CHAPTER II

SOCIAL FORESTRY-CONCEPTS,
EVOLUTION OF POLICY AND
IMPLEMENTATION PARAMETERS
Introduction

Social forestry involves a total social transformation through forestry related activities with a holistic approach. The programme thus transcends the rituals of mere tree planting. The conceptual clarity about social forestry is quite expedient before the other socio economic dimensions of social forestry are analyzed. Hence the present chapter is devoted to a comprehensive discussion about the conceptual dimensions of social forestry in general and the genesis and evolution of social forestry concepts, policy and implementation parameters. The major aspects discussed in this chapter relate to the following.

- General concepts, definitions and perceptions of various authors, experts and national level organizations and commissions
- The components of social forestry programme as initiated in India
- The evolution of social forestry in the early period before the governmental control and regulation through the Department of Forests in various states was exercised and the evolution of social forest policy during the 19th century and thereafter. A detailed discussion of the Government policies on social forestry in the wake of the recommendations of the National Commission on Agriculture in 1976 and the subsequent policies evolved under 1988 Forest Policy etc has been made.
- The discussion in this chapter has also covered the economic and social benefits of social forestry and the problems associated with the implementation of the programme in the century
The discussion in this chapter provides a good backdrop for understanding the basic concepts, issues and problems concerning social forestry in the Indian context.

Social forestry has been conceived as the science and art of growing trees and/or other vegetation on a land available for the purpose in and outside traditional forest area and managing the existing forest with intimate involvement of the people and more or less integrated with other operations resulting in balanced and complementary land use with a view to provide a wide range of goods and services to the individuals as well as the society. Social forestry has been identified with any programme of tree planting for any organization on any land including farm forestry. It is a programme of social forestry to the extent it meets the needs of the rural people. The term 'social forestry' was coined by Jack Westoby during his inaugural address at the Ninth Commonwealth Forestry Conference held in New Delhi in 1968 to include forestry activities that aim at producing flow of protection and recreating benefits for the community. This concept of Westoby implies that the goal of social forestry should be determined by the amount of investment which the community should make to secure these benefits. In other words the involvement and participation of the community in forestry related activities are essential components of social forestry. Social forestry apart from being a programme of planting trees has a wider connotation. "It is bundle of activities which generate flow of benefits, direct and indirect, to the community by utilizing either unutilized or ill-utilized land. It is not just special technology, rather a process of
socio economic change with continuous participation of local community at all levels of programme implementation. Thus initiation of social forestry requires effective tackling of all the interrelated social, economic and political problems prevailing in the rural society".4

Social forestry has been perceived5 as a concept, a programme and a mission which aims at ensuring/providing ecological economic and social security to the people particularly to the rural masses more so to the tribal and those downtrodden who live below the poverty line, particularly by involving the beneficiaries right from the planning stage to the harvesting stage but not only as wage earners. It envisages use of community lands, individual holdings and other public lands, denuded/degraded lands for producing what the dependent communities need and for environmental purposes. It aims at mixed production of wood, fiber, fodder, grasses, fruits and other raw materials for self consumption and cottage industry and if surplus for sale. Here Government control is minimal though financial and technical support is assured. The profits that accrue after meeting the local demands are to be shared between Government and people.

Perception of ‘Social Forestry’ concept

The discussion on social forestry has led to the coining of a plethora of terms to conceptualize it. Some view that basically social forestry is not different from the traditional forestry. Scientists, agronomists, and even environmentalists have not come to a consensus for the exact definition of social forestry. K.M. Tiwari has tried to explain the term social forestry when he says “what is being practiced as social forestry is not in any way different from the conventional
forestry being practiced well over a century”. He has further mentioned “The terms used for various programmes of extending tree cover to non forestry areas used rather loosely at present are social forestry, community forestry, farm forestry, urban forestry, recreation forestry, environmental forestry, Vanamahotsava, arboriculture, tree farming forest farming, small scale forestry, village wood lots, bio aesthetic plantations, energy plantations, three dimensional forestry tree crops and livestock forestry for 4F(fuel, forage, fodder, fertilizer) agro forestry etc. Very few of these terms have been precisely defined. Community forestry has been defined as any situation which intimately involves local people in a forestry activity. Agro forestry has been defined as a sustainable land management system which increases the yield of the land combines the crops (including the tree crops) and forest plants and/or animals simultaneously or sequentially on the same unit of land and applied management practices that are compatible with the cultural practices of the local population.

