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Research Article

THE IMAGE OF THE MOTHER-WOMAN IN ALISHER NAVOI'S WORKS

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ABSTRACT

This article is dedicated to exploring the artistic depiction of the image of the mother-woman in the works of Alisher Navoi. It examines the poet's perspectives on women, as expressed in ghazals and rubaiyat from his collection "Khazayin ul-Ma'ani", as well as in his works "Nasayim ul-Muhabbat" and "Mahbub ul-Qulub". The analysis demonstrates that in Navoi's poetry, the figure of the mother-woman uniquely represents the identity, formation, and manifestation of an entire people and nation. The poet skillfully employed expressive imagery in his verses, capturing both the era's and women's societal challenges with profound philosophical depth. The simplicity of thought, conveyed through straightforward lines, holds a dominant place in his lyrical work. Navoi's poetry reflects national landscapes and realities through an intellectual exploration of meaning and layers of ideas, achieved via artistic interpretation, depiction, and detail. Ultimately, the poet portrays the destiny of women as intrinsically linked to their role as faithful companions and mothers, ensuring continuity for future generations. These characteristics are echoed in oral folklore, where female figures are simultaneously depicted as brave heroines and caring mothers, blending diverse qualities into a syncretic image. The study of Navoi's works reveals a progressive enhancement and deepening of the artistic interpretation of the beloved's image across different genres and works.

KEYWORDS



Image of the mother-woman, symbol of goodness, naive-wise, weak-philosopher, soft-hearted-mystic woman.

INTRODUCTION

The history of humanity shows that the cultural level and moral integrity of any society have always been determined by its attitude toward women. The aesthetic ideal associated with the image of women has traditionally presented them as symbols of beauty, grace, and goodness, as well as nurturers and educators of well-rounded individuals. "All noble feelings that exist in the human heart originate from the mother" [1;136]. The great history of our people honors countless women—Tomaris, Bibikhanim, Gulbadanbegim, Zebunniso, Nodira, Uvaysiy, Anbar Otin—who have left an indelible mark with their courage, resilience, wisdom, and refinement. Respect and reverence for women are defining features of Eastern mentality. Their literary reflection occupies a unique place in the history of national artistic thought. Therefore, the investigation of the emotional and mental transformations within the human heart—central objects of artistic literature—cannot be complete without the analysis and interpretation of the image of the woman, a symbol of love and creativity, who connects generations. Accordingly, studying the mastery with which the image of the woman has been created in Uzbek literature, based on universal humanitarian standards and national values, within the inherent laws of literary art, is among the urgent tasks of literary criticism.

METHODS

In Uzbek literary studies, the portrayal of women has primarily been explored in connection with the system of characters and the author's artistic skills in creating images, encompassing both classical and modern works. Scholars like A. Qayumov, Yo. Is'hoqov, A. Hayitmetov, S. Erkinov, S. Hasanov, N. Komilov, I. Haqqulov, and S. Olim have conducted extensive research on the place of female characters in classical literature, be it in epic works or lyrical depictions of beloved figures [2;3;4;5;6;7;8;9;10]. However, a specialized methodological study on the interpretation of the mother-woman figure in Alisher Navoi's works has yet to be conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Humanity cannot sustain itself, nor can art and literature exist, without women. Indeed, "Literature, as the study of humanity, is first and foremost the study of women. Observing, even the oldest works were dedicated to women, with conflicts revolving around them. It can even be argued that the development of literature is closely intertwined with the artistic exploration and deepening of the woman theme" [11;47]. The artistic interpretation of the woman's image in literature and art and her societal role have been the focus of disciplines such as literature, psychology, philosophy, history, political science, and art studies.

In Uzbek literary studies, the earliest work on women's images was by Maqsud Shaykhzoda, titled "The Image of Women in Navoi's Creativity" [12;58-68]. He emphasized the harmonious blend of physical, social, intellectual, cultural, and warrior traits in characters like Shirin, Mehinbonu, Layli, Dilorom, and Ravshanak. Sh. Abdullayeva, in her doctoral dissertation, explored women's images in "Khamisa", arguing that Navoi used these characters to critique the feudal system's infringement on women's rights [13;119]. The Soviet era's interpretation predominantly depicted characters like Layli as victims of oppression. However, during independence, Navoi's works were revisited with universal ideas, as seen in the research of scholars like N. Komilov and I. Haqqul. They provided new insights, including Komilov's analysis of "Layli and Majnun", where he interpreted the transformation of "earthly love" into "divine love" through the characters [16;73].

