

मुसुःन



Annual Report 2022-23

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Journey of Muskaan

1997 - 1998

In 1997, we began with a focus on integrating marginalised children into formal education. We understood over time that education was just the start of a broader process for lasting change.

1

1998 - 2005

Despite providing support to children transitioning to school, they faced disrespect and discrimination instead of gaining confidence. School experiences varied based on social and economic status, affecting marginalised communities like Pardhis and Gonds who already deal with trauma, violence, financial issues, and limited access to government services impacting their education. Efforts were made to address these challenges.

2

2005 - 2015

We tackled grassroots challenges in education by establishing a school, Jeevan Shiksha Pahal, organising camps for out-of-school children, enhancing school curriculum, providing academic support, and training teachers. In health and sanitation, we focused on the urban poor and denotified tribes. We mapped informal settlements for targeted interventions. Our collaboration with denotified tribes increased after the death of Tinti Bai due to police harassment. We also worked on obtaining caste certificates for migrant adivasi communities.

3

2015 - 2019

We launched planned interventions at a community level for child protection, addressing sexual abuse cases. Educational efforts included milestones for children and formal certificates. We expanded our work on marginalised children's voices in literature.

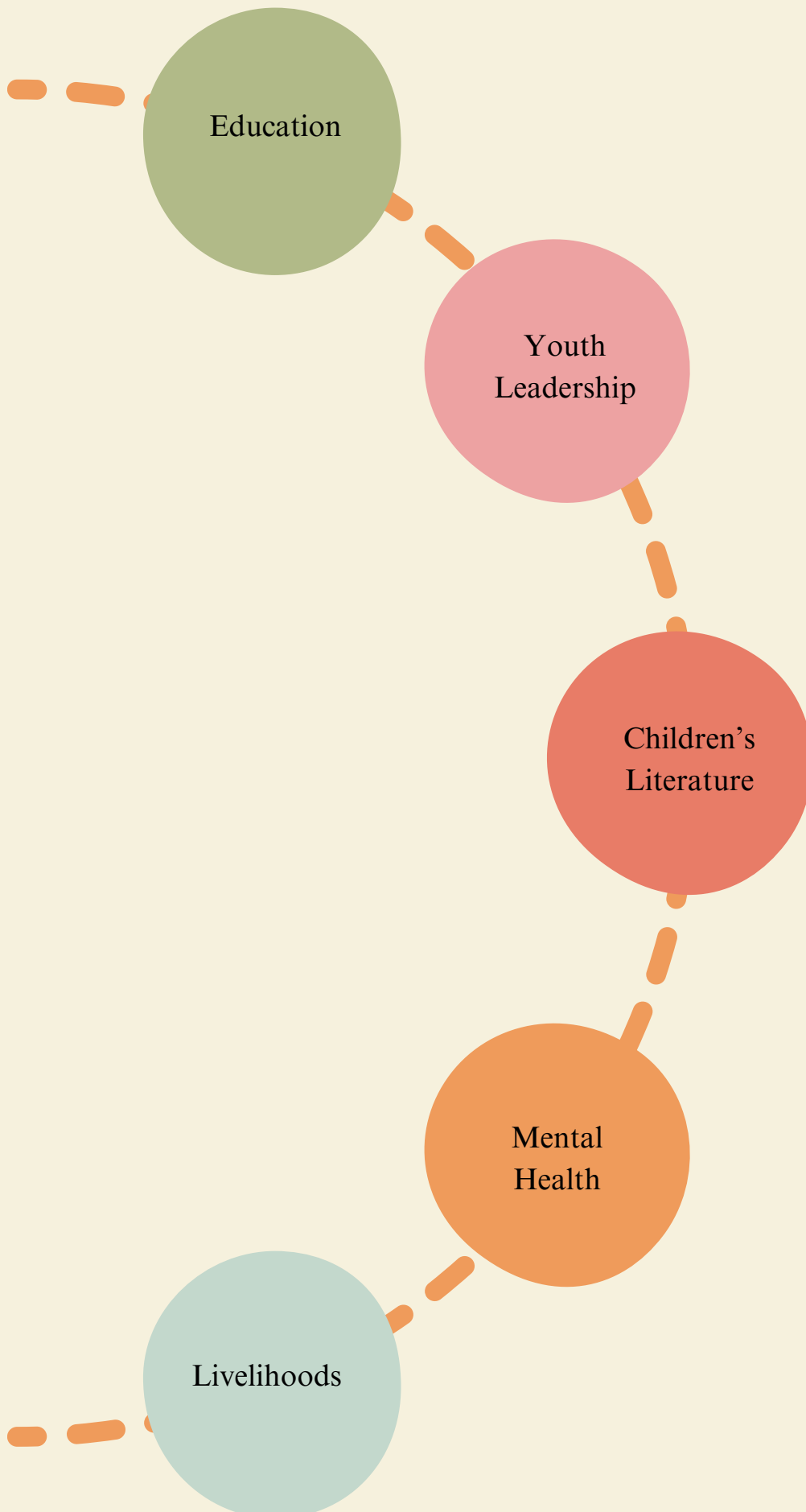
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2019-2023

During COVID, relief work included delivering rations, household needs, and education to communities. Mental health support with a focus on trauma and therapy was provided. Functionary training focused on child protection to enhance children's safety in Bhopal.

