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Household Basic Amenities in Rural India: Evidence from NFHS-4 (2015-16)

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Abstract

The present paper aims to examine the status of household basic amenities in rural India. It also aims to explore the factors affecting the household basic amenities in some areas. This study utilizes a national representative data of NFHS -4 (2015-16). A simple cross tabulation method was used to analyse the data. A household basic amenity index has been computed with help of six explanatory variables. A binary logistic regression model has been applied to see the effect of explanatory variables on the dependent variable i.e., household basic amenity index. The results indicate that there was acute shortage of household basic amenities in rural India. The findings also suggest that there was disparity in household basic amenities with social groups, religious groups and wealth index. For sound health and descent life, household basic amenities are essential.

Keywords: Household basic amenity, NFHS-4, Social Groups, Wealth Index, Binary logistic regression.

Introduction

Amenities are thought to be necessary as these make life easier and pleasant. Basically, these are of three types. First, basic amenities which includes running water, electricity etc. Second, social amenities which make the social life pleasant-like schools, parks and infrastructural facilities. Third, civic amenities which refer to those services which are used by everyone like sanitation, burial ground, roads, drains, hospitals etc[1]. Here, we are concerned with basic amenities. Merriam-Webster Dictionary[2] defines basic amenities as things considered to be essential to make life easier and more pleasant. On this account, household basic amenities may be defined as household things considered being essential to make life easier and more pleasant for every member of the household. The terms 'basic amenities' and 'basic services' are used interchangeably for each other. These things are very basic in nature. These are minimum physical requirements that a dwelling supposed to be have in the household. These include clean water, toilet facility, good dwelling, electricity, separate kitchen, clean fuel for cooking etc.

Basic services are not only essential for physical well- being but these are also vital for their ability to earn a living[3]. Basic amenities are important measure of socio-economic status of the household. These are also fundamental elements to the health of the people. Better access to basic amenities prevents from falling sick and reduces chances of the death. Basic amenities are essential foundation for a decent living and it enhances economic growth and quality of life.

The living condition of common people reflects the socio-economic and political development of a country[4]. Basic amenities are fundamental determinants of quality living in societies, regions and nations[5]. Unfortunately, access to basic amenities is one of the major issues at global level. Throughout the world, poor sanitation is one of the leading risk factors for infant mortality. In every 15 seconds a child dies of a preventable disease relating to contaminated water, sanitation and hygiene[6]. In developing countries, inadequate access to basic amenities is more pronounce. India is not exception to this anomaly. Only 43 percent households used tap water and 47 percent households had source of water within household premises. Only 47 percent households had latrine facility. 56 percent households had kitchen facility within household premises. Only 29 percent households were using clean fuel (LPG) for cooking[7]. In terms of access to basic amenities, these figures seem not satisfactory at any count. Even at this level, there were high disparities across Indian states in terms of access to basic amenities[8]. At the same time, households belonging to socially deprived classes were found to be more disadvantaged as compared to the others[9].

There is vast literature dealing with access to basic amenities in India. But majority of the literature focus on urban India. As more than two third (833.5 million) of the total population of India lives in rural areas. But there is the least literature that deal with basic amenities in rural India. Rural people constantly face locational disadvantage, being in rural areas where the access to basic amenities is inadequate. The deprivation of basic amenities causes the rural life most vulnerable to insecurities[10].

Under these circumstances, there is need to explore access to basic amenities in rural India. The present study is an attempt in this direction. The objectives of the present study are as follows: i. To examine the status of household basic amenities in rural India. ii. To examine the determinants of household basic amenities in the study areas.

Methodology

This study utilizes the national representative National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4, 2015-16) data. This data base includes all the states and union territory of India. There are several files viz, birth, couple, household, women, children, men and household members files that addresses different population attributes. The present study uses household file having household attributes. Total sample size of the household file with completed interviews are 601509 of which rural and urban sample households are 425563 and 175946 respectively. The present analysis for the rural India has been carried out on the rural sample size i.e., 425563. But it is worth to mention that the responses of the independent variables carry some unclear responses like don't know, others etc. which were not well defined. Such type of the responses has been subjected to system mission while handling the data. So, one doesn't find exact sample households when one sees the total of the sub categories of the independent variables. Six dependent variables viz, pucca dwelling, toilet facility, water in residence, separate kitchen, fuel for cooking and electricity supply have been taken as dependent variables which has been transformed into household basic amenity index, a single dependent variable. In this study, explanatory variables were social groups, religious groups and wealth index.

