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RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES AND THE PARTITION OF INDIA IN 1947: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Mr. Samir Jana
Assistant Professor, Annapurna Memorial College of Education, Kashinagar, Kakdwip, North 24 pgs, W.B., India

ABSTRACT

The Partition of India in 1947 remains one of the most significant and tragic events in the history of South Asia. The present study examines the historical role of religious ideologies in shaping the political developments that ultimately led to the division of British India into India and Pakistan. The research is based on the historical method and uses secondary sources such as books, journals, historical documents, and scholarly articles to analyse the relationship between religion, politics, nationalism, and colonial governance during the late colonial period. The study finds that British colonial policies, particularly communal representation and separate electorates, encouraged the growth of communal consciousness among different religious communities. Socio-religious reform movements and political organisations further strengthened separate political identities and ideological divisions. The research also highlights the role of the Indian National Congress, the All-India Muslim League, and major political leaders in influencing nationalist politics and communal relations. Furthermore, the study discusses the humanitarian consequences of Partition, including violence, migration, displacement, and psychological trauma experienced by millions of people. The study concludes that the Partition of India was a complex historical process shaped by the combined influence of religious ideologies, colonial policies, political conflicts, and social transformations.

KEYWORDS: *Partition of India, Religious Ideologies, Communal Politics, British Colonial Rule, Nationalism, South Asian History.*

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant moments in South Asian history is the 1947 Partition of India. India and Pakistan became independent countries as a result of the end of British colonial control. Millions of people faced severe social, political, and psychological difficulties as a result of the Partition process, considering the fact that independence increased hopes for self-governance and national advancement. Several historical reasons affected the subcontinent's partition, including colonial administrative practices, discussions about politics, communal representation, and the expanding role of religious ideas in public life. Historians have frequently defined Partition as a complicated process in history rather than a single political event, owing to decades of shifting political relations and ideological developments (Chandra et al., 2008).

In colonial India, religion progressively played a significant role in the development of political identities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Different religious communities were encouraged to organise politically along communal lines by British policies like communal representation and distinct electorates. The development of cultural identity and community consciousness was also aided by socio-religious reform movements among Muslims and Hindus. Different ideas about India's future political system were produced by political groups including the All-India Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. The Muslim League became more and more concerned with defending Muslim political interests, whereas the Congress primarily stressed a unified nationalist framework. The demand for a distinct Muslim nation, which finally became Pakistan, was influenced by these ideological disagreements (Jalal, 1985).

Political unpredictability and communal tensions increased in the last years just before independence. Mistrust between various communities was encouraged by incidents like the Lahore Resolution of 1940, the collapse of constitutional negotiating processes, and the sectarian unrest of the 1940s. Religious beliefs developed a close relationship with political activism, impacting public opinion and leadership choices. However, religious differences alone cannot fully explain the Partition of India; colonial governance, constitutional disputes, regional politics, and the difficulties of handing over authority from British rule to independent nations all had an impact. Large-scale migration, community dislocation, and enduring social and cultural changes throughout the Indian subcontinent were among the effects of Partition (Talbot & Singh, 2009).

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate the historical significance of religious ideologies in the 1947 Indian Partition. It aims to examine how political developments during the colonial era were impacted by religious identity and how ideological differences ultimately led to the formation of India and Pakistan. With an emphasis on the interplay of religion, politics, and nationalism in contemporary Indian history, the research also aims to investigate the larger historical background of Partition in a fair and comprehensive manner.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The 1947 Partition of India has been studied from historical, political, social, and cultural angles by a variety of researchers. The development of religious nationalism, communal politics, colonial policies, and the effects of Partition on people are the key subjects for the present study. The influence of political figures, identity-based politics, literature, and collective memory on the perception of Partition has also been studied by researchers. According to the examined literature, religious beliefs had a significant impact on communal relations and political events in India during the latter years of British administration. These studies shed important light on the

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reasons behind Partition, its effects, and its long-term effects on the Indian subcontinent.