The depiction of maternal figures in classical literature often includes nurturing characters like Shirini's nurse Mehinbonu, who plays a significant role in her education and emotional growth. Similarly, Navoi's works frequently reference mothers, such as in "Nasayim ul-Muhabbat", which mentions 35 female saints advocating truth and Sharia [19;13]. Navoi's ghazals and prose celebrate mothers, a theme also explored in B. Rajabova's "Conversations with Mothers", which examines depictions of women in "Baburnama".

This exploration demonstrates that the artistic portrayal of women in Navoi's works evolves and

deepens across genres, reflecting broader societal and philosophical themes.

In Alisher Navoi's works, the sublime qualities of Eastern women find their ideal representation. When reflecting on women, Navoi writes in his work Mahbub ul-Qulub:

"A virtuous wife is the wealth and fortune of a household. The home's tidiness comes from her, as does the peace and comfort of the household. Her beauty gladdens the heart, and her pleasant demeanor nourishes the soul. If she is wise, there is order in the home, and its tools and belongings remain clean and well-arranged. A man who is blessed with such a spouse finds in her a confidant in sorrow and hardship, a companion in open and hidden pain. Should trials arise in life, she is a supportive partner; when the heavens bring misfortune, she is a source of solace. If sorrow clouds the spirit, she shares the burden; when illness and frailty afflict the body, her soul agonizes alongside."

Contrary to the archaic prejudices of the past that deemed women as "feeble-minded," "weak," or "the husband's servant," Navoi's poetic and prose works elevate the mother-woman to a noble and revered stature:

"At the feet of mothers lies the garden of paradise. If you seek the bliss of paradise, become the dust at your mother's feet."

Navoi's literary oeuvre is an inexhaustible treasure trove. His work Nasayim ul-Muhabbat, like his other writings, holds significant importance. In this text, Navoi places particular



emphasis on saintly women. The existence of Tazkirat un-Niso, a work about female poets, is well-documented in the history of literature, but very few records address saintly women. Thus, Navoi's Nasayim ul-Muhabbat, dedicated to 770 spiritual figures, stands out uniquely. Navoi writes with particular reverence about Fatima binti Muthanna, a saintly woman who mastered the interpretation of the Quran's Fatiha surah and was renowned for her miracles. Ibn Arabi served her and described her in his Futuhat al-Makkiyya as "a divine mercy sent for all people." Fatima was regarded as Ibn Arabi's spiritual "mother."

According to literary scholar O. Juraboyev, an event narrated by Navoi in Nasayim ul-Muhabbat aligns with a passage in Ibn Arabi's Futuhat detailing the states of 189 true lovers and highlighting Fatima's spiritual condition. Scholar A. Schimmel notes that Ibn Arabi held profound respect for Sufi women. When Navoi described saintly women, he often mentioned their cities, interactions, and lives, occasionally including poetic couplets. For example, Navoi's portrayal of Rayhona-i-Woliha highlights her devotion to God through the following lines:

"You are my companion, my aspiration, and my joy; my heart desires no one but you. O beloved, my aspiration and goal, my yearning for you never ceases. When will I be honored with your presence? My goal is not the delights of paradise but only to behold you."

This excerpt reveals Rayhona-i-Woliha's deep love for God. Navoi's Nasayim ul-Muhabbat thus provides invaluable insights not only into male

spiritual leaders but also into saintly women, offering readers fascinating accounts.

Women's history is the most profound and radiant reflection of universal history. The status, rights, and conditions of women have always been intertwined with a society's socio-economic structure. In oppressive societies throughout history, women have often been the most marginalized and exploited, stripped of their rights, and confined in their societal roles. These systems disrespected women as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, severely limiting their participation in social life and denying their freedoms.

Living within such a society, Alisher Navoi maintained a consistently positive attitude toward women. He respected their maternal and marital rights and advocated for their happiness and well-being. In one of his quatrains, Navoi even considered wise and virtuous women superior to unworthy men, asserting:

"The wisdom and morals of a noble woman surpass the flaws of an unworthy man."

