

ANTYODAYA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (Asha)

**BRIDGING LEARNING GAPS
AND EXPANDING
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY**



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Class Starting with Theme Song Dil Hai Chhota Sa बच्चों द्वारा कहानी सबको सुनाते हुए बोर्ड पर आकर कहानी पढ़ना कहानी से मुख्य शब्दों की पहचान शब्दकोष निर्माण प्रक्रिया शब्दकोष निर्माण



AShA at a Glance

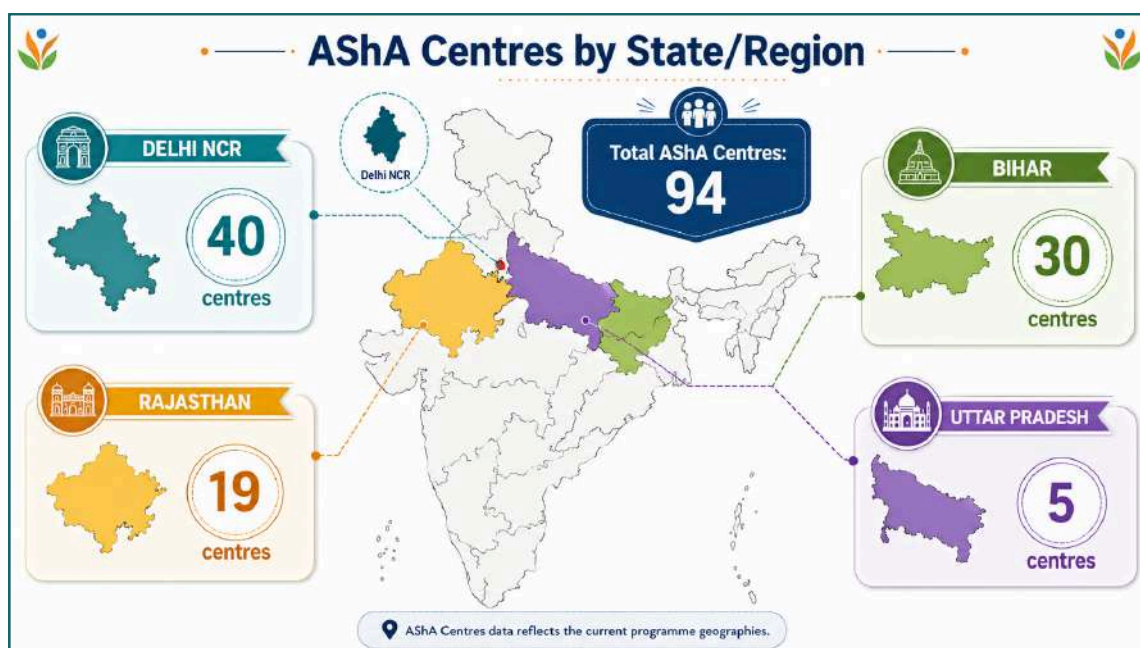
2021 Launch	4 states/regions Current coverage	94 Learning locations
2,620 Children reached	600+ Govt. school enrolments	100+ Youth teachers

Understanding AShA

Antyodaya Shiksha Abhiyan (AShA) was launched by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in 2021. The objective was to address the learning disruption and educational exclusion experienced by children living in urban slums, resettlement colonies and remote rural villages.

The programme emerged in the aftermath of COVID-19, when school closures deepened existing inequalities and left many children without regular learning support. AShA was designed as a community-based supplementary education programme. It serves children between six and fourteen years. Some children had never enrolled in formal schooling; others had dropped out or struggled with basic learning. The programme supports reading, writing, and foundational numeracy skills.

The programme began with 24 centres in Delhi NCR in 2021 and subsequently expanded to Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Its current footprint covers 94 locations and 2,620 children across Delhi NCR, Karauli, Bundi, Nalanda, Jehanabad, Nawada, Sonbhadra and Varanasi.



The centres operate six days a week for two hours a day and typically serve 25-30 children. Local partners, trained teachers and community volunteers deliver foundational learning support, co-curricular activities and regular engagement with parents. More than 100 youth teachers have received opportunities to work with children and strengthen their own teaching skills.

