

MANAGEMENT CASE

describes a real-life situation faced, a decision or action taken by an individual manager or by an organization at the strategic, functional or operational levels

Sarvodaya Samiti

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KEY WORDS

Marketing

Procurement

Processing

Tie-ups

Prior to an important meeting of the partner organizations of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) scheduled the next morning, Pradip Mohanty, Coordinator of Sarvodaya Samiti, wondered what would be the best course of action for his organization as he was concerned about the large number of honey bee-keepers associated with the Samiti. He knew that his action will have implications for the local honey industry in general and the bee-keepers in specific. He had to decide on the linkages of his organization with KVIC and its presence in different core activities like production, processing, and marketing and therefore suggest suitable ways to allocate the efforts and resources of the organization among these activities depending on the varied strengths of his organization. He was in a dilemma whether the Samiti should be a part of the proposed consortium. According to him, “Though, at present, we are in a comfortable situation, we are looking at various options which can make the future more attractive.”

BACKGROUND

Sarvodaya Samiti, Koraput, is a state-level, non-governmental, non-political organization. Registered in 1970-71 under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, it is committed to the all-round and sustainable development of tribal and other under-privileged communities of the society. Started in 1959 as Narayanapatna Kshetra Samiti, it was renamed as Sarvodaya Samiti after its area of operation got extended to the other parts of the state.

Its present activities are sustainable agriculture, development of khadi and village industries, child and women welfare, building of an educational complex for scheduled tribe girls, consumer welfare, watershed programmes, and rural marketing. As a founder member, Akshaya Mohanty said, “We are one of the few organizations trying to promote rural marketing as one of the viable activities and bring in a change in the living standards of the poor.” According to him, “Though Sarvodaya Samiti is a not-for-profit organization, it has started realizing the greater interest and benefits in keeping the enterprise alive by making it a profitable entity.”

The Samiti had some good marketing experience which encouraged the organization to do marketing of the rural produce. It was one of the few institutions that had been certified by KVIC, Mumbai and the Government of India under the broad category, ‘Development of Khadi and Village Industries.’ It encompassed a range of activities like production of khadi, promotion of bee-keeping, and marketing of honey, turmeric powder, and arrowroot.

Staffing Pattern of the Organization

Akshaya Mohanty, one of the founding members of the Samiti, was leading the organization in the capacity of its Secretary. Under him, Pradip Mohanty functioned as the sole organization Coordinator. He looked after all the programmes of the Samiti in general and marketing activities in specific. Out of a total of 22 employees, six were in charge of the central office and eight were in marketing operations. Three out of these eight members were engaged in the honey processing plant at Bhubaneswar. A technician, whose primary job was to take care of the processing of honey, was heading the processing centre. In addition, he also did the marketing in bulk by negotiating and collecting money from the buyers in time.

Honey Production in Local Economy

The role of honey production in the local economy is negligible with just around 5 per cent of the farmers of the district being engaged in bee-keeping. Pradip Mohanty estimated the income out of honey production and marketing to be approximately 2 per cent of the total income of the district though there was no official estimate. He was bullish about the exploration of marketing potential for different products of the organization. He felt that “among all the activities of the Samiti, honey production, procurement, and marketing were expanding and needed greater attention in terms of time and manpower.” According to him, “Sarvodaya Samiti always gives importance to the production of honey by the farmers as it is an additional income for them without spending much time and energy. Also, rearing of bee colonies only requires some training in the local technique.” A discussion with experts revealed that the local area was suitable for honey production. Koraput is a hilly region with 65 per cent of the geographical area covered by forest. There was plenty of forest honey available which needed better processing and impressive packaging for its marketing. The Samiti had realized the importance of bee-keeping as a livelihood option. As there was not enough farmland, the local people had expressed an interest in taking up bee-keeping.

The Samiti used to give additional support to the farmers by marketing their product with nominal charges for packing and processing. The income from the marketing and processing of honey was also used for the development of bee-keeping and training to the bee-keepers.