Community Forestry is considered as a generic term and other terms are components there of. It is necessary to appreciate that society is a broader term than community and therefore social Forestry is to be treated as a generic term with community forestry as best a synonym. Other terms are to be treated as different species of social forestry which encompasses all types of plantations on land mainly outside the traditional forest areas but may also include the degraded reserve forests which can be managed to meet the day to day requirements of people.
The concept of social forestry should include activities involved in making available tree based produce in the form of firewood leaf fodder, small timber, fruits edible flower and a variety of other materials like bark, gum, resin etc for rural cottage industries within easy reach of people in such way that people feel that they have actively participated in getting it. The emphasis should be on people and hence social forestry may be called forestry of the people, by the people and for the people.

Components of Social Forestry

Implementation of Social Forestry Programme is planned through different types of plantation activities viz

(a) Farm forestry involving plantation of trees on lands and boundaries of the fields of farmers by motivating them to take up such practices.

(b) Community Forestry utilizing village panchayat wasteland, tank foreshore lands or common lands for raising mixed forest plantations or fuel wood plantations depending on the immediate needs of the people fuel wood, timber, fodder and grass or fruit trees etc which are to be utilized by the people. Besides these rising of shelter belts in dry and arid regions may also be taken up in government or community lands.

(c) Strip plantations by planting quick growing trees or road sides canal banks sides or both sides of railway tracks, tank foreshore etc.
(d) Rehabilitation of degraded forests so as to take up the reforestation of such area with primary objective of supplying fuel wood and small timber to the villages in the adjoining villages. Such plantations should provide employment to people in the neighboring villages. The technique of agro-silvi culture should be adopted in such plantation programme to provide employment.

(e) Development of recreational forests for meeting the recreational needs of the people in urban areas.

**Major Characteristic Features of the Social Forestry**

Following are the major characteristic Features of social forestry

1. Involvement of the beneficiaries' right from the planning stage.
2. Satisfaction of the beneficiary based on the consumption goods
3. Community lands are used
4. Mixed production system viz grass, fodder fruits, fiber etc are followed
5. Government control is minimal
6. Finance is contributed though Panchayat as it draws Government subsidies and voluntary contributions etc.

**Gensis of Social Forestry**

The concept of social forestry is traced to the period of Lord Buddha i.e. about 2500 years ago. Lord Buddha gave the message that every good Buddhist should plant one tree and look after it for five years so that it grows to full tree and in this way he should plant 5
trees in his life time. Later Emperor Ashoka is credited to have planted shade trees and fruit bearing trees along the roads in his territory.

Sir D. Brandis the first Inspector General of Forests visualized the role of village forests as early as 1873. He made suggestions to form 'village forests' as 'Fuel and Fodder Reserves' to be managed by the people themselves. The efforts to establish them however did not succeed. In the Indian Forest Act of 1878 a chapter was inserted to provide for the right of the Government to constitute "Village Forests" over any land and reserved forests. This provision however could not become operative due to the impossibility of determining and separating the rights of the community from private rights of Zamindars. In 1886 an attempt was made to amend the land revenue laws in Punjab to read as follows.

"If the majority of land owners desire or the local Government considers it expedient that part of the common waste lands of an estate be managed for production of timber, fuel or fodder, the local Government may proclaim that any part not exceeding one fifth shall be so managed".

Sir Brandis the IGF wrote in 1883 "It must now be distinctly recognized that not only does the provision of timber and fire wood come with the legitimate scope of forest administration in India, but one of the most important duties will, in future, be to increase the supply of cattle fodder, particularly during seasons of draught in the drier districts."
Government of India made a recommendation in 1883 for acquisition of village lands at the rate up to Rs. 2000 per square mile for creation of village forests as a stand by during famine. Towards the end of the 19th century Government of India invited Dr. J.A. Voelcker to study Indian agriculture and suggest improvements. Dr. Voelcker in his report “Improvement of Indian Agriculture” in 1893 while dealing with wood placed highest emphasis on creation of ‘Fuel and Fodder Reserves’. He wrote, “I regard the provisions of fuel as the most potent means of maintaining prosperity, not alone to the cultivators, but to the state itself and as a measure, which the latter, in its own interest, should take up immediately. If wood could be made to take the place of dung for fuel we should soon come to realize that more wood means more manure, that more manure means more crop and more crops an increasing revenue to the state, whilst to the cultivators, it implies more fodder better cattle, and more manure again to ensure the future fertility of the soil”, Dr. Voelcker’s recommendations found place in Government of India’s resolution of Oct 1894. This obviously inaugurated the Indian Forest Policy.