Yuz tuman nopok erdin yaxshiroq,

Pok xotinlar oyog'ining izi[21;765].

The poet, who cherishes and exalts women as human beings, mothers, and wives, compares them to the sun:

Yaxshi xotinlar safoiy zuhdidin

Olam icra gar yorug'lik, bo'lsa fosh.



Yo'q, ajab, chunkim arab alfozida,

Istiloh ichra muannasdir quyosh[22;134-136].

Navoi's thoughts, reflections, hopes, and wishes regarding women often stemmed, on one hand, from the realities of his contemporary environment, and on the other hand, from his dreams and aspirations for the future. These perspectives frequently intertwined with the actualities of life. Contrary to the degrading dogmas of the past, which labeled women as "feeble-minded," "weak," "fragile," or "the husband's servant," the figure of the WOMAN-MOTHER is elevated to a noble and revered status in Navoi's poetic and prose works:

Onaning oyog'l ostidadir,

Ravzai jannatu jinon bog'i.

Ravza bog'i visolin istar ersang,

Bo'l onaning oyog'in tuprog'i.

In his works, particularly in the Khamsa epics, Alisher Navoi gives significant attention to women. Regarding this, Navoi stated:

Bu ikkining hidmatini bir bil,

Har necha ifrot esa, taqdir bil.

Boshini fido ayla, oto qoshig'a,

Jismni qil sadqa ono boshig'a[23;76].

Alisher Navoi depicts the image of the Mother-Woman with profound care and mastery,

achieving an honorable depiction that we will explore further.

"In regions dominated by Islam, the condition of women was even more precarious and dire. Islam deprived women of even their most basic rights," writes A. Muminova [24;15]. Such views on Islam and its "key," the Quran, were shaped by the demands of the pre-independence era in interpreting national heritage. However, the Hadith presents a different perspective:

"Abu Hurayra narrated that a man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, who is most deserving of my good treatment?' The Prophet replied, 'Your mother.' The man asked again, 'Then who?' The Prophet said, 'Your mother.' The man further inquired, 'Then who?' The Prophet answered, 'Your mother.' The man asked once more, 'Then who?' The Prophet finally said, 'Your father.'" [25;77-78].

The Quran also states: "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women" (Surah An-Nisa, 4:1). This establishes that women, from their creation and throughout their lives, are equal to men. Undoubtedly, one of the truths of Islam is that it recognizes women as fully human beings with souls and dignity equal to that of men. Contrary to misconceptions, Islam does not oppress or demean women, nor does it destroy their self-esteem. Instead, it exalts women as sacred representatives of the family and honors them as Mother-Women.

In Navoi's works, the image of women is portrayed in two primary directions:

The depiction of historical figures, especially saintly women.

The representation of female characters in literary works.

The first direction is directly associated with Navoi's *Nasayim ul-Muhabbat*, which includes mentions of 770 saints, 35 of whom are women. Among these, 12 attained the status of saints and demonstrated miracles, with the most prominent being Rabia al-Adawiyya.

The text provides numerous accounts related to this saintly woman:

"One day, Shaykh Hasan al-Basri visited Rabia. He placed his prayer mat on the water and said, 'Let us pray two rakats here.' Rabia, in turn, laid her prayer mat in the air, sat on it, and replied, 'O master, what you have done can also be performed by a fish. What I have done can also be performed by a fly. Such acts are meaningless; what truly matters is righteous action.'" [26;6].

This anecdote illustrates the extraordinary nature of Hasan al-Basri and Rabia al-Adawiyya, a saintly woman capable of miraculous acts. However, Rabia's response highlights her belief that such displays of miracles hold no real value compared to deeds of true virtue. This aligns with Navoi's views on miracles; he considered meaningless miracles as mere deceit.

According to Navoi, only those miraculous acts that serve to "guide people to God" and foster

enlightenment can be deemed true miracles. Actions intended to deceive or impress others are the work of charlatans, spreading ignorance rather than wisdom. Initially, miracles were regarded as the pinnacle of spiritual development, but over time, as Sufism evolved, attitudes toward miracles also changed.

