ascribed itself. The implications of Said’s theory are evident in all manner of scholarly studies that build upon, but also critique, his insights. Those insights are useful in seeking to understand British views of India and other countries of the “Orient.”

Effective critical thinking also requires our students to reflect upon the nature of language—how humans use language to communicate, form connections, and persuade, but also to distort, manipulate, and subjugate. Here, my classes consider how the “root metaphors” we use to make sense of the world can limit our range of critical

vision. If, for example, our students view teachers like us as *guides* instead of *judges*, as Wesleyan University President Michael S. Roth suggests, their relationship to us can shift in subtle, but important, ways.⁶ As *judges*, we sit above them, ready to pound a gavel while shouting, “Guilty!” As *guides*, we walk the path to knowledge beside them, helping them avoid the poison ivy of superficial thinking and find their way to thinking that is clear and subtle, in-depth and thorough.

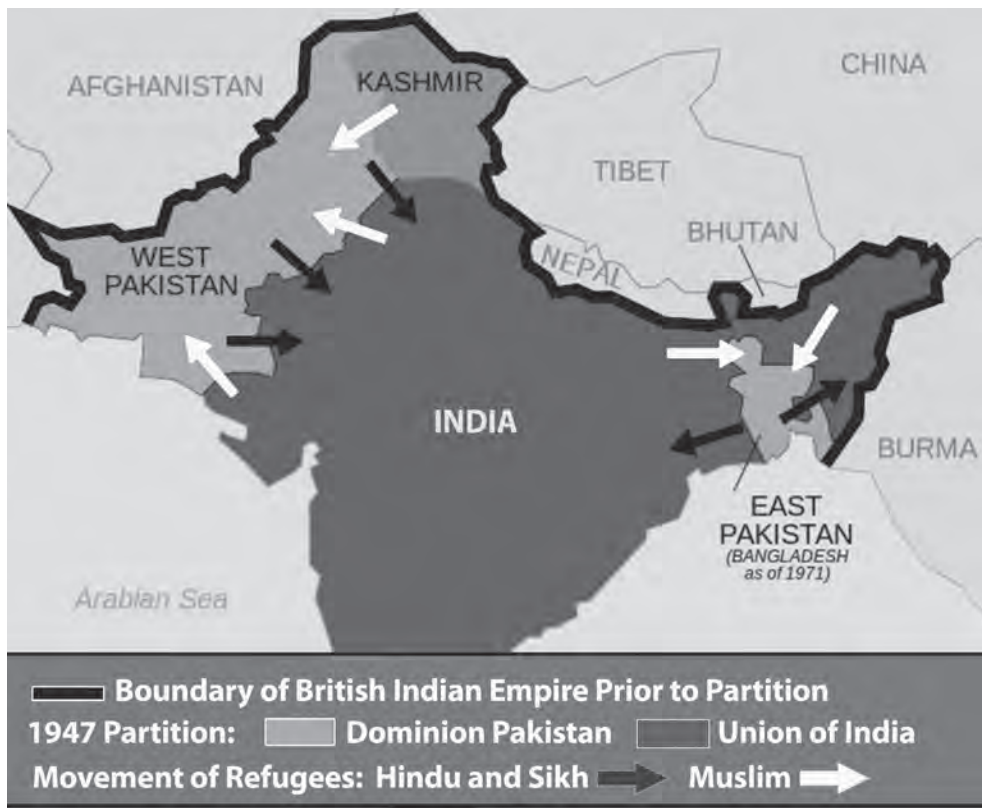
Case studies like the one outlined below are particularly valuable for helping students develop these sorts of skills and a more nuanced understanding of what appears to them as incomprehensible acts of terrorism. At the beginning of the semester, I ask them why a group of mostly young Saudi men hijacked commercial airplanes and flew them into the Twin Towers in New York City, and why ten heavily armed Pakistani men calmly walked through Mumbai gunning down people, including fellow Muslims. Generally, my students know very little about the motivations of the attackers in these and our other cases, nor about the political and economic, religious and cultural contexts out of which these terrorists’ ideologies of hatred and violence emerged.



A Sikh carries his wife on his shoulders as he walks with others to new Sikh and Hindu land in East Punjab, India. Photo by Margaret Bourke-White at *IBNLive.com*. <http://tinyurl.com/o4jy8hg>.



A boy in a Delhi refugee camp. Source: Photo by Margaret Bourke-White at *The Wall Street Journal, India Realtime* website at <http://tinyurl.com/q78boxdb>.



