

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The Aligarh Movement marks a watershed in the history of modern India. It was this movement which under the leadership of Sir Syed that brought about significant changes in social, economic and political lives of the Muslims in India in particular that may be thought to have left tremendous impact on the overall society and polity of India. A close and objective evaluation of the Aligarh Movement is thus the need of the day in order to identify and find out its impact on the contemporary socio-political conditions of India as also to measure and evaluate its relevance to the present day society and politics.

The fall of Mughal Empire actually started with the failure of Duccan Policy of the Mughals and in particular after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. After that, there was a succession of weak rulers who ruled for a short time. The defeat of Siraj-ud-Daula at the battle of Plassey in 1757 completely weakened the Muslim political power and paved the way for the establishment of British rule in India. The last concerted effort was made by the People of India to oust the British in the First War of Independence which took place in 1857. Its failure, however, resulted in the complete downfall of the Mughal Empire in India and the emergence of the British as the ruling power in this country.

After the First War of Independence in 1857, the whole structure of the Indian relating to society-political, social, economic, educational and culture-changed.

With the establishment of the British rule in India western culture and civilization were also introduced which were viewed as harmful for all Indians without any distinction of caste and creed. The Muslims were the worst sufferers because they were the rulers and they were not willing to accept the supremacy of the west which could damage their language 'Urdu' in particular and cultural in general and did effect their Privileged position. Moreover, Muslims considered and viewed the western culture and civilization with suspicion. They thought that by introducing western language and culture they might be trying to convert the Muslims to Christianity. The presence of a large number of Christian Missionaries not only from England but from other parts of Europe preaching the Christianity in India also increased their suspicion particularly in the event of debates that were held between Christian Missionaries and Muslim Ulema in different parts of India specially-the north. The main controvertial points were on the following :

A new system of preaching was introduced by the missionaries and the missionary schools were started in which the principles and disciplines of the Christian

faith were taught there in the boys who attended the schools were asked various questions as to who were their God, who was their Redeemer ? And the boys had to answer as to the Christian faith. In addition to these the village schools were established to preach the doctrines of Jesus Christ¹.

In addition to these, the British had introduced a new system of education emphasising European History, Western Philosophy and Natural Sciences using the English language as the only medium of instruction. Though they introduced a secular and scientific education based on reason, but the traditional scholars (Ulema) were not satisfied with it because of some religious reasons. First, the English schools did not include religious instructions and secondly, the English schools tended to produce disbelief and corrupt morals and manners. That is why, many Muslims did not send their children to these schools and remained uneducated. In this way, they entered into the modern world as a stagnant and backward community².

After the First War of Independence in 1857, Muslims became the main target of the British who felt that the Muslims were their real enemies and most dangerous rivals. For this reason, the British followed the policy of causing harm to the Muslims and bringing an end to their political

power. They deliberately adopted policies which could bring about the ruin of Muslim community and their intellectual stagnation. All avenues to government services were closed to them. The educational policy was also responsible for the increase of unemployment among Muslims³.

In short, they lost their jobs because of the change in the administration and its policy, they lost advantage of their language, literature and culture because of the introduction of western culture and civilization in India⁴. The Allopathic system of medicine introduced by the British caused great damage to the Tabib, Hakim and Jarrah and others connected with the Arab medicine. Thus affecting the economically privileged position of the Muslims and alienating them to the modern values.

In response to this challenge, Sir Syed attempted to reorient Islamic values by a liberal interpretation of the Holy Quran and he attracted some of the prominent figures who shared his views. With their vigorous support Sir Syed started the Aligarh Movement. He established an institution at Aligarh for imparting modern education to his countrymen in general and Muslims in particular.

2. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

Under the circumstances, the Muslim community was constantly being relegated to the second fiddle losing their command over the society, economy and polity of the state hitherto

almost monopolized by them. Besides the gap in perception of both the Muslims and the British about each other was found to be widening day by day in view of the British policies perceived to be subservient to their colonial interest but detrimental to the interests of the Muslims on the one hand, and the perceived role played by the Muslims in the Mutiny on the other. In order to get rid of the situation of mutual distrust and the cumulative effect of this distrust on the day to day lives of the Muslim community in particular and also to provide respite to the colonial sufferings of the Indians in general, Sir Syed launched the Aligarh Movement in the later half of the nineteenth century. Given this background, the present study seeks to make a modest attempt to explore and find out whether the Aligarh Movement could make any headway in solving the problems of the Muslims that cropped up in the aftermath of the War of Independence of 1857. The study also seeks to explore and diagnose as to whether the Aligarh Movement is still relevant to the present day politics and society of India or not. In fine, the study makes an attempt to make a fresh evaluation of the philosophy of Sir Syed and his Aligarh Movement in the context of the present day society and politics of India.

3. SURVEY OF THE EXISTING LITERATURES

Sir Syed has been one of the most controversial thinkers in India. As such, there has been a galaxy of scholars writing on Sir Syed and his Aligarh Movement taking

different approaches, perspectives and lenses thus making him and his movement more controversial. A number of books, articles, reports, periodicals, letters, magazines etc. have been published by the scholars and the founder himself. These writings contains a number of documents providing factual information on the Movement as well as achievements and failures of the Movement. Besides many other discussions through the different organisations and conferences on the Aligarh Movement came out with new insights. Many of the writings indicate the positive aspects of the Movement while others the negative.

A. A CRITICAL SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS OF Sir Syed.

Sir Syed in his Asar-us-Sanadid⁵ discusses the details of the forts, tombs, mosques, minars etc. of the Delhi and round about Delhi and the people of this place. In his 'Rah-e-Sunnat Wa Radd-e-Biddat'⁶, he gives a true spirit of Islam. It rejects the traditional customs and Un-Islamic practices prevailed in the Muslim society. 'Sharkashi-e-Zila Bijnour'⁷ edited by Dr. Syed Moinul Haque deals with the life and work of Sir Syed and educational and social reforms. In the Original text whcih deals with the history of the Bijnour Rebellion. It contains a valuable information about the revolt of 1857. Sir Syed in his 'Asbab-e-Bagawat-e-Hind'⁸ discusses elaborately the causes of the revolt of 1857 and made the English responsible for it. 'The Loyal Mohammadan of India'⁹ deals with those Muslims who were in favour of the British.

and loyal to them. The main purpose of the paper was to reconcile and minimise the hostility between the Muslims and the English. In his 'Risala Taheqqeq-e-Lafz-e-Nassara',¹⁰ he tries to dispel it in the light of the Quran and Hadith the misconception of the English that the word "Nasara" was used against them in terms of hatredness or bad intention.

In his 'The Scientific Society'¹¹ contains the topics dealing with politics and education. The main objective of it was to unite the English and the Indians. The other topics deal with educational problems and solutions of the Muslims.

In his 'Risala Ahkam Taaam Ahle-Kitab'¹² he discusses that the Muslims can eat with the English and there was no religious bar in it. 'Series of Essays of the Life of Muhammad (PBH)'¹³ Syed Ahmed wrote in response to the book of Sir William Muir 'Life of Mohammed'. He tried to refute the allegations labelled against the character of the Prophet Muhammad by Sir William Muir. In his 'Tazib-ul-Akhlaq'¹⁴ Sir Syed's main objective has been social and moral reforms in the light of western scientific knowledge.

B. AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORKS ON SIR SYED AND OTHER SOCIO-RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL WRITINGS.

Shan Mohammad in his 'The Aligarh Movement': Basic Documents Vol. I¹⁵ and 'Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan'¹⁶ provide the comprehensive documents - of the Scientific

Society, the Foundation of the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College, the Mohammedan Educational Conference, speeches, lectures etc - that shaped the Aligarh Movement. Dr. Shan refutes the notion that Aligarh Movement had been anti-national and unpatriotic and believes that it was a constructive movement, a positive venture, nationalistic in outlook and secular in approach. In his book 'Sir Syed Tarikhee Wa Siyasi Ayene Mein'¹⁷ he deals with the Aligarh Movement with its historical background systematically and tries to refute the allegations labelled against Sir Syed. In his another work 'Sir Syed Ahmad Khan : A Political Biography'¹⁸ he examines the two important questions - what kind of education the Muslims in particular and others in general should take and why Sir Syed prevented them to join the Congress.

