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Reimagining Inclusive Education through Indian Knowledge Systems for Viksit Bharat @2047

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Abstract
Inclusive education seeks to ensure equitable access, meaningful participation, and effective learning opportunities for all learners, irrespective of their social, cultural, linguistic, physical, or cognitive differences. Although contemporary approaches to inclusive education have largely been influenced by international frameworks and modern pedagogical perspectives, culturally rooted perspectives remain comparatively underrepresented. In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has renewed attention to Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), yet existing scholarship has largely focused on their philosophical foundations, policy relevance, and broader educational integration. Limited attention has been given to how selected IKS principles can be conceptually aligned with contemporary dimensions of inclusive education. The present study addresses this gap through a structured literature review and thematic synthesis of scholarly and policy literature on IKS, inclusive education, culturally responsive pedagogy, teacher education, and holistic learning. Six IKS principles, namely Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Sarvodaya, Guru–Shishya Parampara, Panchakosha, Samvaad, and experiential learning, are examined in relation to equity and fairness, diversity and belonging, learner participation, holistic development, and culturally responsive pedagogy. The analysis identifies areas of conceptual convergence and uses these relationships to formulate an IKS-informed conceptual framework for inclusive education. The framework positions IKS as a culturally grounded philosophical and pedagogical resource that may enrich contemporary approaches to inclusion while remaining responsive to learner diversity and context. The study further discusses implications for teacher education, curriculum, pedagogy, and educational policy in relation to the broader vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. The framework is conceptual and literature-derived and provides a basis for future empirical inquiry rather than an empirically validated model.
Keywords: *Indian Knowledge Systems, Inclusive Education, Viksit Bharat @2047, Conceptual Framework, Holistic Learning, Inclusive Pedagogy, Teacher Education*

Introduction

Education in the twenty-first century is increasingly expected to respond to the social, cultural, linguistic, and educational diversity of learners. Consequently, educational quality is no longer understood only in terms of access, enrolment, and academic achievement but also in relation to equity, participation, belonging, and meaningful learning opportunities. Contemporary inclusive education is concerned with identifying and reducing barriers to learning and participation while recognising differences among learners and communities. Inclusive education is therefore increasingly understood as an ongoing process through which educational systems respond to diverse learner needs, promote participation, respect differences, and create conditions for all learners to realise their potential.

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This broader understanding of inclusion is particularly relevant in India, where educational experiences are shaped by considerable linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, geographical, and social diversity. Inclusive education in such a context requires approaches that are responsive not only to individual learner differences but also to the cultural and social environments in which learning takes place. Recognition of diversity, learner participation, cultural responsiveness, and holistic development are therefore important for creating educational environments in which learners can participate meaningfully and develop a sense of belonging. Such an approach moves inclusion beyond physical access towards equitable participation and responsiveness to learners' varied circumstances.

Alongside the international discourse on inclusion, India has increasingly emphasised the relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) within contemporary education. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has provided policy support for the integration of Indian knowledge traditions into curriculum, teacher education, research, and other areas of educational development. Recent scholarship identifies IKS as a potential contributor to holistic learning, interdisciplinarity, ethics and values, sustainability, cultural identity, and innovation (Mahato & Dhillon, 2026; Dagore & Singh, 2026).

Meaningful integration of IKS, however, cannot be reduced to the addition of traditional content to existing curricula. Contemporary discussions emphasise curricular integration, teacher preparedness, contextual adaptation, experiential learning, and engagement with contemporary educational needs. The literature also highlights the importance of maintaining academic rigour and avoiding superficial or symbolic inclusion of traditional knowledge (Baral, 2024; Dagore & Singh, 2026). Effective integration therefore requires appropriate teacher preparation, curriculum planning, institutional support, and engagement between traditional knowledge and contemporary scientific and global knowledge frameworks.

The intersection between IKS and inclusive education is particularly significant in this context. Inclusive education seeks learning environments in which learners with diverse identities, experiences, abilities, and backgrounds are recognised and supported. Recent conceptual scholarship has connected IKS with relational communication, dialogic inquiry, learner participation, ethical educational practice, and inclusive pedagogy. Such perspectives suggest that IKS may provide culturally situated concepts through which participation, relationships, recognition, and learner engagement can be reconsidered within contemporary educational settings.