5

Areas of Intervention



What we are working towards!

Education Implementation at the Ground Level

We continuously strive to provide quality, relevant, and contextual education to children of marginalised communities. Through our approach which has taken into account the needs of the children and their communities, we have been successful in making this a reality through a package of interventions and adapting ourselves.

We do this by;

- Running our current school
- Having residential educational facilities for children
- Facilitating youth who have dropped out/are studying in Class 9 or so in their education journeys
- Building capacity of community youth leaders
- Starting libraries and learning centers in bastis

Children's Publications

In the past decade, as we saw that there is very little children's literature representing the marginalised communities in our country, we began our foray into this area as we believe that stories affirm the reader's identity and also enable understanding others, thus functioning as mirrors and glasses. Stories we have published depict the lives and culture of the communities we work with, and have primarily been written/told by community members and our students.

Advocacy around Tribal Education

The importance of tribal education spans across education and tribal rights. By integrating indigenous values, valuable perspectives can be gained for today's society. Teaching methods that embrace multiple languages should acknowledge the mother tongue as a beneficial asset for learning other languages. A tribal education initiative should encompass colonisation, history, trauma, literature, nature, and other subjects to enhance self-expression and identity.

We see our work in this direction growing in the form of -

- Documenting classroom practices,
- Publishing around various aspects of Multilingual Pedagogy and Tribal Education
- Building/contributing to existing networks on multilingual pedagogy
- Training teachers
- Organising seminars on these themes to build awareness and energy around this cause
- Designing courses for Universities providing degrees in Education and advocating for their incorporation

What we are working towards!

Field Interventions and Advocacy for the Rights of Denotified Tribal Groups

Our chance engagement with Pardhi children who were apprehended and abused by police while waste-picking has impacted the course of the organisation quite significantly. It has helped us understand the state, marginalisation, the limitations of NGOs, and the possible trajectories of communities into the future. We feel that we have the experience and attitude that is needed to work with these groups and also realise that this work is critically needed to fill in the gaps of other groups and state interventions, with the hope of changing and contributing to the course of 'development' within these groups. We do this through research and report writing, capacity building, and advocacy.

Support for Community-led groups

As more community-led groups evolve through current efforts, we will be taking a back-step in some community efforts and strengthening the groups/organisations such as Majal, Lahar, and more. This would imply primarily training and facilitating networking. Fundraising and vision building with these groups are considered part of the training inputs, and we see ourselves not limited to training but supporting them in this effort where/when needed.

Mental Health Amidst Indigenous Communities

As an outcome of the trauma experienced both directly at the hand of various entities and inter-generational trauma, addictions, suicides, unnatural deaths of other forms, high rates of drop-outs are part of the lives of denotified tribes and many urban poor populations.

To tackle these, we work on-

- Implementing art therapies, including movement therapy, in classrooms and communities
- Organising workshops on parenting, gender, and understanding and reflecting on personal traumas with community members
- Building a base of community mental health workers and curriculum based on practice
- Networking with other groups for expansion of learning and a voice on Mental Health responses in schools and community settings
- Interventions around Violence and Suicide with affected people
- Research including Action Research and thereby sharing of learnings on these issues
- Consolidations of our Learnings into Mental Health Training Programs in other spaces, such as universities

Education



Our School: Jeevan Shiksha Pahal

The Jeevan Shiksha Pahal is an experimental school, an attempt to redefine education. Functioning from the Mitti Ka Ghar, it has become a nurturing space for children of the Gond, Pardhi, Kanjar, Dalit and Muslim communities.

They walk, play, work, talk, examine, care, question, act, sing, create, analyse, sew, express and feel as they live through this space. Children are distributed in groups as per their learning levels, so you may see a 14-year-old studying with a 9-year-old, or any such combination. This has been done to accommodate students who come from extremely difficult circumstances, which sometimes force them out of school. There is fluidity between classes so children may move from one group to the other during the year or sometimes, by choice of their activities.

