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Buddhist Philosophy in Education: Enhancing Critical Thinking, Compassion, and Cognitive Development in Nepal

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Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji filsafat Buddha dalam lanskap pendidikan Nepal yang beragam, di mana daya tarik etika, moral, dan logika merupakan urgensi keterampilan abad ke-21. Hal ini menjadi latar belakang pertumbuhan holistik dan etis dalam konteks pendidikan Nepal. Tujuan utama makalah ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi pemikiran kritis, stabilitas emosi, dan kesadaran penuh dalam filsafat Buddha dalam sistem pendidikan Nepal. Konsep kesadaran penuh dan welas asih menyoroti ajaran-ajaran kanonik. Saya menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan analisis tematik. Sumber primer dan sekunder digunakan untuk merumuskan tema. Lebih lanjut, saya menerapkan teori perkembangan kognitif Piaget dan perspektif filosofis Buddha untuk melihat dimensi kognitif, sosial, budaya, dan psikologis. Studi ini berfokus pada bagaimana Buddhisme dapat menjadi praktik pendidikan yang mengasimilasi perkembangan holistik, akademis, dan moral. Temuan-temuan dalam makalah ini menyoroti kebijaksanaan Buddha sebagai kerangka kerja untuk pendidikan, pedagogi Buddha, kesadaran penuh, praktik kelas, moral, keterlibatan, lingkungan belajar yang penuh rasa hormat, tantangan, dan implikasi dari integrasi Buddhisme ke dalam pendidikan. Filsafat Buddha menciptakan motif yang didorong oleh nilai dan interaktif dalam pendidikan. Studi ini menyoroti prinsip-prinsip Buddhis yang mengungkap wawasan etika dan pencerahan dalam pendidikan. Tantangan yang dihadapi menunjukkan keterbatasan sumber daya, sistem pengetahuan tradisional, dan kendala sekuler. Motivasi intrinsik berkembang dengan bantuan meditasi, kesadaran, dan peran etika interpersonal. Para guru didorong untuk mengintegrasikan metode Buddhis untuk bermain peran dan diskusi reflektif di kelas. Makalah ini menggarisbawahi keunggulan akademik, stabilitas emosional, dan pengembangan pemikiran kritis, empati, serta wawasan sosial-budaya dalam konteks negara multietnis dan multiagama, Nepal. Makalah ini merekomendasikan diskusi reflektif, kesadaran, meditasi, empati, dan bimbingan menuju welas asih.

Kata Kunci: Filsafat Buddha, empati, pengembangan holistik, perhatian penuh

Abstract

This study examines Buddhist philosophy in Nepal's diverse educational landscape where ethical, moral, and logical appeals are an urgency of 21st century skills. It is the background of holistic, ethical growth in Nepali education context. The main objective of this paper is to explore critical thinking, emotional stability, mindfulness of Buddhist philosophy in the Nepali education system. The concept of mindfulness and compassion highlights canonical teachings. I employed a qualitative descriptive approach using thematic analysis. Primary and secondary sources were used to formulate themes. Moreover, I applied Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Buddhist philosophical perspective to view cognitive, social, cultural, and psychological dimensions. It focuses on how Buddhism can be the practice of education assimilating holistic, academic, and moral development. Findings highlight the Buddha's wisdom as a framework for education, Buddhist pedagogy, mindfulness, classroom practice, moral, engagement, respectful learning environment, challenges, and implications of integrating Buddhism into education. Buddhist philosophy creates value-driven and interactive motive in education. The study highlights Buddhist principles that reveal ethical insights and enlightenment in education. Challenges show resource

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limitations, traditional knowledge systems, and secular constraints. Intrinsic motivation fosters with the help of meditation, mindfulness, and the role of interpersonal ethics. Teachers are encouraged to integrate Buddhist methods for role play and reflective discussion in classrooms. This paper underscores academic excellence, emotional stability, and fostering critical thinking, empathy, and socio-cultural insights in the settings of multiethnic and multireligious nation Nepal. This paper recommends reflective discussion, mindfulness, meditation, empathy, and guidance towards compassion.

