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Uncertainty is Inevitable, But Worry is Optional

Worry is spiritual short sight. Its cure is intelligent faith.

Paul Brunton

Man has the dubious distinction of not sharing with animals his tendency to worry. After the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, the anchors on the television news channels use the word worry so much, whether they are talking about the next wave, a new variant, or vaccination, that one gets the impression that anyone who is not worried about something or the other is guilty of neglecting an important duty. Worry is a product of the mind. Human beings have a mind far better developed than animals have, and that is why man worries whereas animals (at least apparently) don't. It is the mind that makes man distil past experience to predict future possibilities, and that makes him worry. It is the mind that makes man extrapolate, calculate and conclude what all might go wrong, and that makes him worry. It is the mind that makes man analyse and visualize what all might be needed in the future but would be difficult for him to get, and that makes him worry. In short, worry originates in the mind, and is due to uncertainty about the future.

If worry originates in the mind, the solution should reside either in better use of the mind, or in some part of the being higher than the mind. Solutions are available at both levels, at the level of the refined mind and at a level higher than the mind. Let us examine both types of solutions.

At the level of the mind, the first solution is the reminder that that worry changes nothing. Secondly, the future is unpredictable, and could be much better than we think. Thirdly, past experience assures us that of the many things that could possibly go wrong, most actually won't



materialize. These three products of the mind help reduce worry. However, what the mind cannot do is to give us the guarantee that the possibilities that are behind our worry cannot or will not materialize. Thus, the mind can assuage worry; it cannot cure it.

There is a cliché calculated to cure worry, ‘hope for the best but be prepared for the worst’. This cliché seems to be a product of the mind but its source, justification and validity reside in an intuitive perception that originates at a level higher than the mind. How can one hope for the best? By having faith in God’s Love for us, by trusting that God’s Grace is always available to us. How can one be prepared for the worst? By having the faith that what seems to be the worst to us is also an expression of God’s Love and Grace. As the Mother has said, “When in your life, you meet with a hardship, take it as a Grace from the Lord and, indeed, it will become so.” Seems paradoxical, but it is true. The worst in our life is a wake-up call, and is an opportunity for initiating the best in our life. The best in our life is the process of spiritual growth, a rise in consciousness. If we are confident that we can put any eventuality to good use, we are truly prepared for the worst. If we are truly prepared for the worst, what is it that can worry us?

**Worrying does
not take away
TOMORROW'S
Troubles, it takes
away TODAY'S
Peace**

*(Source: irise-psychology.london and
Google images)*



Being Common Does Not Make It Correct

Rachna Bansal

‘Yoga and Meditation’ is an expression used so commonly that nobody feels even the need to pause and think what it means. It is taken to be beyond any doubt or question that the expression refers to a combination of physical practices (asanas and pranayamas), which is yoga; and a technique by which the mind can be free of stress, which is meditation. Both types of techniques, asanas and pranayamas, as well as meditation, are quite fashionable today. Within these techniques also, people try to minimize effort. They start looking for specific asanas, which would help them ‘cure’ a specific disease like diabetes or hypothyroidism. In short, ‘Yoga and Meditation’ is seen as a set of techniques which are an easy way to good health. I don’t agree with this very dwarfed view of the grand discipline that yoga really is.

To justify myself, let me begin by writing about yoga. According to Sri Aurobindo, yoga is a methodised effect towards self-perfection. Its ultimate aim is achieving union with the Divine. We human beings are imperfect beings; the perfect being is the Divine. So, yoga means a systematic way of moving towards the Divine. The movement towards the divine is long and difficult. So, a systematic method is necessary. This systematic route is the use of yogic techniques, which include not only asanas and pranayamas but also meditation. Thus, the *first error* in the expression ‘Yoga and Meditation’ is that yoga includes meditation. Therefore, in the expression ‘Yoga and Meditation’, ‘Meditation’ is redundant. Meditation is a part of yoga. The *second error* is that doing these techniques does not by itself constitute yoga. These techniques have to be done with the yogic attitude which will



lead to the movement towards the perfect being. The *third error* is that the yogic attitude is not restricted to the time when one is doing these techniques. The yogic attitude is required throughout the day.

