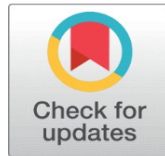


WOMEN 2019'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN INDIA

Anjuma Ahmed Nargis ¹

¹ MA in Political Science, Village Kalgachia, District -Barpeta, Assam Pin-781319



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ABSTRACT

In the same respect, while women are not very active participants in state and national election processes in India, they have registered a tremendous and progressive vote bank. This realisation of women that, although they are confined to the private sphere and continue to be politically irrelevant in their candidacy, are becoming politically active in voting booths is a significant issue in Indian democracy. The 2019 elections demonstrated the impressive ability of women voters who, for several years, have become the numerators of those who voted in many regions of the country. This has led to the numerous approach adjustments of political parties, particularly the BJP and the INC, in their electioneering activities to embrace women's issues and to lean. Measures such as setting aside seats for women in the local government have over time fostered the pipeline to the current increases in women's political involvement at the higher states. However, the interesting fact is the difference between the number of women who voted and those who are headed into the Parliament. Thus, studying its contribution toward focusing on the relations of increasing female participation in elections, changes in rationales and prospects, as well as the general context of Indian democracy, is crucial.

Keywords: Female Representation, Women Voters, Indian Elections, Political Candidacy, Voter Turnout, Gender Parity, Electoral Participation, Reserved Constituencies, Social Policy, Political Empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

The position of women in the elections has received a big boost in the political system in the seven decades of India's independence. Though there are cases where women like Indira Gandhi and Sushma Swaraj moved to powerful posts, there is less representation of women in India's parliamentary and state elections. However, an essential shift has emerged: Women have been quite active as voters in previous and current elections. More women have continued to vote throughout several states than men, which means the democratic process has changed. Such a change is not only owing to a shift in demographics but could also translate into social pressure on policymakers to change so as to respond to women's needs and demands for justice.

Still, females continue to face hurdles when it comes to vying for the positions in elections that they have increasingly participated in. It also observes new and persisting barriers, including inadequate resources, exclusion from essential political networks, and other social obstacles. However, there is a slow improvement in the percentage of SC/STs elected to the assembly in constituencies meant for them only. These trends highlight a paradox: though women are voting even in a more significant number, their representation in the form of the elected arenas has increased less. For this reason, there is a need to look at how increasing numbers of women voters affect election campaign approaches and policy-making in the Indian context. The scenarios for the 2019 general elections and the subsequent future demonstrate that

the instrumentalization of women as voters may transform Indian politics and its possibilities for the sake of new representation and empowerment.

2. PROMINENT WOMEN IN INDIAN POLITICS

When India and the United States convened their first 2+2 summit in September 2018, the composition of The representatives at the press conference held in New Delhi brought out this contrast. For the United States, two senior males appeared: Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. In stark contrast, India was represented by two experienced women: In the Indian government's current lineup, they have External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Minister of Defense Nirmala Sitharaman. The two women occupied some of the important posts in the PM Narendra Modi-led government, which shows the rise of women's leadership in India.

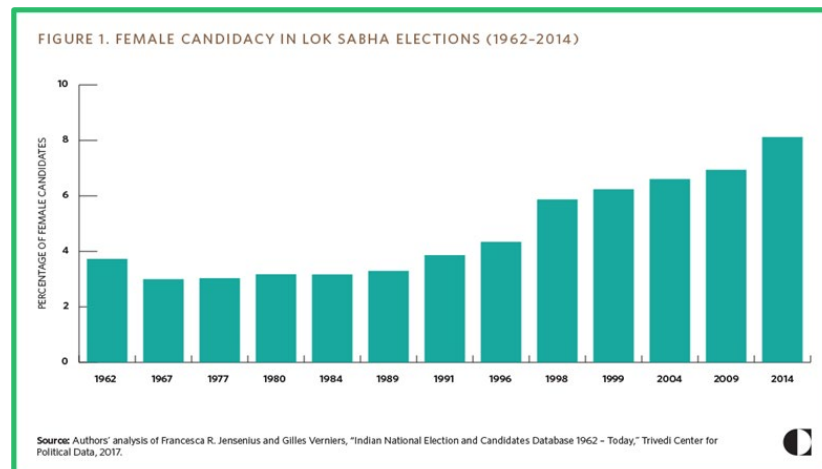
Men have held great power in India's political framework, but so have women. The only daughter of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, became Prime Minister in 1966 and again saw continuous service for a total of 15 years in the Prime Ministership of India. Currently, the most influential state-level female politicians include Mayawati, the Bahujan Samaj Party leader, and Mamata Banerjee, the chief minister of West Bengal. Furthermore, until December 2017, the position of the president of the Indian National Congress, which is currently India's major opposition party, was Sonia Gandhi, Indira's daughter-in-law. These examples show that notwithstanding, India has had outstanding women leaders, women's political representation in the country is not vibrant.

3. UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN POLITICS

Although the Indian political sphere has many successful women leaders, women's political representation continues to lag. While shaping the composition of the United States population, approximately 50 per cent of its citizens are women, and yet the opportunities for women to participate in the political processes of the states and the United States as a whole are rather limited. For instance, in the 2014 general elections, only 121 women, or 9.1 per cent of total contesting candidates for the Lok Sabha, marked a record high of women contestants but at the same time, global slow movers in terms of women's proportion in parliamentary seats. And till 1996, the representation stayed weak; from 1962 to 1996, female candidates never comprised more than 5 per cent. A very slow upward movement started in 1998 but has experienced prolonged growth.

4. THE RISE OF FEMALE VOTER PARTICIPATION

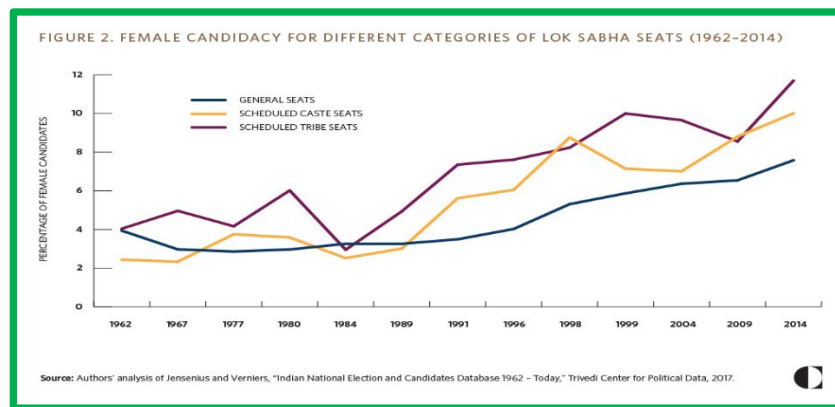
Even though women's representation as political candidates is still tiny, the effort towards female voting has improved. For instance, most states have registered high female voting statistics in the recent past a; this is in a society that is still conservative and dominated by male chauvinism. This trend of higher voter turnouts by women is the cause of significant concern for the Indian elections and this forms the basis of how major political wars are strategized and fought, particularly during the recent general elections of 2019. The increase in the number of women in the electoral lists is evidence of increased female political activism, even though numbers of female candidates is still limited.



5. INCREASED FEMALE CANDIDACY IN RESERVED CONSTITUENCIES

The proposed increase in women's candidacy in India has been most evident in the elections to the reserved constituencies. According to the Indian Constitution, more than one-fourth of the state and national legislative seats are reserved for persons belonging to the so-called backward classes. The minority groups are the Scheduled Caste, commonly referred to as Dalits, who are at the bottom of the Hindu social order and the Scheduled Tribe, also known as Adivasis, who are the indigenous people of India.

The rationale behind these reserved seats is that the government wants to eradicate discrimination these people have suffered and bring in improved political representation. It has also been seen over time that this system of quotas has been beneficial in increasing the representation of women in politics. In the past few years, more women have fought the elections in these SC/ST reserved seats than in general elections where such constraints are placed on candidates. Some statistics collected from 1980 to 2014 show that about 7% of women candidates in the reserved constituencies, while only 4.8 % of women candidates in the unreserved constituencies. Recent movements may support the opinion that the quota system not only assists the unidentified communities but also creates chances for women in these groups to engage in the political process more vigorously.