The Partition of India (1947). Source: *Wikimedia Commons*. Author: *historicair*. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via *Wikimedia Commons* at <http://tinyurl.com/o6s3lup>.

ening. . . To keep up the purity of its race and culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic races—the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. . . a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by.¹⁰

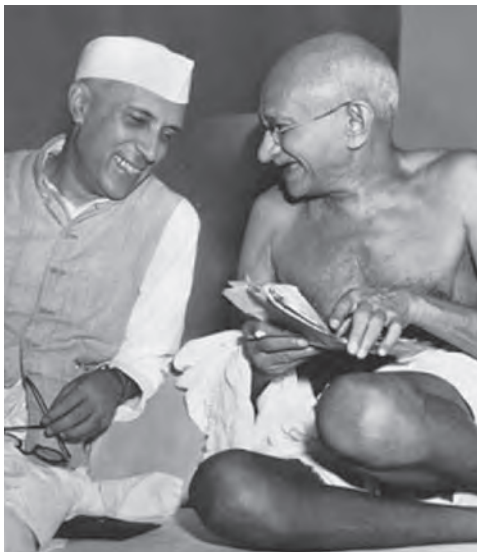
Although these positions represent the extremes, the tension and violence between the two countries is undeniable: India and Pakistan have fought four wars since 1947 that have been interspersed with a series of violent incidents, including the attacks in Mumbai and the ongoing conflict in Kashmir, which has consumed many thousands of lives.

By contrast, Side B condemns acts of terror but also seeks to understand their context—the events, relationships, and discourses that made the twisted logic of violence compelling. For the Mumbai attacks that context included the group's perception that the Indian government and military, dominated by Hindus, was abusing the Muslim majority in the Indian-occupied section of the Kashmir valley. But Roy argues that the ultimate context for those attacks can be traced to India's 1947 Partition. House of Lords member, judicial official, and boundary commission chair Sir Cyril Radcliffe was in charge of drawing the new borders, even though he had been in India for only a few weeks. His border, the Radcliffe Line, divided India from Pakistan, but ran through villages and waterways, thereby dividing people who had lived together for generations. Making matters worse, the British announced the change in borders with little warning causing a massive migration with Muslims fleeing northwest into Pakistan and Hindus and Sikhs fleeing southeast into India. The aftermath was devastating and mind-boggling: historians estimate that as many as one million people died in an orgy of violence. Roy suggests:

She contrasts this rhetoric with the equally vehement denunciations of Muslims by radical Hindu nationalists such as Babu Bajrangji, whom she identifies as a key figure in the 2002 Gujarat riots. Roy connects this extreme anti-Muslim position to the earlier writings of M. S. Golwalkar, a former leader of the nationalist Hindu organization *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (National Volunteer Organization) who, in 1944, wrote:

Ever since that evil day, when Moslems first landed in Hindustan, right up to the present moment, the Hindu Nation has been gallantly fighting on to take on these despoilers. The Race Spirit has been awak-

Each of those people carries and passes down a story of unimaginable pain, hate,



Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas Gandhi.
Source: Hampstead Theatre at <http://tinyurl.com/q8odkvv>.



Muhammad Ali Jinnah.
Source: Hampstead Theatre at <http://tinyurl.com/q8odkvv>.



Eleven days before returning independence to India, Lord Mountbatten works with his advisers to divide India.
Source: Wikipedia at <http://tinyurl.com/nubdzrv>.



Cyril John Radcliffe.
Source: Hampstead Theatre at <http://tinyurl.com/q8odkvv>.

horror but yearning too. That wound, those torn but still unsevered muscles, that blood and those splintered bones still lock us together in a close embrace of hatred, terrifying familiarity but also love. It has left Kashmir trapped in a nightmare from which it can't seem to emerge, a nightmare that has claimed more than 60,000 lives.¹¹

I supplement Roy's piece with other materials—newspaper articles, documentaries, websites, and first-person video accounts—that add greater depth to the discussion.¹²

India's Partition through "Reacting to the Past"

Having studied the Mumbai attacks, we turn to Partition as a key part of the context for those attacks and read Yasmin Khan's excellent book *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (Yale University Press, 2008).