Aziz Ahmad in his 'Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment'¹⁹ provides an essential insight into an understanding of Pakistan or of the Muslim Minority in India. In his another work 'Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1964'²⁰ he discusses and traces the growth of modernist and conservative religio-political thought in Indo-Pakistan Islam and compares it with similar developments in modern Islamic thinking elsewhere. In his work 'An Intellectual History of Islam in India'²¹ Aziz Ahmad examines the effect on Indian Islam of its interaction with Hinduism.

Peter Hardy in his 'The Muslim of British India'²²

shows how the interplay of memories of past Muslim supremacy, Islamic religious aspirations and modern Muslim social and economic anxieties with the political needs of the alien ruling power gradually fostered a separate Muslim politics.

Ram Gopal in his 'Indian Muslims - A Political History'²³ and Jayanti Maitra in her 'Muslim Politics in Bengal 1855-1906'²⁴ and Francis Robinson in his 'Separatism Among Indian Muslims'²⁵, Amlendu De in his 'Roots of Separatism in Nineteenth Century Bengal'²⁶, and Abdul Hamid in his 'Muslim Separatism in India : A brief Survey 1858-1947'²⁷ examine the Separatist tendency and trends among the minority community throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

Pradip Kumar Lahiri in 'Bengali Muslims Thought 1818-1947'²⁸ he takes into consideration the role of the political intellectuals of the two major communities as well as of the British Government in the development of Muslim political thought of Bengal.

K.M. Panikkar in 'Common Sense About India'²⁹ he gives a picture of new India, against the background of the national movement and the general revival of her political and social life.

Bipan Chandra in his 'India's Struggle for Independence'³⁰ deals with the abortive revolt of 1857 to the final victory in 1947. It discusses the role of the

important leaders and analyses the role of other significant strands such as the Revolutionary Terrorists, Socialists and Communists and so on.

P.C. Joshi in his edited work 'Rebellion 1857 : A Symposium'³¹ and Surendranath Sen in his '1857'³² and Metcalf³³, Nomani³⁴, Rizvi³⁵, and Majumdar³⁶ deal with the causes, character, and consequences of the 1857 revolt; its impact on the culture of India an analysis of the reaction abroad, both of the press and the public.

Marx-Engels in the book 'The First War of Independence 1857-1859'³⁷ present a profound scientific analysis of the conquest and enslavement of India and notes the variety of forms and methods of British colonial rule and exploitation.

Tara Chand in his 'History of Freedom Movement in India' Vol. I and II³⁸ deals with the socio-political and economic structure of the 18th Century India and the impact of the British Rule on it and the trends of Muslim political thought (1857-1905) has also been discussed.

Seikh Mohammed Ikram in 'Mauje Kausar'³⁹, he examines the important religious, educational and national movements from 1800 AD to the last quarter of the 20th century.

G. Aloysius in 'Nationalism Without a Nation in India'⁴⁰ he evaluates anti-caste, non-Brahmin and other

socio-religious movements in a new light and seeks to place them within mainstream history.

S. Abid Hussain in his 'Hindustani Musalman Ayene Aiyam Mein'⁴¹ examines the past history of Indian Muslims and tries to show as to how they can be useful and beneficial to the Indian society.

Ranmohan Gandhi in his 'Understanding the Muslim Mind'⁴² provides a deeply insightful and comprehensive picture of the Muslim Community in India and Pakistan through the biographical sketches of eight prominent Muslims.

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadivi in his 'Muslims in India'⁴³ deals with the achievements of the Muslim scholars in our country and their contributions to the freedom struggle.

Altaf Hussain Hali in his 'Hayat-e-Javed'⁴⁴ and K.H. Qadiri & David J. Matthews⁴⁵ give a comprehensive study of life, work and activities of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Abdul Haq in 'Syed Ahmad Khan : Halat Wa Afkar'⁴⁶ and Nizami⁴⁷, Ali⁴⁸, Ansari⁴⁹, Haq⁵⁰, Hussain⁵¹, Muhammad(ed)⁵², Naqwee⁵³, Ziaurrahman⁵⁴, Nizami⁵⁵, Malik⁵⁶ and Graham⁵⁷ discuss about the life, work thought and achievement of Sir Syed and throws light on the impact to the society.

