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Islamic Perspective on Nature and Environmental Challenges in Pakistan

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Abstracts

In today's world, environmental challenges are recognized as one of humanity's most pressing concerns. Environmental devastation has recently been exacerbated by man's unrestrained use of natural resources to generate revenues. Natural resources such as water, air, earth and plants are the God's creations. As a result, Allah has not given control to man of all things, but instead distributed them freely across the globe for everyone to benefit from to the best of their ability. Environmental protection is therefore a religious obligation. However, unless Pakistanis from all walks of life recognize the importance of protecting themselves against such degeneration, these efforts seem to be in vain. As eighty-five percent of Pakistanis are following Islam, it can play a major role in this regard. Islam's moral principles and rules can inspire citizens to guard the environment and make our planet fit for future generations. This article is an attempt to explain environmental problems from an Islamic point of view using Qur'anic verses and Islamic narrations.

Keywords: Environment, Pollution, protection, Islam, Quran, Pakistan.

Introduction

One of the tenets of the Islamic faith is hygiene. This creates a clear connection between cleanliness and religion. Cleanliness, according to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), is half of faith, (Sahih Muslim, Kitab al Tahara, 1). A clean environment is crucial for the survival of life on Earth. Humans' needs for food, air, water, clothing and shelter depend entirely on the environment, directly or indirectly. Life on Earth depends on the natural environment. However, the greatest damage to the ecology is currently caused by various types of pollution. Pollution comes from smoke from cars, factories and garbage, along with from aircraft noise, dirty water and general transport. Defiling the things God has

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given us is not a gesture of gratitude. Allah shaped the distinction between good and evil as:

"The unclean and clean are not equal," you say, despite the fact that the profusion of the dirty may pleasure you; so, O men of insight, continue to fear Allah! In order for you to prosper?" (Al-Quran, Al-Aala:14-15). The concept of Flah (success) was revealed by Allah in the Quran as: *"He who purged, without a doubt, accomplished his purpose. And he prayed, remembering his Lord's name"* (Al-Quran, Al-Baqrah:172).

Environmental problems are often associated with air, soil and water pollution. Since the 18th century, these challenges have plagued the universe. The growth of the European Industrial Revolution accelerated the emergence of ecological problems. The Industrial Revolution began in England, where the mass production of human needs led to enormous development. This was the conversion to new industrial processes in the period from about 1760 to erstwhile amid 1820 and 1840. The transition from manual production methods to machines, iron-making processes, and modern chemicals has led to greater productivity in hydropower, augmented usage of steam power, advancement of machine apparatuses, and upsurge of the industrial system (Ghazali, 2002). As a result of these sectors, extensive resource exploitation occurred, which led to significant environmental damage. Following the publication of the Silent Spring article in 1962, direct recognition of environmental difficulties began to spread. It has succeeded in drawing attention to the world's currently growing environmental challenges (Carson, 2002).

The environmental challenges have gotten much worse recently because of overutilization and poor management of natural resources. Human exploitation of the environment has led to environmental pollution and degradation, reflected in a significant rise in worldwide temperature because of the depletion of the Earth's ozone layer in mid-2010. As a result, the temperature on Earth rose. The most important source of reference in Islam is Qur'an, offers solutions to all the challenges and problems in people's lives. Therefore, references from the Qur'an should always flow into scientific work, even if it deals with environmental problems. Numerous passages in the Qur'an deal with ecological defense. The activities that the average person can take to protect the environment are outlined in these verses.

Islam makes it clear that Muslims, as guardians of the planet that God created, have a responsibility to protect the environment. It implies that Allah formed all in precise measure and harmony, that everything has a purpose, living or non-living, and that every living thing performs an essential function for preserving balance. God gave people clear instructions on how to usage the natural ecosphere according to their requirements, without assuming a free license to use it (Huda, 2012).

