

Full Length Research Paper

A Case study on Medicinal Plants-An Integral part of Goan rituals of Goa, India

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Abstract

Goa is not only the land of sun, surf and sand but much more than this. It is a miniature world in itself full of rituals, cultures, celebrating variety of fairs and festivals. It has a rich and diverse mosaic of culture that gives special importance to the state. From time immemorial people of Goa have been celebrating their customs, rituals, fairs and festivals by making the plants as an integral part of all these. Goa is rich in biodiversity of flora and fauna. The rare medicinal plants are given religious importance by the ancestors and the same knowledge is passed orally from generation to generation. No proper documentation is being done till the date. There is a need of the hour to document this knowledge. Present paper is written to fulfil the objective of documenting the knowledge of use of plants in various ways by Goan folk people.

Key words: *Cynodon dactylon* (Kannada: Garikehullu), *Calotropis gigantea* (Kannada :Ekka) , *Strychnos nux – vomica* (Kannada: Hemmushti).

Introduction

India harbours almost 50 million tribal people belonging to different groups scattered in various states. In Goa there are tribal people like velip, kunabi, Dhangars who stay very close to the nature. They have their own cultures, customs, religious rites, food habits and are themselves the treasures of knowledge of traditional medicine. This knowledge is not documented in proper manner. Also Goans celebrate several fairs and feast and other cultural activities are continuously happening in their community, but these are also not documented in the manner it should be done. While celebrating the fairs, festival and other religious rituals, they make use of plants which are medicinal in many different ways. The researchers and knowledgeable personalities working in the field of medicinal plants have concluded that by giving religious importance to the plants our ancestors have forced the people to worship the plants. And anything which is worshipped is not destroyed by any body in Goa. That is why till today people worship their Gods and Goddesses by offering them flowers, fruits, leaves even seeds sometimes. And since the plant parts are offered to the deities they are preserved and conserved.

Goa is the land of peace, soaked in monsoon rains and so it has great bio diversity of flora. The Shayadris and the Western Ghats are green treasures with valuable and medicinal trees. This narrow stretch of land on the western coast of India has become the destination for a large number of nature lovers, researcher and scholars, scientists to study the flora in detail.

The present paper is prepared by refereeing some literature, from various books and also from the magazines and newspapers of Goa. And also by visiting remote areas like Valpoi Satteri, Bicholim, Coparde, Pilgaon, Narve, Khotigao, Cancona, Quepem, Sangeum, the documentation is done. The communication with people puts on record the traditions, cultural, feasts, fairs, rituals and their integrity with various plants which are medicinal. (Khedekar Vinayak Vishnu et.al).

Materials and method

Periodic field trips were done to various villages, places, sacred groves, also the tribal communities like Dhangars, velips were visited and knowledgeable persons, elderly men, women, village heads, pujaris belonging to different villagers, ward were contacted to gather the data. Repeated queries were made to get the data verified and confirmed. The author of the paper tried to collect data from the primary as well as secondary sources, uses of medicinal plants in rituals, fairs, festivals etc. Also plant species were identified with local tribal's and documented properly. The velips are dominating tribes and the elderly people of this community furnished the author with lots of details about plants. In Goan tribals mostly in their community there is one or two elder persons who are familiar with the uses of plants and people call this elderly experienced person as vaidu (vauj) of the locality. Sick, diseased people take the advice of Vaidu people.