Keywords: Buddhist philosophy, empathy, holistic development, mindfulness

INTRODUCTION

Incorporating the enlightenment of Buddhism into the Nepalese educational system can also improve the curriculum. Nirvana awareness is highlighted from a Buddhist perspective. Specifically, the state of emancipation known as nirvana centers on rebirth (samsara) and birth, death, and rebirth. In line with its essential beliefs, Buddhism underlines kindness, moral conduct, love, and tenderness. Nepal's cultural, social, psychological, traditional, and identity aspects are significantly nuanced by the philosophy of the Buddha. Buddhism derives its inspiration from a criticism of experience itself (Murti, 2013). This line illustrates how human beings are in constant pain, which breeds hopelessness. It is about the causes of suffering (Dukkha) and how people manage suffering throughout their lives. One of the most addressed concepts in Buddhist philosophy is temporariness. Buddhism recognizes that everything in this life, including fame, power, status, vitality, possessions, etc., is ephemeral. It unveils that in the end; nothing will be left. Meanwhile, attachment is the cause of misery (Aich, 2023; Gokhale, 2021).

When people genuinely connect with the things they want, a trajectory of disappointment and melancholy will undoubtedly be evident. Pratityasamutpada is the causal law regulating the rise and subsidence of the several elements (dharma-sanketa) (Murti, 2013). Cause and circumstance are the reasons behind everything that occurs. Pratityasamutapada is the term for useful instruments for understanding the ways in which reality is interwoven with the cycle of change and how it affects our experience of life. Rise and fall despite human pain and transition. Buddhism also reveals the immorality and greed that people have engaged in, linking temperament, behavior, and attitude. Conversely, mindfulness is one of the main focuses of Buddhism, covering feeling, morality, perception, action, and important perspectives (Shulman, 2024). On the flip side, the apprehension of awareness and consciousness is made crystal apparent by mindfulness. Bodhi (2010) emphasizes that mindfulness brings to light experience in its pure immediacy. It uncovers the object as it is before it has been plastered over with conceptual paint, overlaid with interpretations. Being mindful is more about being compassionate, unbiased, and inquisitive when examining thoughts, moods, and the environment around us. Instead of formulating beliefs and theories, mindfulness connects experiences as they are absolutely real and genuine. Either greatness as a monarch or greatness as a holy man was his destiny. Buddha was primarily an ethical teacher and reformer, not a metaphysician (Aich, 2015). Buddhism teaches that there is a reality of suffering and misery as well as a lack of reality that articulates the possibility of termination and points the way to liberation through concepts like right understanding, right speech, right intent, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration (Rahula, 1974). Not only do individuals in Nepal have strong ties to Buddhism, but others worldwide do too. Most importantly, it is consistent with basic principles of ethical insights, cognitive progress, and holistic enrichment, as well as sympathy, attachment, and sympathy. Aich (2015) discusses that attachment is one translation of the word Trishna, which can also be translated as thirst, desire, lust, craving, or clinging. The term "Trishana" has multiple meanings and is derived from Sanskrit. Another trait that is seen as Trishna is seeking or having cravings. Suffering was a result of strong desire and profound longing. Nepal is a bilingual, multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious nation all at the same time.

Due to a variety of religious practices and beliefs, Buddhist philosophy can be difficult to understand in Nepali educational settings. Yoga as the chief raw material for philosophical reflection (Conze, 2013). Yoga is regarded as the ultimate pursuit of knowledge. Besides, yoga searches for ethical, mental, and spiritual disciplines in addition to postures. It represents the idea of profound knowledge and specific issues to be addressed in meditation, such as appreciation, realization, the real world, ethical conduct, and philosophical intellectual stimulation. Self (atman) is the only reality; the other that it is just the absence of a self (nairatmya), which distinguishes true reality from false appearance (Conze, 2013). The concept of the self is one of unity and is connected to cognition, awareness, and execution. The capability of making sensible

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decisions is amplified by the self (atman). Individuals' views and sentiments regarding certainty are in line with who they are. Buddhism represents emptiness in relation to reliance, transience, deception, isolation, and people's deceitful behavior in the context of the materialistic world. Buddhism originated approximately 2,600 years ago and is based on the teachings of Siddartha Gautama who attained 'enlightenment' (henceforth becoming known as Shakyamuni Buddha) and taught extensively throughout India (Shonin et al., 2013).