Royal Commission on Agriculture in India of 1928 advocated the creation of village forests. The commission recommended for establishment of two parallel divisions within the state Forest Department. One to be responsible for preservation of forests for climatic and physical protection and also for commercial production forests and the other division for minor forests village wood lands and fodder fuel plantations. However the proposal programme could not be carried out due to vested interest of the Zamindars.
Post Independence Scenario

The Indian Forest Policy of 1894 and the second of 1952 had placed great emphasis on creating new village forests. But little was achieved.

National Commission on Agriculture in 1976 recommended that the widespread adoption of the practice of social forestry aimed at growing and meeting the future fuel wood, fodder and small timber needs of rural communities. The commission stressed the socio economic importance of social forestry in the rural community as well as in the management of forest resources. It was mentioned that by taking up the programme of raising, of trees, grasses and fodder in the farmers' own lands village common wastelands and degraded forests close to habitations, it would be possible to meet the requirement of fuel wood, fodder small timber for rural housing and agricultural implements thorns for fencing etc. It was also stated that at the same time these programmes would remove a serious impediment in the practice of production forestry.

National Commission on Agriculture suggested specific guidelines for the implementation of various models under social forestry. The states while implementing social forestry programme selected one or two of these models for emphasis depending upon various location specific characteristics like land availability, their productivity, pressure of agriculture and the demand of the local people etc. Out of these models, farm forestry, community forestry and strip plantations are taken up inside or close proximity to rural habitats Among the remaining two models rehabilitation of degraded forests is really an
attempt of reforesting forest lands mostly by forest departments and
the recreation forestry was yet to be taken seriously for
implementation. Consequently social forestry programme
implementation in the country has been attempted mainly through the
first three models.

**Objectives of the Social Forestry As Envisaged by NCA**

The following are the major objectives of social forestry as envisaged by
the NCA:

1. Meeting the material requirements of leaf fodder for large and
   small domesticated ruminants belonging to the rural community
2. Meeting the raw material requirements of household, cottage and
   small forest based industries in rural areas
3. generating gainful employment to the rural poor through social
   forestry activities
4. Promoting eco-restoration, reforestation and rehabilitation of
   degraded forest lands especially those located in the vicinity of
   rural house holds.
5. Supplementing the National Forest Policy (1951) objective of
   having 33 percent of land area under the tree cover.
6. Meeting the recreational needs of both urban and rural populace
7. Reducing noise pollution in urban areas and increase the
   aesthetic value of the urban landscapes.
Participants in Social Forestry

Social forestry is a people’s movement for rehabilitation of the degraded ecosystem and to bring about total transformation of the socio economic conditions of the rural India. The following list provides a range of participants:

1. Landless and resource less persons (men and women) in tree planting and related activities for social cause
2. Small farmers to plant trees along farm boundaries and homesteads
3. Large farmers to plant trees on a portion of the farm lands.
4. Panchayats to afforest/reforest community lands
5. Students and teachers to plant trees in the premises of all types of educational institutions.
6. Industrial houses to plant trees into the industrial areas as a part of landscaping
7. Cantonment areas to plant trees to improve aesthetic and recreation as values of the cantonment lands
8. Revenue and other government departments to plant trees on government lands under their custody.
9. Railways to plant trees on the plat form residential areas and other lands belonging to railways
10. Village organizations on suitable areas in and around the village
11. Forest departments on both sides of national and state highways, railways lines, canals and foreshores of reservoirs ponds etc

12. The Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and voluntary organizations (Vos) will be involved as motivators, promoters, facilitators and implementators where feasible.

13. Areas under corporation, municipality, town councils etc should be planted for environmental amelioration and aesthetic values.