Fig. 1 Study area



A

A. Matoli – Display of Medicinal Plants during Ganesh Chaturthi



B

B. Tulsi Vivah – Tulsi Vrindavan Decorated for Tulsi Vivah



C

C. Cactus – Lady offering Divja Lighted in Niwali Konde (Cactus)



D

D. Rice fields – Rice flour lamps prepared during Laxmi Vrat.

Table 1. List of Leaves offered to Lord Ganesh during Chavath

Sr. No	English name of the plant	Konkani name of the plant	Botanical Name	Family	Disease for which it is used
1.	Bael fruit	Bel	Aegle Marmelos	Rutaceae	Diabetes
2.	Holy Basil	Tulas	Ocimum Sanctum	Labiataeae	Cold, fever
3.	Arjun	Arjun	Sterculia Urens	Sterculiaceae	Heart Problems
4.	Prickly chaff	Aghado	Achyranthes aspera L.	Amaranthaceae	It contains Potash, so given to lactating mothers
5.	Crown flower	Rui	Calotropis gigante	Asclepediaceae	For crack skin
6.	Pimpal	Pipall	Ficus religious	Moraceae	Fever
7.	Jasmine	Jayo	Jasminum Auriculatum	Oleaceae	Nasal Problems
8.		Hatto	Pandanus tectorius	Papili onaceae	To reduce pain of centipedel bites
9.		Shami	Prosopes cineraria druce	Mimosaea	Acidity
10.		Kusari	Jasminum baricum wight	Oleaceae	Cough
11.	Nerium (poisonous-to be used carefully)	Karvir patra	Nerium indium	Apocynanaceae	Skin problems
12.	Pomegranate	Dallimb	Punica granatum	Punicaceae	Worms in infants
13.	Indian nightshade	Vishnu kranta patra	-	-	-
14.	-	Arka patra	Solanium Indicum	Solanaceae	Cough
15.	Patra (Poisonous to be used carefully)	Dhoturo	Datura innoxia Mill	Solanaceae	Rheumatism
16.	Indian plum	Boram	Zyphus maurationa Lamk	Rhamna ceae	Hair problems
17.	Hog wood	Durva	Cynodeon dactylon	Poaceae	Diabetes
18.	Huming bird tree	Aagasti patra	Sesbania Grandi flora	Papilion aceae	Rheumatism
19.	False daisy	Mhako	Eclipta prostrate L.	Compositaeae	Hair problems
20.		Malati patra	-	-	-
21.		Maruvak patra	-	-	-

Table 2: List of Flowers offered to Lord Ganesh which are of Medicinal use

Sr. No	English name of the plant	Konkani name of the plant	Botanical Name	Family	Use
1.	Night flowering Jasmine	Pardas / Parijatak	Nycanthes arbortristis	Oleaceae	Cuts, wounds
2.	Shoe flowers	Dassann	Hibiscus rosa sciensis	Malvaceae	Hair problems
3.	Champa	Chaffo	Michelia champaca	Magnoliaceae	Headache
4.	Butterfly pea	Gokarna	Clitoria tenatea	Fabaceae	Migraine
5.	Red lotus	Tambde kamall	Nymphaea pubescens	Nympheaceae	Seeds energetic
6.	Mountain ebony	Mandar, Aapto	Bauninia racemosa	Fabaceae	Fever
7.	Jasmine	Jhayo	Jasminum auriculatum	Oleaceae	Migraine
8.	Crysanthamus	Shevati	Chrysanthemum sp	Compsitae	Cuts / wounds
9.	Rose	Gulab	Rosa damascene Mill	Rosaceae	Energetic juicem gulab panni eye problems

Table 3: List of other items used in Shri ganesh Puja and normally for any other Puja of any diety

Sr. No	English name of the plant	Konkani name of the plant	Botanical Name	Family	Use
1.	Bettle nut leaves	Khawache paan	-	-	For worms acidity
2.	Bettle nut/Arecanut	Supari	Areca catecha	-	For digestion
3.	Coconut	Mall	Cocos nucifera	-	Water for energy
4.	Rice	Taandull	-	-	Stomach ache
5.	Banand	Kellen	Musa sp.	-	For worms
6.	Sandal wood	Chandan	Santalum album	-	Headache
7.	Turmeric	Halad	Curuma longa	-	Skin diseases

Table 4: List of the plants used to worship various deities during festivals.