What is the attitude with which the yogic techniques should be done? The attitude is that although we do them to make the body and the mind fit, we want the body and the mind to be fit so that they can be suitable and durable instruments for doing what the Divine expects of us. It is only with this attitude that the asanas become yogasanas. Without this attitude, they are just asanas (postures), not yogasanas. On the other hand, with the yogic attitude, even other exercises such as walking, jogging, cycling or swimming become a part of yoga.

What is the attitude that a practitioner of yoga should have when not doing the techniques? The yogic attitude involves three parts. *First*, without any ego, everything that one does should be done as an instrument of the Divine. Yogasanas and meditation sharpen the instrument so that it can serve the Divine better. *Secondly*, all work is done as an offering to the Divine, with no desire for reward. This brings great mental peace. *Finally*, since all work is offered to the Divine, it is done with love, and to the best of one's ability, so that it is fit as an offering to the Divine. By living with such attitude, yoga becomes a journey to reach the Divine. Since the attitude is required all twenty-four hours, all life becomes yoga. That is why, Sri Aurobindo said, "All life is yoga."

Rachna Bansal did a Course on Teaching Yoga at Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch in 2017



Many a bud never bloom for want of care. The country is full of budding young people handicapped by the environment in which they grow up, which prevents them from realizing their full potential. Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch has had the privilege of nurturing thousands of such boys and girls, and also the joy of seeing them bloom. In this column, we shall bring you stories of the difference that the Ashram made to their lives.

Ashram is My Home



Vijayalakshmi, during her stay in the Ashram

Vijayalakshmi Sharma, who came to Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch in 1987, is now a teacher in Ahmadabad. Here is her story in her own words:

I was only 18 when I came to the Ashram in 1987. I had nothing much in my pocket, no skills, and no knowledge of the world. I was raw. I had come from a village in a remote part of Andhra Pradesh. The Ashram served me delicious, nutritious meals, four times a day; provided me a well-furnished room with lights and a fan, which worked any time I wanted because of a regular power supply. Laundry facility was also available. Apart from all this, the place gave me a sense of security, a space to grow academically and spiritually. It motivated and helped me to continue with my studies. The love and



affection of Tara Didi, my mentors and other members of the Ashram made me feel as if I had recovered my parents. I had lost my biological parents when I was seven. I spent 10 years in the Ashram. Thus, Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch is home to me.

In the Ashram I met amazing people, who were intellectually developed and spiritually evolved. They guided us through their spiritual talks, seminars, meditation, various activities such as yoga and music. Living in a neat and clean environment nourished the mind and heart. The exposure to internationally acclaimed people broadened our thinking and kept us charged to do good things in life. We were taken to different parts of India from time to time. We got books to read, and healthcare, including medicines, when needed. We were completely taken care of in every respect. Receiving a monthly stipend (called prosperity) while sitting at the feet of The Mother was like receiving Her blessings. All important festivals were celebrated. Everybody's birthday was a very special day for each of us. Along with developing professional skills, we were well trained in soft skills as well. Tara Didi guided us towards the Light of the Divine through her readings in her mesmerizing voice, which brought a kind of peace in us. I am indebted to her for all her love and affection that she showered on me.

The Ashram prepared us to achieve our goals through various activities and introspection. I studied and worked primarily at Mirambika, a Free Progress School on the Ashram campus. It was different from the life outside the boundary walls of the ashram. Yet we were made ready

to face all sorts of challenges outside the Ashram. We learnt, when we go out of the Ashram, how to make 'The Ashram' and 'The Mother' proud of owning us as their children. I am



grateful to the Divine, Its instruments, Tara Didi, and all the members of that beautiful place for nurturing me into a beautiful person. I am trying my best to give back to the society in whatever way I can, through education! Presently, I am working as a senior TGT in a CBSE School, named 'Khyati World School' in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.



Vijayalakshmi at Khyati World School, Ahmedabad, Gujarat



A Call for the Path

The question you are to answer is this: Do you want the Yoga for the sake of the Divine? Is the Divine the supreme fact of your life, so much so that it is simply impossible for you to do without it? Do you feel that your very *raison d'être* is the Divine and without it there is no meaning in your existence? If so, then only can it be said that you have a call for the Path.