Das, (2017) investigated the importance of religion in the Indian liberation movement and emphasised its impact on social movements, political ideologies, and public awareness during the colonial era. The study found that religion has a significant impact on nationalist feelings and political mobilisation in India. He further noted that in order to defend colonial control and portray British rule as advantageous to Indian society, the British government first employed religious terminology and narratives. The study highlighted how religion impacted the larger trajectory of contemporary Indian history and became intimately linked to political developments throughout the fight for independence.

Chandrashekharaiah, (2021) analysed the reasons and repercussions of India's 1947 partition, describing it as one of the most major incidents in modern South Asian history. The study emphasised how colonial policies, political disputes, and escalating religious tensions during the latter years of British administration influenced the split of British India into India and Pakistan. The author also covered the immediate and long-term effects of Partition, such as widespread migration, violence between communities, shifts in the population, and the formation of national identities based on religion. The long-lasting historical and geopolitical effects of Partition on South Asia's social and political ties were also highlighted in the study.

Poonia, (2022) looked at the part played by religious nationalism in the 1947 Indian Partition and emphasised how the subcontinent's separation was impacted by the combination of religion and political identity. The study found that even though India gained independence following protracted colonial control, widespread violence, dislocation, and societal instability accompanied the Partition process. Poonia highlighted how important political personalities including Cyril Radcliffe, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Lord Mountbatten, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah influenced the circumstances surrounding Partition. She also noted that prior to Partition, members of the Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu populations frequently coexisted and took part in anti-colonial campaigns against British rule. The study found that during the last stages of Partition, when religious identity became strongly linked to political nationalism, communal tensions increased.

Gaur and Chauhan, (2024) investigated how the 1947 Partition affected poetry and literature, emphasising issues of political ideology, social change, and violence. The study made clear that the Indian subcontinent's literary and cultural expression was profoundly and permanently impacted by Partition. They claim that writers, poets, and painters depicted human agony, social unrest, displacement, and political transformation related to Partition through literature. The study also highlighted how, as histories and experiences from that time period are passed down through the generations, memories of Partition continue to influence South Asia's collective cultural consciousness. They also pointed out that a variety of social and historical viewpoints of the Partition experience have been presented through literary works.

Rai, (2026) examined the partition of India in 1947 as a significant historical event that shaped the development of communal and national politics in South Asia. According to the study, Partition was a major example of conflict influenced by identity-based politics and resulted from growing political and religious tensions during the last stages of British administration. Rai highlighted that anxiety, insecurity, and social instability were brought about by the collapse of mutual understanding and trust amongst populations, which had an impact on both internal society and India-Pakistan relations following independence. The study also looked at the long-term effects of Partition on the Indian subcontinent's population and highlighted the widespread human suffering it produced, including psychological trauma, bloodshed, and displacement.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to examine the historical role of religious ideologies in the Partition of India in 1947 and to understand their influence on political and social developments during the colonial period. The major objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the role of religious ideologies in the political developments leading to the Partition of India in 1947.
2. To analyze the impact of British colonial policies on the growth of communal politics and religious nationalism in India.
3. To study the influence of major political leaders and organizations in shaping religious and political identities during the Partition period.
4. To explore the social, cultural, and humanitarian consequences of Partition on the people of the Indian subcontinent.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been framed to guide the study and to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between religious ideologies and the Partition of India in 1947:

5. How did religious ideologies influence the political developments that led to the Partition of India in 1947?
6. What role did British colonial policies play in the rise of communal politics and religious nationalism in India?
7. How did political leaders and organizations contribute to the formation of religious identities during the Partition period?
8. What were the major social and humanitarian consequences of the Partition on the people of the Indian subcontinent?

5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present research is based on the historical research technique, which examines past events, political developments, and societal changes related to India's Partition in 1947. In order to comprehend how religious beliefs influenced the political conditions that resulted in Partition, the study takes a qualitative and analytical method. Historical research is suited for this study since it aids in analysing the causes, developments, and effects of significant historical events by critically interpreting the available resources.

