



**AWARENESS ABOUT FACTORS LEADING TO DECLINING SEX RATIO : A
CASE STUDY OF JALGAON DISTRICT (MS)**

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Abstract :

The present paper investigate the awareness about factors leading to declining sex ratio in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra. The survey method is used for the study. About 900 respondents are interviewed from 30 villages from the district. Systematic random sampling method is used while selecting the respondents. From the present study, it is cleared that most of the people are aware of this issue and they accept that the sex ratio in the study region is declining. The essential factors responsible were son preference and dowry. More than half of the respondents assume that the son preference is the main factors behind the declining sex ratio in the study region. About one-third of the respondents reported that dowry system is the main cause behind declining sex ratio.

Keywords : Awareness, sex ratio, Jalgaon district

Introduction :

‘India is the country of unity in diversity. In India, while we pray to many female deities and look up to them as embodiments of strength, courage, wealth and education, we still practice deep-rooted traditional preference to the male child or the son. In the recent times, it has taken an ugly turn with innumerable crimes against women, increasing cases of rape and sex selective abortions.’ (nipccd, 2008) according to the 2011 census, for every 1000 boys, there are only 918 girls. The child sex ratio in India has been on the decline since 1991 and the worst since independence. According to the 1991 census, there were 945 girls for every 1000 boys and in 2001, 927 girls for every 1000 boys. The sex ratio is defined as the ratio of the number of males to number of females in a population set. It is internationally expressed per 100 females but in India, it is expressed as per 1000 males. According to the World Health Organization, biologically normal child sex ratio ranges from 102 to 106 male per 100 females. Converting it to Indian terms would be 943-980 females per every 1000 males. In Maharashtra, the child sex ratio in the year 1991 was 946 girls for every 1000 boys and in 2001, it declined up to 913 girls per 1000 boys. But in 2011 census, this decline is very sharp and it has become the matter of greater concern because now this ratio is as low as 894 girls per thousand boys. It

is important to understand why and how the child sex ratio has declined. Other things being equal, the child sex ratio, like the sex ratio at birth, does not undergo drastic changes over short periods of time. Women have experienced in the past, and continue to experience, higher mortality than men from late infancy to almost the end of their reproductive period. In recent years, there is enough evidence from the data collected by the sample registration system annually to show that in India the female child mortality, although higher than the male child mortality, has declined at a more rapid rate than the male child mortality. This welcome change should have made the child sex ratio more favourable to girls compared to the past, although it cannot wipe out the overall deficit, which is a cumulative process of neglect of women over several decades.

Objective :

The objective of the present research paper is to investigate the awareness about factors leading to declining sex ratio in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra.

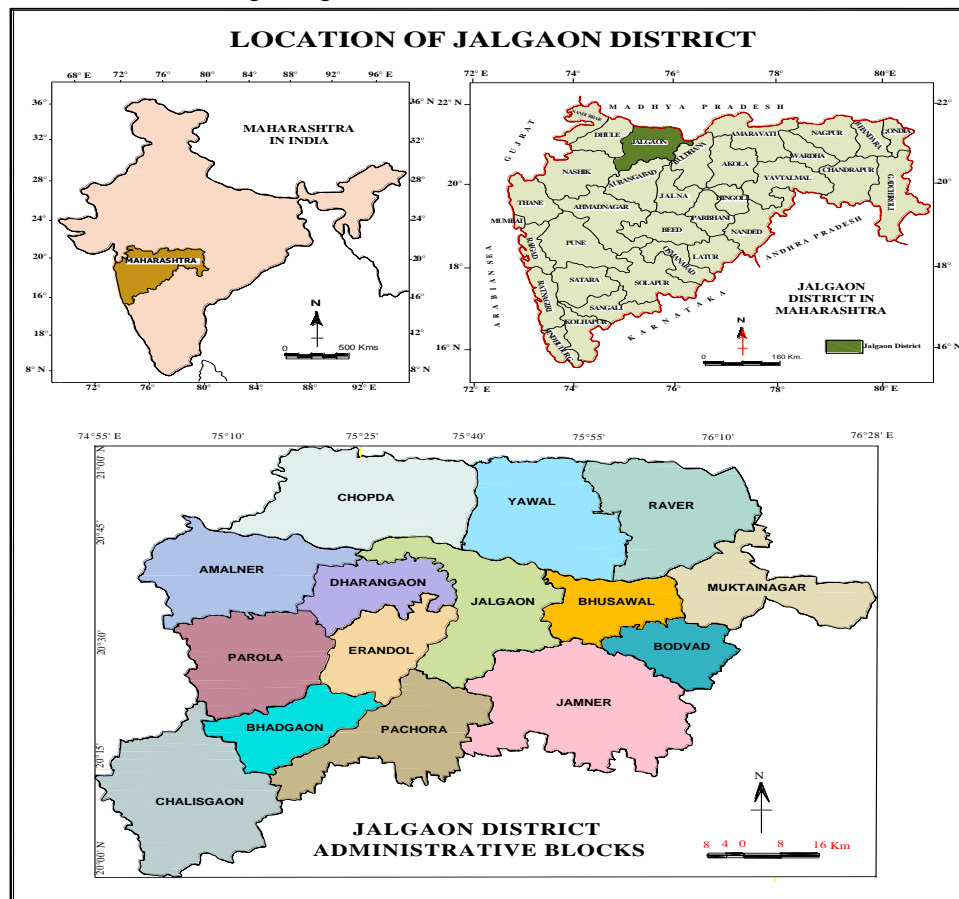
Research methodology :