Name of the plant	Name of the deity	Festivals, fairs or rituals
Cynodan dactylon	Ganesh all over Goa	Ganesh Chaturthi, Angaraki, Vinayaaki, Sankashti, on Tuesday
Ocimum Sanctum	For almost all Gods	Tuksivivah, various Pujas, Ganesh Puja
Aegle marmelos	Mahadev, Ganesh all over Goa	Mahashivratri Shravani Somvar
Musa pudica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prasad for all most all gods is served on banana leaf Fruits are also used as Prasad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly in all pujas Sheaths are used in Rangap Puja
Jasminum grandiflorun	Mahalas a of Mardol	Duirng Zaya puja
Nivali konde	Mahamaya kurtarkarin Cancona	During Tulsi Vivah, Divja
Bauhinia racemosa	Shri Bhagvati, Ravalnath, Pernem	Pednechi Punav
Rice	Mahalaxmi Vrata Bicholim	Devi-vrata
Coconuts	For almost all Gods and Goddesses	Matolli during Ganesh Chaturthi, during Dusshera by Dhangar community of Bicholim
Strychnosnun Vomica	Massandevi Narve	Massandevi Zatraa
Mango	All most all Gods, for pujas, Choratsav of Sattari	Chorotsav, Chaturthi various pujas, etc
Crossandra in findibuli formus	Vadhlo Dev Narve	For procession of Vhadlo Dev
Cotton silk tree (Bomban ceiba)	Jagadamba sateri, Pilgaon	Worshipped throughout
Calotropis gigantean	Maruti all over Goa	Hanuman Jayanti
Averrhoa carambola 16) Ixora coccine	Shri Ravalnath, Shri Bhumika, Marcela	Kaul or Prasad (for devince advice)

Mimosa elengi	Shri Anat Savoi Verem	Gandha puja
Marigolds	Almost all over Goa during Dusshera Dhillio	All temples and during Dhillio of Cancona
Amla (Phyllanthus emblica) Sugarcane (Saccharum officinarum) Tamarind (Tamarindus indicas)	Vhadli Diwali all over Goa	Tulsi vivah celebrateions
Jasmine (Jasminum sambacis)	Shree Lairai devi Sirigao	Zatraa
Cucunus trigonis	Lord Krishna	Diwali

Table 5: List of families to which the plants belong included in the research paper.

Name of the medicinal plant	Family to which it belongs
1) Cynodon dactylon (Durva)	Poaceae
2) Decimum sanctum (tulsi)	Labiataeae
3) Aegle marmelos (bel)	Rutaceae
4) Musa sp (Banana)	Musaceae
5) Calotropis gigantean (Rui)	Asclepiaceae
6) Averrhoa carambola	Oxalidaceae
7) Ixora coccinea	Rubiaceae
8) Cucumis trigonis	Cucurbitaceae
9) Tamarindus indicus	Faba ceae
10) Bomban ceiba	Malvaceae
11) Jaminum sambac	Oleaceae
12) Saccharum officinarum	Gramineae
13) Phyllanthus emblica	Phyllanthaceae
14) Crosandra in funfibalo formus	Acanthaceae
15) Mimosa elengi	Sapotaceae
16) Calendula officinallis	Asteraceae
17) Bauhim a racemosa	Fabaceae
18) Oryza sativa	Poaceae
19) Cocos mucifera	Are caceae
20) Cocos nucifera	Are caceae
21) Strychnos vomica	Loganiaceae
22) Mangifera indica	Anacardiaceae
23) Jasminum grandi florum	Oleaceae
24) Cactus / opuntia	Cactaceae
25) Sterculia urens	Sterculiaceae
26) A chyranthes aspera L	Amarathaceae
27) Ficus religious	Moraceae
28) Pandanus fectorius	Papilionaceae
29) Prospes cineraria druce	Mimosaea
30) Nerium indicum	Apocynaceae
31) Punica granatum	Punicaceae
32) Solanum indicum	Solanaceae
33) Datura innoxia Mill	Solanaceae
34) Zyphus mactrationa	Rhamnaceae
35) Sesbania grandiflora	Papilionaceae
36) Eadipta prostrate L	Compositae
37) Hibiscus Rosa sciensis	Malvaceae
38) Michelia champaca	Magnoliaceae
39) Clitoria ternatea L	Fabaceae
40) Nymphaea pubescens	Mympheaceae

Sateri Devi of Mulgaon of Bicholim Taluka

It is the deity of not only of Goa but also people from Kudal (Maharashtra) and Karwar (Karnataka) worship her. It is a type of Bhudevi (Goddess of the land). But is also further named as "Shantadurga" under the influence of culture in Goa. Actually it is worshipped in the form of anthill. It is the goddess of fertility. It has the 'shakti' to reproduce. And thus it gives birth to trees, fruits, flowers, birds and insects and all survive only after receiving the blessings of Devi. This Goddess Sateri is also named as Bhumika, Mauli and Bhagavati. The trees in the vicinity are of medicinal use.