6. FACTORS BEHIND CONCENTRATED FEMALE CANDIDACY IN RESERVED CONSTITUENCIES

Thus, it is imperative to decode the plethora of reasons that this study has identified as determining the high density of female aspirant in the reserved constituency. Political scientist Francesca Jensenius on the Political party system and identity politics in India in showing that many of these political parties consider politicians who belong to the caste and tribal seat to be more easily replaced than those in the general seat. This mirrors the structure of parties, imitating the presence of hierarchical social divisions within their existent structures. The distribution of special seats in the 1990s to increase the take up of females in Parliament saw many political parties promote women by shifting the less powerful male politicians in these constituencies, hence increasing the status of women without changing the power relations. Before some of the coming into force of women's pressure for reserved seats in the parliamentary elections in late 1980s, there are no significant differences in the female candidacy between the reserved and unreserved seat. A third factor that is attributed to acting as an obstacle towards increased female candidacy is the issue of finance. Elections in India are expensive, and let's take the example of affidavits submitted in the parliamentary elections of 2004 and 2009. It was quite evident that the wealth of male candidates is much higher; in fact, they gross at least three times more than the median of the female candidates. This financial disparity reduces Women's prospects of raising cash for campaigns, and since reserved constituencies may cost less in terms of elections, they are more viable for ladies.

7. VARIATIONS IN FEMALE CANDIDACY BY STATE AND SOCIAL FACTORS

This relative representation also has some unexpected regional trends depending on the state. When aspiring for election, women choose constituencies with a higher male population than female, not where the female/male ratio is equal to or higher than males. As the study by Economists Mudit Kapoor and Shamika Ravi showed, Kerala is not an exception. The reasons for such a pattern}} superseding the prior expectations that more female candidacies appear in

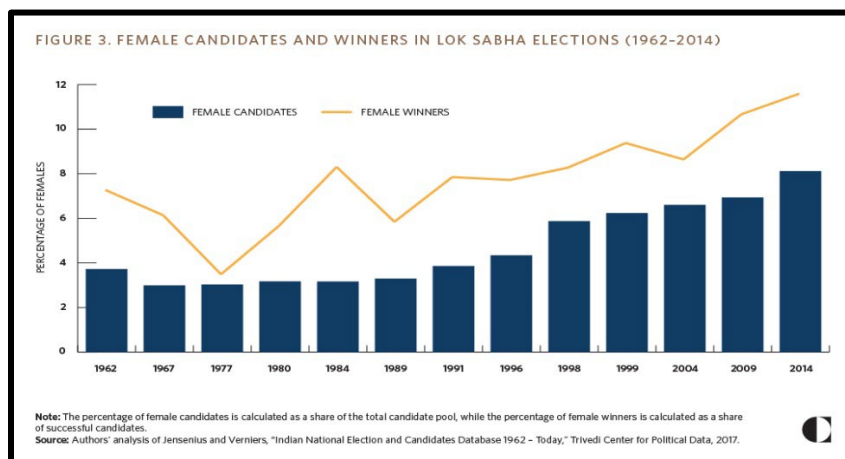
the states where females constitute the larger part of the population, according to Kapoor and Ravi, are connected with social stratification. It was suggestively argued that, in the states where women seem to have higher levels of social parity, there might be lesser perceived demand on them to run for political office and bear the financial burden of campaigns. On the other hand, in states where women still have the perception that they lack the rightful representation, to engage in the political processes means engaging in the only available avenue through which change can be chanted.

8. PATTERNS AND IMPLICATIONS OF FEMALE CANDIDACY GROWTH

They have found that there has been little increase in actual representation at higher political levels but some patterns emerged. Women tend to be active in those electoral events in states and constituencies where women are marginalized. To quench representation demands in the public sphere, political parties have increased the number of female candidates in restricted zones for minorities but they retain private authoritative power. These patterns partially signify that gendered micrology, dominant social norms, and political tactics in the interplay define the degree of female engagement in Indian elections.