The school is registered from Class 1 to Class 8, with the State Education Board. Currently, 160 children are enrolled here but the space is open for other children of their communities too, even if they are not formally enrolled here.



Basti Centers

Many children from denotified tribal communities have shared horror stories about casteist discrimination experienced in schooling systems. Children have experienced being called “thieves” or forced to sit separately from the remaining classes amongst other incidents. Additionally, most children also work alongside approaching their studies to help support their families who live in extreme difficulty. This in turn has forced many students out of school. We have established 18 Basti Centers for children belonging to denotified communities to support them in continuing further studies. The centers are run by people belonging to the community who act as role models to students and are sensitive to their context. We aim to use alternate mediums to engage students in learning. Classes include language classes like Hindi or English, and maths amongst others. Classes are conducted regularly focusing on helping children prepare for higher education and their foundational learning.

Education



Library Centers

Currently 14 libraries are working with 805 children in Bastis. Many children in Bastis do not have access to books, especially stories that represent the everyday realities of their communities. In schools, children may have access to 4 or 5 books, which get used throughout the academic year. These books do not have many pictures, are simply black and white, and do not incite the urge to read amongst young children. Reading books is an interesting and alternative medium to introduce topics of many subjects and to support the socio-emotional learning of children. We have curated a collection of books that include books written by students from similar backgrounds, as well as books by Eklavya, Tulika, Pratham Books, and Parag amongst others. Through our libraries, we attempt to make reading fun by conducting activities like read-aloud, and book talks and using theater as a medium to represent the stories that have been read.

Higher Education

One of the bigger challenges is to combat the dropouts in education, especially at the higher levels. At Muskaan, we work with children, adolescents, and young adults at varying levels of education. Beyond classroom education, we work with them to prepare them for their futures, such as through training and guidance for competitive exams.

Our students have flourished beyond the school level and others have joined universities in the past year. 5 of our students have gained admission in Azim Premji University, and have begun their classes.



Youth Leadership



DNT Youth Leadership

As a part of our youth leadership program, we conducted a six-day workshop in December 2022, which saw the participation of Madari, Bawri, Sapera, Kanjar, Pardhi, Bedia, and Bachchda youth from Budhan Theater, Grameen Shiksha Kendra, Jan Sahas, and Muskaan. The program focused on examining the history of denotified tribes and-

- 1) Building a consciousness around oneself - in one's own body and in engagement with others within the family/community and in the world
- 2) Our communities and families - how they work on us
- 3) Building awareness about our common DNT identity and recognizing how it impacts us
- 4) (re) Defining our individual and collective dreams
- 5) Identifying the need for an internal collective leadership in struggles
- 6) Building empathy and solidarity within the group

Stories of discrimination, of theft, of being stigmatised were aplenty in the room. So while there was sharing, there was also learning. We shall continue the leadership journey for this group of youth over the next year.



Gender Research Workshop

There is sparse literature available on the lives of indigenous and minority communities, by people from the community. Gendered perspectives are especially sidelined and ignored. We choose to change that through a series of capacity-building workshops with young girls from different vulnerable groups. We conducted sessions on different modes of research and report writing especially focusing on bringing out gendered based narratives. We then had the girls conduct a study of their own within their own communities. Some of the topics chosen by the girls included;

“pitrasatta ka chashma pehen leeya hai humne”

“pehli baar ladkiyon se hee nahi, ladko se bhi maahwaari ki baat kari”

Youth Leadership



Film Making

We support young adults in pursuing their interests from Muskaan. Many young adults drop out because of an unsupportive school environment, early marriages and pressures to find livelihoods from families. Two such young adults, Narendra Singh Pardhi and Annu Bhagmare, took the courageous step to start their learning journeys again. They were awarded the Green Hub Fellowship which is a one year documentary and photography fellowship, focusing on social change and wildlife documentation. Both Annu and Narendra made a documentary as a part of their fellowship. They are additionally working on an everyday basis to document activities while pursuing their personal interest of documenting the lives of people from their own communities.