Muslims believes that all living things, as well as individuals, are subject to Allah alone. So, we are not rulers ruling over the globe, but God's slaves who must keep the peace He ordained. Quran says, *"It is He who has made you viceroys on planet..... so that He may test you in what He has provided you"* (Al-Quran, 6:165). *"O Adam's*

children!.....eat and drink, but do not overindulge, for Allah despises wasters” (Al-Quran, 7:31). “It is He who grows gardens with and without trellises, and dates and plowland with all types of food, and olives and pomegranates that are alike [in kind] and distinct [in form]. Consume their fruit in season, but pay the necessary dues on the day the harvest is assembled. And utilize not by excess: Allah despises wasters” (Al-Quran, 6:141). These and countless other chapters of the Holy Quran form the basis for Islamic guidelines focused at environmental protection and improvement. Not only does the Quran provide a framework for environmental protection, but Muslims are also compelled to fight for it as part of their religious obligations.

Definitions of Islam and Environment

Islam is an Arabic accent that means "surrender to the divine will." According to Lewis, the words "Islam" and "Muslim" descend from the origin "s-L-m," and the term "aslama" signifies to surrender to Allah in whole peace of mind, which is where the term "Muslim" comes from. (Lewis, 2001). Muslims consider Islam to be a branch of monotheism, and the Quran to be mankind's eternal revelation. The Quran was revealed to Islam as a constitution for humanity as a whole, governing and organizing every aspect of life and relationships. This results in the dual pillars of Islamic law - Sharia, the Quran and Sunnah. The Sunnah defines and illuminates these instructions by referring to the remarks, actions and conducts of the Prophet (peace be upon him), while the Quran gives general instructions.

Worship and commerce are important pillars of Islamic Sharia (Muamalah). Worship is about the connection between God and people, while transaction is about interpersonal contacts in everyday life. Both components work together to achieve five goals of Sharia: faith (din), human self (nafs), intelligent offspring (aql), and currency to encourage the well-being of entirely people (maal) (Al-Najjar, 2008). Sharia defines four rules that administrate socioeconomic status life: Union (Tawhid), which declares that separate activities must be in congruence with the entire; balance (al'adlwalihsan); free will (ikhtiyar), which states that a individual's freedom is carefully determined by a greater context of public obligations; and responsibility (fardh), which states that individuals and citizens have the concern to use and dispose of capital and possessions fairly (Rizk, 2014). Muslims must now live up to their moral obligation to people and the environment as a vital part of their belief.

Everything in our immediate surrounds, including plants, animals, individuals, houses, and other items, is referred to as the environment. Green fields, rural grass, dirty industrial and cars in cities all contribute to our ecology. According to Onuoha, an environment is a set of situations and factors that surround and have a direct impact on the organization or organism (Onuoha 2012). Furthermore, the physical, biological, and social elements and conditions that work together to define the properties and behaviors of living species and systems are called the environment, (Dorland's Medical Dictionary for Health Consumers, s.v 'Environment'). As a result, the living being gets what it needs from its

environment. A balanced environment is Allah's greatest blessing, according to this verse: *"And who created the earth a bed for you, and the sky a structure, and allowed water to fall from above, bringing forth certain fruits for you to eat, so don't set up equals for Allah deliberately"* (Al-Quran, Al-A 'raf:10).

The God has handled all of the Earth's demands admirably. God says: *"And without a doubt, we placed you on the earth and provided you with a means of subsistence. How little gratitude you express"* (Al-Quran, Al-Ra 'd: 3-4). According to the Quran, the following are required for environmental aesthetics: *"And it is He who overextended out the earth and made therein anchors and rivers, and He made binary types of all the fruits of the earth. He covers the night with the day. These are undoubtedly signs of a person who are thinking. And there are diverse areas that border each other, and there are vineyards and cornfields and palm trees that grow on a base and distinctly, entirely are irrigated with one water and in fruits, we do one to balance the other. Undoubtedly these are signs for wise people"* (Al-Quran, Al-Mursalat:25-2).

As Allah has revealed, the earth is vital for both the living and the dead. *"Have we not converted the earth into a meeting place? Of your living and deceased?"* (Al-Quran, Al-Baqrah: 29). The following verse outlines a multitude of Allah blessings, encompassing clothing, the existence of humans, accommodation, and numerous other things. *"He is the one who created everything on earth for you, then looked towards the heavens, appropriately forming seven heavens, and He recognizes everything"* (Al-Quran, Ar-Rum: 41).