9. INDIAN WOMEN AS REPRESENTATIVES

Once Vote, able to participate in Indian women have demonstrated splendid performance over the years of election. This paper presents retrospective data drawn from the period 1962 onwards for the general election results in the UK to demonstrate that women candidates, overall, win parliamentary seats at a slightly better rate than their numerical strength in the list of candidates that they are contesting. This trend shows that, when women participate in elections, they do so and record admirable performances. Nevertheless, this position has established the Central Government with a comparatively high score in comparison to the number of women in the Lok Sabha. Women's parliamentary representation and vote only went past the 10 percent level for the first time in 2009, and progress has been slow since then. Women constitute only 11.6% of the directly elected members of parliament, which is low compared with the number of women who get elected in India's legislative body. This gender difference emphasizes the importance of constant campaigns for female candidacy and women's representation in political office.

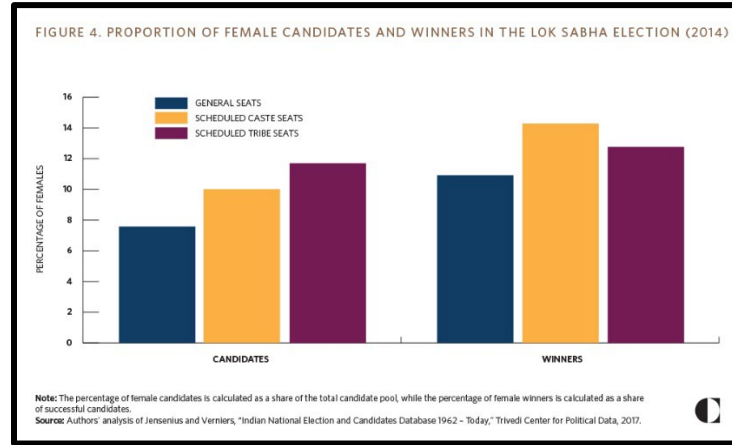


10. HIGHER SUCCESS RATES FOR WOMEN IN RESERVED CONSTITUENCIES

The cross-sectional data analysis reveals that females cast their votes more actively in SC/ST reserved segments, and candidates from these constituencies also enjoy higher success ratios than in other segments. Since 1980, about 16.2 per cent of women candidates who sought electoral seats in the reserved constituencies have won, while the remaining 11.5 per cent were those who sought electoral seats in the unreserved constituencies. This trend further supports what earlier established that reserved constituencies offer women a more propitious environment in which to capture seats.

The best example of this difference can be explained by the results of the general election held in 2014. The findings also showed that women contested and were elected in larger numbers in the reserved constituencies than in the open ones in that election. Overall, women constituted 7.6 per cent of unreserved candidates, but this rose to 10 per cent of those in reserved constituencies for castes and 11.7 per cent in the case of tribal constituencies. This pattern extended

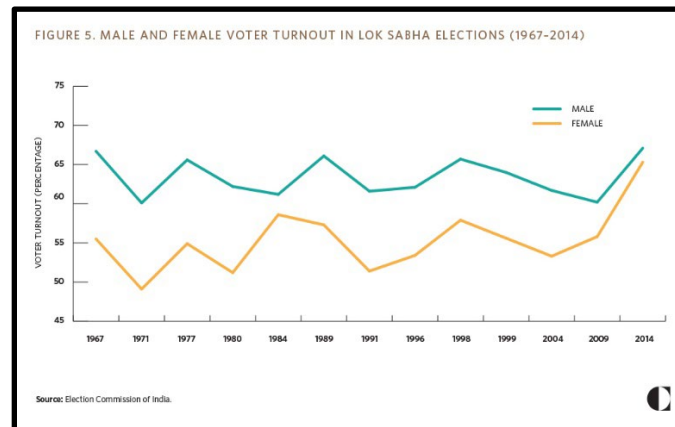
to the outcomes: In unreserved constituencies, women were found to be only 10.9 percent, whereas in the SC & ST reserved constituencies, women were 14.3 percent and 12.8 percent, respectively. These statistics established that even though female candidacy is still a problem, the reserved constituencies have gone a long way in improving women's chances of success in Indian politics.



11. INDIAN WOMEN AS VOTERS: A GROWING FORCE

Although the rates at which women contest and win elections remain relatively low, female voters are gradually injecting themselves into the democratic process in India. Some similar values of electoral participation include: In the recent general election held in 2014, 66.4% of the adult populace turned out to vote a motion that was considered a clear rise from the previous election of 2004/2009 that 58% of the population only came out to exercise their franchise. It was this increased voter turnout that helped decide the victory of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP.

