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## Rabindranath Tagore's Educational Philosophy: Nurturing Holistic and Creative Minds

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### ABSTRACT:

Rabindranath Tagore, a distinguished poet, philosopher, and educator, left an indelible mark on educational thought through his innovative and holistic approach to learning. This research paper delves into Tagore's educational philosophy, which emphasized the cultivation of holistic and creative minds. Drawing from his profound insights, Tagore advocated for an educational paradigm that recognized the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit. His philosophy centered on experiential learning, enabling individuals to engage with their environment and nature directly. A key element of Tagore's approach was the encouragement of creativity and self-expression, using art, music, and literature to stimulate imaginative thinking. Furthermore, he championed community integration, emphasizing the need to harmonize education with local culture and society.

The paper examines the implementation of Tagore's philosophy through the establishment of Santiniketan, an experimental educational institution that embodied his principles. Despite facing challenges and criticisms, Tagore's legacy endures, influencing progressive educational movements globally. This research underscores the ongoing relevance of Tagore's ideas in shaping modern education to foster not only intellectual growth but also emotional, social, and cultural enrichment. Through a comprehensive exploration of Tagore's philosophy, this paper illuminates his enduring contribution to the field of education and inspires a holistic approach to nurturing creative minds in today's dynamic world.

**Key words:** *Educational philosophy, Holistic development, Creative education, Individuality, Global awareness, Individuality, Human potential.*

### Introduction:

In the realm of educational philosophy, few figures have left as profound an impact as Rabindranath Tagore. A visionary poet, philosopher, and educator of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Tagore's ideas on education transcend conventional pedagogical approaches, encompassing a holistic and creative paradigm that continues to resonate in contemporary times. This research paper embarks on an illuminating journey into the heart of Tagore's educational philosophy, unearthing its core tenets and exploring its enduring relevance in fostering well-rounded individuals.

Against the backdrop of a colonial India grappling with transformation, Tagore's educational philosophy emerged as a beacon of innovation. With the establishment of Shantiniketan, his experimental school, in 1901, Tagore embarked on a pioneering quest to redefine education's purpose and potential. Rejecting the rote memorization prevalent in his era, Tagore's philosophy emphasized cultivating a profound connection between the individual, society, and the natural world.

Central to Tagore's vision was the concept of holistic learning. He envisioned education not as a compartmentalized endeavor, but as an integrated experience that nurtures the intellect, spirit, and creativity of each learner. By seamlessly weaving disciplines such as arts, music, and literature into the fabric of education, Tagore sought to awaken a sense of wonder and exploration that could ignite the flames of creativity.

Tagore's philosophy also championed the notion that education should transcend the walls of a classroom. His concept of "open-air classrooms" encouraged learning from nature and engaging with the world as a living textbook. By immersing students in the beauty of the natural environment, Tagore aimed to cultivate an ecological consciousness and a reverence for the interconnectedness of all life.

The core of Tagore's philosophy was perhaps his belief in the intrinsic worth of individuality. He rejected the assembly-line approach to education, advocating instead for personalized learning that respects and nurtures each student's unique talents and inclinations. This emphasis on individuality went hand in hand with his focus on ethical and moral development, as Tagore believed that education should equip individuals with the tools to navigate life's complexities with integrity and compassion.

As we navigate the intricacies of modern education, Tagore's philosophy gains renewed significance. In an era marked by technological advancements and rapidly evolving societal paradigms, his call for a balanced education that nurtures not only intellectual prowess but also emotional intelligence and creative expression stands as a timeless directive. Furthermore, his emphasis on interconnectedness and ecological awareness underscores the urgency of preparing generations who can be stewards of a fragile planet.

In this research paper, we embark on a comprehensive exploration of Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy. Through an in-depth analysis of his writings, pedagogical experiments, and the lasting impact of his ideas, we seek to unravel the layers of his holistic and creative approach to education. By delving into the essence of Tagore's philosophy, we endeavor to unearth insights that can enrich contemporary educational discourse and inspire the cultivation of individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also deeply attuned to the harmonies of the human spirit and the world at large.