**National Forest Policy 1988 and Social Forestry**

The National Forest Policy of 1988 had assigned much significance to social forestry. The strategies enumerated in the policy under “afforestation, social forestry and forms forestry are mentioned here.

i. There is need for a massive need based and time bound programme of afforestation and tree planting, with particular emphasis on fuel wood and fodder development. It is a national imperative to perform this on all degraded and denuded lands whether forest or non forest land.

ii. Encourage the planting of trees along the sides of roads, railways, rivers and streams and canals and other unutilized land. Green belts should be raised on urban/industrial areas as well as in arid tracts.

iii. Village and community lands should be taken up for development of tree crops and fodder resources if such lands
are not required for any other productive purposes. Technical assistance should be given by Government and the revenue raised should be given to Panchayats. In all other cases the revenue should be given to people in order to provide incentives. Vesting ownership of trees to people belonging to weaker sections subject to appropriate regulations.

iv. Land laws should be modified wherever necessary to facilitate and motivate individuals and institutions to undertake tree farming and grow fodder plants, grasses and legumes on their own land. Degraded lands should be made available for this purpose either on lease or on the basis of tree Patta scheme.

The National Forest Policy 1988 thus took important decisions with regard to social forestry in the country the significant guidelines relate to the following aspects.

i. Sharing of revenues accruing from social forestry plantations

ii. Vesting ownership of the trees to weaker sections in lien of their services in nursing, protection and maintaining the plantations.

iii. Amending land laws wherever necessary to facilitate and motivate individuals to take up to social forestry

iv. Making the degraded lands vested with the government/corporate sector available for social forestry on lease or under tree Patta scheme and

v. Making appropriate regulations that should govern the felling of trees of private holding.
Participatory Forest Management – 1990

The ministry of Environment and Forest Govt. of India notified on first June 1990 to introduce the participatory Forest Management of the restored, degraded reserved/protected forest lands where, earlier, even access was prohibited. This was an important watershed in the management under social forestry.

Social Forestry under Jawahar Rojgar Yojana

The objectives of social forestry under Jawahar Rojgar Yojana relate to the benefits accruing to the rural communities and particularly to the rural poor. The J Ry aims at soil and water conservation for the survival of plants under social forestry.

Economic Benefits and Problem Areas of Social Forestry

A proper implementation of social forestry programmes would bring some economic benefits to the people. The following economic benefits are mentioned widely.

1. Employment to the poor in the rural backward areas is ensured by selling ‘people’s’ own forest products to the market and by starting various small scale industries like honey bee, soap and oil manufacturing.

2. The forest products of fuel, fodder and timber would be available to the village community within or near to their villages.

3. A healthy feeling is generated between the foresters and the plantations as trees are planted by the people and for the people.
4. Poor and eroded land which is unfit for agriculture would come under the forest species which give fuel and timber and make the villagers self sufficient.

5. Cash crops could be raised by interspacing of the plant rows. This would help in solving the food and financial problems of the poor villagers.

6. Slightly acidic soils are not suitable for growing crops, hence such lands could be used for planting trees like Leucaena leucocephala which give fuel, fodder, timber and pulp.

7. Tree plantations will slow down the speed of the floods and wind and hence they ensure protection of crops.

8. Social forestry will relieve the pressure on the natural forests which can be maintained for the ecological balance.

The success of the social forestry programme depends on the attitude of the foresters, villagers, politicians and all those involved in the creation maintenance and utilization of natural resources. Rural masses should be motivated and trained for the social forestry programmes.

**Problem Areas of Social Forestry**

There have been criticisms against social forestry by environmentalists and other organizations about the manner in which the programme is being implemented. The criticisms centre round:

- the choice of tree species
- the wisdom of monoculture plantations and
• the nature of actual beneficiaries

1. It has been mentioned in the media that the eucalypt plantations that are being raised in Kolar district of Karnataka state feed only big rayon and paper industries. The high prices paid to some farmers do benefit them but the agriculture labourers have been hard hit because farmers grow trees instead of the traditional food crops. Tree growing is less labour intensive and the agricultural workers are loosing their traditional jobs and food production declines leading to high food prices.

2. More and more farmers are taking up to growing to eucalyptus in Gujarat due to effective extension services of the forest department. It is mentioned that in Bhavanagar district alone some 10000 farmers have converted irrigated agricultural land into eucalypt growing lands. This results in sacrificing good fertile lands fit for food crops to exclusive tree culture because of good market price. This is a dangerous tend. This calla for necessary guidance for arresting this switch over from growing food crops to eucalyptus Farmers should be encouraged to take up to agro forestry. Social forestry should be made supplementary to agricultural programme.