Several principles within Indian knowledge traditions appear particularly relevant to this intersection. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam emphasises interconnectedness, mutual respect, compassion, and shared belonging, while Sarvodaya emphasises the welfare and development of all. Guru–Shishya Parampara foregrounds relational learning and mentorship; Samvaad highlights dialogue and shared inquiry; Panchakosha provides a multidimensional understanding of human development; and experiential learning connects learning with experience, reflection, and context. These principles can therefore be examined as potential conceptual resources for considering inclusion beyond physical access and accommodation.

Existing literature has examined IKS in relation to NEP 2020, holistic education, experiential learning, cultural identity, relational pedagogy, inclusive education, and Viksit Bharat 2047. For instance, Mahato and Dhillon (2026) connect IKS integration with NEP 2020, teacher education, curriculum, research, and the developmental vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, while recent work on relational educational practice highlights communication, participation, recognition, and relational pedagogy within contemporary education.

However, these strands of literature have largely developed as separate conceptual discussions. What remains comparatively underdeveloped is a systematic examination of how specific IKS principles converge with specific dimensions of inclusive education and how these relationships can be organised into a coherent conceptual

framework. The present study therefore focuses on the conceptual alignment between selected IKS principles and contemporary inclusive education. This gap is consistent with the need identified in recent IKS scholarship for meaningful integration of indigenous knowledge with contemporary educational aims rather than superficial incorporation of traditional content.

Research Questions

1. Which aspects of inclusive education are reflected in the selected principles of Indian Knowledge Systems?
2. What patterns of convergence emerge between the selected IKS principles and dimensions of inclusive education?
3. How can the identified conceptual convergences be organised into an IKS-informed framework for inclusive education?

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relevance of selected principles of Indian Knowledge Systems to inclusive education.
2. To analyse the conceptual convergence between selected IKS principles and key dimensions of inclusive education.
3. To formulate a conceptual framework for IKS-informed inclusive education.

The study is guided by the position that IKS should not be treated as a replacement for contemporary approaches to inclusion. Rather, selected principles are examined as culturally grounded conceptual resources that may enrich contemporary educational thinking and practice. The analysis therefore focuses on conceptual convergence rather than causal effectiveness.

Conceptual Foundations of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education has evolved from an earlier emphasis on integrating groups of learners into mainstream settings towards a broader concern with transforming educational systems to respond to learner diversity. Contemporary inclusion therefore requires structures, practices, and expectations to become more responsive to differences rather than expecting learners to adapt to predetermined educational arrangements.

2.1 Equity and Fairness

Equity is a central dimension of inclusive education. It does not imply identical provision for every learner but recognises that learners may begin from different social, cultural, and educational circumstances and may therefore require different forms of support. An equitable system seeks to prevent such circumstances from unfairly determining learners' educational opportunities.

- **Diversity and Belonging**
  Inclusive education also requires recognition and valuing of diversity. Learners may differ in language, culture, identity, socioeconomic circumstances, geographical location, and educational needs. Recognising diversity therefore extends beyond preventing discrimination to valuing learners' identities, experiences, knowledge, and contributions.
- **Learner Participation and Engagement**
  Physical presence in a classroom does not necessarily constitute inclusion. Meaningful inclusion requires opportunities for learners to participate, interact, express perspectives, develop relationships, and

contribute to the learning community. Learner self-worth, belonging, positive relationships, and supportive educational environments are therefore important dimensions of inclusive education.