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The majority of the data included in the study comes from secondary sources. Relevant material about the Partition of India, religious nationalism, colonial policies, and communal politics has been gathered from books, peer-reviewed research articles, historical documents, journals, biographies, government reports, and legitimate academic publications. A balanced understanding of the subject has also been developed by consulting a variety of academic research by historians and researchers.

The data gathered has been examined using both descriptive and interpretive techniques. The study looks at how religion and politics interacted during the colonial era and assesses how ideological differences affected communal relations, political decisions, and the final split of British India into India and Pakistan. The attempts have been made to interpret historical events and opinions with historical objectivity and academic impartiality.

6. COLONIAL RULE AND THE GROWTH OF COMMUNAL POLITICS

British colonial rule had a significant impact on communal politics in India during both the 19th and 20th centuries. Administrative initiatives, political changes, and socio-religious movements all contributed to the strengthening of distinct religious identities among various communities. In colonial India, these developments had an impact on Hindu-Muslim political ties as well as the formation of communal awareness.

6.1 British Colonial Policies and Communal Division

Indian communal politics were significantly shaped by British colonial policies. The British government frequently categorised people based on caste, community, and religion in order to retain administrative control over a heterogeneous society. Separate communal identities were formed as a result of policies pertaining to political representation, reforms to education, and census activities. According to historians, the colonial tactic of "divide and rule" exacerbated tensions between various populations and reduced the likelihood of a cohesive political opposition to British rule (Chandra et al., 2008).

Additionally, the British government implemented constitutional changes that promoted communal representation and progressively increased political engagement. Through the prism of communal identity, religious communities started to view political rights and opportunities. During the late colonial era, this practice enhanced political rivalry between communities and raised communal consciousness. These measures led to political division and mistrust between various religious groups, although the fact that they were implemented in the name of administrative effectiveness and representation.

6.2 The Policy of Separate Electorates

The establishment of distinct electorates under the Indian Councils Act of 1909, sometimes referred to as the Morley-Minto Reforms, was one of the most important colonial policies that promoted communal politics. Muslims were permitted to choose their own delegates under this system, independent of other communities. Later constitutional amendments expanded the program to include other groups. In addition to institutionalising communal representation within the political system, the British government rationalised different electorates as a way of protecting minority political interests (Jalal, 1985).

The establishment of distinct electorates altered the character of Indian politics by directly associating religious identification with political identity. As a result of political leaders' growing appeals to religious communities for electoral support, communal differences progressively become more pronounced. Additionally, the program enhanced the function of groups that represented Muslim political interests, such the All-India Muslim League. Separate electorates, according to many nationalist leaders, undermined the notion of a single Indian nationalism and encouraged rivalry amongst communities rather than group political cooperation.

6.3 Socio-Religious Reform Movements

In reaction to social change, colonial influence, and the desire for cultural reform in Indian society, a number of socio-religious reform groups arose during the 19th century. These movements sought to advance religious revival, social reform, education, and cross-cultural understanding. Many reform movements encouraged distinct community identities by highlighting religious and cultural uniqueness, even while they also made positive contributions to social modernisation and educational advancement.

Arya Samaj: Swami Dayanand Saraswati established the Arya Samaj in 1875 with the intention of advancing the Vedic teachings and transforming Hindu society. The movement promoted social reform and education while opposing societal customs like child marriage, caste inequality, and superstition. During the colonial era, Arya Samaj also stressed the preservation of Hindu identity and cultural rebirth (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012).
In addition to playing a significant role in educational and reform initiatives, the movement helped Hindus become more socially conscious. But in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, its focus on religious identity and cultural renewal also had an impact on the growth of communal consciousness.

Aligarh Movement: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan founded the Aligarh Movement in the late 1800s to encourage social reform and modern education among Muslims in India. Sir Syed thought that in order for the Muslim community to adjust to shifting political circumstances under British rule after the Revolt of 1857, they needed to advance socially and educationally. A significant hub for Muslim educational reform was established in Aligarh with the founding of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, which subsequently evolved into Aligarh Muslim University (Hasan, 1993).