Nasim Qureshi in his edited work 'Aligarh Tahreek: Agaz Ta Imroj'⁵⁸, Mazhar Hussain in his 'Aligarh Tehreek:

Samaj Aur Siyasi Mutala⁵⁹ and Ishrat Ali Qureshi in her 'The Aligarh Movement'⁶⁰ deal with all the aspects-social, political, educational and economic - of the Aligarh Movement.

M.S. Jain in his 'Aligarh Movement : Its Origin and Development 1858-1906'⁶¹ dicusses the aims and ideals of the movement and presents its negative aspect mentioning the movement as anti-national and anti-secular.

Gail Minailt in her 'The Khilafat Movement'⁶² examines the cultural and educational movements that arose among the Northern Indian Muslim elite in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and then analyses the Khilafat Movement in detail.

Bashir Ahmad Dar in his 'Religious Thought of Sayyid Ahmad Khan'⁶³ discusses the reinterpretation of religious thought of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and attempts to offer a positive contribution of him in this field.

Narhari Kaviraj in his 'Wahabi and Farazi Rebels of Bengal'⁶⁴ tried to prove that these were not communal outburst but they were in the nature of peasant risings under a religious flag.

B.K. Narayan in his 'Pan-Islamism : Background and Prospects'⁶⁵ gives a few glimpses in to the future and critically examines theological or materialistic interpretation of history of Islam.

Kenneth W. Jones in his 'Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India'⁶⁶ examines and discusses the division between those movements that arose without being influenced by the new colonial world and those that emerged within this world and were led by individuals influenced by western culture.

Asghar Ali Engineer in his 'Rethinking Issues in Islam'⁶⁷ examines the misconceptions and stereotypes regarding Islam in the Muslim Community and the non-Muslim world and wants rethinking or reevaluating of Islam on the part of both the Muslim and the non-Muslims.

Atique Siddiquee in his 'Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: Ek Siyasi Mutala'⁶⁸ throws its light on the political thought and activities of Sir Ahmad Khan and the concept of the word 'nation' has clearly been explained.

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi in his 'Islam and the World'⁶⁹ examines the impact left by Islam on the world of mankind. In his another book 'Muslim Mumalik Mein Islamiyat Aur Magribiyat Ki Kashm Kash'⁷⁰ he compares and examines critically the Islamic Values and Western values.

Shahid Hussain Razzaqui in his 'Afghanistan Ke Pahle Mard-e-Majahid : Syed Jamaluddin Afghani'⁷¹ discussess the life, thought and activities of Syed Jamaluddin Afghani.

Anwar Moazzam in his article 'Sir Syed : Jamaluddin Afghani Ki Nazar Mein'⁷² published in Aligarh Magazine,

gives a clear idea of differences between Sir Syed and Jamaluddin Afghani and also clarifies why Sir Syed did not support pan-Islamism.

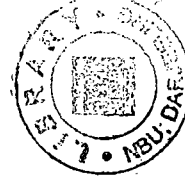
Nafis Bano in her 'Tahzibul-Akhlaq : Tahquiquee was Tanquidee Mutala'⁷³ critically examines the different topics - social, political, religious and educational- of the periodical Tahzib-ul-Akhlaque published by Sir Syed and she also includes the criticism made by its opponents.

Charles Kurzman in his edited work 'Liberal Islam'⁷⁴ provides a valuable introduction to thirty two significant Muslim thinkers for understanding contemporary Muslim thought.

Shan Muhammad in his recent work 'Education and Politics'⁷⁵ deals with the socio-political history of the Aligarh School from its inception to the present day. At the out set, education was the goal to be achieved but later it imbibed the ideals of Nationalism and led the national movement along with Mahatma Gandhi and other nationalists.

Asghar Ali Engineer in 'Indian Muslims'⁷⁶ he deals with the background of revolt 1857 and its impact on the Muslims and their problems. In his another work 'Islam and Muslims'⁷⁷ he discusses the various aspects of Islam and the Problems of Muslims.