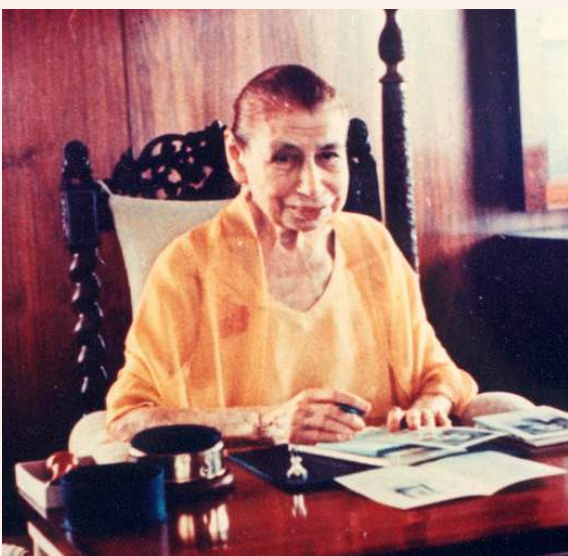
This is the first thing necessary – aspiration for the Divine.

The next thing you have to do is to tend it, to keep it always alert and awake and living. And for that what is required is concentration – concentration upon the Divine with a view to an integral and absolute consecration to its Will and Purpose.

Concentrate in the heart. Enter into it; go within and deep and far, as far as you can. Gather all the strings of your consciousness that are spread abroad, roll them up and take a plunge and sink down.

A fire is burning there, in the deep quietude of the heart. It is the divinity in you – your true being. Hear its voice, ...

The Mother ('The Great Adventure', p. 34)



All the pages of The Mother's work, 'The Great Adventure', in Tara Didi's voice, have been uploaded on the YouTube channel of Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch. The link to the channel is: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcmF6JzAOsBMdqJjZbnmyng>



Moksha

The pessimists have made moksha synonymous with annihilation or dissolution, but its true meaning is freedom. He who is free from bondage, is free, is *mukta*. But the last bondage is the passion for liberation itself which must be renounced before the soul can be perfectly free, and the last knowledge is the realisation that there is none bound, none desirous of freedom, but the soul is for ever and perfectly free, that bondage is an illusion and the liberation from bondage is an illusion. Not only are we bound but in play, the mimic knots are of such a nature that we ourselves can at our pleasure undo them.

Nevertheless the bonds are many and intricate. The most difficult of all their knots is egoism, the delusion that we have an individual existence sufficient in itself, separate from the universal and only being, *ekamevadwitiyam*, who is one not only beyond Time, Space and Causality. Not only are we all Brahman in our nature and being, waves of one sea, but we are each of us Brahman in His entirety, for that which differentiates and limits us, *nama* and *rupa*, exists only in play and for the sake of the world-drama.

Whence then comes this delusion of egoism, if there is no separate existence and only Brahman is? We answer that there is separate existence but only in manifestation not in reality. It is as if one actor could play different parts not in succession but at one and the same moment; each part is He Himself, one and indivisible, but each part is different from the other. Brahman extends Himself in Time, Space & Causality which do not condition Him but exist in Him and can at any time be changed or abolished, and in Time, Space & Causality He attaches Himself to many *namarupas* which are merely existences in His universal being. They are real in manifestation, unreal outside manifestation.

Sri Aurobindo (Essays Divine and Human, p. 6)



I Am Such A Leaf

James Dillet Freeman

*Suppose a leaf should decide,
"I will withdraw from this tree
Into my own true being.
I will isolate myself in silent meditation.
Shielded by my tranquil thoughts
From the perturbations of this tree,
I will go and find myself."*

*And suppose the leaf did this
And flew off on the wind
Till it came to rest
On the forest floor.
Will it not find that it cannot find fulfilment
As a thing complete in itself?
As a thing complete in itself,
Separate from the tree,
It is nothing but crumbling dust
In a dusty world.*

