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Role of Ayurvedic herbs in managing *Shukra Dosha* - A Review

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda possesses a wealth of ancient and well-established theories aimed at achieving holistic physical, mental and social well-being. To comprehend *Ayurvedic* state of well-being, an individual must delve into the study of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*. *Ayurvedic* texts outline seven *Dhatus* with *Shukra* being the seventh *Dhatu*, revered as the essence of all *Dhatus*. Recent studies have frequently indicated that despite men exhibiting favourable semen parameters, they may still face difficulties in conceiving after a prolonged period of unprotected intercourse. *Ayurveda* places significant emphasis on the preservation of both physical well-being and emotional contentment. In order to attain overall happiness and a harmonious existence, it becomes imperative to accomplish all life's objectives. The creation of offspring is an integral aspect of human life, alongside the pursuit of happiness. This abstract explores the role of *Ayurvedic* herbs in managing *Shukra Dosha*. Commonly used herbs include *Musli*, *Kapikacchu*, *Jatiphla*, *Kupilu* etc. each offering unique benefits. Overall, *Ayurvedic* herbs present promising avenues for managing *Shukra Dosha* and improving overall reproductive health.

Key words: *Shukra Dosha*, *Vajikarana*, *Shukra-Srutikaram*, *Shukra Pareeksha*, *reproductive tissues*

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of *Ayurveda*, optimal health is achieved when the *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, and all other physiological processes are in a harmonious state of balance. Furthermore, the soul, sense organs, and mind must also be in a state of complete well-being.^[1] *Dhatus* are seven in number, hence called as *Sapta Dhatu*. These are *Rasa* (plasma), *Rakta* (formed blood

cells), *Mamsa* (muscle tissues), *Meda* (fatty tissues), *Asthi* (bone tissue), *Majja* (bone marrow and nervous tissues) and *Shukra* (reproductive tissues). *Shukra* is the seventh *Dhatu*, which is considered as essence of all *Dhatus* providing the body with power and vitality.^[2] In its *Prakrut Awastha* (equilibrium form), *Shukra Dhatu* provides nourishment to the body & helps in reproduction, while in its *Dushta Awastha* (imbalance form), it can lead to various health issues related to fertility and sexual health. In traditional *Ayurvedic* practice, several herbs are recommended for balancing *Shukra Dosha* and promoting reproductive well-being. This article aims to review the efficacy and therapeutic potential of commonly used herbs in *Ayurveda* for addressing *Shukra Dosha*.

Concept of *Shukra Dosha* in *Ayurveda*

The *Tridosha* theory forms the foundation of *Ayurveda*. This theory is not only utilized to comprehend the physiology of the body but also to understand various pathologies. *The Shukra Dushti*, which pertains to the pathological conditions of semen, has been extensively

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elucidated in *Ayurvedic* classics. *Charaka* has expounded upon eight factors for the examination of *Retas* (semen), while *Sushruta* has provided insights into different pathological conditions related to semen. The analysis of semen is facilitated by the examination of all the *Dusti Lakshana*.

Table 1: Shudha Shukra Lakshan

Characteristics	Charaka	Shushruta	Astanga Sangraha	Astanga Hridaya
Colour	Shuklam (White)	Tailanibham Kshaudranibham (resembling oil or Honey)	Shuklam (White) Ghrita Taila Kshoudra nyatam Avarna	Shuklam (White) Ghrita Makshika Tailabham (resembling ghee, honey or oil)
Taste	Madhura (Sweet)	Madhuram	Madhura	Madhuram
Smell	Avisram (not having a bad odour)	Madhugandhi (Smell of honey)	Madhugandhi (Smell of honey)	-
Consistency	Bahalam (thick) Snigdham (unctuous) ^[3]	Dravam (fluid) Snigdham (unctuous) Sphatikabham (Crystalloid) ^[4]	Saumyam (Jala predominant) Snigdham (unctuous) ^[5]	Guru (heavy) Snigdham (unctuous) Bahalam (thick) ^[6]

Table 2: Shukra Dusti Lakshan according to Charak^[7]

Dosha	Shukra Dusti	Modern Correlation
Vata	Phenila	Frothy
Vata	Tanu	Low in Concentration (Oligospermia)
Vata	Ruksha	Highly alkaline semen