Jawaharlala Nehru in his 'Discovery of India'⁷⁸ and 'An Autobiography'⁷⁹ deals Indian history and about his



life respectively but he critically examined in some of the pages in both books about Sir Syed's Aligarh Movement and he supported and appreciated his movement.

Mohammad Ziauddin Ansari in 'Maulana Azad, Sir Syed Aur Aligarh Tahreek'⁸⁰ he deals with the comparative study between Azad and Sir Syed and shows the shortcomings in the thinking of Sir Syed. Rafiudddin Ahmad in 'The Bengal Muslims 1871-1806 : A Quest for Identity'⁸¹ he shows the evolution of mass awareness among the Muslims of Bengal. Iftekhar Alam Khan in 'Sir Syed Aur Scientific Society'⁸² he discusses the origin, development and achievement of it in details.

P.N. Chopra in 'Role of Indian Muslims'⁸³ and Ikram⁸⁴ and Muhammad⁸⁵, they deal with the role of the Muslims in the freedom struggle of India.

Safia Amir in her 'Muslim Nationhood in India'⁸⁶ discusses the concept of nationhood of seven thinkers, Sir Syed is one of them who has been described as layalist.

Ram Gopal in 'How India Struggled for Freedom: A Political History'⁸⁷ and Mehrotra⁸⁸, Wedderburn⁸⁹, Andrews et al⁹⁰, and Azad⁹¹, they systematically deal with the origin and development of the congress and the freedom movement of India.

Mohammad Noman in his 'Modern India'⁹² discusses

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about how the Muslims passed through a great crisis from 1857 to 1906. Zia-ul-Hassan Faruque in his 'The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan'⁹³ systematically discusses and explains the genesis of its opposition to the demand of Indian Muslims for Pakistan and shows a consistency in its anti-British attitude.

S.K. Bhatnagar in 'History of the M A O College'⁹⁴ and Morison in 'The History of the M A O College'⁹⁵, they deal with the history and achievements of the College.

David Lelyveld in 'Aligarh's First Generation'⁹⁶ and Muhammad⁹⁷ and Abdullah⁹⁸, they deal with the role of prominent personalities in the Aligarh Movement. Rafiq Zakaria⁹⁹ and Shan Muhammad¹⁰⁰ in their works examine systematically about the consciousness of the Muslims and their role in the freedom movement in India.

Allama Shaqueel Arshalan in 'Asbab-e-Jawal-e-Ummat'¹⁰¹ systematically discusses the causes for the decline of the Muslim community.

W.W. Hunter in 'Indian Musalmans'¹⁰² examines the role of the Muslims in Wahabi Movement and their attitudes towards the British Government. Wilfered C. Smith¹⁰³ also analyses the Muslim society in details. Metcalf¹⁰⁴ Nadvi¹⁰⁵, Baljon¹⁰⁶ and Badayauni¹⁰⁷ in their works, they discuss about the different religious movements and Sir Syed 's Aligarh Movement comprehensively. Badayauni, in particular, criticises the religious ideas of Sir Syed. K.A. Nizami in 'Secular Tradition at Aligarh Muslim University'¹⁰⁸ shows the secular approach of Sir Syed and secular practices within the campus elaborately.

Kaye¹⁰⁹, Kaye and Malleson,¹¹⁰ Metcalf,¹¹¹ Philips^{111A} Geaves¹¹² and Gahlib¹¹³ in their works, they systematically present the facts about the Revolt of 1857 and also clarify whether 1857 event is a Mutiny or a War of Independence.

Prasad.¹¹⁴ Sharma,¹¹⁵ and Manglori¹¹⁶ in their writings, they discuss about the role of the Muslims in Indian Politics though Manglori's writing gives the picture of Muslim Politics before Indian Independence, 1947.

Nafish Ahmad in his article 'Some Aspects of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Political thought',¹¹⁷ he discusses about the political role of Sir Syed and he presents the logic why he opposed the Indian National Congress.

Spear¹¹⁸ and Sherwani¹¹⁹ in their works, they systematically discuss about the causes for the decline of the Mughals and Thaneshwari in his 'Islamic Tahrik Ka Muja-hid'¹²⁰ he discusses about the role of the Mujahids in the Wahabi Movement.