AShA combines academic support with child-centred learning. Alongside reading, writing, Hindi, English and basic mathematics, children participate in storytelling, poetry, art, theatre, music, yoga, sports and creative activities.

Teacher workshops focus on conversational learning, self-expression, confidence, questioning and the use of stories and poems connected with children's daily experiences. The Mobile Library extends this approach by taking books, audiovisual resources, science activities and cultural learning directly to underserved communities.

A distinct component of AShA was implemented in ten government middle schools in Nalanda between 2023 and 2025. More than 1,500 students benefited from bridge classes, story-based learning, peer learning, library use, home assignments, parent engagement and activities in science, theatre, games and digital learning.

Across the wider programme, more than 600 children have been supported in enrolling in government schools. The available evidence also points to improved attendance at centres, stronger foundational skills, greater confidence and increased parental awareness of education.

The programme's value lies in its ability to meet children where they are. It creates an accessible bridge between exclusion and formal schooling, while recognising that learning recovery requires more than textbooks. Its community presence, flexible teaching, local partnerships and emphasis on creative expression make AShA a practical model for supporting children who are most likely to be left behind.

Going forward, stronger learning assessments, digital progress records, structured parent engagement and closer tracking of school retention can help deepen its impact and demonstrate measurable learning gains over time.



1. The Educational Challenge

Despite significant progress in expanding school access, many children in urban slums and remote villages still remain excluded from quality education. Primary and middle-school learners often struggle with reading, writing, comprehension, and basic numeracy. Schools serving slums, resettlement colonies, and backward villages frequently lack adequate teaching resources. These gaps increase the risk of irregular attendance and early dropout.

Children living in urban slums and remote villages often face overlapping barriers to education. Poverty, insecure livelihoods, migration, weak documentation, parental illiteracy and unstable housing can prevent school enrolment or regular attendance. Some children support their families through rag-picking, market work, shop work or other forms of informal labour. Others live with grandparents or relatives and receive little academic support at home.

Children aged six to fourteen face the greatest difficulties. Many live in informal settlements without secure housing or basic services. Some have never entered school, while others leave after brief enrolment. Even under the Right to Education framework, bringing these children into mainstream education remains difficult.

Even among children enrolled in school, foundational learning remains a serious concern. Many struggle to read and write basic Hindi, understand simple English or apply elementary mathematical concepts. COVID-19 widened these gaps by interrupting classroom learning and reducing contact with teachers. For children already at risk of dropping out, the disruption was particularly severe.

These interconnected challenges showed that school access alone was insufficient. Children also required nearby, flexible, and supportive learning spaces. A community-based programme was needed to rebuild foundational skills. This need led to the creation of Antyodaya Shiksha Abhiyan.

AShA responds to this challenge by creating neighbourhood learning spaces that are accessible, regular and sensitive to children's social realities. The programme does not treat every child as being at the same level. Instead, it provides supplementary support that helps children regain confidence, strengthen foundational skills and move towards sustained participation in formal education.



2. Genesis and Purpose of AShA


AShA was launched in 2021 as a response to the educational disruption caused by COVID-19 and the long-standing exclusion experienced by children in disadvantaged settlements.

Seventeen centres began educational activities on 2 October 2021, followed by seven additional centres on 14 November 2021. The initial network of 24 centres in Delhi NCR created a practical foundation for a programme that could later be adapted to rural and semi-rural settings.


The programme serves children aged 6-14 who are out of school as well as school-going children who need additional support. Its central purpose is to strengthen reading, writing and numeracy while encouraging enrolment, regular attendance and continued participation in school.

Genesis and Purpose of AShA


A community response to learning disruption and exclusion

**LAUNCHED
2021**

17 centres opened on 2 October.
Seven more opened on 14 November.
The first year reached 24 centres.

**WHO IT SERVES
Children aged 6-14**

Out-of-school children receive learning access.
School-going children receive additional support.
Centres remain close to their communities.

**CORE PURPOSE**
Learn • Enrol • Continue

Strengthen reading, writing and numeracy.
Build confidence, expression and curiosity.
Support school enrolment and regular attendance.



3. Programme Objectives

AShA aims to restore meaningful learning opportunities. Its objectives address access, skills, and school continuity. The programme also strengthens confidence and creative expression. Family participation supports progress beyond the learning centre. Together, these objectives guide every programme activity.