The term "Buddha" refers to Gautam Buddha, also known as Siddhartha Gautam Buddha, and it signifies an "awakened" or "illuminated" being. Moreover, Buddha Purnima is observed on his birthday. He was born in the city state of Kapilvastu, the home of the Sakyas, in what is now the western part of Nepal, near the Indian border (Siderits, 2007). He was born into a royal family in Lumbini of the Shakya dynasty in Nepal. Following his birth, he walked seven steps in each of the four cardinal directions, and flowers appeared underneath his feet. Gautam Buddha had a slightly different conception than others. He was born without inflicting pain or tearing his mother's skin.

Buddha places a greater value on exemplary moral conduct of humankind, humanity, appreciation, and hardship than on theories from academia. Buddha's position as a revolutionary thinker and pursuit of welfare among people. In order to spare Gautam Buddha from the agony of life, his father raised him to be a great monarch. The very essential conditions of life appeared to be fraught with suffering: birth, old age, disease, death, sorrow, grief, wish, despair; in short, all that is born of attachmentis suffering (Aich, 2015). The written statement indicates misery is a part of life, and it affects everyone we meet via occurrences like conception, passing away, sickness, and agony. When he was 29, though, he left his kingdom to discover who he really was. He will become a Buddha if he sees four things in his youth: an old person, a sick person, a corpse, and a wandering renunciant (Siderits, 2007). Simultaneously, he encounters an elderly man on his first outing, a sick man on his second, a dead body cadaver on his third, and a cheerful man pleading for change on his fourth encounter. A very happy-looking but really impoverished person. Buddha reaches the point where he determines he cannot stay at home because everyone ages, becomes ill, and passes away, but some people choose to be contented and joyful in spite of this. On that account, Gautama is a prince; his father, Suddhodana, is a powerful and wealthy king (Siderits, 2007).

Therefore, he needs to know what's going on and get answers afterward. However, there are numerous challenges such as resistance to change, inclusivity practices, resource constraints, etc. The fundamental principle of Buddhism is that nothing is permanent in this universe. Everything has a cause of existence and Nirvana can be attained through the eight-fold path. In summary, incorporating the teachings of Buddha within Nepal's educational framework enhances students' academic performance, holistic education, empathy, dignity, and moral principles, as well as their awareness of ethics and a well-rounded curriculum (Gold, 2021). To sum up, integrating Buddha's enlightenment in the context of Nepal's educational system nuances the students' academic excellence, holistic education, compassion, respect, mindfulness, ethics, moral values, and balanced curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

This study applies a qualitative and descriptive approach to explore the integration of Buddhist philosophy in education. Literature review examines primary and secondary sources comprising scholarly research related to cognitive development. For thematic development, first I reviewed primary and secondary sources of articles, books from Google Scholar and ResearchGate. I used thematic coding to develop the recurring themes from scholarly articles (Barun & Clarke, 2006). Reading directed me to generate ideas, practices that are pertinent to the construction of mindfulness, meditation, compassion, empathy, and the challenges of integrating Buddhism into education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Buddha's Wisdom as a Framework for Education

The core of the enlightened one's teachings from Buddha is how can people find cheerfulness in the midst of so much distress and wretchedness? For all the negative emotions in Buddhist teaching, there are currently 84,000 sutras. Buddha was a unique psychotherapist. His therapeutic methods helped millions of people throughout the centuries (Aich, 2015). Buddha tried going without food for a while to see whether that would bring him to enlightenment. Eventually, he discovered it while meditating under a fig tree in Bodh Gaya, and at the age of 35, he attained enlightenment around the 5th century BCE. His enlightenment

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gave rise to the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths. The founder of Buddhist philosophy in this modern era was Buddha. This way of thinking indicates a state of mind inclusive of training, cognition, and discernment in Nepal's education system.