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### Objective:

- **To Understand Tagore's Educational Philosophy:** This research seeks to deeply comprehend the fundamental principles, values, and beliefs that constitute Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy. By studying his writings, speeches, and correspondence, the objective is to unravel the underlying concepts that shaped his approach to education.
- **To Explore Holistic Learning:** One of the central tenets of Tagore's philosophy is the idea of holistic learning. This research aims to explore how Tagore integrated diverse disciplines such as arts, music, literature, and nature into his educational framework. It aims to investigate the ways in which holistic learning contributes to the development of well-rounded individuals who are capable of creative thinking and embracing their individuality.
- **To Analyze Creative Pedagogy:** Tagore's emphasis on creativity and self-expression challenges conventional pedagogical norms. This research intends to analyze his methods of fostering creativity in students and investigate how these methods contribute to the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and innovative perspectives.
- **To Examine the Role of Nature:** Tagore's concept of "open-air classrooms" and the integration of nature into education play a crucial role in his philosophy. This research seeks to explore how exposure to nature and the environment contributes to the holistic development of individuals and instills a sense of ecological consciousness and interconnectedness.
- **To Evaluate Individualized Education:** Tagore's rejection of uniform education in favour of personalized learning highlights the significance of recognizing and nurturing individual talents and inclinations. The objective here is to assess the effectiveness of Tagore's individualized approach and its potential to foster self-awareness and a strong sense of identity.

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### Methodology:

The research on Rabindranath Tagore's Educational Philosophy: Nurturing Holistic and Creative Minds employed a combination of qualitative research methods to gather and analyze information.

- **Primary Sources:** Study Tagore's original works, including his poetry, novels, essays, and plays. Analyze his writings to identify recurring themes, motifs, and the evolution of his thoughts throughout his literary career.
- **Secondary Sources:** Utilize secondary sources such as scholarly articles, historical documents, and interviews with experts to gain insights into Tagore's impact on Bengali literature and the cultural renaissance. These sources provide a broader context and different perspectives

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### Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy:

Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy is a holistic and innovative approach to education that places the individual learner at the centre of the educational process. It emerged as a response to the limitations of the traditional colonial education system in India and reflects Tagore's broader humanistic, spiritual, and cultural beliefs. His philosophy is encapsulated in his experimental school, Shantiniketan, which served as a living embodiment of his visionary ideas. Some key elements of Tagore's educational philosophy include:

- **Holistic Development:** Tagore believed in the integral development of the individual's physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects. He advocated for an education that nurtures all dimensions of a person, promoting a well-rounded and harmonious growth.
- **Individuality:** Tagore rejected the notion of a uniform education system. He emphasized that each individual is unique and should be allowed to develop according to their own pace, interests, and capabilities. He sought to create an environment where students' individuality is recognized, celebrated, and nurtured.
- **Natural Environment:** Tagore believed that learning should be closely connected to the natural environment. He promoted the idea of open-air classrooms where students could engage with nature, learn from it, and develop a deep appreciation for the world around them. He saw nature as a powerful teacher that stimulates curiosity and creativity.
- **Creative Expression:** Creativity held a central place in Tagore's philosophy. He believed that creative expression through arts, music, literature, and other forms of self-expression was essential for both personal growth and effective communication. He integrated the arts into the curriculum, providing students with a means to explore and convey their thoughts and feelings.

- **Ethical and Moral Values:** Tagore emphasized the importance of ethical and moral development alongside intellectual growth. He believed that education should instill values such as empathy, compassion, and social responsibility, aiming to create individuals who contribute positively to society.
- **Global Understanding:** Tagore's philosophy extended beyond national boundaries. He believed in the value of cultural exchange and interaction to promote mutual understanding and tolerance among different civilizations. He saw education as a means to bridge cultural gaps and promote global harmony.
- **Joy of Learning:** Tagore wanted education to be a joyful and liberating experience. He advocated for an education that ignites curiosity, fosters a sense of wonder, and encourages lifelong learning. He believed that the joy of learning is intrinsic to human nature and should not be stifled by rigid educational systems.
- **Teacher-Student Relationship:** Tagore emphasized a close and personal teacher-student relationship. He believed that teachers should be mentors and guides, facilitating the student's intellectual and moral growth through individualized attention and meaningful interactions.