- **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**
  The meaning and implementation of inclusive education are influenced by cultural and social contexts. Inclusive systems therefore need to recognise learners' communities, identities, experiences, and knowledge traditions. Community engagement can further strengthen educational responsiveness to local diversity.
- **Holistic Learner Development**
  Inclusive education also concerns learners' wider well-being and development. A broad conception of inclusion therefore extends beyond academic achievement to include self-worth, belonging, well-being, and opportunities for learners to realise their potential. Based on this literature, the present study adopts five interconnected dimensions of inclusive education:

Dimension	Focus
Equity and fairness	Fair opportunities and appropriate support
Diversity and belonging	Recognition, respect, and shared membership
Learner participation and engagement	Voice, interaction, and meaningful engagement
Holistic learner development	Development beyond academic achievement
Inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy	Responsiveness to learners' contexts and experiences

Indian Knowledge Systems: Philosophical and Educational Foundations

Indian Knowledge Systems encompass diverse philosophical, scientific, cultural, ethical, and educational traditions developed across the Indian knowledge landscape. Contemporary educational discourse increasingly positions IKS as a potential resource for curriculum development, teacher education, research, and knowledge creation rather than merely as historical content. Recent literature links IKS integration with holistic learning, interdisciplinarity, ethics and values, sustainability, and innovation (Mahato & Dhillon, 2026).

The present study does not treat IKS as a homogeneous or static body of knowledge. Instead, selected principles are examined as conceptual and pedagogical resources whose contemporary relevance requires critical interpretation and contextual adaptation. This position is important because meaningful IKS integration involves connecting culturally rooted knowledge with contemporary educational purposes rather than simply adding traditional content to existing curricula.

3.1. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam represents an orientation towards interconnectedness, compassion, mutual responsibility, and shared belonging. The literature also associates the principle with inclusion, respect for diversity, social responsibility, and harmonious coexistence Pathak, S. (n.d.).

Its relevance to inclusive education can therefore be considered through the dimension of diversity and belonging. Rather than treating learner differences as barriers, this principle provides a culturally situated perspective for

recognising learners as members of a shared educational community. Its emphasis on mutual respect and collective responsibility also provides a conceptual basis for considering inclusive classroom relationships.

3.2 Sarvodaya

Sarvodaya refers to the welfare and development of all and is associated with equality, justice, social responsibility, and attention to disadvantaged groups. Gandhian interpretations of Sarvodaya emphasise the welfare of all members of society, particularly those who are marginalised or disadvantaged (Sonune & Chelladurai, 2026). Its relevance to inclusive education can therefore be considered through the principle of equity and fairness. In educational contexts, this orientation shifts attention from uniform provision towards the development and participation of learners whose circumstances may otherwise restrict their opportunities. The connection is conceptual rather than equivalent, as Sarvodaya represents a broader ethical and social philosophy.

3.3 Guru–Shishya Parampara

Guru–Shishya Parampara foregrounds the relationship between teacher and learner, guidance, mentorship, practice, and personalised learning. Contemporary interpretations emphasise the importance of the learner's experience, sustained practice, teacher guidance, and meaningful teacher–learner relationships rather than reproducing historical hierarchical arrangements (Rege, 2025). Its relevance to inclusive education lies primarily in the relational dimension of learner engagement. Supportive relationships, guidance, recognition, and personalised interaction can contribute to learning environments in which learners feel supported and meaningfully engaged. This interpretation is also consistent with recent scholarship connecting IKS with relational communication and inclusive educational practice (Didddi, 2026).

3.4 Panchakosha

Panchakosha provides a multidimensional conception of human development. Contemporary educational discussions interpret Panchakosha Vikas in relation to physical, mental, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of learner development and well-being (Sharma et al., 2023). Within the present study, Panchakosha is therefore examined in relation to holistic learner development. Its relevance lies in broadening the understanding of educational development beyond narrow academic achievement towards attention to learners' wider well-being and development. This also creates a conceptual connection with inclusive education, where learner participation and well-being are important dimensions of meaningful inclusion.

3.5 Samvaad

Samvaad refers broadly to dialogue, questioning, interaction, and shared inquiry. Literature on Indian pedagogical traditions identifies dialogic engagement as an important mode of inquiry and knowledge development. Its contemporary educational relevance lies in positioning learners as active participants in knowledge construction rather than merely as recipients of information. The principle is therefore particularly relevant to learner participation and voice. Dialogue can provide opportunities for learners to express perspectives, ask questions, engage with different viewpoints, and participate in shared meaning-making. In the proposed framework, Samvaad is consequently interpreted as a culturally grounded conceptual basis for dialogic and participatory pedagogy.