3. Planting of trees in lands called village commons has also attracted criticism. These lands have been in use for grazing. This change over needs to be carefully studied. Instead Silvi pastures will be acceptable to village poor people.
4. The choice of tree species in use under the social forestry programme has also invited criticism. There is an aversion to the use of exotic species for afforestation programmes. The preference seems to be for indigenous species of multi purpose use.

**Problems of Planning and Management of Social Forestry**

Social forestry is not a mere programme of planting of tree. It is an amalgam of activities which generate flow of benefits, direct and indirect to the community by utilizing either unutilized or ill-utilized land. Initiation of social forestry requires effective tackling of all the interrelated social, economic and political problems prevailing in the rural society. This necessitates a comprehensive and relevant policy, administrative and technological framework which will be able to manage the programme effectively. A comprehensive analysis of the over all scenario of planning and management of social forestry is attempted here.

**I. Availability of Land for Social Forestry**

1. Wasteland resources – The availability of land for social forestry is constrained by several factors. Greater chunk of forest land is being encroached for agricultural purposes due to population pressures. For long the common purpose land available in the country side was not considered for raising forestry.

2. Lands believed to be available for social forestry are usually highly degraded. They are characterized as bald and barren hills, laterite waste, and thorny scrubs, eroded Lands devoid of top soil cover,
Developing plantation in such lands become very difficult particularly within the normal range of cost benefit phenomena.

3. Tenurial status: Land tenure arrangements come in the way of social forestry. Adequate security of tenure is to be decided before the plantation can be undertaken.

II. Utilization of Surplus Land

A considerable area of surplus land available under the Land Ceilings Act has been distributed to members of weaker sections to provide them with a means of livelihood. But such lands are in many cases agriculturally marginal and they require heavy investment to make it productive. In many cases such lands are kept vacant such lands can be brought under social forestry. However definite policies have to be formulated to bring such lands under social forestry.

III. Organizational Arrangement

Successful implementation of social forestry requires a sound organization with an inbuilt system of adequate extension methodology. The present traditional forest organization is not likely to serve the purpose as it is primarily meant for protecting and policing the forest. Social forestry can be effectively implemented only with close contact and persuasion of the local people. The personnel involved in social forestry must have adequate training in community dealing. Some actions are initiated in this direction at the state and central Government level However certain crucial aspects like training of social forestry personnel and the mode of institutional intervention in the implementation process are yet to receive attention.
IV. Establishment of Plantation

There are some major operating tasks for raising plantations and social forestry. They relate to nursery raising and preparation, watering, weeding, fertilizations, protection and exploitation. However some crucial decisions are needed to be taken by the local community prior to initiating the above tasks. They relate to:

i. Reaching a common understanding between the local felt needs and national priorities

ii. Deciding an appropriate silvicultural practices and

iii. Mechanism for production and distribution of seedlings.

V. Distribution of Benefits

The success of social forestry is determined by the efficiency with which it can ensure the benefits to various sectors of rural population. However the question of distribution of benefits relate to community forestry and other similar schemes where forest plantations are raised on land not belonging to any individual member of community.

The experience so far gathered in the matter of sharing the benefits particularly in community plantations refers to the fact that programmes which are designed to help the poor must be based on clear enforceable contract agreements which guarantee their rights to share the benefits.

VI. Marketing of Forest Products

Forest Development Corporations in most of the states are responsible for marketing and pricing of forest produce including the
social forest produce. The existing price policies have been criticized in many national forums as it does not reflect the true resource cost of various forest products. The price is heavily tilted in favour of industries. The following steps are needed to improve the position in this direction viz.

i. Rationalizing the price structure of several wood products and timber species of industrial importance.

ii. Extending support price to timber producers under social forestry programme.

iii. Encouraging forest based cottage industries by supplying raw materials as subsidized rates.

There is therefore need for adequate deliberation on the issues relating to decision on appropriate pricing policy and marketing infrastructure and monitoring of marketing activities to safeguard the producers.

**Major Observations**

The following major observations have emerged from the analysis made in the chapter.