Pitta	Vivarna	Discoloration
Pitta	Puti	Infected semen (Leukospermia)
Kapha	Picchila	Low motility (Asthenozoospermia)
Rakta & etc	Anya Dhatu sansrushta	Mixed with Blood (Hemospermia)
Vata Kapha	Avasadi	Low motility (Asthenozoospermia)

Table 3: Shukra Dusti Lakshan according to Shushrut^[8]

Dosha	Shukra Dusti	Modern Correlation
Vata	Vataja	Painful (Throbbing pain) ejaculation
Pitta	Pittaja	Painful (Burning pain) ejaculation
Kapha	Kaphaja	Low motility (Asthenozoospermia)
Rakta	Kunap Gandhi, Raktaja	Mixed with Blood (Hemospermia)
Pitta Vata	Kshina	Low in Concentration (Oligospermia)
Pitta Sleshma	Puti, Puya	Infected semen (Leukospermia)
Sleshma Vata	Granthibhuta	Shreddy or clotted semen
Sannipata	Mutra, Purisha Gandhi	Infected semen (Leukospermia)

Importance of balancing Shukra Dosha

Shukra is the highest essence of *Ahara Rasa*. It is distributed throughout the entire body, with its primary function being reproduction (*Garbhotpadana*) alongside nourishment of *Oja*. *Oja* plays a role in numerous physiological processes, such as regulating the immune system, providing neuroprotection, and influencing emotional processing. If *Oja* is destroyed or malfunctions, it can result in physiological changes and potentially lead to death.^[9]

A sound mental state is essential for the correct development of *Shukra Dhatu*. Hence for the proper functioning of reproductive hormones and the *Oja*, it is very important to keep *Shukra Dhatu* in balanced state.

Table 4: Normal values (Lower reference limits) of semen analysis (World Health Organization, 2010)^[10]

Volume	>=1.5ml
Ph	>=7.2
Sperm concentration	>=15*10 ⁶ /ml
Total sperm count per ejaculate	39*10 ⁶
Sperm morphology	>=4.0% normal forms
Vitality	>=58% live forms
White blood cells	<=1.0*10 ⁶ /ml
Motility	
Total motility (PR+ non PR)	>=40%
Progressive motility (PR)	>32%
Mixed antiglobulin reaction test	<50% motile sperms with adherent particles
Immunobead test	<50% motile sperms with bound beads

Table 5: Biochemical variables of semen analysis (World Health Organization, 1992, 2010)

Total fructose (seminal vesicle marker)	>=13 µmol/ejaculate
Total zinc (prostate marker)	>=2.4µmol/ejaculate
Total acid phosphate (prostate marker)	>=200 U/ejaculate
Total citric acid (prostate marker)	>=52 µmol/ejaculate
Neutral glucosidase (epididymis marker)	>=20 mU/ejaculate
Carnitine (epididymis marker)	>=0.8-2.9 µmol/ejaculate

Ayurvedic approach to *Shukra Dosha* management

In *Ayurveda*, *Shukra Dosha* refers to an imbalance in the *Tridosha*. Management involves herbal remedies to restore balance. Here are some common approaches -

1. *Shukra Shodhak Dravya*

They help to neutralize the *Dosha & Roga* manifesting in the *Shukra Dhatu*. For e.g.: *Kokilaksha*, *Kathphal*, *Kuth*, *Kandekshu*, *Vasuka*, *Kadamb Niryasa* etc.

2. *Shukra Sthambak Dravya*

They help in treating premature ejaculation which increase duration of sexual intercourse. For e.g.: *Aakarkarabh*, *Jatiphal*, *Ahiphena* etc.

3. *Vrishya Dravya (Aphrodisiacs)*

Vrishya refers to any substance that possesses the qualities of being sweet, unctuous, promoting bulk, heavy (difficult to digest), and exhilarating. While *Vrishya* and *Vajikarana* are often used interchangeably, the former specifically pertains to the secretion of semen, whereas the latter relates to sexual potency, symbolized by the bull and the horse respectively.