*Only as it gives itself to the tree,
Reaches out to sunlight and rain,
Lets the life of the tree pass through it
As it grows and unfolds,
Only then does it have meaning
And find fulfilment.
What happens to any other part of the tree affects it,
And what happens to it affects all the tree.*



*On the tree of life,
I am such a leaf,
And I fulfil myself
By giving myself to life
And letting it flow through me
To make me and life more alive.*

Reproduced from The Call Beyond, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 67, 1996



*All our earth starts from mud and ends in sky,
And Love that was once an animal's desire,
Then a sweet madness in the rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearning's space.
A lonely soul passions for the Alone,
The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God,
A body is his chamber and his shrine.
Then is our being rescued from separateness;
All is itself, all is new-felt in God:
A Lover leaning from his cloister's door
Gathers the whole world into his single breast.
Then shall the business fail of Night and Death:
When unity is won, when strife is lost
And all is known and all is clasped by Love
Who would turn back to ignorance and pain?*

Sri Aurobindo (Savitri, Book 10, Canto 3, lines 416-431)



Animals Have Personalities and Principles

This world is God fulfilled in outwardness.

Sri Aurobindo (Savitri, Book 10, Canto 3, line 111)

Sweet Children of the Sweet Mother,



All creation is an expression of the Consciousness of the Creator. But nothing in the creation expresses it fully. Further, different types of creation express it differently, just as the fans, bulbs and refrigerators express the electrical energy differently.

But the fact that the consciousness of all creation derives from the same Source makes it possible to have an incredible level of communication between widely different forms of creation.

The Mother has narrated the story of a newly acquired lion in a zoo in Paris. In its cage was a little room with a door. If it went behind the door, it could not be seen. The lion made it a point to hide behind the door just when visitors wanted to see it. One day, the Mother went near the cage and started speaking to the lion thus: “Oh! How handsome you are, what a pity you are hiding yourself like this, how much we would like to see you....” Its vanity satisfied, the lion took notice, moved bit by bit, and finally “put the tip of the nose against the bars as if saying, “At last, here’s someone who understands me!”

Another story the Mother has narrated is that of a Buddhist lady, Madame Z, who was the first European woman to enter Lhasa. She approached Lhasa through the tiger-infested forests of Indo-China. Some of these tigers had become man-eaters, and were referred to as ‘Mr. Tiger’. One day, quite late in the evening, she and her fellow Tibetans were passing



through a forest. She was very particular about meditating at a fixed hour every evening. She wanted to meditate in the forest even on that evening. She was told by one of her Tibetan companions that that was the time when Mr. Tiger was on the prowl looking for his dinner. Ignoring all pleading and warning, she insisted on sitting down to meditate, while she told her companions to go up to the next stage and prepare the camp. Seeing no other choice, they moved on, leaving Madame Z to meditate. While she was meditating, Mr. Tiger came. She saw him, and made herself ready to leave the world with a sense of total detachment. She went deeper into meditation, but nothing happened. When she came out of meditation, Mr. Tiger was no longer there. Impressed probably by her immobility, “I dare not say by the intensity of the meditation!” says the Mother, the tiger had withdrawn. An immobile person seems dead, and “wild animals, except the hyena, do not attack and eat a dead body.” One may not agree with the inflexible adherence to the ritual of meditating at a fixed time, but one has to admire the unshakable commitment of Madame Z to what she believed in.



Spot the ‘peacock’ in this picture of the Meditation Hall of the Ashram. (Photo: Manan Bindal)

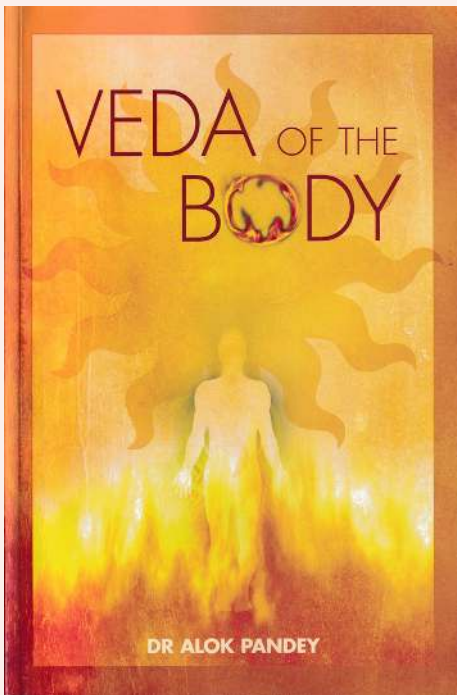
We shall continue this dialogue month after month. In the meantime, do two things. First, keep your ears open to the whispers of the intelligence hidden in all the animals in your surroundings. Secondly, if you have any questions, please send an e-mail to callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in.