The integration of Buddha's enlightenment into the Nepali educational system will help both teachers and pupils. Pupils grow disinterested in dull, pointless material and repetitive instruction methods. Students will often fall asleep and have tantrums in class as a result of these kinds of problems in the classroom. Students can learn to comprehend and manage their social and mental spheres by integrating the four noble truths such as life is suffering (Duhkha), cause of suffering (Duhkha-samudaya), possible to stop suffering (Duhkha-nirodha), and way to extinguish suffering (Duhkha-nirodha-marga) into their curriculum (Aich, 2015). Both their lack of study awareness and their dislike of textbook reading plague students. A lack of enthusiasm in reading books and a lack of dedication to studying are the issues facing education today. Studying is not something that the majority of students take seriously. They exhibit no signs of focus when studying. Students' attitudes, respect, behavior, thinking, temperament, and habits may change when Buddhist teaching is incorporated into the classroom, and it may also demonstrate their decency in education. Since they are not motivated to work hard, kids would understand their purpose, ambition, aim, and vision if Buddhist practices were introduced into the classroom (Askara et al., 2024; Phan et al., 2025; Tshering, 2021). In classroom, educators can promote the notions of critical thinking, self-reflection, empathy, compassion, and ethical living practices so that students know the concept of four noble truths, and they will cultivate this habit aligning with Piaget's theory, which emphasizes the development of social skills, active learning, and the formation of intellectual growth (Piaget, 2008).

Buddhist Pedagogy, Mindfulness, Classroom Practices

The benefits of meditation on education were also confirmed, as was the more successful instruction. Many people view teaching as a tedious and demanding career. A teacher must also be dedicated, motivated, and practice meditation if they are to make teaching more convenient, valuable, and fruitful via Buddhist teaching. Teaching pedagogy is improved when taught through the lens of Buddhism, where practices like mindfulness, meditation, and compassion are helpful (Hall et al., 2025). Long-term structuring of educational instruction is greatly influenced by the practice of mindfulness and meditation. In teacher training we can also embed the noble Eight-Fold Path (astangika-marga) as advocated by Buddha as a way to extinguish the sufferings: right views, right resolve/aspiration, right speech, right action/conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration (Aich, 2015). Use the biography of the Buddha and his teachings to interestingly illuminate moral ideas. Adopting the teachings of the Buddha's enlightenment to impart values of morality, reverence, and honesty.

The practices in the classroom should incorporate a variety of exercises such as discussions, communication, debates, arguments, and thought sharing since they help to finesse the nature of righteous and value-driven education. In the context of the Buddhist path, ' wisdom ' means the practice of philosophy: analyzing concepts, investigating arguments, considering objections, and the like (Siderits, 2007). Buddhism is a multidimensional phenomenon that seeks to develop imperative reasoning, analytical skills, and a thorough understanding of idealism. Every student of a well-known Buddha should be given a role-playing assignment so they can learn sympathy, consciousness, and making righteous choices when the moment is suitable and appropriate, supporting Piaget's notion of active participation rather than the passive mode of learning among students, and the cultivation of moral perspective (Piaget, 2008).

There are numerous potential benefits of using Buddhist philosophy in the contemporary curricula such empathy, compassion, mindfulness, critical thinking, peaceful environment, holistic development, responsibility, excellence academic performance (Matiz et al., 2025). Likewise, teachers can build a good relationship between students. Truthful speech provides, in the sphere of interpersonal communication, a parallel to wisdom in the sphere of private understanding (Bodhi, 2010). There is a strong connection between wisdom and speaking the truth. Interpersonal skills encompass inherent correlation wisdom that encompasses mental agility, oral communication, capacity to make decisions, awareness of oneself, or cooperation. Being effortlessly truthful assists with self-motivation, convincing, action, and solving issues. Students are able to contrast between useful and useless details to solve problems in class. Furthermore, students are becoming more critical and creative thinkers if they actively construct knowledge through experience and differentiate from relevant sources of information (Piaget, 1972).