As far as method is concerned, a very simple method viz., a cross tabulation has been performed to analyse the data. A household basic amenity index (HBAI) has been computed by summing up of the binary or dichotomous explanatory variables (Table-1). Total six explanatory variables were used to create household basic amenity. These six explanatory variables were pucca dwelling, has toilet, water in residence, separate kitchen, fuel for cooking and electricity supply. Those explanatory variables were not dichotomous, they have been made dichotomous for the sake of the simplicity.

The sum of the six independent variables resulted into 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 which has been known as composite score. Composite score '0' represents that particular household does not possess any of the six variables. Composite score 1 represents that household possesses only one amenity out of the six amenities. Similarly, composite score 6 represents that a particular household possesses six amenities out of the total six amenities. After computation of household basic amenity index, it has been categories into three groups. These are low, medium and high household basic amenity. 'Low' household basic amenity was computed by summing up composite score 0,1,2 and 3. 'Medium' household basic amenity was computed by summing up composite score 4 and 5, and composite score 6 has been designated as 'high' household basic amenity index. To see the effect of explanatory variables on dependent variable i.e., household basic amenity index, a binary logistic regression has been applied. The composite score 5 and 6 has been summed up together to compute dependent variable for the present purpose.

Table-1: Computation of Household Basic Amenity Index.

Composite Score	Rural Households	%	Variables	Dichotomous responses	Composite Score	Household Basic Amenity Index
0.0	25515	8.0	Pucca house	Yes=1, No=0	0.0	0-3: Low
1.0	53494	16.7	Toilet facility	Yes=1, No=0	1.0	
2.0	58629	18.3	Water in residence	Yes=1, No=0	2.0	
3.0	59160	18.5	Separate kitchen	Yes=1, No=0	3.0	
4.0	53816	16.8	Fuel for cooking	Yes=1, No=0	4.0	4-5: Medium
5.0	46369	14.5	Electricity supply	Yes=1, No=0	5.0	
6.0	23549	7.3	Total		6.0	6: High
Total	320532	100.0				

Results and discussion

Access to household basic amenities: Table-2 depicts the percentages of the households having household basic amenities by the background characteristics of the households. Starting with households having pucca houses, ST households were at the bottom in terms having pucca houses. Only 20 percent of the total ST households possessed the pucca households. In this case, SC households were at relatively better position than ST households. On the other hand, forward caste households were in better position in terms of having pucca houses as compared to other backward classes and the scheduled population (STs and SCs both).

In this study, there was crystal clear social disparity in terms of possessing pucca houses. On observing possession of pucca dwelling across religious groups, one finds that Christian households were at disadvantageous position as compared to other religious groups. This may be attributed to rural location, otherwise, Christian as religious groups is considered well off. There was no sharp gap between Hindu and Muslims in terms of possessing pucca houses. But, as compared to these three religious groups viz, Hindu, Muslim and Christian all other religious group i.e., Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish and Parsi were at quite better position in terms of possessing pucca houses. Wealth index seems to play vital role in possession of pucca houses. It has been reflected in the present study.

The poor households were at the bottom in terms of possessing pucca houses whereas the rich households were far ahead of the other households in terms of possessing the pucca houses. There was direct relationship between wealth index and possession of the pucca dwelling.

Toilet is one of the basic needs for better sanitation and hygiene. Unfortunately, rural India does not have universal access to the toilet facility. In the present study, tribal population or Scheduled Caste households were at the bottom in terms of accessing toilet. The Scheduled Castes (SC) households were at relatively better position than ST households in terms of accessing toilet facility. The forward Castes had relatively better position in terms of accessing toilet facility as compared to other social groups in rural India. But these households too did not have universal access to toilet facility. Only 69.4 percent of the households belonging to forward caste had access to toilet facility which is not satisfactory at any count. In terms of accessing toilet facility, social divide was quite visible. In terms of accessing toilet facility, households belonging to backward communities (SCs, STs and OBC) were at relatively disadvantageous position as compared to households of the forward castes.