- Provide basic reading, writing and arithmetic support to children excluded from primary education because of socio-economic disadvantage.
- Strengthen foundational Hindi, English and mathematics among school-going children who are unable to learn effectively through existing classroom support.
- Prepare out-of-school children for enrolment and help enrolled children attend school regularly.
- Build confidence, curiosity, self-expression, creativity and participation through child-centred learning.
- Increase parental and community awareness of the importance of education and continued schooling.



4. NGO Partnerships: The Foundation of Local Implementation

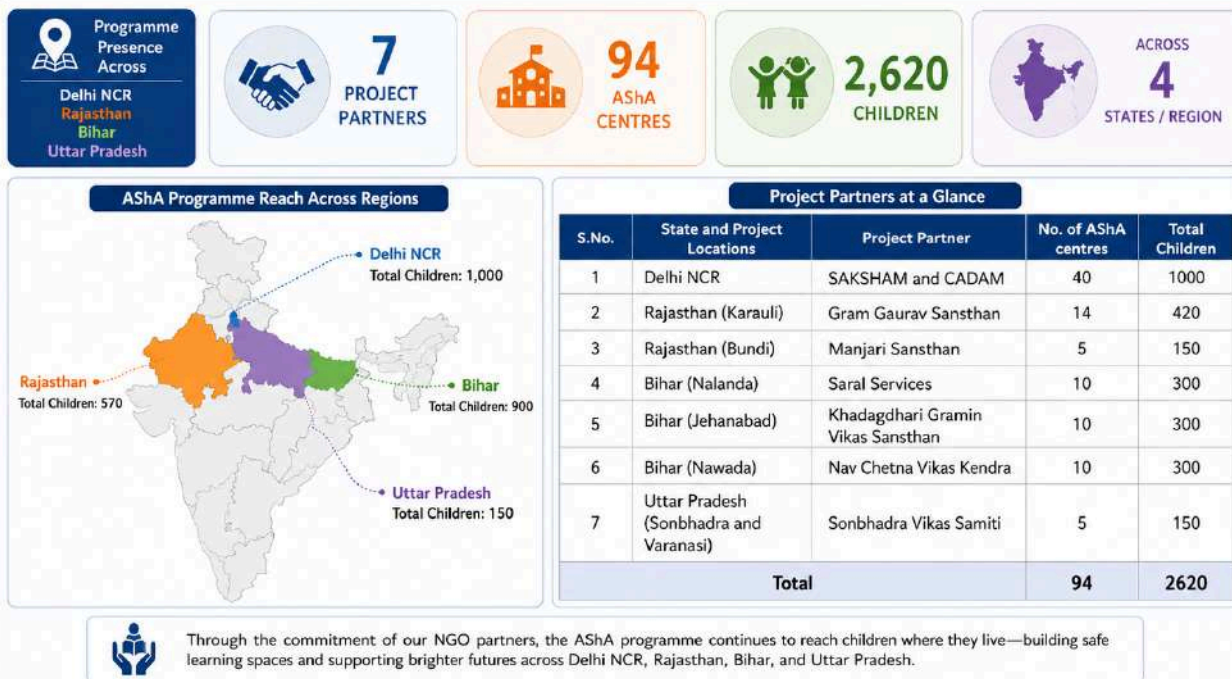


AShA Programme Implemented Through NGO Partners

The AShA programme is implemented through a network of trusted NGO partners who are deeply rooted in the communities they serve. These partners play a vital role in running AShA centres, reaching children from underserved and marginalised communities, engaging families, and supporting the continuity of learning in safe and supportive environments.

By working closely with local organisations that understand community needs, the programme is able to build strong relationships, encourage participation, and create spaces where children can learn, grow, and regain confidence.

This partner-led approach enables AShA to combine a central vision with local implementation—ensuring quality, accountability, and relevance at the grassroots while driving meaningful impact for children across multiple regions.



AShA is implemented through seven local NGO partners. These organisations provide field support across four states. Their teams manage centres, engage families, and support teachers. This local presence keeps learning connected with community realities.