The Concept of Environment in Quran and Hadiths

The Islamic faith is founded on the Qur'an, which God conveyed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The environment is discussed in the Quran using a number of expressions and terminologies. The need to protect the environment and limit environmental damage is addressed in numerous verses in the Quran. Humans are able to process and use the universe in all its facets. As already mentioned, the environment in the Quran is referred to as the universe, heaven, earth and bi'ah (environment) (Subhan 2023). There are three sorts of verses about ecology that are addressed in the Quran. The first type of verse is about harmony with the environment, another type is about environmental protection, and the third type is about prohibiting ecological damage.

"He who made the seven heavens one above the other: No lack of proportion will thou see in [God's] Most Gracious's Creation. Thus, turn your gaze once more: do you spot any flaws?" (Al-Quran, Mulk Verse, 67:3). *"The sun and moon follow [perfectly] calculated paths, and the plants and trees - both [alike] prostrate in devotion. And He has lifted the Firmament high, and He has established the Balance [of Justice], that you may not violate [proper] balance. As a result, establish weight with fairness and do not fall short in the balance. He is the one who made the earth for [His] creatures: There are fruit and date palms, which produce spathes [enclosing dates]; maize, with [its] leaves and stalk for fodder, and sweet-smelling plants"* (Al-Quran, Rahman Verse, 55/5-12).

The preceding passages show that God's made nature in balance and that humanity's actions must go beyond what is obligatory for its survival. The Koran

mentions the preservation of the natural order several times. For instance, *“Those who, when they use, are neither excessive nor stingy, but strike a fair [balance] between those [extremes]”* (Al-Quran, Furqan Verse, 25:67).

Other verses define the persons who do not murder someone (animal, plant and human) dishonestly, luxury and miser, so these traits can be considered as ecological traits of humans. *“We took each one of them for his criminal activity: contrary to some of them, We guided a severe tornado [with stone showers]; others were caught by a [great] Blast; some We made the ground to swallow up; and some We sank [in the waters]: It was not God’s who wounded [or oppressed] them: it was their own hearts who were injured [and persecuted]”* (Al-Quran, Ankabut Verse, 29:40)

Environmental elements are sometimes used as punishment for people who don't follow instructions, and these elements are also used as contaminants. Hadiths are another important source of the Islamic religion. So, animals cannot be killed unjustly if they are used for hunting and remain hungry and thirsty.

There are hadiths that relate not only to animals but also to plants. The Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H. has also stressed on the trees. A tree's owner receives alms on a daily basis because the tree serves other people and creatures such as birds, wolves, and insects throughout its life cycle. People must evaluate the benefits of oxygen production and pollutant reduction in this regard. (Yeniceri, 2009. 153). In this context, individuals must likewise contemplate the benefits of reducing air pollution and generating oxygen.

Environmental Issues in Pakistan

Allah has given people the ability to change their environment to suit their needs. Some of these alterations are meant to be environmentally beneficial. Various human behaviors, such as extreme energy consumption, deforestation and the throwing away of factories and municipal waste into the soil water and air, have severely threatened the ecosystem. In Pakistan, water, air and soil pollution is a major problem. Human activity caused global climatic changes that changes the composition of the environment. As a consequence, there are numerous environmental problems at the moment. In Pakistan, the yearly expense of deteriorating the environment has reached alarming levels. According to recent research, in Pakistan the economic cost of environmental degradation is billions of dollars per year (Ministry of Climate Change, 2022). These costs include a variety of issues such as air pollution, water pollution, deforestation and poor waste management (World Bank, 2021). The health impacts of environmental degradation exacerbate the economic burden by increasing healthcare costs and reducing productivity (Khan et al., 2020).