1. Social forestry is perceived as a concept, a programme and a mission which aims at ensuring/ providing ecological, economic and social security to the people particularly to the rural masses more so to the tribals and those down trodden who live below the poverty line, particularly by involving the beneficiaries’ right form the planning stage to the harvesting stage.
2. Social forestry envisages the use of community lands, individual holdings and other public lands, denuded/degraded lands for producing what the dependent communities need and for environmental purposes. It aims at mixed production of wood, fiber, fodder, grass, fruits and other raw materials for self consumption and cottage industry and if surplus for sale. Here government control is minimal though financial and technical support is assured.

3. Social forestry is perceived differently and different terms are used interchangeably to define social forestry viz social forestry, community forestry, farm forestry, urban forestry, recreation forestry, environmental forestry, vanamahotsava, arboriculture, tree farming, forest farming small scale forestry, village wood lots, bio aesthetic plantation,/ energy plantations three dimensional forestry, tree crops and livestock forestry for 4F (fuel, forage, fodder, fertilizer) agro forestry etc.

4. Development of social forestry programme is planned through different type of plantation activities viz

1. Farm forestry  2. Community forestry  3. Strip plantations
4. Rehabilitation of degraded forests and 5. Development of recreational forests.

5. Major characteristic features of social forests relate to the following:
   i. Involvement of the beneficiaries right from the planning stage.
ii. Identification of the beneficiary based on the consumption goods

iii. Use of community lands

iv. Mixed production system

v. Limited Government control

vi. Contribution of farmers though Panchayats

6. The concept of social forestry is traced back to the days of Lord Buddha and Mahaveer in the early period. Sir D. Brandis the first Inspector General of Forests Visualized the role for village forests as early as 1873. The Indian Forest Act 1878 provided for village forests Government of India made recommendation in 1883 for acquisition of village lands for creation of village forests. Dr. J.A. Voelekar recommended for creation of “fuel and fodder reserves” at the end of 19th century.

Royal commission on Agriculture in India of 1928 advocated for creation of village forests. The Indian Forest Policy of 1952 laid great emphasis on creating new village forests.

National Committee on Agriculture in 1976 recommended for widespread adoption of social forestry aimed at growing and meeting the future need of fuel wood, fodder and small timber. The commission suggested specific guidelines for implementation of various models under social forestry programme.

7. The participants in the social forestry included landless and resource less persons, small farmers, large farmers, Panchayats, students and teachers, industrial houses, cantonments, railways,
village organizations, forest departments NGOs, corporations, municipal councils and town Panchayats etc.

8. Forest Policy 1988 has assigned much significance to social forestry. Participators Forest Management of 1990 scheme has been notified by the Government of India for the management of restored, degraded, reserved protected forests lands. The Jawhar Rojgar Yojana has emphasized the importance of social forestry.

9. i. The economic benefits of social forestry included employment generation for the rural poor, and starting of small scale industries like bee keeping, soap and oil making.

   ii. The fuel, fodder and timber would be made available to the village community

   iii. Social forestry generated healthy feelings between foresters and the plantations.

   iv. Poor and eroded land which is unfit for agriculture is now put to productive uses.

   v. Cash crops could be raised by interspacing

   vi. Slightly acidic soils are made useful by planting certain plants like Leucaena Leucocephala.

   vii. Tree plantation will slow down the speed of the floods and wind and ensure protection of crops.

   viii. Social forestry will reduce pressure on natural forests

10. The success of the social forestry programme depends on the attitude of the foresters, villager's politicians and all those
involved in the creation maintenance and utilization of natural resources. The rural masses should be motivated and trained for the social forestry programmes.

11. Criticisms have been leveled against the social forestry by environmentalist and other organizations about the manner in which the programme is being implemented. The criticisms centre round three main aspects viz.,

i. the choice of the tree species

ii. the wisdom of monoculture plantations and

iii. the nature of the actual beneficiaries

12. Initiation of social forestry requires effective tackling of all the interrelated social economic and political problems prevailing in the rural society. This necessitates a comprehensive and relevant policy, administrative and technological framework which will be able to manage the programme effectively.

The area of planning and management of social forestry relate to the following

i. Availability of Land for Social Forestry

ii. Utilization of surplus land

iii. Organizational Arrangement

iv. Establishment of plantation

v. Distribution of Benefits and

vi. Marketing of Forest products.
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