Table-2: Households with households' basic amenity, Rural India.

Variables	Percentage of households having					
	Pucca House	Toilet Facility	Water in Residence	Separate Kitchen	Fuel for Cooking	Electricity Supply
Social Groups						
SCs	35.2	38.7	41.4	44.8	16.1	81.5
STs	20.6	51.1	29.5	50.3	12.6	83.3
OBC	42.5	44.0	50.7	53.0	22.2	82.6
Forward Castes/others	52.8	69.4	56.5	70.4	33.4	90.2
Total	38.0	49.3	44.9	54.1	20.8	83.9
Religious Groups						
Hindu	38.9	42.5	43.5	53.2	20.1	83.3
Muslim	39.4	68.2	62.9	57.8	19.7	81.7
Christian	28.2	86.7	43.3	59.8	21.4	90.4
All other religions	56.1	86.4	53.5	70.2	41.9	95.1
Total	38.7	50.6	45.7	54.9	21.0	84.2
Wealth Index						
Poor	12.6	27.9	39.0	39.0	2.6	72.6
Middle	55.8	66.8	50.4	63.3	25.0	98.4
Rich	84.6	93.1	66.9	82.9	64.0	99.7
Total	38.3	50.6	45.6	54.7	20.9	84.1

Across the religious groups especially between Hindu and Muslim households, there was sharp divide in terms of accessing toilet facility. The Hindu households were at disproportionately disadvantageous position as compared to other religious groups. Only 43 percent of the Hindu households were found to have access to toilet facility. The Christian and the all-other religious households (86.7 percent and 86.4 percent respectively) were far ahead of Hindu and Muslims households in terms of accessing toilet facility.

We have often heard saying that water is life. Pure drinking water is one the basic needs. Without pure drinking water, life becomes very difficult. The present study tries to examine the availability of water in household premises of rural India. The result depicted that only around 30 percent of the ST households had water facility in its household's premises and it was at the bottom across the social groups. Almost 57 percent of the forward castes possessed drinking water facility in its premises. At rural India level, only 45 percent of the total households had water facility in its household's premises which was very discouraging figure in terms of universal access to pure drinking water. Social divide in terms of possessing source of drinking water was quite visible in this particular study. Across religious groups, Muslim households were at better position in terms of possessing source of drinking water in its household's premises as compared to other religious groups in rural India. It is unfortunate to mention that only around 46 percent of the total rural Indian households were found to have drinking water sources in their premises.

Separate kitchen for cooking is an indicator of better standard of living people. Results shows that only around 45 percent of the SC household had separate kitchen for cooking and remained at the bottom across the Indian social groups in rural India. The tribal households i.e., ST households were at relatively better position in terms of having separate kitchen for cooking as compared to SC households but far behind as compared to forward caste households (70.4 percent) which found to be at the top across social groups in rural India. The Hindu households (53.2 percent) remained at bottom in terms having separate kitchen for cooking across the religious groups. All other religious groups viz., Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Jewish and Parsi were in far better position as compared to remaining religious groups in terms having separate kitchen for cooking. So, religious groups wise disparity distinctly visible in terms having separate kitchen for cooking. Income level (wealth index) was found to play vital role in having separate kitchen for cooking. There was a direct relationship between level of income in terms of wealth index and having separate kitchen for cooking. Rich households were disproportionately far ahead of poor and middle households in terms of having separate kitchen for cooking. It is saddening to observe that only around 55 percent of the households in rural India had access to separate kitchen for cooking.