Overall, Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy is a call for a more humane, creative, and holistic approach to education. His ideas continue to resonate with educators, scholars, and policymakers around the world, inspiring a rethinking of educational practices to foster the development of well-rounded, compassionate, and intellectually curious individuals.

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### Tagore's philosophy is the idea of holistic learning:

Certainly, the central tenet of Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy is the concept of holistic learning, which emphasizes the integration of various disciplines, including arts, music, literature, and nature, into the educational framework. This approach aims to cultivate well-rounded individuals who possess creative thinking abilities and a strong sense of individuality. Let's delve deeper into how Tagore's philosophy achieves these goals through holistic learning:

- **Integration of Disciplines:** Tagore believed that education should not be compartmentalized into separate subjects but should encourage the interweaving of different disciplines. He integrated arts, music, dance, and literature into the curriculum, considering them essential for a balanced and comprehensive education. By exposing students to a variety of subjects, holistic learning promotes a broader understanding of the world and encourages students to make connections between seemingly unrelated fields.
- **Stimulating Creativity:** Holistic learning encourages students to approach problems and ideas from multiple perspectives, fostering creative thinking. By engaging with diverse disciplines, students develop a more versatile and imaginative approach to solving challenges. Exposure to artistic expression and creative outlets nurtures innovative thinking and allows students to explore and express their ideas in unique ways.
- **Embracing Individuality:** Tagore's philosophy acknowledges that each student possesses distinct talents, interests, and strengths. Through holistic learning, students are given the opportunity to explore different disciplines and discover their areas of interest and aptitude. This approach enables them to embrace their individuality and pursue their passions, contributing to a deeper understanding of themselves and their potential.
- **Cultivating Critical Thinking:** Integrating various disciplines cultivates critical thinking skills by encouraging students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from different sources. Exposure to literature, music, and arts challenges students to think beyond conventional boundaries and develop a more nuanced and multidimensional perspective on issues.
- **Connecting with Nature:** Nature plays a significant role in Tagore's holistic learning approach. Integrating nature into education not only fosters an appreciation for the environment but also provides a source of inspiration for creativity and intellectual growth. Learning from the natural world encourages curiosity and an understanding of the interdependence between humanity and the environment.
- **Enhancing Emotional Intelligence:** The inclusion of arts and creative expression nurtures emotional intelligence by encouraging students to connect with their emotions and express them in healthy ways. This enhances self-awareness and empathy, enabling students to relate to others on a deeper level.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Holistic learning instills a lifelong love for learning by showing students that knowledge is not limited to textbooks or classrooms. By experiencing the interconnectedness of various subjects and their relevance to real-life situations, students develop a thirst for knowledge that extends beyond formal education.

In essence, Tagore's integration of diverse disciplines and emphasis on holistic learning enriches education by promoting creative thinking, individuality, critical analysis, and a deep connection with both the natural world and the human experience. This approach contributes to the development of well-rounded individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also emotionally intelligent, culturally aware, and open to exploring the full spectrum of human potential.

## Analyze Creative Pedagogy:

Indeed, Rabindranath Tagore's emphasis on creativity and self-expression in education challenges conventional pedagogical norms and offers a paradigm shift in how learning is approached. This aspect of his educational philosophy has far-reaching implications for how education is designed and delivered. Here's a closer look at how Tagore's emphasis on creativity and self-expression challenges conventional norms:

**Move Beyond Rote Memorization:** Conventional education systems often prioritize rote memorization and standardized testing, which can stifle critical thinking and creativity. Tagore's approach encourages students to move beyond memorization and engage with the material through creative interpretation, allowing them to develop a deeper understanding of concepts.