The Aligarh Movement promoted scientific thought, contemporary education, and political consciousness among Muslims. It also aided in the development of a unique Muslim political identity at the same time. These concepts subsequently

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had an impact on the growth of communal politics in India and the formation of Muslim political groups.

6.4 Hindu-Muslim Political Relations before Partition

In colonial India, both cooperation and conflict moulded Hindu-Muslim political relations. Religious leaders frequently collaborated to oppose colonial rule in the early stages of the independence movement. Events like the Khilafat Movement and the Non-Cooperation Movement demonstrated initiatives to advance national unity and intercommunal harmony (Talbot & Singh, 2009).

But over time, political disputes over representation, constitutional amendments, and minority rights grew more intense. During the 1930s and 1940s, tensions between communities were brought on by the development of communal organisations and distinct political identities. These changes ultimately influenced the political conditions that resulted in India's 1947 Partition.

7. RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES AND NATIONALIST POLITICS

Religious ideologies influenced nationalist politics during the latter years of British rule in India. Multiple perspectives on religion, nationality, and political representation were taken by political organisations and leaders. The political circumstances that ultimately resulted in the Partition of India in 1947 were impacted by these ideological divides, which over time affected communal relations.

7.1 Indian National Congress and Secular Nationalism

During the liberation fight, the Indian National Congress primarily advocated for a unified, secular Indian nationalism. Leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi pushed individuals from many communities to join together in the fight against British colonial rule and stressed national unity above religious identity. The Congress thought that a democratic and inclusive political system could accommodate India's diversity. However, political disputes over minority representation and power-sharing made it difficult to achieve total unity among all communities, while its efforts to preserve communal harmony (Chandra et al., 2008).

7.2 Muslim League and the Two-Nation Theory

In colonial India, the All-India Muslim League progressively became a significant political force that represented Muslim political interests. The League strongly pushed the Two-Nation Theory in the 1940s, which maintained that Muslims and Hindus were distinct political groups with unique cultural and historical identities. A significant turning point in the movement for a distinct Muslim country was the Lahore Resolution of 1940. The demand for Pakistan was strengthened by the Muslim League's belief that constitutional protections would not be sufficient to secure Muslim political interests in an independent India (Jalal, 1985).

7.3 Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Muslim Nationalism

The rise of Muslim nationalism in the last years of British administration was largely attributed to Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Jinnah, who was first linked to constitutional politics and Hindu-Muslim collaboration, went on to become the main leader of the Muslim League and was a fervent supporter of Muslim political representation. He maintained that Muslims should be recognised as a separate political community with rights and interests of their own. Many Muslims in various parts of India significantly supported the cause for Pakistan under his leadership. One of the key elements affecting the 1947 Partition process was Jinnah's political leadership (Talbot & Singh, 2009).

7.4 Hindu Nationalist Responses

The expansion of Hindu nationalist reactions during the colonial era was also impacted by the advent of Muslim political nationalism. Concerns about communal representation and political discussions were voiced by several Hindu organisations, which also highlighted the cultural and historical identity of Hindu society. In the shifting political landscape of colonial India, organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha advocated for the defence of Hindu interests. The growing emphasis on religious identification during the last decades prior to independence contributed to the development of communal awareness, even though various political groupings had diverse ideological stances (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012).

8. Political Crisis and the Road to Partition

The final phase of British administration in India was distinguished by increasing political uncertainty, communal tensions, and debates about the country's future constitutional framework. Different political groups and leaders have divergent opinions about power-sharing, federalism, and representation. The failure to reach a consensus on a political solution led to the Partition of India in 1947 by progressively widening gaps between communities.

8.1 Lahore Resolution of 1940

The All-India Muslim League passed the Lahore Resolution in March 1940, which was a significant turning point in colonial India's political history. In areas where Muslims made up the majority, the resolution suggested establishing distinct states for them. The resolution reinforced the call for distinct political arrangements for Muslims even if it did not initially mention the word "Pakistan." The Muslim League's rising concerns about minority rights and political representation in a future independent India were expressed in the Lahore Resolution. It later served as the basis for the demand for Pakistan and had a major impact on 1940s political debates (Jalal, 1985).