Classification of *Vrishya Dravya (Aphrodisiacs)*

Shukra-Vridhikaram - Factors which increase the quantity of semen. For e.g.: *Musali*, *Kapikacchu*, *Munjataka*, *Utangan*, *Makhana*, *Jeevak*, *Mashaparni* etc.

Shukra-Srutikaram - Factors which induce the ejaculation of semen such as determination for sexual act. For e.g.: *Kupilu*, *Bhallatak*, *Amla* etc.

Shukra-Sruti Vridikaram - Factors which increase the ejaculation of semen and increase the quantity as well. For e.g.: *Ksheera*, *Ghrita*, *Masha* etc.^[11]

Table 5: List of *Dravya* reviewed for *Shukra Dosha* management.

S N	<i>Dravya</i>	Latin Name	Rasa	Guna	Vipaka	Veer ya	Action
1.	<i>Musli</i>	<i>Asparagus adscendens</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Guru, Snigdha</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Shukra-Vridhikara</i> ^[12]
2.	<i>Kapikacchu</i>	<i>Mucuna prurita</i>	<i>Madhura, Tikta</i>	<i>Guru, Snigdha</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Ushana</i>	<i>Shukra-Vridhikara</i> ^[13]

3.	Munjat aka	Orchis latifolia	Madh ura	Guru, Snigd ha	Mad hura	Shee ta	Shukra- Vridhika ra ^[14]
4.	Utanga n	Blephar is edulis	Madh ura, Tikta	Guru, Snigd ha, Picch ila	Mad hura	Ush ana	Shukra- Vridhika ra ^[15]
5.	Kokilak sha	Asterac antha longifoli a	Madh ura	Guru, Snigd ha, Picch ila	Mad hura	Shee ta	Shukra- Shodha k ^[16]
6.	Aakark arabh	Anacycl us pyrethr um	Katu	Ruks ha, Tiksh ana	Katu	Ush ana	Shukra- Sthamb ak ^[17]
7.	Jatiphal	Myristic a fragran s	Tikta, Katu	Lagh u, Tiksh ana	Katu	Ush ana	Shukra- Sthamb ak ^[18]
8.	Kupilu	Strychn os nuxvom ica	Tikta, Katu	Ruks ha, Lagh u, Tiksh ana	Katu	Ush ana	Shukra- Srutikar am ^[19]

Review of Herbal drugs for Shukra Dosha

This review examines the efficacy and therapeutic potential of commonly used herbs in *Ayurveda* for addressing *Shukra Dosha*. Key herbs discussed include the following-

1) *Musali (Asparagus adscendens)*

The root of this plant is utilized in *Ayurvedic* medicine for its fertility-enhancing properties in both males and females.

Probable mode of action in *Ayurveda*

- *Musali* has *Madhura Rasa* & *Madhura Vipaka* which are *Sarva Dhatu Vardhak* so by anabolic action they act as *Shukra Dhatu Vardhak*, also *Guru Guna* is *Brihan* in nature acting as *Dhatu Vardhak*. They all ultimately nourish *Oja*.

- As *Sheeta Veerya* & *Snigdha Guna* are *Saumya (Sheeta)* in nature they help in maintaining consistency of semen by providing it with *Snighdta, Bahalata, Saumyata, Guruta* which are *Shudh Shukra Lakshana*.
- *Madhura Rasa, Madhura Vipaka* are *Vata & Pitta Shamak*. Due to *Snigdha, Guru Guna & Sheeta Veerya* it can also be given in *Kshina Kapha*. So *Musali* will act as *Vata Pitta Nashaka* and *Kapha Vardhaka*. Hence it can be given in following disorders:

1. *Tanu Shukra Dusti (Vata Dosha)*
2. *Vivarana Shukra Dusti (Pitta Dosha)*
3. *Ruksha Shukra Dusti (Vata Dosha)*

Mode of action & research study supporting herbal remedy

One study in rats demonstrates the anabolic effects by AARR extract at 200 and 300 mg/kg doses indicating body and reproductive organ (testis, epididymis, ventral prostate, and seminal vesicle) weight gain. The testicular/epididymal function was evident by an increase in the testicular tubular diameter, spermatogenic germ cells (spermatids) population, DSP, and ESC in rats. Further, the extract also produced a significant increase in sexual behavioural aspects such as MF, IF, EL, and penile erections, and exhibited decreased ML, IL, and PEI in a dose-dependent manner in rat. Thus, the results of the study provide scientific rationale for traditional use of AARR extract as an aphrodisiac as well as for male sexual disorders.^[20]

2) *Kapikacchu (Mucuna prurita)*

The seeds of this plant are considered to be aphrodisiac (*Shukra-Vridhikaram*).