The study region :

the district under study is flanked by the Satpura ranges to the north and Ajanta hills to the south and the central part of the district is covered by well known Tapi river basin which flows towards the west. The region experiences

slightly different climate than by rest of the state of maharashtra, since it is located away from the coast but at much lower altitude than the rest of the plateau of maharashtra. The location away from the coast has resulted in high range of mean

daily temperature which is slightly than 15°C . Low altitude has resulted in abnormally high maximum summer temperature which is normally above 40°C .



Map No.1

The district is bounded by the state of madhya pradesh to the north. The rivers anner and panjhara form a boundary in the west between the region and the dhule district. In the east, the district under study is bordered by buldhana district. To the south, satmala, ajantha and chandor hills form a natural boundary between the study region and the districts of nasik and aurangabad. The jalgaon district which is one of the 34 districts of maharashtra lies between 20°N and 21°N latitudes and $74^{\circ}55'\text{E}$ and $76^{\circ}28'\text{E}$ longitudes. The total area of the district is 11765.0 sq. Km. According to 2011 census, the total population of the region was 42, 29, 917. The researcher undertook a study to ascertain the awareness of socio-cultural factors contributing to the declining sex ratio in the study region. The field work was conducted throughout the district. The primary data for the study was collected through multi-stage stratified random sampling method. Two villages from each tehsils ($15 \times 2 = 30$ villages) were selected by considering various geographical factors such

as physiography, rainfall, net sown area, density of population and sex ratio. Urban respondent were considered from amalner town. The perceptions of different stakeholders – women (15-45 years), men and mothers-in-law/elderly women, were ascertained. 10 women (15-45 years), 10 men and 10 mothers-in-law were communicated from each village. Therefore, from 30 villages 30 respondents were communicated which arrived at total 900 respondents. The data was substantiated with an analysis of policy instruments, programmes, legal provisions, enforcement machinery, media inputs, etc. On the issue, using secondary source data. Care was taken to maintain confidentiality at all costs.

Profile of the respondents

Age-wise distribution of respondents

The age-wise distribution of respondents is depicted in table no. 5.2. Most of the women were in the 20-35 year age group and men in the 25-35 year age group. The majority of mothers-in-law were in the 55 years and above category.

Educational status of respondents

Educational status of male respondents suggests that 35 % males, who were age old, have been reported as illiterates. The proportions of male respondents completed schooling up to primary, middle, ssc and hsc schooling were 12.67 %, 18.00 %, 17.33 % and 20.67 % respectively.