Water Pollution in Pakistan

Water is essential for life. Since water covers three quarters of the earth's surface, it is the most important element for all living things. Water is not only a source of food for humanity, but also a major source of energy, transportation and climate management. Rivers, glaciers, rainfall and groundwater are the foremost foundations of water in Pakistan. The state's varied terrain contributes to the

unusual rainfall pattern. In Asia, precipitation variability has increased spatially, seasonally and annually in recent decades. Rainfall patterns in the coastal and desert areas of Pakistan are also showing a decreasing trend. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, most of Pakistan has an arid climate. There is humidity, but only in a limited area in the north. The entire province of Sindh, most of Balochistan, much of the Punjab and the central parts of the Northern Territories receive less than 250mm of rain per year (Salma 2012). Pakistan's agricultural industry currently consumes 70% of the state's water sources. The uncontrolled release of domestic, farming and manufacturing surpluses in the shape of pesticide and fertilizer runoff is the reason of Pakistan's water pollution due to the country's environmental problems. When water cannot be used, it is considered dirty water, and water pollution denotes to the chemical and physical change in water.

The contaminated water causes significant outbreaks and diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, and arsenic poisoning. The most catastrophic concern, though, is the lack of pure, fresh water throughout the universe. Many scholars believe that upcoming battles, mainly in the Middle East, will be fought over water instead of oil.

Aforementioned unrestrained releases of entirely three substances in the form of household manure, a toxic metal, organic pollutants, acids, other less hazardous but infectious substances from industrial displacement, and pesticides and fertilizers discharge from agricultural fields include harmful contaminants are both polluting the environment both ground and surface water supplies and can cause serious damage to human well-being, both directly and indirectly.

With few water charges levied on well-maintained domestic or agricultural water, in Pakistan water is not considered an expensive commodity. The extraction of groundwater, for whatever reason, also indicates inadequate water management protection. The Lyari River has deteriorated due to waste dumping and has become a dirty drain. The ecological assessment focused on the production zone of the Sindh Industrial Trading Estate to document the impact of industrial effluents on Karachi's vegetation. During the investigation, it was found that residues of heavy metallic element such as nickel and chromium were present in the herbal samples. This indicated that the industry was not taking protective measures against pollution (Mustafa, 2014).

In addition, when dirty water passes through the ground into the deeper layers, it pollutes rivers and canals. The various chemicals heat the water and reduce the oxygen levels in the water, both of which are essential for aquatic life (http://www.geocities.com/rain_forest/andes). The fact that gastrointestinal disorders account for 25.30% of the causes observed in pharmacies and public hospitals in Pakistan underlines the gravity of the circumstances. Drinking dirty water as a teenager donated to 60% of child mortality in Pakistan. In addition, infectious and parasitic infections, primarily waterborne and caused by human excretions, are responsible for nearly 60% of neonatal deaths (<https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/pakistan-waste-management>).

Most wastewater from large cities is discharged into irrigation schemes, where it is recycled, as well as into streams and other bodies of water, regardless of their capacity. Despite the fact that various studies, investigations of definite sources and annotations have emphasized the severity of manufacturing pollution in some regions, no organized or comprehensive study of the origin, capacity and quality of factories effluents has been carried out in Pakistan. The industry does not manage its residual water waste in accordance with the absolutely relevant requirements, whether through method limitations, tailings processing or end-of-pipe behavior. For example, waste, including hydrochloric acid and large amounts of organic matter, is discharged directly into rivers and waterways from several biochemical plants, steel mills, textile industries, tanneries and additional industries in the nearby Kala Shah Kaku Industrial Area. Heavy metals, biological waste, fats and oils, and further chemicals are dumped into home-grown watercourses from Sindh province's two major industrial areas: Landhi Industrial Trading Estate and Sindh Industrial Trading Estate. Each day, 376 tons of dissolved solids, 35 tons of suspended solids, 1.4 tons of arsenic oxide and 2 tons of ammonia are dumped into the previously contaminated Karachi seaport, where the Landhi Industrial Trading Estate is located. In Faisalabad, 235 companies discharge large concentrations of particulate matter, organic matter, inorganic salts, substantial metallic element and fragrant dyes into municipal sewage systems lacking former treatment, polluting neighboring regions (Muhammad, 2018). Tanneries in Kasur, Sialkot and Karachi also pollute the water supply and surrounding areas. In metropolitan areas, industrial wastelands have contaminated the deep groundwater.

Air Pollution

The atmosphere, often called air, consists mainly of the gas's oxygen and nitrogen. This mixture of oxygen, nitrogen and other gases has a fixed ratio in the air structure. A change in gas ratio could pollute the air and lead to a catastrophic disaster for humans. For example, when the oxygen level falls below its constant value of 21%, all living things find it difficult to breathe properly. As the ratio increases, small fires will start around us (Syed Riazuddin, 2019).