Later interpretations emphasized not the display of miracles but the ability to conceal and keep such capabilities private, considering this discretion a sign of spiritual maturity. Navoi argued that indulging in the performance of miracles could distract one from God and lead to heedlessness. In *Nasayim ul-Muhabbat*, Navoi cites a source, *Asrar al-Awliya*, which states: "The display of miracles is akin to neglecting one's obligatory duties."

Moreover, *Asrar al-Awliya* mentions that the Sufi path consists of 15 stages, five of which involve uncovering miracles. If a seeker reveals these miracles, they are denied access to the remaining stages, thus failing to achieve the ultimate goal.

Navoi believed that the most spiritually developed individuals are those who possess miraculous abilities but choose to hide them, as they cannot afford even a moment of heedlessness from God. Displaying miracles requires a temporary diversion of attention from God, which true saints cannot accept. Navoi writes in *Nasayim ul-Muhabbat*:

"There are servants and friends of God who avoid all such displays and even consider them shameful, as they cannot bear to be distracted from witnessing and being absorbed in God's

presence for even a moment. Until they are separated from this bliss, they cannot turn their attention to such matters. If these exalted individuals are distracted by any worldly pursuit, even if it is eternal paradise, it becomes a source of torment for them."

This reveals Navoi's profound understanding of spirituality, emphasizing deeds over displays and unwavering devotion to God over fleeting worldly distractions.

Rabia al-Adawiyya, originally from Basra, is first mentioned in detail in Shaykh Fariduddin Attar's *Tazkirat al-Awliya*. In this work, Attar provides extensive accounts of Rabia's sainthood, describing her as a beloved servant and friend of Allah, with over 20 related stories. Similarly, Abdurrahman Jami's *Nafahat al-Uns* includes numerous details about Rabia, focusing particularly on her piety in the translated sections of the text.

Alisher Navoi, aware of his readers' familiarity with *Tazkirat al-Awliya* and similar works, highlights Rabia al-Adawiyya's most profound and enlightening sayings, as well as her conversations with Shaykh Sufyan al-Thawri.

Navoi begins by noting that Rabia hailed from Basra and recounts two of her conversations with Sufyan al-Thawri, one of the greatest spiritual figures of her time:

First Conversation:

One day, Sufyan al-Thawri raised his hands in Rabia's presence and prayed, "O Allah, O Allah, I

ask You for peace." Upon hearing this, Rabia began to weep. When Sufyan asked why she was crying, she replied:

"Peace lies in abandoning this world. And you are still attached to it."

In this conversation, Rabia criticizes Sufyan's prayer, suggesting that his request for peace reflects his love for the world.

Second Conversation:

Sufyan al-Thawri asked Rabia, "What is better than acts that bring one closer to Allah?" Rabia responded:

"If you desire closeness to Allah, then love nothing but Him in this world and the hereafter."

Third Interaction:

On another occasion, Sufyan cried out, "Woe is me!" in Rabia's presence. Hearing this, Rabia reproached him:

"Do not lie; if you were truly sorrowful, life itself would feel like an unbearable burden for you."

Rabia's response emphasizes that true grief over the world detaches one entirely from it, making existence within it devoid of joy and unbearable.

After recounting these dialogues, Navoi presents two deeply meaningful aphorisms attributed to Rabia al-Adawiyya, underscoring her saintly character and closeness to God:

1. "Every purpose bears fruit, and the fruit of knowledge is turning one's face toward Allah."



This wisdom implies that the ultimate goal of all pursuits is knowledge—specifically, the kind that directs and brings one closer to Allah. The Quran itself affirms that the learned and the ignorant can never be equal, highlighting the necessity for knowledge that ultimately reveals the Creator. Without such knowledge, all endeavors are meaningless.

2. “My sorrow is not because I grieve, but because I do not grieve. My sorrow lies in the absence of true grief.”

This aphorism carries profound spiritual significance. In its first part, Rabia expresses her sorrow over not grieving in God’s love. For her, no worldly sorrow can compare to the anguish of being disconnected from divine love. This concept is a cornerstone of Sufi poetry and reflects a key theme in spiritual literature.

As Jalal al-Din Rumi writes in his Masnavi:

"True sorrow is the longing for union with the Divine; all else is but fleeting despair."