8.2 Failure of Constitutional Negotiations

In order to settle political disputes between India's main political parties, a number of constitutional negotiations were attempted in the last years of British rule. However, the creation of a unified constitutional framework was thwarted by disagreements over matters like minority representation, province autonomy, and the allocation of political power. Compromise became more challenging due to the growing hostility between political groups, particularly the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. The ongoing failure of these talks increased the likelihood of Partition as a political solution and added to political instability.

In order to obtain Indian collaboration during World War II, the British government dispatched the Cripps Mission, led by Sir

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Stafford Cripps, to India in 1942. The mission promised dominion status following the war and suggested modest constitutional changes. The Muslim League and the Indian National Congress, however, opposed the plans for various reasons. The Muslim League was unhappy with the lack of explicit clauses pertaining to Pakistan, while Congress leaders were against the restricted transfer of power. The Cripps Mission's failure was a reflection of the growing political divisions among India's main political parties (Chandra et al., 2008).

In an effort to maintain Indian unity while resolving communal issues, the British administration unveiled the Cabinet Mission Plan in 1946. A federal system with grouped provinces and constrained central authority was suggested under the plan. At first, the plan was accepted conditionally by both the Muslim League and the Congress. However, disputes about how to interpret and carry out the strategy quickly surfaced. The idea of preserving a united India was ultimately undermined by the breakdown of the Cabinet Mission Plan and the escalation of political tensions. Partition was expedited by the collapse of this last significant constitutional attempt (Talbot & Singh, 2009).

8.3 Mountbatten Plan and the Decision for Partition

As the final British Viceroy to arrive in India in 1947, Lord Louis Mountbatten was tasked with handing over authority to Indian authorities. Mountbatten came to the conclusion that partition was now the most practicable way to prevent more instability after evaluating the escalating intercommunal strife and political impasse. The Mountbatten Plan, which was unveiled in June 1947, suggested splitting British India into India and Pakistan, two separate dominions. The major political parties approved the plan, which resulted in India's official partition in August 1947. While both countries gained independence as a result of Partition, the subcontinent saw widespread migration, social unrest, and long-term political repercussions (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012).

9. Partition, Violence, and Human Displacement

Millions of people throughout the Indian subcontinent were severely impacted by the 1947 Partition of India, which was not just a political divide of territory but also a severe humanitarian crisis. One of the biggest mass migrations in modern history occurred as a result of the founding of India and Pakistan, as people crossed the new borders in quest of security and stability. While many Muslims migrated from India to Pakistan, Hindus and Sikhs migrated from areas that became part of Pakistan. Significant social and economic challenges resulted from this abrupt and extensive population shift, including the loss of homes, belongings, means of subsistence, and familial bonds.

In several areas, especially Punjab and Bengal, the Partition era was also characterised by extensive intercommunal violence and societal instability. Many families endured insecurity, dislocation, and emotional damage throughout the change. In addition to upsetting regular community life, the violence had a lasting psychological impact on both people and families. During this time, women and children were among the most vulnerable groups, experiencing social problems, separation, and displacement. Many people showed resiliency and reconstructed their lives in new social and political contexts following Partition despite these terrible experiences.

The demographic, cultural, and political structures of both India and Pakistan were permanently impacted by human relocation during Partition. Different regions of the subcontinent saw the emergence of refugee camps, and governments encountered significant difficulties in giving displaced people social support, work opportunities, and rehabilitation. For many generations, personal narratives, literature, art, and collective memory were all impacted by the recollections of migration and displacement. Partition is frequently seen by historians as a pivotal event that altered South Asia's social and political climate and left a lasting historical impact on the area (Talbot & Singh, 2009).