With love, CB

(Based on Whispers of Nature. Edited by Vijay. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Society, 1981, pp. 57-58)



Just One Little Virus



The main problem of modern medicine is that it has lost sight of the holism from which it was born. It has deviated far and deep into the woods, labelled trees and studied their colours and tasted their fruits, but in the process lost sight of the forest and the direction of the path. It is like a child lost in the woods through an excess of curiosity. The result is that in trying to correct one problem, it creates another. It is like the process of industrialization which undoubtedly gave us many useful things, but when it came to be driven by excess of vitalistic, commercial interests (rather than a quest for genuinely making things better) it disturbed the whole ecological world. One can nightmarishly imagine a day when we will live only indoors, where each house has an oxygen-generating plant while the air outside has become dangerously polluted. So too, one can envisage a day when bombarded with chemical bullets (called medicines) mankind as a race loses its natural ability to fight disease. And then, we need just one little virus (which also has been manufactured in the arsenal of weapons) to destroy an entire race, much as plague did in the so-called Dark Ages.

Alok Pandey (Veda of the Body. Sri Aurobindo Society, Puducherry, 2014, pp. 278)



The Creator

Jagdeep Singh

*We are infinite.
Our mind confines us,
To the limits,
To the illusions.
When we are confined,
We forget
The Creator is in us,
We forget
We are the Creator*

An Anchor

Jagdeep Singh

*In life, we need an anchor,
To which we can hold on,
When the ship of mind is out of control,
When the emotional tsunami plays havoc,
When the tides of feelings are high and low,
When we are unable to see any lighthouse,
We need an anchor we can hold on to.*



In this column, we try to answer three types of questions: those related to spiritual quest ('aspiring high'); those related to psychological issues ('feeling low'); and those related to physical health ('frailties of the flesh'). It is needless to say that the identity of the person asking the question is kept confidential if the question is about a sensitive issue. The questions may be sent to callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in.

Reconciling Contraries

Question:

M wants a clear practical example to illustrate the idea of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. She has asked whether 'God exists-God does not exist' can be an example of thesis-antithesis.

Answer:

Thesis-antithesis-synthesis is a philosophical idea rooted in dialectical materialism. Dialect is a method of engaging in a dialogue, in which an idea or opinion or belief is argued for on purely rational grounds. Care is taken to use only dispassionate reasoning in support of the idea; emotional attachment to the idea is kept out of the discussion. Materialism is rooted in matter. Dialectical materialism was the nineteenth century product of the European Renaissance, which had placed reason on the highest pedestal. But as you can see, dialectical materialism is a restricted and one-sided approach. By restricting itself to reason, it is denying truths that may be accessible to layers of consciousness other than the intellect. By rooting itself in matter, materialism subordinates subtle layers of reality without offering any convincing reasons for doing so. Thus, materialism itself contradicts the basic foundation of dialectics!

Now, coming to thesis-antithesis-synthesis. The idea concedes that one person may believe in an idea, and another person



may believe in just the opposite idea. But if they engage in a rational dialogue, keeping emotions out, they can always reconcile their ideas in a synthesis, which is a higher truth than either of the opposites with which they started. Sri Aurobindo has used this principle while working out a synthesis of different schools of yoga in 'The Synthesis of Yoga', and while reconciling the 'refusal of the ascetic' and the 'denial of the materialist' in 'The Life Divine'.