About 16 % male respondents were graduates while proportion of postgraduates was only 4 %. It was heartening to note that the educational status of women of the present generation was better than that

Table no. 01 : age-wise distribution of respondents

| Age-groups | Respondents | | | Total N=900 No. (%) |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Men N=300 No. (%) | Women N=300 No. (%) | Mothers in-law N=300 No. (%) | |
| 15-19 years | -- | 04 (1.33) | -- | 04 (0.44) |
| 20-24 years | 25 (8.33) | 71 (23.67) | -- | 96 (10.67) |
| 25-29 years | 98 (32.67) | 85 (28.33) | -- | 183 (20.33) |
| 30-34 years | 84 (28.00) | 59 (19.67) | -- | 143 (15.89) |
| 35-39 years | 36 (12.00) | 48 (16.00) | 02 (0.67) | 86 (9.56) |
| 40-49 years | 22 (7.33) | 16 (5.33) | 28 (9.33) | 66 (7.33) |
| 50-54 years | 18 (6.00) | 12 (4.00) | 45 (15.00) | 75 (8.33) |
| 55-59 years | 13 (4.33) | 05 (1.67) | 57 (19.00) | 75 (8.33) |
| 60 years and more | 04 (1.33) | -- | 168 (56.00) | 172 (19.11) |

Source : data collected during field work.

Of their mothers-in law, where 48 per cent were illiterate and the %age of mothers-in-law who had passed schooling up to the primary, middle, ssc, and hsc were 17.33 %, 15.33 %, 11.33 %, and 5 % respectively. The distribution of illiterates, those who had passed the primary

level, middle level, ssc, hsc of schooling, and who were graduates and postgraduates among the women was 18.00 %, 14.67 %, 22.33 %, 18.00 %, 20.67 %, 15.37 %, and 4 %, respectively.

Table no. 02 : distribution of respondents by educational status

| Educational status | Respondents | | | Total N=900 No. (%) |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Men N=300 No. (%) | Women N=300 No. (%) | Mothers in-law N=300 No. (%) | |
| Illiterates | 35 (11.67) | 54 (18.00) | 145 (48.33) | 234 (26.00) |
| Primary school | 38 (12.67) | 44 (14.67) | 52 (17.33) | 134 (14.89) |
| Middle school | 54 (18.00) | 67 (22.33) | 46 (15.33) | 167 (18.56) |
| S. S. C. | 52 (17.33) | 54 (18.00) | 34 (11.33) | 140 (15.56) |
| H. S. C. | 62 (20.67) | 62 (20.67) | 15 (5.00) | 139 (15.44) |
| Graduate | 47 (15.67) | 16 (5.33) | 08 (2.67) | 71 (7.89) |
| Postgraduate | 12 (4.00) | 03 (1.00) | -- | 15 (1.67) |

Source : data collected during field work.

Occupational status of respondents :**table no. 03 : distribution of respondents by occupational status**

| Occupational status | Respondents | | | Total N=900 No. (%) |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Men N=300 No. (%) | Women N=300 No. (%) | Mothers in-law N=300 No. (%) | |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Farmers | 119 (39.67) | 11 (3.67) | 05 (1.67) | 135 (15.00) |
| Agricultural labourers | 88 (29.33) | 107 (35.67) | 57 (19.00) | 252 (28.00) |
| Casual workers | 23 (7.67) | 45 (15.00) | 13 (4.33) | 81 (9.00) |
| Service | 41 (13.67) | 16 (5.33) | 11 (3.67) | 68 (7.56) |
| Business / self employment | 25 (8.33) | 10 (3.33) | 06 (2.00) | 41 (4.56) |
| Unemployed | 04 (1.33) | 111 (37.00) | 208 (69.33) | 323 (35.89) |

Source : data collected during field work.

Majority of men are farmers followed by agricultural labourers. About 14 % men are engaged in various services. About one-third women are agricultural labourers and 37 % are unemployed (housewives). Majority of mothers-in-laws are unemployed followed by agricultural labourers. It is surprising to note that the %age of unemployed women and mothers-in-law were greater than men.

Awareness about factors leading to declining sex ratio :

It is also heartening to note that awareness about the missing girls in the country is near universal among the respondents of the present study. Most of the respondents comprising men (97.0%), women 96.33 % and mothers-in-law 94.67 were aware of the phenomena of the declining sex ratio throughout the study region. Female foeticide was cited as the main reason for the decline in sex ratio. The other reasons included neglect of the girl child resulting in

higher female mortality, maternal death, dowry death, female infanticide and male migration. (ghosh, goel and balda, 2005).