3.6 Experiential Learning

Experiential learning connects knowledge with experience, observation, practice, reflection, and context. Literature on IKS integration identifies experiential and context-based learning as important features of contemporary pedagogical integration (Rout & Sahoo, 2025). Its relevance to inclusive education lies in its potential to diversify how learners engage with knowledge. When learning is connected with experience, activity, context, and reflection, learners can relate curriculum to their own environments and lived experiences. This provides a conceptual connection with learner-centred and culturally responsive pedagogy. However, such an approach should remain sensitive to differences among learners rather than assuming that all learners share the same cultural or experiential background. These principles are not assumed to be inherently inclusive. Their relevance to inclusive education is examined through the thematic synthesis that follows. The analysis therefore focuses on conceptual convergence while maintaining a distinction between the philosophical meanings of IKS principles and contemporary educational constructs.

Methodology

The present study adopted a qualitative conceptual research design based on a structured integrative literature review and thematic synthesis. Relevant scholarly literature, peer-reviewed articles, academic texts, policy documents and secondary sources addressing Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), inclusive education, culturally responsive pedagogy, holistic learning, NEP 2020 and Viksit Bharat @2047 were purposively selected. The literature was examined through four stages: familiarisation, initial coding, categorisation and conceptual mapping. Recurring themes related to equity and fairness, diversity and belonging, learner participation, holistic development and culturally responsive pedagogy were identified and subsequently mapped onto six selected IKS principles: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Sarvodaya, Guru–Shishya Parampara, Samvaad, Panchakosha and Experiential Learning. The identified conceptual relationships were synthesised to develop an IKS-informed framework for inclusive education. The framework is literature-derived and interpretive rather than empirically validated; therefore, the relationships identified in the study are presented as conceptual propositions requiring future empirical examination.

Thematic Analysis and Conceptual Convergence

The thematic synthesis identified distinct but interconnected relationships between the selected IKS principles and dimensions of inclusive education. The analysis focused on conceptual convergence, rather than assuming direct equivalence between traditional philosophical concepts and contemporary educational constructs

IKS principle	Central orientation	Inclusive education dimension	Possible educational implication
Sarvodaya	Welfare and development of all	Equity and fairness	Equitable participation and attention to disadvantaged learners
Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam	Interconnectedness and shared belonging	Diversity and belonging	Respectful and cohesive learning communities
Guru–Shishya Parampara	Relational learning and mentorship	Learner engagement	Personalised support and meaningful teacher–learner relationships
Samvaad	Dialogue and shared inquiry	Participation and learner voice	Dialogic and participatory pedagogy
Panchakosha	Multidimensional conception of the learner	Holistic development	Attention to broader dimensions of learner growth
Experiential Learning	Learning through experience and context	Learner-centred pedagogy	Contextual, active and culturally responsive learning

The mapping indicates that Sarvodaya is most closely associated with equity and fairness because of its orientation towards universal welfare and attention to disadvantaged groups. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam relates to diversity and belonging through its emphasis on interconnectedness and shared membership. Guru–Shishya Parampara contributes primarily to the relational dimension of inclusion, while Samvaad foregrounds participation and learner voice. Panchakosha broadens the conception of learner development, and experiential learning provides a pedagogical connection between experience, context, and learning. These relationships represent conceptual correspondences rather than direct equivalences.

The synthesis therefore indicates that the six principles can be organised into a connected conceptual architecture: Sarvodaya contributes an orientation towards equity; Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam towards belonging and diversity; Guru–Shishya Parampara and Samvaad towards relationships and participation; and Panchakosha and experiential learning towards holistic development and contextual pedagogy.

These relationships remain conceptual rather than empirically established. Their contemporary educational application therefore requires critical interpretation and contextual adaptation rather than direct reproduction of historical educational structures

Proposed Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework translates the identified conceptual convergences between selected IKS principles and dimensions of inclusive education into an integrated educational model. It connects IKS principles with inclusive educational orientations, pedagogical practices, and potential educational contributions.