Rabia’s sayings and Navoi’s accounts of her life reflect the essence of spiritual devotion, underscoring her extraordinary role as a saintly woman whose piety and wisdom continue to inspire generations.

Tingla naydin chun hikoyat aylagay,

Ayriliqlardin shikoyat aylagay.

Men qamish erdim kesib keltirdilar,

Nola cheksam, el ham oh urdilar[28;8].

Here, the flute symbolizes the human heart, and Rabia al-Adawiyya highlights this in her wisdom. In the second part of her aphorism, she expresses grief over the absence of sorrow. For a true believer, this world is a place of trials, challenges, and hardships. Passing these tests while preserving one’s faith ensures eternal bliss in the hereafter. However, Rabia laments the insufficient difficulty of these trials, indicating her elevated spiritual state and profound understanding of divine wisdom.

Human life is sustained and balanced through the unity of men and women. In this context, just as men play a vital role in society’s progress, women hold equally significant positions.

One of the most pressing issues in contemporary Uzbek Navoi studies is the analysis of the image of the beloved in Navoi’s works. The beloved refers to the lyrical figure to whom the poet dedicates his love. This topic is complex and challenging, with several scholarly perspectives within Navoi studies:

1. Interpreting the beloved in Navoi’s works as a worldly figure—a beloved woman.
2. Understanding the beloved as a divine entity—Allah.
3. Viewing the beloved as both a worldly and a divine figure.
4. Interpreting the beloved as a worldly figure—a beloved man.



5. Considering the beloved as a combination of a woman, a man, and Allah, and blending these interpretations in analysis.

How does the great thinker Alisher Navoi portray the image of the mother-woman in his works? How do his worldview and concepts reflect an original and delicate beauty? Let us delve into these aspects.

The history of women is the most prominent and vivid reflection of universal history, as women's freedoms, rights, and conditions—both material and spiritual—are always intertwined with the socio-economic structure of society.

Alisher Navoi consistently maintained a positive attitude toward women. He respected their maternal and marital rights and advocated for their happiness and well-being. In his ghazals, he describes a pure, beautiful, and unattainable beloved, whose allure and inaccessibility transcend from one poem to another. He asks the breeze to convey his state to the beloved. In one verse, he says, "O breeze, carry my message to my tulip-faced, moon-like beloved, whose hair is like cypress branches." Navoi compares his longing for the beloved to a beggar's need for bread, vividly illustrating the depth of his yearning to see the radiant face of his beloved.

G'arazim ul sanamga sajdadur,

Yer o'pay, deb qoshida qo'ysam yuz [29; 103].

The poet lives with a great hope for union. On this path, he endures suffering, sheds tears, and creates.

Orzu aylar Navoiy ko'yung ichra orazing,

Zor bulbul aylagandek bog'u gulzor orzu.

The poet, who cherishes and exalts women as human beings, mothers, and wives, compares them to the sun, symbolizing their vital and radiant role in life.

Yaxshi xotinlar safoiy zuhdidin

Olam ichra gar yorug'lik, bo'lsa fosh.

Yo'k, ajab, chunkim arab alfozida,

Istiloh ichra muannasdir quyosh [29;317].

Navoi's thoughts, reflections, hopes, and aspirations regarding women are rooted, on the one hand, in the realities of his contemporary environment and, on the other hand, in his dreams and ideals for the future. These often intertwine with life's realities. The figure of the woman-mother is elevated to a noble and revered status in Navoi's poetic and prose works.

Onalarning ayog'i ostidadir,

Ravzai jannatu jinon bog'i.

Ravza bog'i visolin istar ersang,

Bo'l onaning oyog'in tufrog'i

In his works, particularly in the Khamsa epics, Alisher Navoi gives significant attention to women. Regarding this, he stated:

Bu ikkinig xizmatini bir bil,

Har neni ifrot esa, taqsir bil.

Boshni fido ayla, ato qoshig'a.

Jismni qil sadqa ano boshig'a [23;204].

Thus, in the grand anthology of classical poetry, the woman is primarily portrayed as a majestic figure. For instance, when the heart, elevated by love, soars to the heavens, Alisher Navoi glorifies the beloved as the "queen of beauty" and marvels at her life-giving grace with phrases like, "Your ruby lips, reviving the dead, utter words like those of Messiah." Not only does he revere the beloved, but he also vows to sacrifice countless lives for those who value her, elevating the lover's gallantry to its utmost height.