Mostly this deity is found in isolated places as her followers believe that she needs peace and isolation to fulfil her deities with her blessings.

Divjotsava the festival of lamps

Goan Hindus strongly believe in the festival of lamps i.e. 'Divjotsav' as they have strong faith that light is a symbol of truth and knowledge and also full devotion towards God. Divajotsav is mostly celebrated all over Goa after Diwali celebrations on the dark night of the moon day of Kartik. Irrespective of the caste, the women in villages wear new nine yard sari and gold jewellery with lots of flower, like marigold, aabolim in their hair and they collectively seek the blessings of their gramdevi or Kuldevi. Also in some areas of Goa tribal people worship the God or Goddesses in sacred groves, e.g. women carry their lamps to Brahamanimaya temple in Coparde village near valpoi. Here the sacred grove is protected under the name of Goddess Brahamanimaya whose temple is situated in the sacred Grove. There are medicinal trees in this sacred grove, and also a small pond (Talli) which has some medicinal properties in its water. People come from all over Goa and also from other parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka and get healed by taking the treatment of this medicinal water.

Unique Celebrations of Tulsi Vivah using Cactus Stalks in Canacona Taluka

In Canacon Taluka of Goa there is a small village, 'Tambem' in the village panchayat of Loliem. The temple of Mahamaya Kurtarkarin is the landmark of Tambem where the deities of Pagi (fisherfolk) community celebrate Tulsi Lagna (Tulsi Vivah or Wedding of Tulsi) in a very unique way. The unique ritual is performed by the married couples of Tambem, from Paagi community. The married ladies dress up themselves with 9 yard saris, lots of gold jewellery and with their hair decked with fragrant zayo (local white flowers which bloom during this season) and they gather near Mahamaya temple after 10 at night on Tulsi Lagna day. Alongwith them they bring pieces of cactus, in local language they call them as 'nivli Konde'. One end of this 'nivli Konde' is cleaned whereas the other end, cavity is filled with oil and cotton which is inserted in it. The nivali konde are scraped in such a way that they fit on the fingers of the women like gloves. After preparing these finger glove lamps from Nivali Konde, women wore them on their ten fingers, one on each finger.

Pednechi Punav

The devotees of Shri Bhagavati Ravalnath in Pernem celebrate the full moon day called "Pednechi Punav" means Pernem's full moon day. The Punav begins from first day of Navratri i.e. 'Ghatasthapana' day. One the first day a palki (Palanquin) procession of the idols of Goddess Bhagvati and lord Ravalnath is held. This is then followed by pooja and offering "Naivedya" (sweet prepared of jaggery and coconut by using some dry fruits like cashew). Only Sutars (Carpenters), Kumbhars (Potters), and Guravs (Knights) perform this puja. The toran (Door garland of flowers) of marigold flowers is prepared only by Kotkar family while grand and main puja is performed by the Deshpribhu (Viscount) family of Pernem. The procession is continued for 2 days. During this punav the idol of Goddess Bhagavati is draped in 24 different saris and tarangas (Umbrellas) made from 21 saris are draped in a unique manner on Lord Ravalnath also called Bhutnath.

During this puja people collect and offer the leaves of the apta (Bauhinia racemosa) the tree which is believed to be symbol of gold and prosperity. In some other parts of Goa, many people take away these leaves and distribute among their family members and also among the relatives and friends. The medicinal plant Bauhinia racemosa is used to treat worms in infants.

Mahalaxmi Vrata in Bicholim

Rice is the staple crop of Goa. It is the main food of Goan people. Rice is used in different ways for different purposes. One of the rare use of rice is in worshipping Goddess Laxmi. A ritual is practised in "Chitpawan Kokanasth Brahamins" to worship Goddess Laxmi. In Sarvann village of Bicholim Taluka, in the temple of Yogeshwari, Mahalaxmi Vrat is celebrated every year by chitpawan kokanasth Brahmin community.

Dusshera Celebration by Dhangars of Bicholim.

Dhangars are the tribals of Goa scattered in almost all Talukas of Goa in forest areas and are closely related to the nature. Their festivals, ritual have close relationship with nature e.g. celebration of Dusshera festival in unique way is done in Dhangar wadi of Kudchire Village. Dhangars of Maharashtra, and Goa have constructed a temple of "Mhalachi Pandhar" at Dhangarwaadi in Kudchire. This is the only temple of Dhangar community where the diety is worshipped as a type of "Shakti".