**Empowerment through Expression:** Tagore believed that education should empower students to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas freely. This challenges the traditional model of education where students are passive recipients of information. By encouraging self-expression, Tagore's approach empowers students to take ownership of their learning and become active participants in the educational process.

**Foster Individuality:** Traditional education can sometimes promote conformity by treating all students as a homogenous group. Tagore's emphasis on creativity recognizes and celebrates individuality. By allowing students to express themselves in various ways, educators acknowledge that each student has unique strengths and perspectives.

**Nurture Critical Thinking:** Conventional education often focuses on delivering predetermined content, leaving little room for students to think critically and develop their own ideas. Tagore's approach challenges this by encouraging students to question, analyze, and explore concepts through creative avenues, fostering independent and critical thinking skills.

**Promote Practical Application:** Tagore's philosophy encourages students to apply their learning in real-life contexts, which contrasts with traditional education that can sometimes remain disconnected from practical applications. This approach prepares students to navigate complex real-world situations by applying creative problem-solving skills gained through self-expression.

**Embrace Arts and Culture:** Tagore's incorporation of arts, music, dance, and literature into education challenges the separation of the arts from academic subjects. This challenges the conventional hierarchy of subjects and recognizes the arts as integral to holistic development and learning.

**Cultivate Intrinsic Motivation:** Traditional education often relies on external rewards and punishments to motivate students. Tagore's emphasis on creativity and self-expression taps into intrinsic motivation. When students are allowed to explore their interests and express themselves creatively, their motivation to learn becomes more genuine and enduring.

**Prepare for a Changing World:** In a rapidly evolving world, adaptability, innovation, and creativity are highly valued. Tagore's approach equips students with skills that are increasingly relevant in modern contexts, challenging the traditional view of education as a means to transmit static knowledge.

In conclusion, Tagore's emphasis on creativity and self-expression challenges conventional pedagogical norms by prioritizing active learning, individuality, critical thinking, and practical application. His approach encourages educators to move away from rigid structures and embrace a more dynamic, learner-centered model that fosters holistic growth and equips students for the complexities of the contemporary world.

### Tagore's concept of "open-air classrooms" and the integration of nature into education play a crucial role in his philosophy:

Absolutely, Rabindranath Tagore's concept of "open-air classrooms" and his emphasis on integrating nature into education are key components of his educational philosophy. Tagore was a renowned poet, philosopher, and educator from India, and his ideas about education went beyond traditional classroom settings. He believed in a holistic approach that recognized the importance of nature, freedom, and creativity in the learning process.

#### ❖ Tagore's philosophy can be summarized as follows:

- **Open-Air Classrooms:** Tagore was a strong advocate for learning in natural surroundings rather than confining education within the four walls of a classroom. He established his school, Santiniketan, as an open-air educational institution, where students were encouraged to learn amidst the beauty of nature. The open environment was meant to inspire creativity, curiosity, and a deep connection with the natural world.
- **Integration of Nature:** Tagore believed that nature is a powerful teacher in itself. He saw nature as a source of inspiration, knowledge, and spiritual growth. Integrating nature into education allowed students to develop a deeper understanding of the environment and fostered a sense of responsibility towards nature.
- **Holistic Learning:** Tagore's educational philosophy emphasized the holistic development of individuals. He believed that education should not be limited to the mere acquisition of knowledge but should also focus on nurturing a person's physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. Nature played a crucial role in this holistic development.
- **Freedom and Creativity:** Tagore's approach to education was rooted in the idea of fostering individuality and creativity. He believed that students should be given the freedom to explore their interests, ask questions, and pursue their passions. Nature provided a space where this freedom could be exercised, leading to more meaningful and self-directed learning experiences.
- **Learning from Diversity:** Santiniketan attracted students and scholars from around the world, creating a diverse and multicultural environment. Tagore saw this diversity as an opportunity for cross-cultural learning and exchange, enriching the educational experience.

- **Connection with the Divine:** Tagore's philosophy also had a spiritual dimension. He believed that nature was a reflection of the divine and that a deep connection with nature could lead to a greater understanding of spiritual truths.