Probable mode of action in *Ayurveda*

- Its *Madhura Rasa & Madhura Vipaka* are *Sarva Dhatu Vardhak* so by anabolic action they act as *Shukra Dhatu Vardhak*, also they ultimately nourish *Oja*. *Snigdha & Guru Guna* helps in maintaining consistency of semen by providing it with *Snighdta, Bahalata, Saumyata, Guruta* which are *Shudh Shukra Lakshana*.

- Its *Ushna Veerya* helps in *Agni Deepan* and *Pachana* of *Aama* helping in clearing *Shroto Dushti* and facilitating *Dhatu Poshan*.
- *Madhura Rasa, Madhura Vipaka, Ushna Veerya, Snigdha & Guru Guna* all are *Vata Shamak*. Due to *Snigdha & Guru Guna* it can be given in *Kshina Kapha*. Due to *Ushna Veerya*, it can also be given in *Kshina Pitta*. So *Kapikacchu* will act as *Vata Nashaka* and *Kapha Pitta Vardhaka*. Hence it can be given in following disorders:

1. *Phenila Shukra Dusti (Vata Dosha)*
2. Painful (Throbbing pain), Ejaculation (*Vata Dosha*)
3. *Puti Shukra Dusti (Pitta Dosha)*

Mode of action & research study supporting herbal remedy

Study in Human population demonstrated *Mucuna pruriens* stimulates the secretion of L-Dopa which converts to the Dopamine. This dopamine stimulates the Pituitary to secrete FSH and LH. With the help of LH, secretion of the Testosterone may occur. Improved level of Testosterone lead to improvement in spermatogenesis and performance. It will be helpful to upgrade the general health. *Mucuna pruriens* is also found to inhibit the secretion of high Prolactin; which is one of the causes in erectile dysfunction and thus it will help to improve the sexual drive.^[21]

3) *Munjataka (Orchis latifolia)*

The bulbous rhizomes of *Orchis latifolia* are used traditionally in India.

Probable mode of action in Ayurveda

- *Munjataka* has *Madhura Rasa & Madhura Vipaka* which are *Sarva Dhatu Vardhak* so by anabolic action they act as *Shukra Dhatu Vardhak*, also *Guru Guna* is *Brihan* in nature acting as *Dhatu Vardhak*. They all ultimately nourish *Oja*.
- As *Sheeta Veerya & Snigdha Guna* are *Saumya (Sheeta)* in nature they help in maintaining consistency of semen by providing it with *Snighdta, Bahalata, Saumyata, Guruta* which are *Shudh Shukra Lakshana*.

- *Madhura Rasa, Madhura Vipaka, Snigdha & Guru Guna* are all *Vata Shamak*. Due to *Sheeta Veerya*, it is also *Pitta Shamak*. So *Munjataka* will act as *Vata Pitta Nashaka*. Hence it can be given in following disorders:

1. *Kshina Shukra Dusti (PittaVata Dosha)*
2. Burning ejaculation (*Pitta Dosha*)

Mode of action & research study supporting herbal remedy

Study demonstrated that oral administration of *Orchis latifolia* in male albino rats notes a significant increase in serum testosterone post treatment. The greatest effects were observed at a dose of 200 mg/kg body weight, providing concomitant increases in body mass, reproductive organ mass, and sexual behaviour. Interestingly, improvements to spermatogenesis were also noted via histological examination of the testicular tissues.^[22]

4) *Utangan (Blepharis edulis)*

The seeds of this plant are considered to be aphrodisiac (*Shukra-Vridhikaram*).