A creative thinker will try to address an issue from a different point of view that has not been used before. Empathy and compassion foster academic excellence. Similarly, critical thinking provides different

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opportunities for leadership and responsibility. The tool the Buddha holds out to free the mind from desire is understanding (Bodhi, 2010). This says that knowledge is the main tenet of the emancipation process. The solution to diminishing the force of cravings and opening the door to peace and mental freedom is to overcome attachment. Understanding comes from not remembering itching and having a strong desire in the mind. Buddhist educators establish classroom rules and include their pupils in creating them.

Holistic Development and Ethical Formation

Lessons are more interactive and students easily deal with their problems. Students will be more creative andcritical thinkers in order to solve distinct problems related to their studies. On top of that, teachers also relate the content with real-life based education. Lessons will be more interactive and engaging by incorporating Buddhist education. Samādhi, as wholesome concentration, collects together the ordinarily dispersed and dissipated stream of mental states to induce an inner unification (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2010). A person's sense of stability, lucidity, and cognitive growth are all enhanced by practicing samadhi. While the teacher is teaching in the classroom, the students are not paying attention. In light of this, samadhi may be the answer for helping pupils get a better grasp of the subject matter and broaden their richness of comprehension. Students start cultivating good habits and become sincere as well as honest. Buddhist practice resonates with the sound of avoiding negative things and cultivating a positive state of mind. Each student excels to the full potential in scholastic activities. The development of children's minds, emotions, bodies, and spirits is the main focus of the Buddhist principles. The students are going to be prepared for success in the future with the help Buddhism executes. When Nibbāna is seen, it is realized to be the state of peace, free from the turmoil of becoming (Bodhi, 2010). This claim highlights the importance of nirvana regardless of one's nationality, identity, place of residence, or condition of unrest. A deeper state of perceptions and the sensation of liberty emerge upon reaching nibbana, also known as nirvana.

Moral, Engagement and Respectful Learning Environment

A child's education should be holistic, according to Buddha's teachings. Instructor will grow in skill and self-assurance. As Buddhism is interconnected with life skill education, student-centered learning, and holistic development, it makes sense that Buddhist teachings would be well-represented in educational programs. The integration of discipline, respect, service, trust, caring, etc. is first among the values of Buddhism. With all of their differences, it fosters a respectful learning environment where students may practice sharing respect. Delusion (*moha*) means mental darkness: the thick coat of insensitivity which blocks out clear understanding (Bodhi, 2010). Mental darkness arises from misconceptions, fallacies, and misinterpretations, which obstruct the layer of perception and interpretation. Hence, delusion represents the obstacle to the transmission of knowledge and cognition.

Everyone creates a safe space for others to express their unique emotions and beliefs, which fosters trust, wellbeing, and successful relationships. Buddha's enlightenment is compatible with confidence. Students will therefore have mutual confidence and a sense of integrity. The core tenets of Buddhist philosophy are honesty, loyalty, and responsiveness to the person. Dedication to being sensitive and helpful, as well as to treating people with kindness, compassion, and generosity. Speech can break lives, create enemies, and start wars, or it can give wisdom, heal divisions, and create peace (Bodhi, 2010). Our speech should have the ability to promote empathy, balance, and serenity. We should consider our words carefully before speaking. Afterward, speech is viewed as a potent tool for dividing people within a group. Additionally, a person's speech celebrates their uniqueness and personality. People in a given territory can come together through speech (Hymes, 1974). By employing the Buddhist canons of education, students can also enhance their communication abilities. Buddhist teaching methods are therefore more beneficial and engaging for teachers and students in the educational field when included into contemporary curricula (Nandabodhi, 2025).

Challenges and Implications of Integrating Buddhism into Education

Incorporating Buddha's enlightenment into the Nepali educational system will have a number of effects. Students receiving a Buddhist education may be kept apart from non-Buddhist environments. Students become anxious and polarized as a result. Due to non-religious aspects, spiritual beliefs cannot be included in the most current curricula of Nepal's educational system. Teachers lack the expertise to teach Buddhism; hence they cannot share profound insights in the educational field. It can be difficult to adapt Buddhist religious ideas in various cultural contexts while maintaining respect for differing interpretations. Buddhist principles can be used to abolish practical education, as Nepal's educational system is entirely focused on vocational and technical knowledge. The choice of a spiritual path is closer to marriage: one