Tagore's ideas about open-air classrooms and the integration of nature into education were radical in his time and remain relevant today. They highlight the importance of fostering a deep connection with the environment, promoting creativity, and nurturing well-rounded individuals. His educational experiment at Santiniketan continues to inspire educators who value experiential and holistic learning approaches.

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### Evaluate the Tagore's Individualized Education:

Evaluating Tagore's individualized education approach involves considering its strengths and weaknesses in the context of educational philosophy and practice. Here's an evaluation of Tagore's approach:

#### ❖ Strengths:

- **Emphasis on Creativity and Individuality:** Tagore's approach recognizes the unique qualities and potential of each student. By promoting creativity and individuality, it encourages students to explore their interests and strengths, fostering a deeper engagement with their learning.
- **Holistic Development:** Tagore's focus on holistic development aligns with modern educational trends that prioritize nurturing emotional, intellectual, and physical growth. By integrating nature and a well-rounded curriculum, students are exposed to diverse experiences that contribute to their overall development.
- **Cultural and Global Awareness:** The open environment at institutions like Santiniketan encourages cross-cultural interactions and promotes a global perspective. This is particularly valuable in today's interconnected world, where understanding diverse cultures is essential.
- **Student Autonomy and Ownership:** Tagore's approach empowers students to take ownership of their learning journey. By allowing students to pursue their interests and shape their education, they become more self-directed learners who are better prepared for lifelong learning.
- **Real-world Learning:** Learning in natural surroundings and engaging with the community provides practical experiences that connect academic knowledge with real-world applications. This approach can lead to deeper understanding and retention of concepts.

#### ❖ Weaknesses:

- **Applicability to Larger Settings:** While Tagore's approach thrived in the small, close-knit community of Santiniketan, it might face challenges in larger educational institutions with limited resources. Implementing individualized education on a larger scale could be logistically complex.
- **Assessment Challenges:** Tagore's emphasis on individuality could pose difficulties in standardized assessment and grading systems. Balancing personalized learning with standardized evaluation might require innovative assessment methods.
- **Equity and Inclusivity:** The personalized nature of Tagore's approach could inadvertently lead to unequal learning opportunities. Ensuring equal access and support for students from diverse backgrounds might be a challenge.
- **Preparation for Standardized Tests:** In educational systems that heavily prioritize standardized testing, students educated through Tagore's approach might face challenges in adapting to such assessments, potentially affecting their opportunities in higher education or employment.
- **Lack of Structure:** The open and flexible environment might not suit all students. Some students may require more structure and guidance to thrive academically.

#### ❖ Impact and Legacy:

Tagore's individualized education approach has left a lasting impact on educational philosophy. His emphasis on creativity, holistic development, and personalized learning resonates with modern educational reform efforts. His model continues to influence alternative education systems and approaches that prioritize student agency, creativity, and a broader understanding of learning.

#### ❖ Relevance Today:

In today's educational landscape, Tagore's ideas remain relevant, especially in the context of innovative learning environments and alternative education models. As education evolves beyond traditional classroom settings, his emphasis on individualized learning, holistic growth, and the integration of nature can offer valuable insights.

Tagore's individualized education approach offers a balanced blend of strengths and challenges. While it might not be universally applicable, its emphasis on creativity, holistic development, and student autonomy provides a valuable perspective that continues to inspire discussions and innovations in modern education.

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## Findings:

Certainly, here are some key findings that could be drawn from research on Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy titled "Nurturing Holistic and Creative Minds":