The increase in voter mobilization was accompanied by a notable yet overlooked trend: the decline of the gender gap in voter turnout. In 1967, the turnout rates of male and female voters were significant depa. Allow me to share the details: It did not take a new shape until the 1984 election following Indira Gandhi's assassination; however, even in 1984 the gap had not been filled to an extent where it can be said that it had destroyed the Congress opposition alliance. But between 2004 and 2009, the difference was much smaller, falling from 8.4 percentage points to 4.4 points, while total voters' turnout remained almost stagnant. This trend signals a change in the process of women's political activities, which gives grounds to assume the impact on the outcomes of elections.

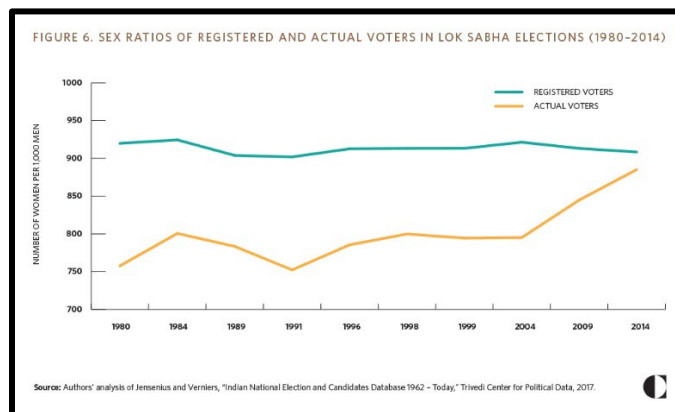


12. RECORD HIGH FEMALE VOTER TURNOUT IN 2014 ELECTIONS

The difference in the voter turnout of men and women voters in the 2014 general elections was the lowest at only 1.8 percent. This was a shift in voters' participation in elections such a shift could only had been recorded in the history of the country. However, female voter turnout outdid male voter turnout in fifty per cent states and union territories in India. What is interesting is that this pattern of a rise of women's participation is not limited to national votes only. In

the state assembly elections of 2012-2018, across the 30 states for which gender specific statistics are available, women voted in larger numbers than men in 23 of the states.

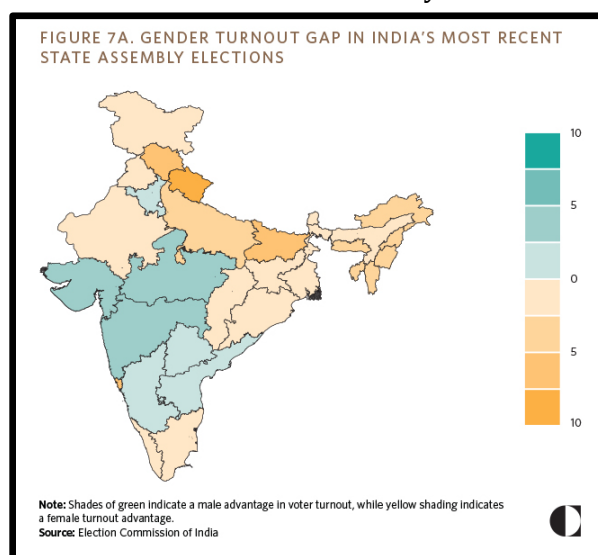
But that being said, as Rithika Kumar points out, this does not lead to the fact that women vote more than men in absolute numbers. The number of male voters dominates the number of female voters in the electoral register, and in the population as a whole. This means that the increase in female voter participation is attributable to an electoral mobilization effect that has seen many women already registered on the voters roll turn out in large numbers. Intense involvement from women is clear from the above graph where there is a record-breaking increasing trend of women participation clearly implying their assertiveness and influence on the outcome of any elections.