Festivals to honour Massanndevi of Graveyard

In Narvem, 5 km away from Bicholim town, there is a temple of Masanndevi where the goddess of grave yard, Massanndevi is being worshipped by her devotees spread all over Goa. The third Tuesday of Shravan month is celebrated as "Ghost Fair" or "Bhootanchi Zatra" or "Massanndevichi Jatra" every year. This jatra is celebrated to honour the grave ard goddess "Massanndevi". In vernacular languages "Massann" means graveyard, "Massandevi" means the goddess of graveyard. This temple is situated on the bank of the river which is formed due to confluence of five rivers – Zuari, Mhadei, Khandepar, Bicholim and Valvanti. The river here is called Panchganga. This bank of the river is considered as an auspicious area to bury the dead bodies of women who die during delivery due to reason like heavy bleeding, negligence of treatment etc. such women is called "Aalvantinn" means the one who dies during delivery leaving her infant. This place is protected by Massanndevi and the people have belief regarding this diety that she grants peace to such souls.

Also people offer coconuts and local flowers to the goddess Massandevi. The goddess is attributed by the power of blessing the married couples for their wish for a male child. Devotees throng towards the temple on her jatra day. Also those who are blessed

with male child by her grace of blessings tie a cradle made from bamboo to the kazro tree. As coconut is the main crop plant of Goa, it is also used for many purposes, one of its purpose is medicinal use of coconut oil for various ailments. Devotees also make offerings of goats and spoons made of coconut shields. Once 'ragi' (millet) was the crop grown here. On the day of jatra, a local dish called aambeel (made of ragi) is served to the devotees. The mud of massanndevi anthill is offered as Prasad to the devotees, who make use of this mud powder. Devotees carry this mud powder to their home and use it on their forehead whenever they feel that they are in trouble.

Chorotsav of Zarme – Sattari

Chorotsav means the festival of thief's. This festival is celebrated in Zarme village of Satterri which is tucked away in the hills in one of the remoter parts of Goa. Chorotsav is the unique festival of Zarme which is celebrated on the second day of Holi Pournima situated in the arms of Sahayadri, Satterri gains pride of celebrating this special festival of thieves, like how ghost's do not create any good feeling among the people but are still worshipped under the name of Massanndevi at Narvem, thieves are honoured in Sattari during Chorotsav even though thieves do not hold respected position in the society.

After Holi whoever youngster visits the families in Zarme is teased as 'chor' means thief and the 'chors' are allowed to steal flowers and fruits in the backyards or from the fields. This festival occurs in the season of flowers and fruits i.e. during 'vasant ritu'. Fruits in this season become ready to eat and thus this is one of the way to encourage the youngsters of the village to steal fruits and eat them as Prasad.

Aabolim used for Vhadlea Deva Narve

Goa is beautiful for its lush green palm which increases its scenic beauty, but at the same time there are many colourful flowers blooming here which add more beauty to this land.

In some villages like Narve and Painginim of Goa the procession of inscriptions on the cloth are carried out. The processions also read these inscriptions for the people in the villages ceremoniously. 'Hakka' is a type of procession taken out to read inscriptions on cloth in each ward of Painginim after every 3 years. Similar type of procession takes place in Narvem near Bicholim town. In this village after every 15 years such procession is taken. This procession is taken during the Jatra of Vhadlo dev. Devotees from five different wards of Hundale, Devul wado, Goankaar wado, Honati wado and Mudder, come together with five baskets of bamboo decorated with Aabolim flowers (crossandra infundibuli forms) and they take the floral baskets to the temple of Kankeshwari in Narve. The villagers are not able to inform about who is this Vhadlo Dev. The procession starts in the scorching heat of sun at 12.00 p.m, from Kankeshwari temple all 5 baskets go towards Shri Saptakoteshwar temple of Narve and the procession returns back to Shri Kankeshwari temple, on the way it visits "Taairir" i.e. ferry point as Vhadlo Dev wishes to visit Dewar island by crossing Mandovi river but his devotees prevent him from doing so. The procession comes to Kanteshwari temple by 4.00 p.m. Aaboli flowers are arranged on a cloth which is put on a bamboo, this is carried by the people as Vhadlo dev.