- **Holistic Development as the Core:** Tagore's educational philosophy places holistic development at the center, emphasizing the integration of intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual growth. His belief in a well-rounded education aimed at nurturing all dimensions of a person stands as a timeless principle.
- **Individuality and Creativity:** Tagore's approach highlights the importance of recognizing and fostering individuality and creativity in education. His open-air classrooms and emphasis on personal expression and creativity encourage students to explore their unique talents and interests.
- **Nature as a Teacher:** Nature is not just a backdrop but an active participant in Tagore's educational philosophy. Integrating nature into education allows students to learn from their environment, fostering a deep connection with the natural world and instilling a sense of responsibility towards it.
- **Freedom and Self-Direction:** Tagore's philosophy champions the idea of giving students the freedom to guide their own learning. This freedom promotes self-direction, critical thinking, and a sense of responsibility for one's education.
- **Cultural Pluralism:** Tagore's institution, Santiniketan, attracted students from various cultural backgrounds, promoting cross-cultural interactions and mutual learning. This aspect of his philosophy holds relevance in today's globalized world, emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding.
- **Spiritual Growth:** Tagore's approach doesn't just focus on intellectual development but also encompasses spiritual growth. He saw education as a means to connect with the divine and understand one's place in the universe.
- **Challenges of Implementation:** While Tagore's philosophy has numerous merits, challenges like scalability, assessment methods, and maintaining equity in diverse settings must be addressed when considering its practical implementation.
- **Legacy and Influence:** Tagore's educational philosophy continues to inspire educators and thinkers around the world. His ideas laid the foundation for alternative educational models that emphasize student agency, experiential learning, and a broader understanding of education.
- **Relevance in Modern Education:** Tagore's emphasis on holistic development, creativity, and individualized learning aligns with modern educational reforms. His philosophy provides insights for educators seeking to create more engaging and meaningful learning experiences.
- **Balancing Tradition and Innovation:** Tagore's philosophy bridges traditional values with innovative ideas. While he drew inspiration from ancient Indian educational systems, he incorporated modern approaches to adapt to changing times.

Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy is a rich blend of holistic development, individuality, creativity, and a deep connection with nature. His ideas remain influential in shaping progressive education and promoting a more well-rounded and meaningful learning experience.

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## Conclusion:

Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy stands as a testament to his visionary thinking and deep understanding of human potential. Through this research, we have delved into the essence of his philosophy, uncovering a rich tapestry of ideas that continue to resonate with educators and learners worldwide.

Tagore's educational philosophy is characterized by its holistic approach, aiming to foster the development of individuals who are not only intellectually proficient but also emotionally, physically, and spiritually well-rounded. The recognition of these interconnected dimensions of human growth forms the foundation of Tagore's vision, emphasizing that a truly educated person is one who possesses a harmonious blend of these facets.

One of the cornerstones of Tagore's philosophy is the celebration of individuality and creativity. By encouraging students to explore their unique talents, interests, and perspectives, he recognized that true learning stems from genuine engagement and personal investment. His approach breaks away from the conventional mold, emphasizing that education is not a uniform assembly line, but a dynamic and personalized journey of self-discovery.

The integration of nature into education serves as both a practical and philosophical underpinning of Tagore's approach. The "open-air classroom" concept underscores the profound connection between human beings and the natural world. This immersion in nature not only provides a conducive environment for learning but also cultivates a deep sense of wonder, curiosity, and respect for the environment.

Furthermore, Tagore's philosophy transcends boundaries by promoting global awareness and cultural exchange. By fostering a multicultural atmosphere, he believed that students could develop a broader perspective and an appreciation for diversity. Such an environment prepares individuals to become responsible and empathetic global citizens who can contribute positively to a world that is increasingly interconnected.

While Tagore's educational philosophy celebrates freedom and self-directed learning, it also critiques the limitations of traditional education. His emphasis on experiential learning, critical thinking, and a lifelong love for learning challenges the prevailing educational norms and seeks to pave the way for a more dynamic and engaging approach to education.

In conclusion, Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy encapsulates the essence of nurturing holistic and creative minds. It is a philosophy that encourages us to break free from the confines of convention, to embrace the beauty of nature, to celebrate our individuality, and to forge connections across cultures. Tagore's ideas continue to inspire educators, policymakers, and learners alike to reimagine education as a transformative journey that nurtures not only the mind but the heart and soul as well. As we carry forward the torch of his legacy, we are reminded that the pursuit of education is a lifelong endeavor—a journey of self-discovery, enlightenment, and the perpetual blossoming of holistic and creative minds.

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