Probable mode of action in Ayurveda

- Its *Madhura Rasa & Madhura Vipaka* are both *Sarva Dhatu Vardhak* so by anabolic action they act as *Shukra Dhatu Vardhak*, also they ultimately nourish *Oja*. *Snigdha Guna* helps in maintaining consistency of semen. *Guru & Picchila Guna* are *Brihan* in nature acting as *Sarva Dhatu Vardhak*.
 - Its *Ushna Veerya* helps in *Agni Deepan* and *Pachana* of *Aama* helping in clearing *Shroto Dushti* and facilitating *Dhatu Poshan*.
 - *Madhura Rasa, Madhura Vipaka, Snigdha, Guru Guna & Ushna Veerya* are all *Vata Shamak* so it can be given in *Vataj Shamak*. So *Utangan* will act as *Vata Nashaka*. Hence it can be given in following disorders:
1. *Ruksha Shukra Dusti (Vata Dosha)*
 2. *Granthibhuta Shukra Dusti (Sleshma Vata Dosha)*

Mode of action & research study supporting herbal remedy

Study indicated that the ethanolic extract of *Blepharis edulis* Linn. (family Acanthaceae) produced a significant and sustained increase in hormonal levels of testosterone indication for the sexual activity of normal male mice without any adverse effects.^[23]

5) Kokilaksha (*Asteracantha longifolia*)

The seeds of this plant are considered to be aphrodisiac (*Shukra-Shodhak*).

Probable mode of action in Ayurveda

- *Kokilaksha* has *Madhura Rasa* & *Madhura Vipaka* which are *Sarva Dhatu Vardhak* so by anabolic action they act as *Shukra Dhatu Vardhak*, also *Guru* & *Picchila Guna* is *Brihan* in nature acting as *Dhatu Vardhak*. They all ultimately nourish *Oja*.
- As its *Sheeta Veerya* & *Snigdha Guna* are *Saumya* (*Sheeta*) in nature they help in maintaining consistency of semen by providing it with *Snighdta*, *Bahalata*, *Saumyata*, *Guruta* which are *Shudh Shukra Lakshana*.
- *Madhura Rasa* & *Madhura Vipaka* are *Vata* & *Pitta Shamak*, So *Kokilaksha* will act as *Vata Pitta Nashaka*. Hence it can be given in following disorders:
 1. *Vivarana Shukra Dusti* (*Pitta Dosha*)
 2. *Leukospermia* (*Pitta Dosha*)
 3. *Teratozoospermia*.

Mode of action & research study supporting herbal remedy

A study in male rats showed that ethanolic extract exhibited pronounced anabolic effects in treated animals, as evidenced by gains in the body and reproductive organ weights. Increased spermatogenesis due to treatment with extracts were also witnessed in transverse section. The treatment further markedly affected sexual behaviour of the animals, as reflected by the reduction of ML (Mount Latency), increase in MF (Mount Frequency) and enhanced attractability towards females. A significant

increase in the sperm count as well as fructose levels of seminal vesicles were noted.^[24]

Here *Kokilaksha* act's *Shukra Shodhan* by increasing the fructose content in the sperm count. As fructose is an indispensable liveliness resource for metabolism and motility of sperm.

6) Aakarkarabh (*Ancyclus pyrethrum*)

The roots of this plant are considered to be aphrodisiac (*Shukra-Sthambhak*).

Probable mode of action in Ayurveda

- Its *Katu Rasa* is *Vayu* & *Agni Mahabhuta Pradhana* which are *Laghu* & *Ruksh* in nature. *Aakarkarabh* also has *Ruksh Guna* in its property which help in *Dhatu Shoshan* i.e., *Shukra Shoshan* correcting *Taral Veeryata* present in pre mature ejaculation.
- Its *Ushan Veerya* is *Agni Mahabhuta Pradhan* which is opposite to *Shudh Shukar Lakshana* of *Saumyata* here *Ushan Veerya* again helps in *Shukra Shoshan*, pacifying the *Vata Dosha* present in *Shukra Gata Vata* (Pre mature ejaculation).
- Due to its *Katu Rasa*, *Katu Vipaka* & *Ushan Veerya* it acts as *Kapha Vata Nashaka*. Hence it can be given in following disorders:
 1. Pre-Mature Ejaculation (*Shukra Gata Vata*)
 2. *Swapan Dosha*.
 3. *Avsadi Shukra Dusti* (*Vata Kapha Dosha*)

Mode of action & research study supporting herbal remedy

A study showed that the treated male rats were more receptive and oriented towards female rats and showed increased precopulatory activity. The penile erection index was significantly increased with reduction in mount latency and intromission latency period. There were four-fold increase in mount and three-fold increase in intromission frequency in treated rats reflecting improved sexual performance.^[25]

7) Jatiphal (*Myristica fragrans* Houtt)

The Seeds of this plant are considered to be aphrodisiac (*Shukra-Sthambhak*).