Clean fuel for cooking is essential for good health of persons engaged in cooking and for others around cooking places. Contrary to this, unclean fuels make the persons engaged in cooking prone too many respiratory diseases. In this study, LPG, natural gas and biogas have been considered as clean fuel and analysis has been carried out accordingly. Though, electricity is also a clean fuel but it is not affordable for masses for cooking purpose. Unfortunately, only around 16 percent of the ST households had access to clean fuels and remained at the bottom across the social groups. The forward caste households were at relatively better position in accessing clean fuel for cooking and remained at the top across the social groups. But only around 33 percent of the forward caste households had access to clean fuels for cooking which is not a figure to be happy. Even at this low level of access to clean fuels for cooking, there was sharp social divide in terms of accessing clean fuels for cooking. Religious groups wise disparity was also encountered in accessing clean fuels for cooking. With little variation, Hindu, Muslim and Christian households were at almost same level in accessing clean fuel whereas all other religions (Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Jewish and Parsi) were at relatively better position in this context. But income level in terms of wealth index, clearly reflects the divide among poor, middle and rich households in accessing clean fuels. Rich households were far ahead in terms of accessing clean fuel for cooking as compared to households standing at poor and middle at the ladder wealth index. Here, only around one fifth of the rural households had access to clean fuel for cooking which is very saddening.

Uninterrupted electricity supply is the need of hour in modern technological era. Without regular supply of electricity, all the world will stand still. So, electricity is utmost need at present time. But rural India found to be not had universal access to electricity supply at household's level. Around 82 percent of the SC households had access to electricity supply as per the present study and remained at the bottom among social groups. There was little variation in accessing electricity supply between SC (81.5 percent), ST (83.3 percent) and OBC (82.6 percent) households. There was sharp social divide between backward communities (SCs, STs and OBCs) and forward castes in terms of accessing electricity supply. At religious group front, Muslim households remained at the bottom in terms of accessing electricity supply. On the other hand, Christian and all other religious groups were at fairly better position in terms of accessing electricity supply across the religious groups. Rich households had edge over middle and poor households in terms of accessing electricity supply. There was a direct relationship between degree of electricity supply accessed by the households and level of income of the households in terms of wealth index. Despite these, only around 84 percent of the total rural households had access to electricity supply.

Household Basic Amenity Index by background characteristics, Rural India: As stated at outset, household basic amenity index has been grouped into three categories viz, low, medium and high. Starting with social groups, around half of the SC and ST households witnessed low level of household

basic amenity in this study. Contrary to this, one fifth of the households belonging to forward castes came into the category of low level of household basic amenity index which was the least across the social groups in rural India. In terms of medium level of household basic amenity index, ST and Forward caste households were at same footing (around 38 percent). SC and OBC households were at same level in terms of medium level of household basic amenity index. Turning to high level of household basic amenity index, forward caste households were edge over remaining social groups. ST households remained at bottom in terms of having high household basic amenity index. Social group wise divide was clearly witnessed in household basic amenity index ranging from low through medium to high levels.

Table-3: Household Basic Amenity Index by background characteristics, Rural India.

Variables	Household basic amenity index (%)		
	Low	Medium	High
Social Groups			
SCs	50.8	32.4	16.8
STs	50.3	38.6	11.1
OBC	46.1	32.3	21.5
Forward Castes/ other	24.8	38.5	36.7
Total	44.0	34.9	21.1
Religious Groups			
Hindu	47.6	32.1	20.3
Muslim	36.6	37.6	25.8
Christian	21.2	58.1	20.8
All other religions	12.1	40.3	47.6
Total	42.8	35.1	22.0
Wealth Index			
Poor	73.0	26.0	1.0
Middle	15.7	63.7	20.7
Rich	1.5	30.6	67.8
Total	42.9	35.2	21.8

In terms of low household basic amenity index, Hindu households were at top across the social groups taken into account. In other words, Hindu households were worst performing in accessing household basic amenity index. Christian and all other religious groups had the least percentage in terms of low household basic amenity index. It means, these religious groups were better performing in terms of accessing household basic amenity index. In terms of medium level of household basic amenity index, Christian households followed by all other religious groups witnessed better position. In terms of high level of household basic amenity index, all other religious groups viz., Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Jewish and Parsi had edge over the rest of the religious groups. Income level in terms of wealth index showed distinct disparity across households in accessing household basic amenity. In terms of low level of household basic amenity index, poor households had predominant followed by middle level wealth index households. The rich households had the least proportion of households having low level of household basic amenity index. In case of medium level of household basic amenity index, middle households in terms of wealth index found to be remained at middle position. At both ends i.e., poor and rich there was no sharp gap in terms of medium level of household basic amenity. Contrary to this, direct relationship between high level of household basic amenity index and wealth index was witnessed. Poor households had disproportionately low proportion in high level household basic amenity index and rich households had the greatest share in high level of household basic amenity index. It is a paradox that only around 22 percent of the total rural households came into category high household basic amenity index.