Air pollution is a serious problem in many state communities. Increasing energy demand and unprecedented growth in the transportation sector are major contributors to deteriorating air quality. The uncontrolled use of low-quality fuels and the large number of cars on the road have led to increased air pollution in cities and significant health problems. However, air pollution has significant economic and health consequences in many countries, including Pakistan. A 2019 World Bank report projected the price of outdoor air pollution at around 3% of Pakistan's GDP in terms of early deaths, healthcare costs and lost productivity (World Bank 2019).

The number of cars on city streets has increased dramatically, leading to increased air pollution. Nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and ozone are chemicals commonly produced by cars that are hazardous to health in certain quantities. Polyaromatic hydrocarbons free by diesel automobiles are carcinogenic, and smoke from diesel engines already raises large amounts of powder into the air.

Karachi has the highest nitrogen oxide levels, followed by Lahore, Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad (Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency and Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2006). Brick kilns burned by low-grade coal are major foundations of dust, while urban manufacturers are the primary cause of Sulphur dioxide, which is harmful to floras, inhabitants and animals' lives. Precautionary steps have been executed to mitigate the urban air pollution effects, such as encouraging cleaner, lower Sulphur gases for instance diesel and CNG, and gradually phase out the use of lead-based petrol. Since 2005, lead has been totally removed from entire grades of gasoline on the systematic trade market in Pakistan, which is set to decrease ethyl lead levels in the air in the years to come. Another encouraging trend is the increasing number and speed of the transition from gasoline-powered vehicle engines to CNG-powered engines (Government of Pakistan, 2007).

This means that Pakistan has the major fleet of natural gas-powered automobiles in South Asia and ranks third in the world behind Argentina and Brazil. Due to the lack of access to current energy resources, the usage of biomass fuels in adjacent spaces has been recognized as the main source of indoor air contamination, especially in countryside regions. However, most developing countries face problems in providing a consistent supply of energy, particularly electricity as the most commonly used energy source. More importantly, in many developing countries, a large percentage of families are unconnected to electricity, relying only on conventional cooking and lighting sources. According to the latest global figures, traditional biomass resources are used by around 2.6 billion people to encounter their elementary food needs, while around 770 million individuals lack approach to electrical energy. The International Energy Agency report (IEA, 2020) goes on to say that lack of approach to clean energy is not the only problem; Rising prices for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and grid electricity, as well as growing unemployment in energy-poor nations, are important factors contributing to households' inability to purchase clean energy. In addition, air pollution leads to breathing difficulties, heart problems, tonsillitis, chest discomfort and suffocation. Smoking causes bladder cancer. Around the globe Pakistan is the third most polluted nation, according to the World Air Quality Index 2021, with cities such as Lahore, Faisalabad and Peshawar among the 15 most polluted countries in the country. Air pollution and climate change are intricately linked, according to Fair Financing Pakistan, because all major pollutants have an impact on the climate and most are a source of greenhouse gases. In Pakistan, air pollution is a silent public health epidemic that kills about 128,000 people each year from air pollution-related diseases. Pakistan is among the three countries with the highest mortality rate from air pollution (smog), along with China and India (Pakistan Observer [News](#) desk, 2022).

Among these environmental factors, air is often the most important for our lives, since it has a direct influence on the rain production and the preservation of a comfortable climate. As a result, Islam writes and commands people not to pollute the air because it considers it a gift and a blessed emblem from God's. We Pakistanis can simply fulfill our responsibility towards this vital element by

interpreting the revealed verses of the Quran and Sunnah. The Quran explains: *“And one of His types of evidence is that He sends the gales to proclaim virtuous news, and that He may give you a taste of His kindness, and that the ships may sail at His orders, and that you can look for His elegance in order to be grateful”* (Al Quran, 30:46).