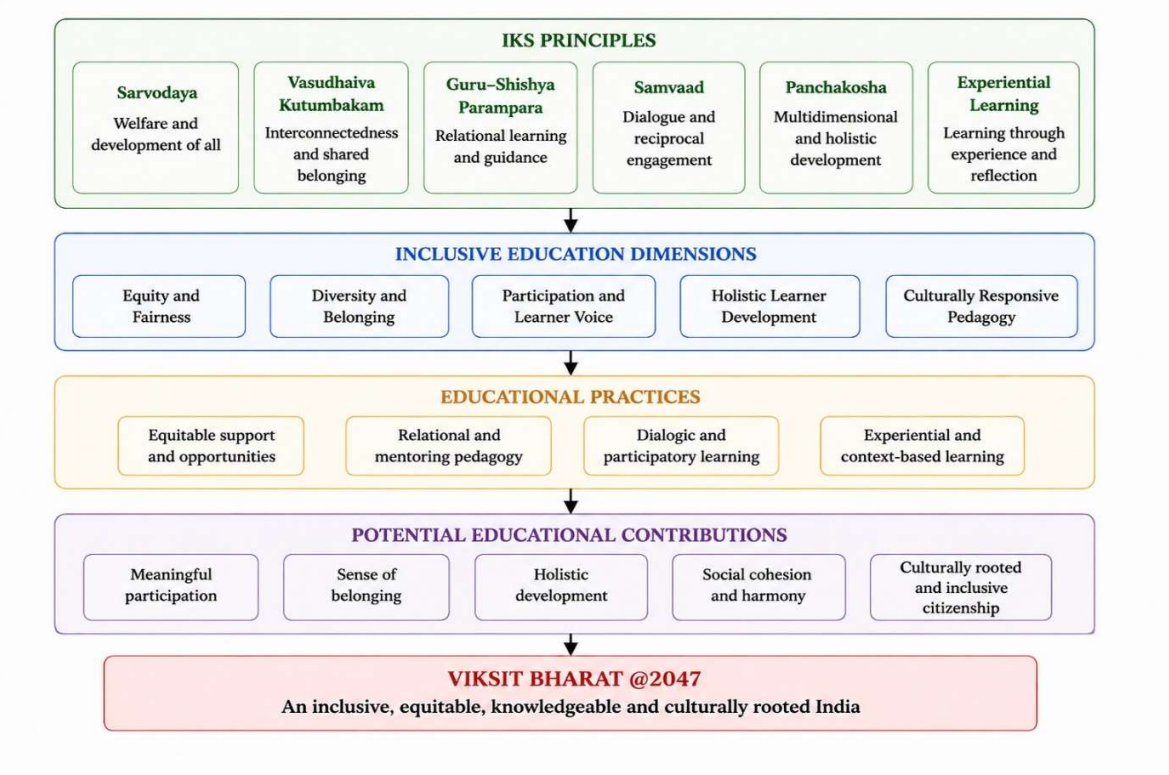


Figure 1. IKS-Informed Conceptual Framework for Inclusive Education

The framework positions IKS as a culturally grounded conceptual resource for informing inclusive educational thinking while recognising the need for contextual interpretation and empirical validation.

Discussion

The framework suggests that the relationship between IKS and inclusive education can be understood through five interconnected dimensions.

First, the convergence between Sarvodaya and equity suggests that an inclusive educational orientation may be interpreted not only as equal provision but also as attention to learners' differing circumstances.

Second, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam contributes a perspective on diversity and belonging. Its emphasis on interconnectedness and mutual respect offers a culturally grounded way of understanding the inclusion of learners from different backgrounds within a shared educational community.

Third, Guru–Shishya Parampara foregrounds the relational dimension of educational inclusion. Its contemporary interpretation can contribute to teacher–learner recognition, mentorship, and supportive interaction. This is consistent with recent work that places relationality and communication at the centre of inclusive educational practice.

Fourth, Samvaad highlights the participatory dimension of inclusion. Dialogue provides opportunities for learners to express ideas, ask questions, listen to others, and participate in knowledge construction.