Regional variations in household basic amenity index, Rural India: Regional variations were witnessed in household basic amenity index in rural India (Table-4). As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, there are three categories of household basic amenity index in the present study. Taking 'low' household basic amenity index across the states and union territories of India, one finds that some states like Jharkhand (80.0 percent), Bihar (76.8 percent), Uttar Pradesh (74.1 percent), Chhattisgarh (67.8 percent), Madhya Pradesh (62.2 percent) and Odisha (61.6 percent) were far behind the other regions of India. These states are poor states with little degree of variations. This has been reflected in the household basic facilities enjoyed by the households of these states.

In case of medium level of household basic amenity index, Lakshadweep (80.3 percent), Nagaland (79.0 percent), Manipur (69.7 percent), Meghalaya (64.9 percent) and Tripura (61.8 percent) seemed to be appeared in the scene. Lakshadweep is a constellation of Islands which is remotely located to the main land of India. Remaining states like Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura are the part of north-eastern India which too are remotely located with respect to main land of the country. Moreover, these are hilly areas. So, penetration of the basic amenities is yet to be took place.

Table-4: Regional variations in household basic amenity Index, Rural India.

States/UT's	Household basic amenity index (%)		
	Low	Medium	High
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	6.2	30.7	63.1
Andhra Pradesh	15.0	43.6	41.3
Arunachal Pradesh	23.3	59.4	17.3
Assam	36.2	52.4	11.4
Bihar	76.8	18.3	5.0
Chandigarh	0.0	25.0	75.0
Chhattisgarh	67.8	26.1	6.0
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	32.2	39.5	28.3
Daman and Diu	1.2	27.1	71.7
Goa	3.4	24.4	72.2
Gujarat	35.8	32.6	31.5
Haryana	11.1	41.0	47.9
Himachal Pradesh	4.0	39.8	56.2
Jammu and Kashmir	15.7	40.7	43.7
Jharkhand	80.0	16.5	3.5
Karnataka	17.1	53.1	29.8
Kerala	1.1	42.9	56.0
Lakshadweep	0.0	80.3	19.7
Madhya Pradesh	62.2	27.9	10.0
Maharashtra	25.6	43.5	30.9
Manipur	18.6	69.7	11.6
Meghalaya	15.8	64.9	19.3
Mizoram	18.9	61.7	19.4
Nagaland	9.4	79.0	11.6
Delhi	0.0	11.6	88.4
Odisha	61.6	29.7	8.7
Puducherry	8.8	26.7	64.5
Punjab	6.4	35.2	58.4
Rajasthan	42.0	37.5	20.5
Sikkim	0.7	31.9	67.4
Tamil Nadu	8.6	36.1	55.3
Tripura	27.9	61.8	10.4
Uttar Pradesh	74.1	19.1	6.8
Uttarakhand	18.8	42.8	38.5
West Bengal	46.3	39.7	14.0
Telangana	20.4	44.0	35.6
Total	42.9	35.2	21.8

As far as 'high' household basic amenity index is concerned, Delhi (88.4 percent), Chandigarh (75.0 percent), Goa (72.2 percent), Daman and Diu (71.7 percent), Sikkim (67.4 percent), Puducherry (64.5 percent) etc were better performing. Except Sikkim, above listed regions are union territories. Being administered by the central government, these regions witnessed high household basic amenity index.

This may also be attributed to the effect of urbanisation in these regions. Addition to these regions, some larger states like Punjab (58.4 percent), Himachal Pradesh (56.2 percent), Kerala (56.0 percent) and Tamil Nadu (55.3 percent) found to be had high household basic amenity Index. This may be attributed to the good governance in the respective states.

Determinants of household Basic Amenity taking 5 and above score as dependent variable: Before going to interpret the result of binary logistic regression, it is worth to check suitability of the model to the data. From omnibus tests for model coefficients, model chi-square (chi-square = 140660, df=8, p=0.000, p<0.05 recommended for significant) suggests that the overall model was very significant when all explanatory variables entered.