Viability of Sarvodaya Samiti

Different products of the Samiti were marketed through six consumer stores, retail outlets, and a distribution network spreading across different parts of the state and outside. The consumer stores were selling khadi products, honey, turmeric, and arrowroot. The Samiti was getting approximately 27 per cent of its revenues from honey and with the growing

importance of honey production in the local economy, Mohanty expected the revenues to further increase in future (Table 1). Though khadi constituted the largest share (64%) of the total revenues of the Samiti, it had lesser margin, i.e., 3 per cent compared to the 8 per cent in honey on the mark up. The popularity of khadi was also on the decline. Therefore, the growing honey business seemed to boost the financial position of the Samiti thus making it viable compensating for the lesser margin in khadi.

Table 1: Sales of Turmeric, Arrowroot, Honey, and Khadi (in Thousand Rupees)

Year		Turmeric	Arrowroot	Honey	Khadi
1968-69	Production	—	—	.90	40.90
	Sales	—	—	.60	210.1
1969-70	Production	—	—	2.10	103.20
	Sales	—	—	3.10	281.50
1989-90	Production	—	—	26.50	—
	Sales	—	—	39.00	—
1991-92	Production	15.50	15.60	47.00	184.90
	Sales	15.70	18.60	53.80	724.50
1992-93	Production	37.70	17.00	109.00	182.20
	Sales	45.10	27.50	148.00	941.70
1995-96	Production	15.90	22.60	162.00	1010.00
	Sales	30.00	48.70	260.00	1149.00
1996-97	Production	14.10	21.60	160.00	596.80
	Sales	31.30	45.00	197.00	1137.80
1998-99	Production	15.90	22.60	211.00	805.80
	Sales	30.00	48.70	336.00	1537.30
1999-2000	Production	51.10	20.50	302.00	1150.90
	Sales	83.90	40.90	476.00	1136.80

Four different factors decided the importance of honey for the Samiti such as ease of procurement, availability of processing facilities, marketing experience, and financial support. There was an abundance of forest honey which could be procured by the Samiti as it had the necessary processing and packaging facilities to make it marketable. The honey marketed by the Samiti was getting very good response from the consumers for its quality

and certification from 'Agmark.' The decision to open a special honey processing centre at Bhubaneswar had perhaps been taken in view of its popularity. The Samiti wanted to establish its product as a quality branded honey in the honey market. It had experience and capability in marketing too. The fourth and one of the most vital factors was the financial support provided by the KVIC and the UNDP. The Samiti had garnered a lot of experience in providing training on bee-keeping, technical help, and supplying equipment from its involvement with organizations like KVIC and Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Koraput, in the past.

MARKETING AND PROCESSING

In 1982, four organizations were involved in different areas of bee-keeping and honey marketing activities. These were Orissa Khadi Board, KVIC, District Industries Centre (DIC), and ITDA, Koraput, providing financial help and technical support while the Samiti was the implementing agency. The Orissa Khadi Board was the only body involved in marketing though it had not taken it up seriously. Due to inconsistencies in procurement and improper processing of honey, the whole process of marketing of honey had not picked up. At the request of the then District Magistrate of Koraput, it entered into marketing of honey apart from its procurement.

Initially, in the seventies, the Samiti used to manually process and sell its honey locally. When it started expanding its markets outside local areas, it applied for an 'Agmark' certification and received the same in 1990. Ever since, it has taken lot of care to sustain the credibility of the product through proper processing and bottling.

Koraput, the head office of the Samiti, was not well connected either to the other parts of the country or to different parts of the state and hence it was difficult to carry out both processing as well as marketing operations from here. The 'Agmark' officials found it inconvenient to visit Koraput for taking the honey samples and giving approval. At times, the Samiti had to wait for months before getting an approval for marketing it. Hence, it took a decision to shift the processing centre from Koraput to Bhubaneswar. Thus, a new processing centre was opened at Bhubaneswar in 1995 which was involved in a host of other activities like procurement, processing, and bottling of honey. Statistics showed a quantum jump in the sales of honey in two phases: one after the 'Agmark' certification in 1990-92 and the other after the shifting of the office to Bhubaneswar in 1995-97 (Table 1).