Land Pollution

Land pertains to the earth's solid, firm outer layer and is an important constituent of what surrounds us. It makes up about 29% of the Earth's surface. Land was created by the creator of the universe for humans and other creators. In Quran God's says, Land is as essential to existence as water and oxygen are. *“And He has prepared the land for the creature”* (Al-Quran, Ar-Rahman: 10). Allah says, together people and floras are made of earth. *“And one of His signs is that He made you from dust, and that you are now human beings distributed over the biosphere”* (Al-Quran, Ar-Rum: 20).

Land is the most important source of housing and food for humans. Land is used by humans for various reasons and there are various sorts of land, such as productive land, desert land, underused land, mountains, peaks, and forestry zones. Soil, like other natural materials, is being degraded and less usable all over the world. Humanity's harmful actions were found to have degraded, in whole or in part, about seventy three percent of the ecosphere's arable land. Islam considers this part of the natural world to be an extremely fertile source, and the Quran emphasizes altogether of this. The Quran explains: *“And in the earth are stretches side by side, vineyards, ploughed cornfields, and date palms similar to and unlike-cornfields that are watered with identical water”* (Al Quran, 13:4).

Another issue is the discarding of medical left-over on private property. Hospitals in Pakistan generate approximately 250,000 tons of waste annually. Hospital waste is allegedly mishandled and improperly disposed of by hospital staff and administration. This has environmental and health implications for both hospitals and the general public (Ramesh Kumar et al 2010). The Pakistani government guesses that each week 87,000 tons of solid waste is produced, most of it in main metropolitan regions. Karachi, a major city of the state, generates about 16,500 tons of municipal left-over everyday (<https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/pakistan-waste-management>). Further, thousands of small electroplating and other operations wastes significant amounts of metal onto water and land, unaware of the environmental damage it causes.

Conclusion

Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable nations to climate change, and the environmental disaster is having a devastating impact on almost all areas of life. Pakistan creates around 49.6 million tons of solid trash yearly, representing a 2.4% annual growth. Like other poor states, Pakistan has no infrastructure for waste management, which leads to major ecological complications. The majority of municipal solid waste is either incinerated and landfilled or buried on unoccupied land, harming the health and welfare of the inhabitants. The wastes produced by humans and animals are dangerous, sterile and toxic. This solid waste generally

includes rubbish, industrial waste, construction waste, garbage, ash, hazardous waste and mining waste. Chemical elements include herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and pesticides. While these compounds offer certain benefits, they are extremely harmful to the environment.

The environment is God's gift to entirely living beings. The environment that includes entirely living beings on earth, in heaven and universally is described in the Quran. Islam is a widespread religion that addresses environmental issues and transcends national and spiritual boundaries. Furthermore, maintaining the environment is one of our responsibilities as God's creations on Earth, according to Islam. Natural disasters can be avoided by following the principles of Islam. As a result, human being should take a moral message to overwhelmed the forthcoming obscenity of climatic changes. Allah says in Qur'an: *"That we may provide life to a dead land and provide water from it to all of what We have created in the form of animals and humans"* (Al Quran, 25:49). Muhammad (P.B.U.H) also regulated some laws saying: — If someone cultivates waste land, he will be rewarded, and whatever any creature seeking sustenance consumes of it will be considered sadaqah to him (Imam At-Tirmizi, op.cit., Hadith no-596).

Pakistan, as one of the most important states in terms of Islamic culture and values, has the potential to significantly conserve our environment by adhering to the principles of the Holy Quran and Sunnah about environment and ecosystem. Immediate action to address this issue and adopt sustainable practices is needed to prevent rising costs. Failure to act harms not only the environment but also economic growth and social well-being. Policy makers and stakeholders must work together successfully to develop a comprehensive environmental policy that prioritizes sustainability and protects Pakistan's natural resources for future generations.

To effectively manage environmental risk in Pakistan, to reduce these negative impacts, it is necessary to build a worldwide and countrywide policy with sturdy institutional backing and capacities that is coordinated with global standard practices. The government of Pakistan needs to teach the Islamic teachings on environment in all educational institutions, including religious seminaries and mosques. These Islamic guidelines shall be made simple and spread through advertisement to reach to ordinary citizens. The government should strengthen the ministry responsible for climate change and develop several realistic programs to ensure global financing. It is essential to prevent these issues from worsening, as doing so will harm the ecology and jeopardize the nation's food and water security.

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