Jagdamba sateri of Pilgaon and silk cotton tree

On the bank of the river Mandovi, in Bicholim Taluka a small village called Pilgaon is situated, which has gained publicity for the beautiful surroundings and temple of Jagdamba Sateri Devi. In ancient times there were many dominating pimpal tree in the vicinity of the village, so it was named a 'Pimpalgaon' and now its named is derived as Pilgaon from the same name Pimpalgaon.

Shantadurga devasthan of Pilgaon has one small temple of Sateri devi in its devasthan area which is very ancient and is situated in isolated place. There are old trees tree the temple. The Banyan, jackfruit, cashew nut tree on one side of the temple whereas on the right side of it there is one silk cotton tree i.e. Sanwar (bombax ceiba) which has worked like a rain indicator, since time immemorial. It is a well known fact to all the villagers and people staying in close by villages like Orgaon, St. Estevam, that until and unless monsoon totally reaches to Goa and it rains heavily, till then the tree doesn't give birth to new leaves on the branches of the tree. Once the tree starts showing the tender and fresh green foliage. Till today nobody has dared to cause any harm to the soft wood silk cotton tree. From time immemorial it is standing with a grace by the grace of goddess Sateri Devi.

'Maruti' worshipped with Rui leaves and flowers at Advalpal, Bicholim

In Advalpal village of Bicholim taluka, an ancient temple of Lord Hanuman i.e. Maruti Mandir is awaiting from many years for renovation. It is at present in a very bad state and is very old temple in Goa. It is infact the only temple where 'Kaavi Paintings' can be observed. It was about more then hundred years ago this temple was constructed and was decorated with the paintings of 'Kaavi Paintings'. This is one of the Goan art. The research scholar of Germany Dr. Grittalee walnar in heir one of the research paper has mentioned about these unique Kaavi Paintings in India.

Durva (Cynodan dactylon) in the Ganesh and Murugan Poojan at Rawan fond Margao

Shadanan, skand, Agnibhu, Mahasen and Murgan are the different names of Kartikeya Swami, elder brother of Lord Ganesh. But since his vehicle is peacock (Mayur), he is popularly known as murugan. At Rawanfond Margao there is only one temple in which Lord Ganesh and Murugan Swami are devoted together an one platform in Ganapati Murugan temple. It is very famous temple, in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa and so devotees gather in large number on Kartik ekaadashi at Rawanfond temple. This is the only temple of two brothers among three states mentioned above. In some states ladies are not allowed to enter the Kartikeya temple and also it is not kept open for all days for the devotees. But only during festivals devotees can take the blessings of the Gods. But this is not the situation in Goa, here the temple is open for all 365 days but on "Kartika Ekaadashi" there is a grand

celebration. Also 'Shasti' is celebrated in the temple, during which kartikeya swami is offered some items in Paalkaawadi (Kaawadi means a bamboo lath provided with slings at each end for carrying pitchers). But in the temple Kaawad is used to offer milk, water, flowers like red shoe flowers, white shoe flowers and Abhishek of all these items is done for both Gods. Also durva is offered to Lord Ganesh. After the Abhishek (giving bath to the God with holy water or milk) of milk is done, the milk is used to prepare payasam (sweet dish of rice) and is distributed among the devotees as Prasad.

Results and Discussion

The paper provides some very interesting uses of ethno medicinal plants used by Hindu Goans of various communities for the treatment of dysentery, boils, cough and cold, typhoid, kidney stones, fever, body ache, toothache, headache, rheumatism, asthma, skin disease etc. These medicinal plants belong to several number of botanical families. The information was also collected by referring some magazines in local languages and also by referring articles from local newspapers which highlighted various festivals and medicinal plants. The paper is not to prescribe any medicine to any ailment but to document the uses of medicinal plants and the deities related to each plant, and the rituals, fairs or festivals celebrated to honour any deity by the Goans spread all over Goa from Pernem to Cancona Taluka, and to draw the attention of plant workers and pharma cologistis research scholars for further scientific research in this specific topic.

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Ethics

All the authors read and approved the manuscript and no ethical issues involved.

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