PROCUREMENT

The procurement of apiary honey from Koraput district was very low compared to that from the other parts of India like West Bengal, Chhatisgarh, and parts of Bihar. Most of the forest honey available in Koraput and adjacent districts (Phulbani is the nearest) were being procured by the traders from adjacent states like Andhra Pradesh (Box 1). They were paying higher procurement prices like Rs 90-100 per kg vis-à-vis Rs 60 per kg paid by the Samiti. The Samiti did not rule out the possibility of paying competitive prices for procurement when they would have a better processing facility at their disposal. It could also procure honey from West Bengal, Chhatisgarh, and parts of Bihar. “This is going to help the farmers of those areas as they are getting lower prices like Rs 40 per kg. But, the transportation cost is likely to increase the cost of procurement,” said Akshaya Mohanty.

Box 1: Some Facts about Honey

Generally honey is of two types – apiary honey and forest honey. Apiary honey is extracted from the bee-keeping boxes produced by the Indian hive bee. Normally, all the branded honey is apiary honey because it is clean and transparent. It is free from foreign materials like pollen, eggs, wax, etc., and, therefore, looks transparent. The forest honey, which is normally collected by crude methods from the beehives of the rock bee, looks turbid due to the presence of the above mentioned materials. Due to its turbidity, forest honey requires extra filtration to make it transparent.

Pradip Mohanty felt that there was a possibility of procurement of more amount of forest (rock bee) honey which was sufficiently available in different parts of Orissa (Box 2). He gave an estimate of his procurement plans; Similipal was approximately 500 km from Koraput whereas the other two possible sources, namely Phulbani and Malkangiri, were less than 200 km away from Koraput. The Samiti hoped to do the marketing of its own procurement which was expected to be around 15 tonne per annum (Table 2).

Box 2: Information on ‘A Mellifera’ Species

A Melliferra , a new variety of Italian bee, is a great hope in a situation where the demand for production is very high. It can give a yield of 30-40 kg honey per box per annum against the average yield of approximately 10 kg from the Indian bee. But, one of the conditions for nurturing this variety is that it needs frequent migration where flowers will be available. This may be one of the areas of concern for the popularization of this breed in case flowers are not available in abundance.

Table 2: Procurement Plans of Rock Bee Honey

Area	Quantity to be Procured Per Annum
Similipal	Eight tonne
Malkangiri, Umerkote, and Nabarangpur	Two tonne
Phulbani	Five tonne

The Samiti was procuring 3-5 tonne of honey per annum from one of its partner cooperative societies named 24 Pargannas Bee-keeper Cooperative Society of West Bengal which was also certified by the KVIC. From Calcutta to Koraput, the transportation cost was Rs 14,000 per truck for 10 tonne of materials. From Koraput to Bhubaneswar, the transportation cost was Rs 8,000 per truck for 10 tonne of materials. The Samiti also procured 3-4 tonne of honey from the nearby coastal areas like Puri and Sakshigopal. The transportation cost for these places was Rs 2,000-3,000. From Koraput, the manually processed honey was transported to Bhubaneswar in 50 kg containers. The transportation charge for each container was Rs 20-30. “To compensate the transportation cost of Rs 10 to 12, we have to hike the retail price of our honey from Rs 135 to Rs 150 (as compared to Dabur it is still cheaper). It can be a viable proposition,” Pradip Mohanty said.

PACKAGING AND BRANDING

The Samiti packaged its honey in glass bottles and did not market it under any special brand name apart from the name ‘Sarvodaya Samiti’ written on the bottle. The label wrapped over the bottles read ‘Apiary’ written in a big font followed by a prominent ‘Honey.’ At the bottom of the bottle, the name and address of the organization, had been given in still smaller

size which Akshaya Mohanty as well as Pradip Mohanty virtually accepted as the brand. The word ‘apiary’ differentiated this honey from ‘forest’ honey.

HONEY MARKET: PRODUCT VARIANTS OF SARVODAYA SAMITI AND ITS COMPETITORS

The Samiti’s share in the honey market is given in Table 3. Its market is divided into two parts. First, the local market comprising Koraput and Jeypore, the only two towns of the district, and the second comprising Bhubaneswar and the market outside. The main competitors of Samiti honey were Dabur honey and Himani Sona Chandi honey. The Samiti’s honey was given the ‘Standard’ grade by ‘Agmark’ whereas it was ‘A’ and ‘Special’ for Dabur honey and Himani Sona Chandi honey respectively.