The Choices Program curriculum unit "Indian Independence and the Question of Partition" (Brown University, 2013) is another excellent pedagogical resource on the 1947 Partition that won the 2014 AAS Franklin R. Buchanan Teaching Prize. For further information about this unit and a review of it, readers can access the Winter 2014 (19:3) issue of *Education About Asia* at <http://www.asian-studies.org/EAA/TOC/index.asp>.

I also ask students to investigate this context by playing one of the "Reacting to the Past" (RTTP) games titled *Defining a Nation: India on the Eve of Independence, 1945* (Pearson, 2005). The RTTP website describes the pedagogy as follows:

Reacting to the Past (RTTP) consists of elaborate games, set in the past, in which students are assigned roles informed by classic texts in the history of ideas. Class sessions are run entirely by students; instructors advise and guide students and grade their oral and written work. It seeks to draw students into the past, promote engagement with big ideas, and improve intellectual and academic skills. Pioneered in the late 1990s by Mark C. Carnes, Professor of History at Barnard College, the RTTP curriculum has been implemented by faculty at hundreds of colleges and universities in the US and abroad since dissemination began in 2001.

All of the games are set in the past, and thus might be regarded as history, but each game also explores multiple additional disciplines. Part of the intellectual appeal of RTTP is that it transcends disciplinary structures.¹³

Defining a Nation examines the history of the Indian subcontinent in the period leading up to India's independence from Great Britain and the varied interests—Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, and Marxist, among others—seeking to promote their own vision of a postcolonial subcontinent. In the game, each student assumes a role: Some play major figures—Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Ambedkar, and the British Governor-General—in the negotiations held in the north Indian city of Simla. Others serve as anonymous members of particular factions, reporters, videographers, and so forth. During the game, which takes four weeks of class time, students must master the information in their individual role sheets, but also must do primary research, write position papers, negotiate and debate with other students and their factions, and give public speeches.¹⁴ RTTP thus requires students to practice an array of intellectual and social skills including working as a member of a group or faction—the Muslim League or Congress Party, for instance—to pursue a set of shared objectives.

In this way, the pedagogy promotes student engagement and integrative thinking about a complex series of events tied deeply to religious beliefs, economic interests, and distinct political visions. The RTTP pedagogy has helped transform reluctant students into enthusiastic learners as they explore through persuasive writing, public speaking, and debate, a time when Gandhi and other fascinating figures actively resisted the British, and in the words of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, would make ". . . momentous decisions and handle grave issues . . ." that fundamentally shaped the future of the subcontinent.¹⁵

Although I have only sketched this case in its most basic form, I would gladly correspond with those of you who might like to try it out in class.

Modern Pakistani Politics

Pakistani politics are equally compelling, not only because of the country's generally fractious relationship with India but also for its internal tensions and debates. These include Pakistan's blasphemy laws that prohibit impugning the dignity of the *Quran* and the Prophet Muhammad; indeed, Salman Taseer, the former governor of the Punjab Province of Pakistan, and other outspoken opponents of the law have recently been assassinated because of their views. Pakistani politicians have also grappled with other difficult issues, such as the fallout from an American Navy SEAL team's killing of Osama bin Laden in his compound in Abbottabad, a city in the north of the country, and increasingly hostile criticism in Pakistan of the American military's use of drone strikes. Another contentious issue has been how to deal with the Pakistani Taliban, which has been active in areas along the border with Afghanistan. A faction of this group sponsored the attempted assassination of Malala Yousafzai, a young Pakistani woman who recently won the Nobel Peace Prize and is a champion of girls' education. Malala has served as a particularly inspirational model for my students because of her indomitable spirit and pure love of learning.

If done well, it will stimulate your students' interest in India and Pakistan while also helping them hone their critical thinking skills by asking them to visit India's past in order to better understand its present and future. In this way, they will gain a better understanding of key events in modern South Asian history and thereby be prepared to participate thoughtfully in broader discussions about the region. It will also teach them how to engage in the sorts of integrative critical thinking that are the very foundation of the liberal arts and the focus of John Kerry's reflection on religion in public life and world cultures.

Conclusion

In this way, the case can serve as the springboard for delving into other material including South Asian literature, politics, and many other compelling subjects. The literature of Partition and its aftermath is especially rich and includes a substantial body of well-known works such as Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (Grove Press, 1961), Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (Milkweed Editions, 1991), and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (Knopf, 1980), each of which has been made into a film.¹⁶

The case can also be used to explore modern Indian politics. For example, Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was recently elected as India's prime minister, replacing Manmohan Singh of the Congress Party. Congress, the party of Gandhi and Nehru, had controlled the national government uninterrupted since Partition, except after The Emergency (1977–1980) and during a six-year period (1998–2004) when the BJP's Atal Bihari Vajpayee was prime minister. Some observers worry that the party's policy of *hindutva*, or "Hinduness," does not bode well for India's large Muslim population, nor for relations with Pakistan.