13. STATE-LEVEL TRENDS IN FEMALE TURNOUT ADVANTAGE

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14. RISING FEMALE VOTER PARTICIPATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR 2019

The emerging trend in India, particularly after the 2014's election is the enhanced female voter turnout. This time, the sex differential in voter turnout reduced to a record low of 1.8 per cent as female turnout exceeded male turnout in 15 of the country's 29 states and union territories. This trend of increased participation of females is not only observed at the national level but seems to escalate similarly in most of the state assembly elections that were held in the period between 2012 and 2018.

15. THE IMPACT OF FEMALE VOTER MOBILIZATION ON POLITICAL STRATEGY

Female voting assertiveness that India witnessed, especially as the country prepared for the 2019 general election, started defining political strategies. This was best seen in Bihar when Nitish Kumar placed a ban on alcohol based on the demand of women's organizations. This policy should have targeted matters such as GBV and poverty – proving that women have the power to pull the strings where their vote is concerned. Similarly, other states, especially Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, also came up with similar policies.

16. 2019 ELECTIONS: FOCUS ON WOMEN IN CAMPAIGNS

Before the 2019 general elections, the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi relied on policies based on welfare and social insurance to woman voters. Modi's government brought out schemes like Swachh Bharat (Clean India), Ayushman Bharat (Health for All), and Ujjwala (providing LPG connection to Below Poverty Line families) to create a social welfare state which would definitely attract female voters. In his campaign, Modi always pointed at women as key to a stable family and, hence, a stable society.

The BJP also sought legal reforms for women to win the national government's support. It changed laws to protect women's rights, including passing an ordinance against triple talaq, which Modi portrayed as constitutional to Muslim women. Such a shift was seen as an attempt to woo women Voters who had hitherto voted for the Indian National Congress (INC).

Rahul Gandhi and the INC also knew the inevitable rise of women's political participation in the country. During his campaign, Gandhi made political commitments regarding the upliftment of women; he pledged women representatives and even stated that women would occupy chief minister positions in at least half of the Congress jobs by 2024.

17. THE PUSH FOR THE WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL

Regardless of these endeavours to engage women in elections, there was still a wide gulf between female voters and female politicians. The Seventy-Third Amendment, which calls for one-third of the village council seats for women, has not been copied to the states and the central government. The Women's Reservation Bill, to provide 33% of the seats in the Lok Sabha as well as in the state legislatures for women, has not been able to progress in the legislative stage since its passage by the Rajya Sabha in 2010.

Rahul Gandhi called on Modi to reboot the bill, but the two major political parties accused each other of stalling it. An additional dispute over sub-quotas for women from socially deprived districts also added to the bill's acuteness. However, the pipeline effect from reserved local seats provided clues of the incremental progression of women towards competitive positions for higher offices.

18. CONCLUSION: ONGOING CHALLENGES AND HOPE FOR PROGRESS

There is evidence of gender parity in Indian politics. However, the problem persists, though the increasing voter turn out specifically the women voters are exerting a positive change on Polity and Governance. Despite this trend, women have voting rights; hence, enhancing their votes in leadership has challenged /pressured political parties to have women's issues and cardinal causes. This shift is well documented in policy decisions adopted by woman voters particularly the liquor ban in Bihar brought about by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar under pressure from women organizations agenda on social malaise like Gender Based Violence and poverty.

It's also important to note the political focus on women also came out in the 2019 election campaigns. It may be recollected that against the opponents of demonetization, Modi's government had spent money to help social welfare schemes like Swachh Bharat, Ayushman Bharat, and Ujjwala Gas to capture the female vote. An example of try to censor triple talaq to gain female votes was Modi's attempt to promote constitutional rights for females. The Congress Party, headed by Rahul Gandhi, also committed to improving women's participation and promised to make at least half of Congress-ruled states what chief ministers are women by 2024.

These progressive developments notwithstanding, there are still areas of exclusion in political Leadership. While the Seventy-Three Amendment gives women one-third of the village council, no such provisions exist in state or national governments. This is well illustrated by the Women's Reservation Bill that has been pending for quite some time with the intention of reserving 33 per cent of parliamentary as well as state assembly seats for women. Nevertheless, reserved seats at the local levels have resulted in the pipeline, which has provided women with practical experience in exercising political power and competing for other higher positions. If continuous efforts were made in such programs, women could occupy state and national political positions in the future, closing the gap.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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