10. Historical Interpretation of Religious Ideologies in Partition

Historians have interpreted the importance of religious ideas in India's Partition in many ways, based on their strategy for political, social, and cultural history. Several researchers contend that during the colonial era, religion and political identity became intimately linked, particularly when organised political movements and communal representation grew. Religious beliefs shaped how many cultures saw issues of national identity, political authority, and representation. However, historians also note that colonial policies, constitutional disputes, political rivalry, and shifting social conditions in late colonial India all contributed to Partition rather than religion alone.

Many historical studies indicate that the development of communal awareness among various religious groups was facilitated by British administrative techniques, especially communal representation and separate electorates. Ideological divides were further exacerbated by political groups like the All-India Muslim League and the Indian National Congress, who had divergent ideas about India's destiny. Historians have also looked at how negotiations, political figures, and constitutional shortcomings influenced the ultimate Partition decision. According to this viewpoint, religious ideas played a significant role in shaping public opinion and nationalist mobilisation in the last decades prior to independence (Jalal, 1985).

Other historians concentrate on the social and cultural aspects of Partition and stress that, in spite of political difficulties, common people frequently maintained enduring relationships across religious organisations. This point of view holds that throughout colonial authority, political differences coexisted with social cohesion and shared cultural traditions. Thus, it is possible to understand the violence and displacement connected to Partition as the outcome of quickly shifting political conditions and increasing insecurity during the handover of power. A fuller comprehension of the human experiences associated with Partition and the enduring influence of religious and political beliefs on collective memory has also been facilitated by literary works, personal stories, and oral histories (Butalia, 1998).

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Partition is typically portrayed in contemporary historical interpretations as a complicated and multifaceted event influenced by social change, religious identities, political discussions, and colonial rule. Historians are increasingly examining Partition using interdisciplinary perspectives that take into account both political events and human experiences, as opposed to interpreting it from a single standpoint. In order to comprehend the historical development of nationalism, religious politics, and intercommunity relations in South Asia, it is still crucial to examine religious ideas during Partition.

11. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study indicates that religious doctrines had a significant impact on the political climate of colonial India over the final stages of British administration. Religious identities were reinforced and communal politics were fostered by British policies like separate electorates and community representation.

The results also show that Hindus and Muslims' cultural awareness and sense of community were enhanced by socio-religious reform movements such as the Aligarh Movement and the Arya Samaj. In colonial society, these processes progressively impacted communal understanding and political identity.

Additionally, the study reveals how sectarian tensions grew during the 1940s due to ideological differences among the All-India Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. The Muslim League increasingly backed Muslim political participation and the demand for Pakistan, while Congress pushed secular nationalism.

Another important finding is that political instability in colonial India was exacerbated by the failure of constitutional negotiations, such as the Cripps Mission and the Cabinet Mission Plan. The 1947 Partition movement was motivated by these political disputes.

The study also emphasises how the Indian subcontinent's population suffered long-term social and psychological effects as well as mass migration, violence, and displacement as a result of Partition. Therefore, the findings indicate that religious beliefs, colonial practices, political leadership, and constitutional disputes all influenced India's partition.

12. CONCLUSION

One of the most important developments in contemporary South Asian history was the 1947 Partition of India, which was influenced by a number of political, social, colonial, and religious elements. The study comes to the conclusion that during the last years of British administration, religious ideologies had a significant impact on communal ties and political identity. While socio-religious reform movements helped many groups develop unique cultural and political identities, British colonial measures like separate electorates and community representation enhanced community consciousness.

The study also finds that political divisions in colonial India were progressively exacerbated by ideological disagreements between key political organisations, especially the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League. Partition was expedited in the 1940s by constitutional failings, political mistrust, and rising communal tensions. In addition to bringing about independence, the formation of India and Pakistan caused widespread migration, violence, displacement, and permanent social and psychological repercussions for millions of people.

Finally, the study emphasises that rather than being the result of a single cause, the Partition of India should be viewed as a complicated historical process. Religious ideologies were inextricably linked to colonial governance, negotiations over politics, nationalist movements, and social developments throughout that time. Therefore, assessing the evolution of nationalism, community politics, and intercommunity relations in South Asian history requires a fair historical perspective on the Partition.

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