Ishq ichra aning fidosi yuz jon

Har jonki sanga fido bo'lubtur.

At the same time, for Hazrat Navoi, a woman's modesty, manners, and character are of immense value. In his famous ghazal, he subtly approves of humility and thoughtfulness, saying, "If she maintained caution like her radiant face in the moonlight." Furthermore: Mahbub durur gulu visoli matlub,

Ko'rmak ani gulbun uzra bilgil mahsub.

Bazm ichra uzub keturgan ermas marg'ub,

Ul nav'ki majlis ichra o'lgan mahbub,—

In one of his rubaiyat, Navoi expresses a similar sentiment, emphasizing that a woman is beautiful within the harmony of her beloved and her family. The poet implies that wandering from gathering to gathering, attending various festivities, and

straying from her inherent dignity withers and degrades a woman, like a flower plucked from its stem.

"Mahbub ul-Qulub" is a work that encapsulates the essence of Alisher Navoi's life experiences and creative reflections. The first section of the book, titled "The States, Actions, and Sayings of People", comprises 40 chapters in which the poet characterizes various social groups and classes. Chapter 37, "The Qualities of Household Management and the Mention of Women", specifically discusses women. This alone demonstrates Navoi's recognition of women as an essential and significant segment of society. As a figure of his time, Navoi believed that the active role of men in society and their service to the state and nation were largely dependent on women. He wrote:

"If the mistress of the house is worthy, prosperity and harmony will bless the household and society alike."

According to Navoi, if a woman is wise, she brings order and flourishing to the home. In times of hardship, a good woman is a friend and confidant; when misfortune strikes, she is a companion and source of solace. Such women are akin to angels, and having them as partners in life is a sign of divine blessing and happiness. The poet, as the sovereign of the realm of ghazals, elevates virtuous women to this noble status.

In Navoi's view, the most esteemed qualities in a woman are modesty, chastity, fidelity, and purity. He believed that a woman's virtue is paramount,

as only from virtuous mothers can righteous and noble children be born.

Pokdomon zuafodin neki zoyanda bo'lur,

Ruhparvardur, jonbaxsh zihi xilqati pok.

Undoubtedly, the highest honor for a woman is motherhood. In the literature of the past, this role has been celebrated with profound reverence. The great thinker Alisher Navoi honors mothers as "roziqi marsum"—a "lawful provider of sustenance." In his advice, he extols filial duty with verses like:

"Sacrifice your head for your mother's grace,
Offer your body in charity at her feet."

He emphasizes the equal importance of both parents with the teaching:

"Regard the service of these two as one, If excess arises, know it as a fault."

In another instance, Navoi elevates the image of the mother, declaring:

"A father cannot replace a mother for a child... For it is impossible to exist without a mother."

In Arba'in, drawing on hadiths, he writes:

"The gardens of paradise lie beneath the feet of mothers. If you wish to see the gardens of paradise, become the dust beneath your mother's feet."

CONCLUSION

Through the above analysis, we observed the profound and vivid portrayal of women in the works of Alisher Navoi. In his creations, Navoi highlights the following qualities of women:

- Incomparable beauty (physical aspect),
- Profound intellect (intellectual aspect),
- Knowledge and enlightenment (cultural aspect),
- Active participation in state and societal affairs** (social aspect),
- Courage and bravery in battle (martial aspect).

Navoi, aiming to uplift the spirits of women oppressed by the hardships and injustices of his time, expressed progressive thoughts and aspirations about them in his works, using a unique artistic style and vibrant imagery.

In conclusion, it is no exaggeration to say that the characters Navoi created continue to captivate hearts with their beauty and radiance. Navoi himself recognized the immortality of his works and characters during his lifetime, stating:

"I hope and imagine that the stature of my words will never decline, and the triumph of these writings will find no place other than the highest rank."

This sentiment can undoubtedly be applied to Navoi's depiction of the Mother-Woman. Indeed, the portrayal of the Mother-Woman in his works is exceptionally comprehensive and precise, serving as a testament to Navoi's literary greatness.



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