Another possible line of inquiry is to investigate Otherness through the lens of India's caste system. B. R. Ambedkar, a key figure of the Indian independence movement, was a member of the Dalits, commonly referred to in English

as Untouchables. A brilliant thinker and charismatic leader, Ambedkar had the opportunity to study abroad, as did Gandhi and Jinnah, earning doctorates at Columbia University and the London School of Economics. He returned to India and became a mighty voice for this oppressed class whose very low status in Indian society had been codified in religious texts and maintained through a series of dehumanizing cultural practices. His legacy lives on in the so-called Dalit Buddhist movement, wherein members of the oppressed classes have converted to Buddhism because it rejects the caste system. The study of discrimination against the Dalits is a powerful lesson in Otherness for students and opens up the possibility for examining caste in India today through literature and film. Here, I recommend Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (Penguin Classics, 2014) and the filmography of Stalin K., including *India Untouched: Stories of a People Apart* (2007).¹⁷ I have used this material to lead into broader, cross-cultural discussions of Otherness, discrimination, and violence.

Finally, the Mumbai attacks can serve as a point of departure for investigating other examples of religiously inspired violence such as 9/11. Whereas Partition and the Mumbai attacks seem remote to many of my students, the 9/11 attacks, which occurred on American soil, are different. Even so, they generally do not understand the context of those attacks. To learn why al-Qaeda attacked the United States, I use Lawrence Wright's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, 2006), which offers students a painstakingly researched and well-written genealogy of the founding of al-Qaeda and the distinct circumstances from which its two original leaders, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, became radicalized.¹⁸ What I find fascinating about this case study, and is instructive for us here, is how effectively Wright's analysis, despite being some 550 pages, holds students' attention and helps them develop a nuanced and sophisti-

cated understanding of the attacks by recognizing that they did not occur in a vacuum—Roy's Side B. By grappling with seemingly incomprehensible acts of violence in both Mumbai and New York City, students develop substantially as critical thinkers, capable of integrating knowledge from seemingly disparate sources. ■

NOTES

1. Ninian Smart, *Religion and the Western Mind* (New York: SUNY Press, 1987), 5.
2. In the 1971 Bangladesh War of Liberation, East Pakistan broke away from West Pakistan and became the independent country of Bangladesh.
3. See <http://thisibelieve.org>.
4. Richard A. Lynch, "Rethinking Critical Thinking: Values and Attitudes," *LiberalArtsOnline*, November 2003, <http://tinyurl.com/ox7zfav>.
5. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).
6. Michael S. Roth, "Beyond Critical Thinking," *The Chronicle Review*, January 3, 2010, <http://tinyurl.com/otave7m>.
7. See John Kerry, Shaun Casey, and Melissa Rogers, "Remarks at the Launch of the Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives," *State.gov*, last modified August 7, 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/l3qyv5>.
8. Arundhati Roy, "The Monster in the Mirror," *The Guardian*, December 12, 2008, <http://tinyurl.com/qf69ptr>.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. See for example, "Terrorism in India" in *The New York Times*, <http://tinyurl.com/nflubgl>. See also HBO's *Terror in Mumbai* (2009) and National Geographic's *Mumbai Massacre* (2012).
13. "Reacting to the Past," <https://reacting.barnard.edu/about>.
14. As resources for this work, students use *Sources of Indian Tradition* (ed. Stephen Hay, Columbia University Press, 2014) and *The Bhagavad Gita* (trans. Barbara Stoler Miller, Bantam Classics, 1986).
15. From Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Broadcast on the Partition of India, June 3 1947. See the *British Library, Indian Independence: Partition Source 8* at <http://tinyurl.com/p84vfy5>.
16. See Pamela Rooks's film *Train to Pakistan* (1998). Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India* (Milkweed Editions, 1991) was the basis for Deepa Mehta's film *Earth* (1998), and Mehta also directed *Midnight's Children* (2012).
17. The film's trailer is available on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/qbch68p>.
18. I also recommend HBO's *My Trip to al-Qaeda* (2010), which was directed by Alex Gibney and stars Lawrence Wright.

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