The factors contributing to the declining sex ratio as perceived by the respondents of the study are presented in table no. 4 and fig. No. 02. The essential factors responsible were son preference and dowry. More than half of the respondents assume that the son preference is the main factors behind the declining sex ratio in the study region. About one-third of the respondents reported that dowry system is the main cause behind declining sex ratio. The interesting finding is that the mushrooming number of ultrasound clinics and the ability to pay for abortions was articulated by all the men, women and mothers-in-law as an important contributing factor. Poor implementation of the various acts and laws were mentioned by roughly only 8 %. However, it was not viewed as a major contributing factor by the mothers-in-law.

Table no. 04 : awareness of respondents about the factors leading to declining sex ratio

| Awareness | Respondents | | | Total N=900 No. (%) |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| | Men N=300 No. (%) | Women N=300 No. (%) | Mothers in- law N=300 No. (%) | |
| Awareness about declining sex ratio | 291 (97.00) | 289 (96.33) | 284 (94.67) | 864 (96.00) |
| Factors leading to the declining sex ratio | | | | |
| Son preference | 151 (50.33) | 158 (52.67) | 171 (57.00) | 480 (53.33) |
| Dowry | 100 (33.33) | 85 (28.33) | 111 (37.00) | 296 (32.89) |
| Poor implementation of mtp, dowry law etc. | 28 (9.33) | 31 (10.33) | 12 (4.00) | 71 (7.89) |
| Mushrooming of ultrasound clinics | 19 (6.33) | 21 (7.00) | 05 (1.67) | 45 (5.00) |
| Ability to pay for abortion | 02 (0.67) | 05 (1.67) | 01 (0.67) | 08 (0.89) |

Source : data collected during field work.

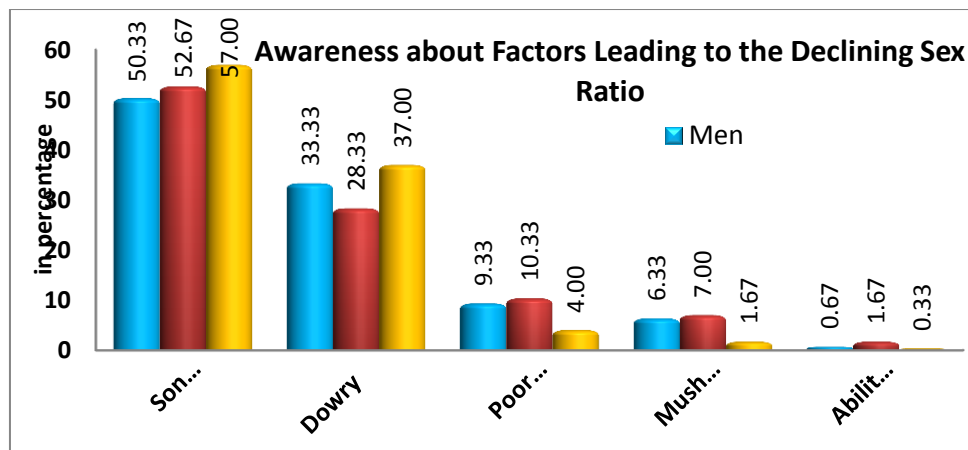


Fig. No. 02

Reasons for son preference :

Reasons for son preference were that they carry on the family name and inherit property; they are providers in old age and perform the last rites (mohfw and tinnari, 2002). The reason for wanting a son is to attain moksha (prasad, 2001; and nayar, 1995); power, prestige, to perform the last rites and continuing the family lineage (yadav and badri, 1997). The reasons for son preference from all respondents as elicited from this study are given in table 05. The various reasons mentioned by the respondents. But majority of the respondents among all the categories reported the main reason for wanting a son is that 'he is a support and provider in old

age'. About 88 % male respondents think that a son carries family name while such thought is stronger among mothers-in-law because 93.0 % of them have reported this reason. More than half of male respondents think that son is required for performing last rites essential to attain moksha. This thought is little bit less among women and mothers-in-law as they have reported it 29.0 % and 34.0 % respectively. Majority of women and mothers-in-law are more concern about wealth because 59.0 % women and 53.67 % mothers-in-law have reported that because of having a son wealth remains in the family.