In Delhi NCR, SAKSHAM and CADAM support 40 centres. These centres currently reach 1,000 children across underserved settlements. Rajasthan has 19 centres reaching 570 children. Gram Gaurav Sansthan works in Karauli, while Manjari Sansthan supports Bundi.

Bihar has the largest partner network outside Delhi NCR. Saral Services supports 300 children across ten Nalanda centres. Khadagdhari Gramin Vikas Sansthan reaches 300 children in Jehanabad. Nav Chetna Vikas Kendra supports another 300 children in Nawada.

In Uttar Pradesh, Sonbhadra Vikas Samiti supports five centres. These centres reach 150 children in Sonbhadra and Varanasi. Together, the partners operate 94 AShA centres. Their combined work currently reaches 2,620 children.

5. Programme Model: How ASHA Works

ASHA combines community identification, regular learning support, teacher preparation and school linkage within a single operating model. The process begins with local surveys and registration of children. Teachers then assess learning needs, conduct regular classes and maintain monthly records of attendance and progress. Parent meetings, home engagement and coordination with government schools help children move towards enrolment and retention.

Community survey and child identification	Registration and learning-level understanding	Two-hour sessions, six days a week	Academic and creative learning	Teacher support and progress documentation	Parent engagement and school enrolment support
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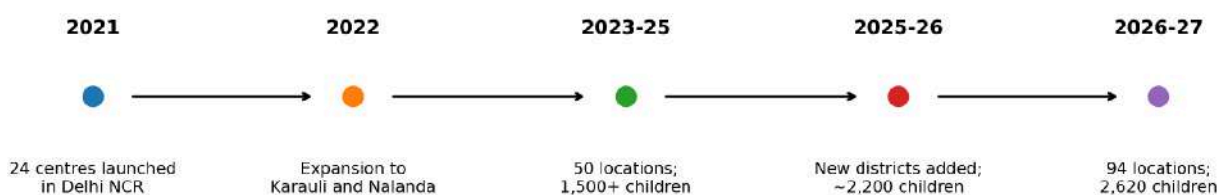
Core Implementation Features

- Centres operate six days a week, with two-hour learning sessions.
- Each centre generally serves 25-30 children.
- Books, stationery and materials support academic and co-curricular learning.
- Quarterly workshops strengthen teachers and programme coordinators.
- RGF teams provide on-site demonstrations, planning support and guidance.
- Teachers document attendance, activities and children's progress.
- Parents and communities participate through meetings and ongoing dialogue.
- Local partners support school enrolment, centre management and field coordination.

6. Growth and Geographic Expansion

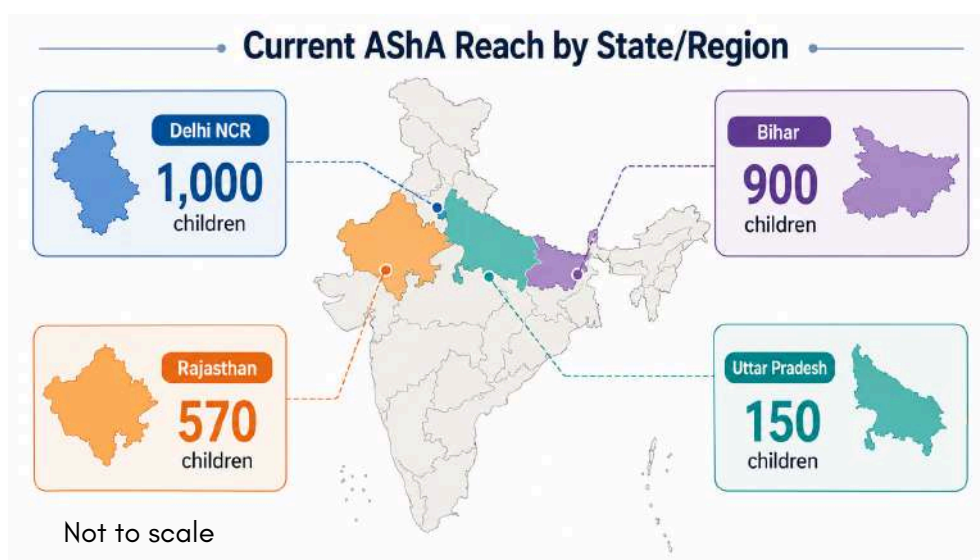
The programme has expanded steadily from an urban-slum intervention in Delhi NCR into a multi-state supplementary education platform.