Desai in his 'Social Background of Indian Nationalism',¹²¹ he shows scientifically the rise of consciousness of the Indian people about nationalism.

Metcalf in his work 'the After math of Revolt',¹²² he does not give a comprehensive history of India from 1857 to 1870. It is rather an analysis of the significance of the Mutiny for the Indian Empire and the people of India in the years that followed. Land settlement policy, social reform, education, the money lender and the position of tenant, the structure of the Government, relation with

the Indian states and the growth of racial sentiment are all examined in turn; and the impact and influence of the Mutiny on the people are assessed in detail.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

However, the review of the literature available on the Aligarh Movement shows that most of the literature are confined to the historical description and development of the Movement. Hardly, there has been any serious research work focussing exclusively on the impact of the Movement and its relevance to the present day society and polity. In fact, most of the scholars studying Sir Syed and the Aligarh Movement appear to contribute with a biased lense and hence, ideologically prejudiced. Thus most of the studies are found to be devoid of objective evaluation of the Movement as also an assessment of the relevance of the Movement and the ideas of its founder to the present day politics and society. Thus, the present study makes an attempt to identify the gap in the chair of knowledge on the Movement and hence, seeks to fulfill that research gap by contributing and enriching the existing body of knowledge on the impact and relevance of the Aligarh Movement. In fact, the present study seeks to provide a fresh insight through an objective assessment of the Aligarh Movement in general and Sir Syed in particular.

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

As the review of literature suggests, there have been a large number of scholarly works on the Aligarh

Movement and the contribution of Sir Syed to liberation and rationality. But these works, in the main, occupy the extreme poles in terms of the theoretical framework. Either they eulogise Sir Syed and his movement as the most outstanding, timely and of immense contemporary relevance while others denounce the movement and Sir Syed as un-Islamic, anti-national and one that was subservient to the interests of British India. Under the circumstances both these frameworks seem to be adequate to provide any objective and comprehensive explanation of the Movement and its impact. Again scarcely one finds any study viewing the movement from the vantage point of the configuration of the society and its character along with dissecting the class character of the movement. As such, the proposed study seeks to undertake the aforesaid theoretical framework to make an in-depth and objective assessment of the nature of the movement and its impact and relevance to the contemporary society as well as to the present day society.

6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

Given the broad objective outlined above the present study seeks to address to the following research questions.

1. What were the long term and immediate reasons that led to the launching of the Aligarh Movement ?
2. What was the relationship between Sir Syed and the Aligarh Movement on the one hand and Wahabism and pan-Islamism, Indian National Congress and the non-Muslims

on the other ?

3. What was the impact of the Aligarh Movement on the contemporary society and polity of India ?

4. What is the relevance of the Aligarh Movement and the ideas of Sir Syed on the present day society and politics in India ?

7. METHODOLOGY.

Given the broad objective of the study and the specific research questions, the present study is an exploratory type research and as such, the specific methodological design appropriate for exploratory research has been followed. As per the requirements of the exploratory research design, the informations were collected through exclusive survey of literature both primary in the form of writings and speeches of Sir Syed and secondly written by scholars on Sir Syed and the Aligarh Movement, Besides, the stay of the present researcher in Aligarh itself for a long time provided the rare opportunity to come into contact with a number of leading authorities on Sir Syed as well as a number of personalities having some informal but a valuable knowledge and experience on Sir Syed and his Aligarh Movement. The experiences of these personalities on Sir Syed were of immense help in answering the research questions and making the research more objective and exhaustive as these experiences stimulated fresh insights on both the Aligarh Movement and

Sir Syed . However, within the broad methodological design of exploratory research, the specific technique that was mostly relied upon was the content analysis. As such, apart from utilising the experiences of a number of personalities on the Aligarh Movement and Sir Syed as well as identifying some significant insight stimulating instances during the researcher's stay at Aligarh, exclusive reliance was on the analysis and interpretation of writings and documents available in various libraries, centres, academics and from personal collections, while analysing and interpreting the contents utmost care was taken to make them objective.

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