From model summary, Nagelkerke R Square= 0.577 (Nagelkerke R Square> 0.5 recommended for adequate variations in dependent variable by independent variables) suggests for suitability of data to the model. The result of binary logistic regression model indicates that OBC (p<0.004, OR: 1.053) and forward caste/other households (p<0.001, OR: 1.293) were more likely to have high household basic amenity index as compared to SC households. Christian households (p<0.016, OR: 939) were less likely to have high household basic amenity index as compared to Hindu households (Table-5). This may be attributed to lesser sample size of Christian population in rural India.

All other religions (p<0.001, OR: 1.419) were more likely to have high household basic amenity index as compared to Hindu households. The households with Middle (p<0.001, OR: 29.187) and rich (p<0.001, OR: 239.848) wealth indices were more likely to have high household basic amenity index as compared to households with poor wealth index. Here, it was found that social groups, religious groups and income level in terms of wealth index were significantly associated with household basic amenity. Hence, these three explanatory variables were found to play vital role in accessing household basic amenity.

Table-5: Determinants of Household Basic Amenity (Index).

Variables	B	S.E.	p value	Odd Ratios (95% CI)
Social Groups				
SCs	Reference Category			
STs	-0.026	0.025	0.301	0.975
OBC	0.051	0.018	0.004	1.053
Forward Castes/others	0.257	0.019	0.001	1.293
Religious Groups				
Hindu	Reference Category			
Muslim	-0.041	0.023	0.078	0.960
Christian	-0.063	0.026	0.016	0.939
All other religions	0.350	0.024	0.001	1.419
Wealth Index				
Poor	Reference Category			
Middle	3.374	0.030	0.001	29.187
Rich	5.480	0.029	0.001	239.848

Discussion: The results indicate that rural India is witnessing acute shortage of household basic amenities. The status of the household basic amenities is not satisfactory in every parameter taken into account. Still large chunk of rural people does not have access to toilet facility and they are defecating in open areas. Hardly near to half of the rural households have access to water in its household premises. Separate kitchen for cooking is not universal. Clean fuels for cooking are still distance from the rural masses. Though, the electricity supply has been percolated to the rural masses but there is still no universal access to electricity supply to the rural masses. There was social group wise disparity in accessing household basic amenity in rural India.

The OBC and forward caste households were found to be in better position in terms of accessing household basic amenity. It has been validated by the result of binary logistic model. This study is in line with some previous studies in India[11,12].

There was religious group wise differential in accessing household basic amenity. But in terms of possessing three basic amenities viz., pucca dwelling, toilet facility and water in residence, Muslim households were in better position as compared to Hindu households. This result is in contrary to the previous studies. This needs explanations. For the rest of the basic amenities viz., possessing separate kitchen for cooking, fuel for cooking and electricity, the result is in line with the previous studies. The Christian and the all-other religious households were significantly associated. The Christian households were less likely be equipped with high household basic amenity index in the present study which is contrary to the previous studies. The reasons for this anomaly have been mentioned in the results section of this study.

All other religions (Sikh, Buddhist, Jews, Jain and Parsi) were more likely to have high household basic amenity index which is in the line with some previous studies in India. Wealth index was found to play vital role in accessing high household basic amenity index. There was a direct relationship between level of income (wealth index) and the high household basic amenity index. Wealth index was significantly associated with high household basic amenity index. This result is in line with some previous studies in India[11, 12.]This study has some limitations. Some more explanatory variables are needed to see its effect on the dependent variable. With only three explanatory variables, the holistic view of household basic amenity in rural India is not discernible. Despites these omission and commission, the present study tries to unravel the scenario of accessing household basic amenities in rural India.

Conclusion

This study is concerned to the household basic amenity in rural India. It tries to examine the status of household basic amenities. This also tries to explore the reasons for disparities in accessing household basic amenities.

The results of this study indicate that large chunk of rural masses was still far away to meet household basic amenities. It has very serious implications on the health of rural masses in particular and their standard of living in general. Every household in turn person has right to live a decent life. But due to lack of household basic amenities, they are unable to have a decent life. There is urgent need to address this issue for the greatest interest of better standard of living and better quality of life our people. Better access to household basic amenities will lead to sound health and descent life. People with better access to basic household amenities will be in a better position to contribute significantly in the advancement of our country.

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