Table 3: Market Share of Sarvodaya Samiti, Dabur, and Others in Honey Markets of Orissa (Quantity in Tonne)

Markets	Sarvodaya Samiti	Dabur	Others
Koraput area	2	1	00.4
Bhubaneswar and Cuttack	8	38	18.5

The Samiti honey was available in variants of 1 kg, 500 gm, 200 gm, and 100 gm bottles whereas Dabur honey was also available in 50 gm and 25 gm bottles. The 50gm and 25gm bottles of Dabur honey were available at a price of Rs 15 and Rs 10 (Table 4). Though the Samiti had also made available its honey in 50 gm bottles, it did not generate enough revenue and hence was withdrawn. The past sales record showed that the entire procured amount had been sold out. According to the retailers of the local bakery and the grocery stores, “The reason for lesser sale of 50 gm bottles is the popularity of the brand which resulted in more volume of sales for the bigger sized bottles of Sarvodaya Samiti. People are confident of the quality of the Sarvodaya Samiti honey and hence they purchase in bigger volumes instead of sizes like 50gm and 25 gm.” The retailers were convinced that brands other than the Sarvodaya Samiti were being mostly used for medicinal purpose whereas Sarvodaya Samiti honey was a regular and necessary item. According to a grocery shop owner, “Dabur’s and Himani’s honey basically requires regular ‘push’ from the retailers whereas Samiti honey does not require ‘push’ for its sales.” To quote the owner of a bakery, “The honey of Sarvodaya Samiti is the first choice of consumers and the demand

is more for bigger volumes which we often fail to meet due to insufficient supply.” Due to the unavailability of the Samiti honey, consumers were looking for other brands like Dabur and Himani and especially smaller sized bottles like 50 gm.

Table 4: Comparative Prices of Different Brands (in Rupees)

Size	Sarvodaya	Dabur	Charak	Jhandu	Baidyanath	Himani
1 kg	130.00	180.00	—	—	—	—
500gm	72.00	94.00	—	—	—	—
200gm	33.00	52.00	43.00	42.00	47.00	52
100gm	17.00	27.00	—	24.00	—	27

The Bhubaneswar office marketed the bottled honey mainly through the cooperative stores of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. Initially, the Ayurvedic medicine stores were also included as part of the retail outlets followed by allopathic medicine stores and grocery stores. The margin given to all the retailers at present is the same at 15 per cent on the selling price. The Samiti had a plan to add more medicine stores to its list of retailers. Considering the big difference in the existing pricing of different brands, the Samiti was planning to increase its market penetration with a better price-value realization. It was looking at the possibilities of hiking its prices slightly though it was contingent upon many factors like its relationship with KVIC, etc.

Promotional Activities

The Samiti participated in some *melas* and fairs like the *Gramashree Mela* in Berhampur organized by the Council for Advancement of People’s Action and Rural Technology (CAPART). It also participated in the *Bali Jatra* held at Cuttack, one of the biggest *melas* of India. It made sincere efforts to participate in all district level *melas*, fairs, and exhibitions. Pradip Mohanty admitted that there was a lot of potential in rural markets and that the Samiti was trying to benefit from it.

POLICY/GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

The Orissa State Government was charging a sales tax of 12 per cent on the marketing of honey by the Samiti. The Samiti was not happy about the tax imposed on its honey and its categorization as a consumer good as it meant an increase in the retail price of honey. According to the Samiti’s accountant, Orissa was the only state where the products certified by KVIC and DIC were taxable. “This sales tax is putting us in a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis other honey producers and marketers under the KVIC banner in other parts of

India,” he said. The Samiti was fighting against this imposition in the Orissa High Court for waiving it off or reducing it to approximately 4 per cent.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

Pradip Mohanty was aware that the Samiti honey was a good brand. That was reflected from its quick sales. As compared to its competitors, the Samiti looked very small for the reason that it was unable to meet the demand of the market because of its limited supply. Without an efficient processing facility, the Samiti had not tried to procure apiary honey in big volume, let alone forest honey. Therefore, to gain a stronger foothold in the market, it wanted to penetrate into the existing and new markets and generate more sales volume for its brand of honey. With the imposition of sales tax, it was finding it difficult to continue with the current prices as there was very less margin. However, as an organization working under the KVIC banner, it could not change the prices as pricing had to be decided by the KVIC. Therefore, the Samiti had to take a strategic decision whether it would continue under the KVIC banner. This decision would have wider implications as without the KVIC banner, the marketing of the entire product range of the Samiti will be deprived of the distribution network of KVIC. As a matter of fact, KVIC operates all over India and has partner local organizations in different parts of the country which are registered with it.