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wants a partner for life, one whose companionship will prove as trustworthy and durable as the pole star in the night sky (Bodhi, 2010). The preceding phrase refers to choosing a life mate who will provide care and dedication. On the other hand, a pole star in the night sky guarantees consistent guidance and direction throughout one's lifetime. Long-term success in life requires attributes such as tenacity, sincerity, and resilience. In the same spirit, students ought to be committed to their studies and driven to learn more. The teachings of the Buddha could give rise to various social hierarchies and problems. Because of diverse dogmatic ideas, policy leaders, educators, and parents interpret traditional teaching as conservative practices or prejudiced concepts as compared to modern educational philosophy. Since Nepal is a secular nation, people plan to incite some friction among various religious groups.

Due to life-threatening engagement and analysis, striking a balance between traditional knowledge and modernity is a little more difficult. Buddhism, with its non-theistic framework, grounds its ethics not on the notion of obedience, but on that of harmony (Bodhi, 2010). This assertion is predicated on equilibrium, ethical appraisal, and lofty goals to mitigate life's pain. In Buddhism, true stability is more strongly desired via righteous conduct than through laws, regulations, government, or policies. There will be a shortage of qualified teachers and resources in the educational spectrum. Traditional education integration initiatives run the risk of becoming flimsy and ineffectual in the absence of sufficient training and curriculum development. From the perspective of policy makers, it might prompt resistance questions into the contents of traditional knowledge systems. We have to be prepared and willing to discover what is true even at the cost of our comfort. For real security always lies on the side of truth, not on the side of comfort (Bodhi, 2010). The importance of finding the truth is not that great. Comprehension arises from confronting obstacles and the harsh reality of life's events. Although seeking truth can be a challenging path, in the end it brings illumination on eternal stability.

Buddhist canons aid in spreading positivity, personality upliftment, physical growth, personal development, social development, and intellectual development of educators and students. Like a lake unruffled by any breeze, the concentrated mind is a faithful reflector that mirrors whatever is placed before it exactly as it is (Bodhi, 2010). This exposes the periphery of mental clarity and interference avoidance. The metaphor eliminates the steady mind and worries about cultivating thoughts, sensations, realities, diversions, and other things. When there are no external causes of distraction, we can see things clearly and decide when it's best to act.

CONCLUSION

By incorporating The Eightfold Path of Buddhism, it fosters uniformity, strengths, and encourages a learning environment that caters to the special requirements of late adolescents and supports both their intellectual and personal development. This research provides a holistic framework for education and moral development among students. Buddhist philosophy underpins social, emotional, and ethical living in human beings. Furthermore, self-reflection, problem-solving, and moral nourishment are seen among students in their performance. Students develop cognitive clarity and emotional stability in their learning by practicing the Four Noble Truths. Buddhist canons support the intellectual, social, physical, personal, and uplifting aspects of teacher and student development, as well as optimism. Buddhist philosophy helps to boost effective communication, classroom participation, interpersonal skills, and fosters social cohesion as well. In a similar vein, Buddhist education encourages supportive, respectful, ethical, and reinforces intellectual development in community and nation. However, a lot of barriers, including resource limitations, integration practices, and resistance, must be addressed. Nothing in this world is permanent based on the core Buddhist philosophy. The eight-fold path leads to Nirvana, and everything has a cause for existing. Crucially, the Pali script directs certain messages in Buddhism, such as *Buddham Saranam Gacchami* highlighting the search for knowledge. *Dhamam Sharanam Gacchami* evokes refuge in teachings and *Sangham Sharanam Gacchami* is a refugee in the community. To inspire kids, give them prizes and recognition for their accomplishments, such as certificates, compliments, and public acknowledgment. On the whole, Buddhist education improves analytical thinking, innovative thinking, interpersonal skills, and cognitive capacities. It additionally improves people's refined personalities and distinctive characteristics. Implications would be that curriculum designers may incorporate Buddha teaching in the textbooks to create holistic and inclusive teaching and learning. Future research could examine the impact of Buddha's teachings by including more diverse samples across distinct geographical landscapes.

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