We also collaborated with our good friends in Ektaara Collective to encourage more students to explore this upcoming field. A group of 10 Pardhi and Gond youth learnt skills around film-making, photography and editing and also assisted in non-fiction documentaries released by the Ektaara Collective



Theatre

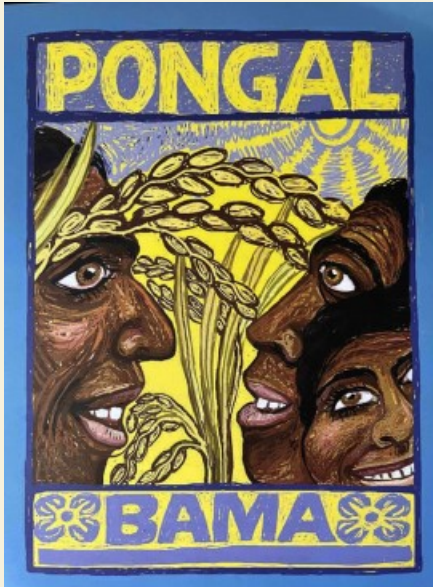
Jeenu and Preeti, two young adults from the Pardhi community travelled to Kolkata where they studied theater of the oppressed with Jana Sanskriti: Center for Theater of the Oppressed. Since, they have worked on several plays questioning social inequities and injustice, inciting reflections from themselves and their spectators. Plays include:

Guthali Ek Ehsas: A titular play exploring the violence and injustices experienced by the trans community.

Gathwala: A suicide prevention play by the Pardhi community was performed in several venues including bastis and Potters Market.

Mehsus: Collaborating with Creacting India, youth from the Pardhi, Kanjar and Gond communities had developed a play on feelings and breaking gender boundaries, and this year the play travelled to North India (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi and Bhopal).

Our Publications

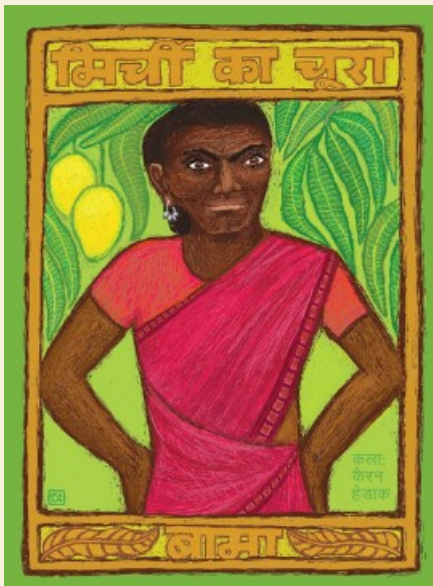


Books open up different worlds, and our publications unit is promoted to fill a gap of bringing lives of marginalised children into the area of children's literature. Our books center around the lives of children, incorporating their everyday experiences and their language. A majority of our stories are written in collaboration with our students. This year has been special for us in Our work.

An endearing tale of warmth and friendship, 'Naram Garam Dosti' is the story of Kalla and Rajdeep who try to escape the cold through difficult circumstances at home. We are happy to share that 'Naram Garam Dosti' was selected as a part of the Parag Honour List, 2023.

In 'Mitti', Madhu Dhurvey takes us into a child's desire to have the water pump for herself for one day.

In our second translation of Bama's stories, 'Mirchi Ka Chooru' Pachayamma fights against those in power with her might and dignity intact. The first story in this set, 'Pongal' received a Runner-up Award in the 8+ category by the Publishing Next Industry Awards.



Mental Health Program

Barefoot Counselling

Communities have been experiencing both direct trauma by various entities such as police and school as well as intergenerational trauma. This is reflected in the deaths by suicide, alcoholism that one sees in the basti. We are attempting to address this through our barefoot counselling program. We are training barefoot counsellors in a range of arts-based therapy practices who are from the communities themselves and hence have an understanding of the context and cultural practices. Our basti counsellors are conducting 4 group sessions and 6 individual sessions a week. The group sessions are supporting young parents and children between the ages of 10 and 14. Girls between the ages of 15 and 20 have become more confident about their body and voicing what they feel.



Capacity Building

As a team, we see everyday cases of violence and trauma. We are also working with children and young adults who have been inflicted with or have witnessed acts of violence that has left their impact. With the help of Dr. Sukriti Kushwaha, Chief Psychologist and Director of Programs at Emancipation India Foundation, we have done training with team members to be able to focus on self-care and sensitise and equip colleagues to be aware of community realities and the impact of trauma on children. Members of our team also participated in a workshop with Vishakha and iCall in December 2022 on Psychosocial Work with Adolescents and Young People. We conducted Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) sessions with 123 children, 56 youth, and 32 team members, which have helped people to find a bit of relaxation, smiles, and reflection time.

Study on Adverse Childhood Experiences

We started a study to understand the impact of the systematic violence experienced by DNT communities. This report will support us in developing programs to address the needs identified amongst DNTs. We have been doing this by collecting detailed life histories, which so far have been taken through interviews of 16 young adults and adolescents from the Pardhi, Nut, Kanjar, and Dafale DNT communities. We are collating the findings of our report and working towards sharing these narratives with various civil society entities and academic bodies with the hope of initiating more dialogue on the mental health of DNTs

Shahri Mazdur Sangathan

We are very proud of the strides our team has taken with respect to livelihoods in the past year. The Shahri Mazdur Sangathan circulates loans to people who seek to start their own enterprises and require a monetary push. In 2022-23, the Sangathan facilitated loans which helped the people achieve financial independence and confidence in their own work.