Now, coming to your example of 'God exists-God does not exist' as an example of thesis-antithesis. Both these are mental beliefs, but if a believer and an atheist have a rational dialogue, they will find that neither of them is able to prevail. Neither the existence of God nor the non-existence of God can be proved by rational analysis. The higher synthesis that the dialogue might lead to is agnosticism: nothing is known and nothing can be known about the existence of God. Thus, your example is a valid example of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. However, the synthesis achieved by agnosticism is not the highest truth. The rishi or the mystic would say that he knows that God exists because his experience tells him that God exists. The rishi's stand is that if something exists, it should be possible to experience it; and if something has been experienced, it proves that the thing exists. In contrast, the rationalist's stand is that if something exists, it should be possible to prove its existence by reason; and if the existence of something cannot be proved by reason, it does not exist. What the rationalist forgets is that absence of rational proof is not a rational proof of absence. What the rationalist refuses to accept, quite irrationally, is that there are tools available which enable human beings to experience a Truth that cannot be proved by reasoning. Thus, without denying what the rationalist can prove or the materialist accepts as real, the mystic can experience an all-encompassing Truth. The mystic experience is not a sensory



experience, and therefore cannot be shared with others. But to the mystic, the experience is as real as a sensory experience. As Sri Ramakrishna told Swami Vivekananda, “I have seen God more clearly than I am seeing you.”

Now, coming to your first question about a clear practical example to illustrate the idea of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. You must have heard of two contradictory proverbs: absence begets love; and out of sight, out of mind. A rational synthesis of the contradiction would be that the intensity of love determines whether prolonged absence of the object of love intensifies the love, or makes one forget the object of love.

Another simple and practical example: contentment-discontent. Contentment is a great virtue, without which it is impossible to have peace of mind because desires have a way of proliferating uncontrollably. Discontent is the beginning of all progress, including spiritual progress. The synthesis: Contentment with respect to outer life and Discontent with respect to inner life is the combination that makes life meaningful.

There are contradictions also in mystic experience, e.g. *iti, iti* (It is this, It is this) and *neti, neti* (It is not this, It is not this); ‘It’ referring to the Absolute Reality or the Infinite or the Divine, or in plain English, God. Everything is a manifestation (a visible form) of the Divine. So, one may look at a stone and say, the Divine is this stone; one may look at a flower and say, the Divine is this flower; one may look at a bird and say, the Divine is this bird; one may look at a dog and say, the Divine is this dog; and so on. Hence *iti, iti* is true. On the other hand, although the essence of everything is Infinite, the visible form is finite. How can the finite be the Infinite? So, one may look at a stone and say, the Divine is much more than this stone, and therefore It is not this stone.



One may say the same about the flower, the bird and the dog. Hence, *neti, neti* is also true. Both *iti, iti*, and *neti, neti*, find their synthesis in 'All is That', i.e. everything manifest, and all that is unmanifest, is the One Divine. If it exists, it is That. If it is not That, it does not exist. In short, the highest Truth is the Absolute Reality, and the Absolute Reality is free from all contradictions. It is free from all contradictions because what appear as contradictions are also contained in the all-encompassing Absolute Reality. That is the Ultimate synthesis of all the thesis-antithesis pairs in the universe.



A compromise is a bargain, a transaction of interests between two conflicting powers; it is not a true reconciliation. True reconciliation proceeds always by a mutual comprehension leading to some sort of intimate oneness. It is therefore through the utmost possible unification of Spirit and Matter that we shall best arrive at their reconciling truth and so at some strongest foundation for a reconciling practice in the inner life of the individual and his outer existence.

Sri Aurobindo ('The Life Divine', CWSA edition, p. 29)



Contact us

Our quarterly magazine in Hindi, *Sri Aravind Karmadhara*, is also available on-line now, and may be viewed on our website www.sriaurobindoashram.net.

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To get *The Call Beyond* online regularly, month after month, please send an e-mail to: callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

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Note

In view of the Hundred and Fiftieth Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo on 15 August 2022, the Ashram is expanding its mailing list to reach out to more and more who may benefit from the teachings of the Master and the Mother. To get included in the Mailing List, please go to <http://erp.saaonline.net.in/addcontacts.cfm> to fill in a form, which will take you only a few minutes.



Feedback

Please send your feedback to
callbeyond@aurobindoonline.in

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