It was at this juncture that the scene for honey marketing by the Samiti had been recast with a proposed consortium. The three parties likely to be part of the tripartite agreement were KVIC, ORMAS, and Sarvodaya Samiti. Under this arrangement, ORMAS working under the DRDA, Koraput, would find ways to increase the productivity of honey in the district with necessary support from KVIC and the Samiti and DRDA would provide financial support to the producers (bee-keepers) through the Swarna Jayanti Swarojgar Yojna (SGSY) to encourage bee-keeping activity. As per the CEO, ORMAS’ estimate, some financially supported Self Help Groups (SHGs) of producers would do the targeted procurement (Table 5).

Table 5: Proposed Estimate by ORMAS

Item	Quantity
No of SHGs to be formed	30 (in number)
No of members in each of the SHGs	10-15 (in number)
Honey bee boxes per member	10 (in number)
Yield per box per annum	10 (in kg)
Total yield per annum	30 (in tonne)

According to Akshaya Mohanty, “Though all the funding will be regulated by the KVIC, Sarvodaya Samiti will benefit due to its long-standing relationship with KVIC.” KVIC was to channelize the original funding of UNDP for plant installation. The honey procured by both ORMAS and the Samiti would be processed at the plant installed in the premises of the Samiti and later marketed by ORMAS. The new machine to be installed had a capacity of one quintal per day. Pradip Mohanty was very optimistic about the popularization of a new higher yielding species of honey bee called *A Mellifera* and his estimated forest honey procurement plan (Box 2). As per his estimates, approximately 24 tonnes of honey could be procured to run the plant at 80 per cent of its capacity.

The cost of installation of one such processing plant with a capacity of one quintal per day had been estimated to be Rs .45 million. With an escalation in the procurement, there was a plan to set up a bigger plant with a capacity of three quintal per day at a cost of Rs .65 million. It had been agreed upon that the procurement price would be Rs 60 per litre irrespective of the parties involved in procurement. In the agreement, there was a clause which would take care of the remuneration to the Samiti for doing the processing. So, the Samiti had to decide whether it should do only procurement and processing and let ORMAS do the marketing. However, Pradip Mohanty was reluctant to kill his brand by withdrawing from marketing after years of nurturing it.

Pradip Mohanty was in a dilemma whether the Samiti should be a part of the consortium. As per the proposal, though the Samiti could continue with the procurement, its primary responsibility would be to process and bottle the honey for ORMAS. But, Pradip Mohanty feared that if he accepted the proposal, his growing marketing operations might suffer as most of the Samiti’s resources would be devoted to procurement and processing. At the same time, he was aware that being a part of this agreement, he could gain technological advantage with an advanced processing plant which would help his revenues grow.

The Samiti was willing to work with all the stakeholders for the development of bee-keeping in the district with a hope that this option would be sustainable and appreciable. Pradip Mohanty wondered if he should follow the path of aggressive marketing using options like coming out of the KVIC network and formulate a new pricing strategy or be a part of the mission for increasing the honey productivity of the district and earn a decent revenue by only processing it. After deliberating over the issues, he identified several alternatives as the possible course of action for the organization.

Alternative 1: Sarvodaya Samiti being Part of the Consortium

By signing the tripartite agreement, the Samiti would have the responsibility of processing the honey procured by ORMAS while ORMAS would market it. There were two options for the Samiti: i) take up the processing activity and withdraw from marketing completely ii) do processing for ORMAS while also processing and marketing its honey procured independently.

Under the first option, ORMAS would pay the Samiti a processing fee of Rs 26 per litre. It was estimated that there would be a miscellaneous expenditure of Rs 20 per litre incurred by the Samiti. ORMAS was planning to sell this bottled honey at 5 per cent margin to a food company. Akshaya Mohanty was of the view that even if ORMAS did all the procurement and marketing, the Samiti could boost its position by leveraging its proven strength in processing and packaging honey, maintaining the quality, and getting the fixed processing charges. But, by doing only processing, the Samiti ran the risk of killing its own brand as it will not be involved in direct marketing.