The Sangathan is also involved in boosting the entrepreneurial spirit of the people. In Rajiv Nagar, 12 young women have started training in a Stitching Centre, hoping to start their own ventures soon.

11 youth studying at school and staying in the hostel have started making soap to earn money for their own expenses.

7 young women who were otherwise involved in scrap picking became involved with the Sangathan and started making diaries. The turnover from the diaries is being used to further support the women and the Sangathan.

The members of the Sangathan work tirelessly to connect with the struggles of marginalised groups. They have conducted readings and discussions on progressive values, and 2 members of the Sangathan have been a part of a constitutional values fellowship, holding trainings on the issue in bastis.



Story of Sita

Sita is a 40-year-old woman living in Gandhi Nagar Sector-3 basti, along with her husband and 5 children. Her husband works as a daily wage labourer, and would get work sometimes, while at other times he would not, due to which the family was struggling. When she learned of Muskaan's livelihood program at a community meeting, she was inspired to sell toys. She got assistance of Rs. 4000 in October 2022 and used the money to buy raw materials for the toys. She has since started to save part of the money she earns from selling toys and has set up an emergency fund as well. Her work is progressing successfully and she has expanded her scale of operations too. Her life has changed for the better and she has now become a source of inspiration in her community too.

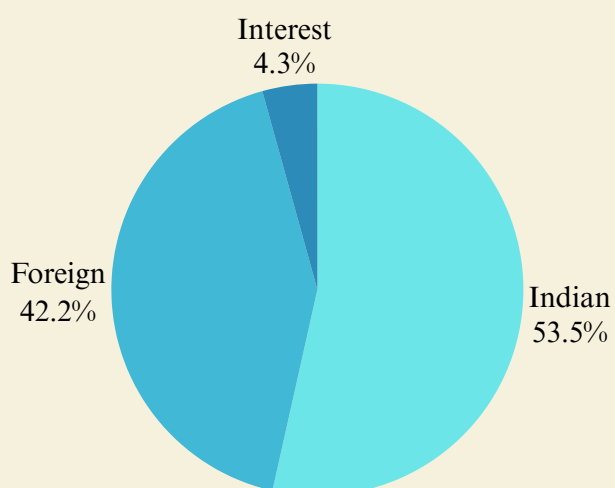
Our Financials

Staff Salaries

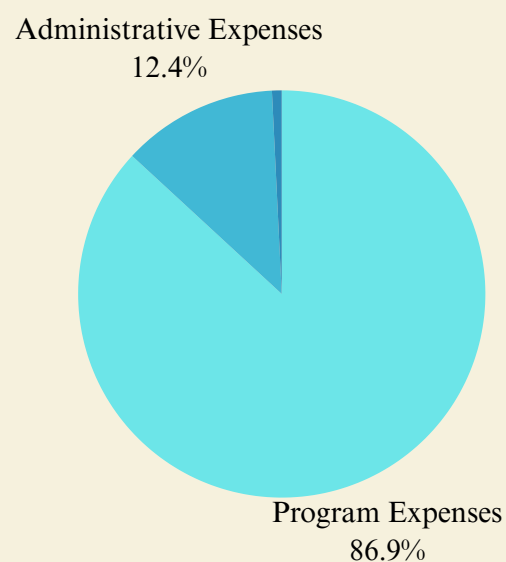
Monthly Slab + Benefits	F	M	T
≥10,000	4	0	4
10,001-15,000	7	1	8
15,001-20,000	5	1	6
20,001-25,000	1	1	2
25,001-30,000	2	1	3
30,001-35,000	0	0	0
35,001-40,000	3	1	4
Total	22	5	27

Figures as noted on 31st March 2023

Income



Expenditure



Our Program Expenses

Program	Expenses (in INR)
School Program Expenses	13,14,766
Outreach Education Program Expenses	11,21,780
Balwadi (Early Childhood) Program Expenses	75,934
Residential Hotel Expenses	11,57,736
Child Protection & Youth Program Expenses	94,48,807
Community Program Expenses	22,02,360
Covid Relief Expenses	1,36,655
Material Development Costs	1,66,565
Organisation Development & Capacity Building	51,164
Administrative Expenses	11,55,981
Property Tax	3,568
Establishment Expenses	8,04,114

Our Institutional Donors

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We are thankful to our donors and friends.

Get in touch!

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