Fifth, Learner Development and pedagogy is enriched with Fifth FORMative assessment and experiential learning. They help promote an orientation to whole person development and contextual engagement, and not just academic achievement. Combined these relationships point to the potential of IKS to contribute to inclusive educational thinking that is characterized by equity, belonging, a relational approach, participation, and holistic development. The framework needs to be considered as a conceptual hypothesis rather than a causal demonstration of the effectiveness of education.

Educational Implications

The proposed framework has implications for theoretical to practical aspects of inclusive education in the Indian context. Selected IKS principles can guide teachers in teacher preparation, which are directed towards a relational, dialogic, culturally responsive, and experiential approach. IKS can be incorporated into the contemporary and global knowledge at the curriculum level, but this incorporation can take place in a way that affirms learners' cultural context and maintains the rigor associated with academic knowledge. The framework can support equity in learner support, dialogue, meaningful participation, in-class relational pedagogy and co-constructed learning at the classroom level. At the policy and institutional level, it can participate in discussions on issues of teacher preparedness, curriculum development, and contextualization of IKS with inclusive education in the context of NEP 2020. According to the existing literature, teacher preparedness, curriculum design, and institutional capacity are also significant factors in meaningful IKS integration (Mahato & Dhillon, 2026). The conceptual trajectory outlined via the framework then suggests a way in which culturally grounded principles of IKS can contribute to inclusive education in practice, acknowledging the importance of the need for contextualization and the need for concrete empirical evidence.

Alignment with Viksit Bharat @2047

The proposed framework can be embedded in the overall vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, with a focus on inclusive human development, cultural roots, knowledge building, and social development. There is a need to bring about India's educational transformation that is grounded in indigenous knowledge but must also draw inspiration from

the worldwide knowledge and innovation (Bairagya & Das, 2026). In the current framework, Sarvodaya (inclusive human development) is connected to Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (social cohesion), Guru-Shishya Parampara and Samvaad (relational and participatory learning) to Panchakosha and experiential learning (holistic and contextual development). The framework thus does not situate IKS in relation to current and global knowledge. Rather, it fosters a dialogic relationship among the knowledge systems of Indians, the contemporary educational knowledge, and inclusive pedagogy. Such orientation is in line with the spirit of scholarship that builds a link between indigenous knowledge, global knowledge, a sense of cultural confidence and inclusive growth under the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The present work is limited in scope.The scope of present work is limited. The present study is conceptual and literature based, and thus, does not offer empirical support for the proposed relationships. Moreover, the principles adopted are only a small number of India's rich traditions of knowledge. They must be critically interpreted and sensitised to social, cultural and institutional contexts for their contemporary educational use. A further development of the proposed framework could be investigated and refined in a multitude of classroom settings and interventions, curriculum studies, teacher-education research and mixed methods investigations.

Conclusion

The present study explored the applicability of some of the principles of Indian Knowledge Systems in the field of inclusive education and conceptual convergence between principles of Indian Knowledge Systems and the key dimensions of inclusion. Themes selected for the literature review were structured into categories: Sarvodaya, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Guru–Shishya Parampara, Samvaad, Panchakosha and Experiential Learning and these were examined with reference to equity and fairness, diversity and belonging, learner participation, holistic development and culturally responsive pedagogy. This analysis suggests that these principles offer alternative philosophical and pedagogical viewpoints which have the potential to complement and enhance inclusive education as practised today. The outcome of this process is the conceptual framework that brings these relationships together, and provides a conceptual connection between the Indian knowledge traditions and the theory and practice of inclusive education. The study does not claim that IKS is always inclusive and/or a substitute for a more modern theory of inclusion. Instead, it calls for the interpretive and contextual appropriation of selected principles, which are in keeping with issues of equity, dignity of the learner, diversity, participation, and holistic development. In the larger framework of Viksit Bharat @ 2047, an IKS informed approach can help in creating an educational vision which is culturally grounded with inclusive human development and socially engaged education. The framework is in a conceptual and literature-based format that needs to be explored in the context of its applicability. The framework can then be tested and refined in various education environments in the future, enhancing the linkage between inclusive educational theory and praxis in India.

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