Under the second option, the Samiti could be a part of the consortium, taking up processing for ORMAS and marketing of its own procured honey simultaneously. This alternative would utilize the marketing as well as the processing strengths of the Samiti which as a part of the consortium could process a limited quantity of honey procured by it and thereafter market the same under the brand name 'Sarvodaya Samiti.' Thus, the Samiti could use the remaining capacity of the plant after the use by ORMAS. The marketing of Sarvodaya Samiti honey, however, would be contingent on the capacity utilization of the processing plant by ORMAS. The question here is if the Samiti did not get any space for processing of its own honey and was compelled virtually to kill its fast moving brand in the process. Though the possibility of installing a processing plant with a higher capacity of three quintals per day could give the Samiti some space to harness the potential of its brand, it needed further negotiation with both UNDP and KVIC and the total procurement had to be nearly three times that of the present procurement to run the plant efficiently.

Alternative 2: Sarvodaya Samiti not being Part of the Consortium

If the Samiti chooses not to be a part of the consortium, the plan of installation of the modern processing plant in its premise would stand cancelled and the Samiti would have to set up its own processing plant by making the required investment. Due to delay in testing and certification by 'Agmark,' the Samiti was planning to set up its own 'Agmark' unit in the

premise of the organization to speed up the process of testing, approving, and marketing honey. Can the Samiti justify the investment for its exclusive use? Though this proposition promised an assured marketing growth for the Samiti, there was a perceived threat that in the absence of ORMAS, the greater interest of the local honey bee-keepers might get jeopardized.

Alternative 3: Severing Linkage with KVIC

Pradip Mohanty also evaluated the option of coming out of the KVIC network and establish the Samiti as an independent marketing entity. As mentioned earlier, the imposition of 12 per cent sales tax by classifying the Samiti's honey as a consumer good by the Government of Orissa had made marketing difficult for the Samiti. It was creating constraints in pricing. The Samiti had the choice of selling through the food companies similar to the plan of ORMAS. Can the severing of ties with KVIC benefit the bee-keepers in the long run? Can the Samiti develop such a national network like that of KVIC to sustain as an independent marketing entity? Will this severing of linkage have an impact on the marketing of its other products which are being marketed through the existing distribution channel of KVIC? These were the issues that need to be tackled before taking a decision.

Alternative 4: OMFED Proposal

There was a proposal from the Orissa State Cooperative Milk Producer's Federation Limited (OMFED) to purchase the Samiti's processed and bottled honey and market it under the OMFED brand name. It was being considered by the Samiti as a good proposition. In this proposal, the Samiti would process and pack honey for OMFED at Rs 26 per kg. OMFED was interested to enter into a contract with the Samiti which would ensure sustainable supply of the bottled honey on a long-term basis. Looking at the proposed plans of procurement, Pradip Mohanty was to decide if the Samiti would be interested in such a contract and be able to cater to the demand continually as this required a fully devoted processing plant. This proposal, however, ensured a market for the bee-keepers. Otherwise, there was not much prospect for the Samiti as a marketing entity.

Alternative 5: Tie-up with Both ORMAS and OMFED

In line with the vision and the purpose of existence of the organization, the Samiti can decide to be a part of all such ventures described in the earlier proposals. As ORMAS and OMFED both aim at helping the farmers and providing them a platform for market linkage, it might be

worthwhile for the Samiti to accept both the offers. The linkage might prove to be beneficial to all the parties in the long run but may hamper the efforts of the Samiti to establish its brand in food and beverages market. If the Samiti limits itself to processing of honey, it may find it difficult to start all the marketing activities from the scratch if both ORMAS and OMFED withdrew from the market. Pradip Mohanty was to take a decision whether to be a part of all the agreements and on the volume of business with ORMAS and OMFED. He wondered whether the Samiti had enough in-house capacity to honour all the agreements.

According to Pradip Mohanty, “We are working in an NGO and our prime objective is to help the farmers as well as the consumers. We want to develop the bee-keeping industry in Orissa so that the production of honey increases with more number of farmers taking up bee-keeping along with other activities. At the same time, we want to get good response from the market for our products.”

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