Table no. 05 : reasons for son preference as perceived by the respondents

| Reasons for son preference | Respondents | | | Total N=900 No. (%) |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Men N=300 No. (%) | Women N=300 No. (%) | Mothers in-law N=300 No. (%) | |
| He is a support and provider in old age | 278 (92.67) | 284 (94.67) | 281 (93.67) | 843 (93.67) |
| Carries on the family name | 264 (88.00) | 259 (86.33) | 279 (93.00) | 802 (89.11) |
| For performing the last rites | 157 (52.33) | 87 (29.00) | 102 (34.00) | 346 (38.44) |
| Brings in dowry | 121 (40.33) | 247 (82.33) | 252 (84.00) | 620 (68.89) |
| Wealth remains in the family | 58 (19.33) | 177 (59.00) | 161 (53.67) | 396 (44.00) |

Source : data collected during field work.

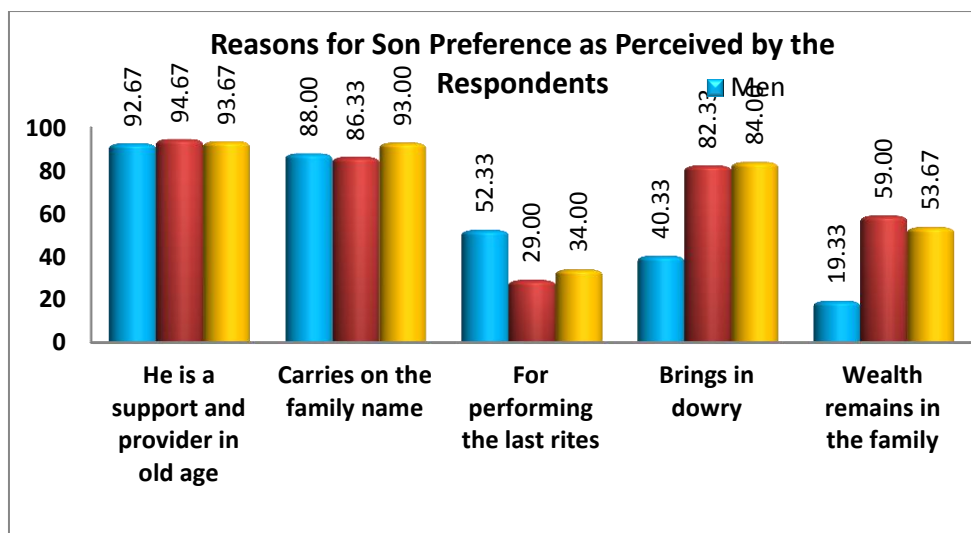


Fig. No. 03

Reasons for not wanting daughters:

The various other reasons for not wanting daughters were, dowry, forbidding wedding expenses, long requirement of giving gifts and money to the daughter, lack of availability of girls to look after the parents after marriage; domestic violence and ill treatment by husbands and in-laws; ill treatment of women after she gives birth to a girl; and not wanting to go through the same fate as them (mohfw and tinnari, 2002; and nayar, 1995). The present study found that the main perceived reason for not wanting daughters is 'dowry' by men, women and mothers-in-law across the study region. It is notable that the women and

mothers-in-law are more worried about dowry than the men. The other reasons voiced by the respondents include that 'investing in girls is seen as a waste, with no returns'. The same has been expressed by 51.67 % men and 49.33 % mothers-in-law which is louder than the women with 37.00 %. 'fear of harm coming to the family honour' is also a major reason perceived by respondents. About 58 % men respondents have reported this fear followed by 41.33 % and mothers-in-law and 36.33 % women. 'lack of safety for girls' is also a reason reported comparatively more by the women and mothers-in-law respondents.