The expansion has retained the core learning model while adapting implementation to local partners and community conditions.



7. Current Programme Footprint

State / project location	Project partner	AShA centres	Children
Delhi NCR	SAKSHAM and CADAM	40	1,000
Rajasthan - Karauli	Gram Gaurav Sansthan	14	420
Rajasthan - Bundi	Manjari Sansthan	5	150
Bihar - Nalanda	Saral Services	10	300
Bihar - Jehanabad	Khadagdhari Gramin Vikas Sansthan	10	300
Bihar - Nawada	Nav Chetna Vikas Kendra	10	300
Uttar Pradesh - Sonbhadra and Varanasi	Sonbhadra Vikas Samiti	5	150
Total		94	2,620



8. Learning Beyond the Classroom

AShA treats foundational learning as the starting point, not the limit, of a child's education. Storytelling, poetry, art, craft, music, dance, theatre, yoga and sports are used to build confidence, imagination and participation. These activities also help teachers engage children who may be anxious, irregular or hesitant in conventional classroom settings.

Teachers are encouraged to create space for children to share their experiences, feelings and questions. Stories and poems are linked to daily life so that learning becomes meaningful rather than mechanical. Sessions at the Wonderoom Children Learning Centre and field locations further expose AShA children to literary, cultural and creative experiences.



9. Teacher and Volunteer Capacity Building

The quality of a community learning centre depends heavily on the confidence and preparedness of its teacher. AShA therefore invests in teacher workshops, field demonstrations and continuing guidance.

Training covers child-centred teaching methods, storytelling, classroom engagement, learning assessment and approaches for working with children and families facing difficult circumstances.

More than 100 youth teachers have received an opportunity to work with community children and strengthen their own educational skills. This creates a dual benefit: children receive local learning support, while young educators develop experience, confidence and a pathway for contributing to their communities.



10. Mobile Library: Learning at the Doorstep

As part of India@75 Programs of RGF, the Mobile Library was inaugurated on 2 October 2021, Gandhi Jayanti, to extend educational and skill-development opportunities to underserved children in Delhi NCR. The Mobile Library carried a wide range of child-friendly learning materials. These included storybooks, poems, cartoons, adventure books, and resources on wildlife and the environment. Video sessions were also organised on themes linked with social harmony, awareness, and skill development.

These activities extended learning opportunities to children and community members. Resource persons use videos, puppet shows, science activities, art, craft, dance, theatre and literary exercises to stimulate curiosity. Interactive discussions connect the material with good habits, education, health, sanitation, social harmony and responsible citizenship. The videos included Wonderoom activities, puppet shows, and stories of noted saints and writers. They also covered themes such as Jal Gullak and COVID-19 awareness. These sessions encouraged children to become informed, sensitive, and responsible. They also promoted values needed for active and responsible citizenship.

The Mobile Library brings a wider learning environment directly to communities that may have little access to libraries, cultural spaces or experiential education.



Representative Image

11. ASHA in Government Schools

Between 2023 and 2025, ASHA supported a focused intervention in ten government middle schools in Nalanda, Bihar. More than 1,500 students benefited from activities intended to close foundational learning gaps and help children reach age-appropriate literacy and numeracy levels.

A range of methods was used to strengthen these skills. Special attention was given to basic literacy, including reading and writing simple sentences in Hindi. Students also received support in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Activities included creating personal dictionaries, forming word chains, peer learning, children's corners, and learning through practical exercises. These methods made classroom learning more participatory, accessible, and relevant to students' needs.

The intervention used bridge classes, story-based learning, peer learning, self-directed activities, library-based sessions and engaging home assignments. Teachers and programme teams also conducted home visits, parent training and regular parent-teacher meetings. WhatsApp groups helped parents and teachers communicate more consistently.

Academic support was complemented by science exhibitions, digital-technology sessions, arts workshops, games, theatre, seed-ball activities and other participatory events. This broader approach strengthened the learning environment and helped children engage with school beyond routine classroom instruction.