Probable mode of action in Ayurveda

- Its *Tikta, Katu Rasa* are *Vayu & Aakash*; *Vayu & Aagni Mahabhuta Pradhana* respectively, which are mainly *Laghu* and *Ruksh Guna* predominant. These two act as *Dhatu Shoshak* i.e., *Shukra Shoshak* correcting *Taral Veeryata* present in pre mature ejaculation.
- The *Shukra Stambhaka* property is increased by virtue of decreasing *Saratva* (responsible for *Prerana*) of the *Shukra Dhatu* and enhancing *Sthiratva* (which favors *Dharana*), helps in the retention of semen for a longer duration.
- Due to its *Tikta, Katu Rasa, Katu Vipaka & Ushan Veerya* it acts as *Kapha Vata Nashaka*. Hence it can be given in following disorders:
 1. Pre-Mature Ejaculation (*Shukra Gata Vata*)
 2. *Swapan Dosha*.
 3. *Avsadi Shukra Dusti (Vata Kapha Dosha)*

Mode of action & research study supporting herbal remedy

Oral administration of the extract at the dose of 500 mg/kg, produced significant augmentation of sexual activity in male rats. It significantly increased the Mounting Frequency, Intromission Frequency, Intromission Latency and caused significant reduction in the Mounting Latency and Post Ejaculatory Interval. It also significantly increased Mounting Frequency with penile anaesthetisation as well as Erections.^[26]

8) Kupilu (*Strychnos nuxvomica*)

The Seeds of this plant are considered to be aphrodisiac. (*Shukra-Srutikaram*)

Probable mode of action in Ayurveda

They act by irritation on the *Shishindriya*.^[27]

Clinical Evidence Supporting Herbal Remedy

- They work by stimulation of sex centre in spinal cord as ejaculatory response is the efferent (motor) component of a spinal reflex.^[28]

CONCLUSION

Ayurvedic herbs offer valuable support in managing *Shukra Dosha* by promoting spermatogenesis,

decrease in mount latency, increased libido, delayed ejaculation in PME, preventing exhaustion during intercourse, alleviate symptoms, and maintain reproductive health.

These herbal drugs can be classified into following categories:

1) *Shukra Janak/ Shukra Vridhikaram/ Shukraal*

Some of these drugs help in spermatogenesis by acting directly on epididymis or indirectly by acting on hormonal level. From our study it can be concluded that these drugs mainly have *Madura Rasa, Guru, Snigdha Guna & Madhura Vipaka*.

2) *Shukra Pravartak/ Shukra Srutikaram*

These drugs do not increase the quantity of *Shukra* but helps in its ejaculation. Some of them act directly by stimulation of sex centres in the spinal cord; by activation of sympathetic system with visual, auditory stimulations or indirectly by causing irritation in the bladder.

3) *Shukra Janka Pravartak/ Shukra Vridhi Shrutikaram*

They act as both to increase the sperm count and also help in ejaculation.

4) *Shukra Sthamban*

They help in stopping premature ejaculation (PME). From our review we studied that, they mainly have *Katu Rasa, Katu Vipaka, Laghu Guna & Ushana Veerya*.

5) *Shukra Shodhan*

Shodhan means to pacify the abnormal constitution of semen. *Shukra Shodhan Gana* by *Acharya Charaka* have mainly *Tikta, Kashaya Rasa* and *Katu Vipaka* but from our review we studied that *Kokilaksha* having *Madhura Rasa & Madhura Vipaka* can also act as *Shukra Shodhan*.

Apart from using these drugs in *Shukra Dosha* Treatment. Incorporating these herbs singly or in combination to one's daily lifestyle can contribute to improved health and overall well-being as they are *Balya, Vrisya & Brihan* in nature.

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