Table no. 06 : reasons for not wanting daughters as perceived by the respondents

| Reasons for not wanting daughters | Respondents | | | Total N=900 No. (%) |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Men N=300 No. (%) | Women N=300 No. (%) | Mothers in-law N=300 No. (%) | |
| Dowry | 288 (96.00) | 291 (97.00) | 294 (98.00) | 873 (97.00) |
| Investing in girls is a waste with no returns | 155 (51.67) | 111 (37.00) | 148 (49.33) | 414 (46.00) |
| Fear of harming family honour | 173 (57.67) | 109 (36.33) | 124 (41.33) | 406 (45.11) |
| Lack of safety | 101 (33.67) | 128 (42.67) | 133 (44.33) | 362 (40.22) |

Source : data collected during field work.

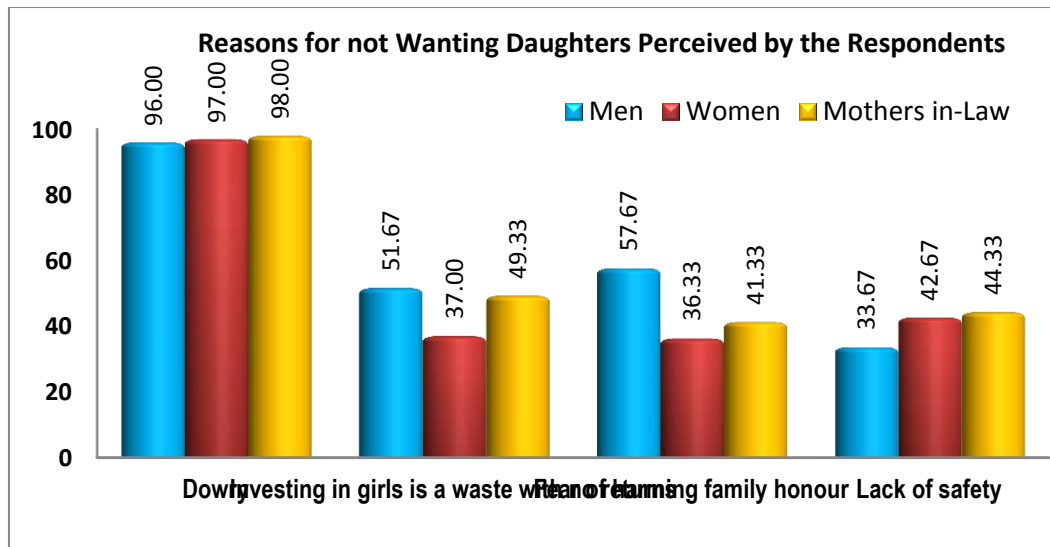


Fig. No. 04

Conclusion :

The declining sex ratio in the study region is a burning issue. From the present study, it is cleared that most of the people are aware of this issue and they accept that the sex ratio in the study region is declining. The essential factors responsible were son preference and dowry. More than half of the respondents assume that the son preference is the main factors behind the declining sex ratio in the study region. About one-third of the respondents reported that dowry system is the main cause behind declining sex ratio. The interesting finding is that the mushrooming number of ultrasound clinics and the ability to pay for abortions was articulated by all the men, women and mothers-in-law as an important contributing factor. Poor implementation of the various acts and laws were mentioned by the respondents. Preference of son is major cause behind declining sex ratio. Majority of the respondents among all the categories reported the main reason for wanting a son is that 'he is a support and provider in old age'. Majority of male respondents think that a son carries family name while such thought is also stronger among mothers-in-law. More than half of male respondents think that son is required for performing last rites essential to attain *moksha*.

Recommendations :

1. There is high awareness of the declining sex ratio in the study region as also its various serious repercussions. Yet a girl child is not valued, pointing towards an alarming volatile situation that would be hard to deal with in the times to come. However, it is an emergency and has to be addressed on a war footing using every means and efforts of communication.

2. Women should also be socialized from childhood to consider themselves equal to men.
3. Women should be encouraged to assume all those responsibilities, which are normally considered to belong to the male domain. This would have a positive influence on future generations, as today's girls would be tomorrow's mothers, as well as, mothers-in-law.
4. The legislative measures, such as the prohibition of dowry act, pndt act etc., should be stringently implemented. The defaulters must be punished and set many examples which may lead for positive change.
5. Awareness about the protection of women from domestic violence act, 2005, mtp, anti dowry act. Etc. Needs to be created.

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