12. Outcomes and Emerging Impact

Reach	2,620 children currently receive supplementary education at 94 locations.
School inclusion	More than 600 children have been enrolled in government schools since the programme began.
Foundational learning	Children receive regular support in reading, writing, Hindi, English and basic arithmetic.
Learning habits	Regular centre attendance helps children develop interest, routine and readiness for formal schooling.
Confidence and expression	Creative activities strengthen communication, curiosity, participation and self-belief.
Parental awareness	Meetings and follow-up increase understanding of children's learning and the importance of school continuity.
Youth engagement	More than 100 youth teachers have gained work opportunities and practical teaching experience.
Community ownership	Local organisations, teachers, parents and volunteers contribute to sustaining neighbourhood learning spaces.

Outcome pathway

Regular learning support	Stronger foundational skills	Confidence and participation	School enrolment and retention	Improved educational opportunity
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13. Strengths of the AShA Model

Neighbourhood access: Centres are located close to children, reducing barriers related to travel, cost and family mobility.

Flexible inclusion: The programme supports out-of-school children, dropouts and enrolled children with learning gaps.

Whole-child learning: Academic support is combined with creativity, physical activity, confidence-building and expression.

Local implementation: NGO partners and youth teachers bring local knowledge, trust and continuity.

Teacher development: Workshops and field support improve the quality of classroom engagement.

School linkage: AShA does not operate as a parallel school; it helps children enter, attend and continue in formal education.

Community engagement: Parents and community members are involved in children's progress and centre activities.

14. Challenges and Programme Learnings

AShA operates in settings where children's attendance can be affected by migration, household responsibilities, informal work and changing family circumstances. Wide variations in age and learning level also make classroom planning difficult. In some cases, school admission is delayed by missing documentation or unstable residence.

The programme's experience suggests that regular contact with parents, flexible teaching and local follow-up are essential. At the same time, the next phase requires more systematic learning assessment, stronger retention tracking after school enrolment and continuing support for teachers. These improvements would allow the programme to demonstrate not only reach, but also measurable progress in learning and school participation.



15. Way Forward

AShA now has a strong foundation for expansion. The next phase should deepen learning quality. Better assessment can guide individual educational support. Stronger systems can track enrolment and retention. Continued innovation can protect children's learning journeys.

1. Introduce a common baseline and periodic foundational-learning assessment across all centres.
2. Create individual learning plans for children with major age-grade or skill gaps.
3. Maintain digital records of attendance, learning progress, school enrolment and retention.
4. Develop a structured annual calendar for parent meetings and home engagement.
5. Provide regular refresher training, peer learning and practical teaching resources for educators.
6. Strengthen coordination with nearby government schools for admission, transition and follow-up.
7. Expand Mobile Library and experiential-learning activities in rural programme areas.
8. Develop focused support for older children at risk of dropping out because of work or family pressures.
9. Undertake periodic independent evaluation to assess learning gains, retention and longer-term outcomes.

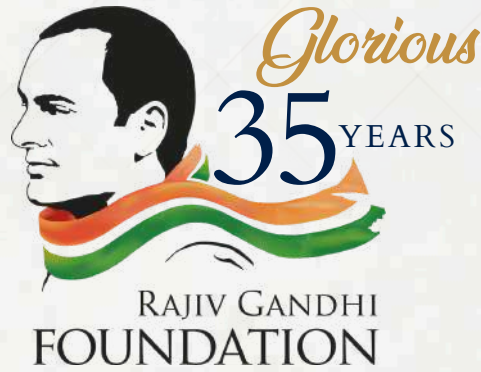
16. Spreading the AShA....

AShA began as a response to an extraordinary educational disruption, but its relevance extends far beyond the pandemic. It addresses a continuing need among children who live close to schools yet remain distant from meaningful learning because of poverty, migration, weak family support or unresolved foundational gaps.

By placing accessible learning centres within communities, preparing local teachers and linking children with formal schools, AShA creates a bridge between exclusion and educational participation.

Its growth from 24 centres in Delhi NCR to 94 locations across four states and regions demonstrates the adaptability of the model. The next stage should consolidate this reach through stronger assessment, retention tracking and evidence of learning outcomes.

The programme's central message is simple but important: when children receive regular attention, encouraging teachers, creative opportunities and support from their families and communities, educational disadvantage need not determine their future.




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