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RURAL TOURISM PRACTICE LEADS TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF CHUNAR IN MIRZAPUR DISTRICT.

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the biggest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the global economy and has significant environmental, cultural, social, and economic effects, both positive and negative. Rural tourism is one of the pre-requisites of achieving sustainable development which can be taken as a remedy to manage tourism effects. Rural communities are facing ever more challenges in terms of regional development. They have difficulties to benefit from emerging economic, social and environmental dynamics and may fail to take advantage of their local resources and capabilities. Rural tourism acts as an important driver in the promotion of rural regional development as it offers opportunities for income generation and job creation. This paper focuses on the sustainable development through Rural tourism in Chunar situated in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The present paper aims at identifying key success factors and challenges for the development of attractive tourism products and offers within rural areas. Based on a selection of Mirzapur district- Chunar as a case studies of rural tourism initiatives and the conditions for the implementation of rural tourism development which is a way to attain sustainable Tourism approach.

Keywords: *Sustainable Tourism, Rural Tourism, Rural Communities, Regional Development, Rural Development*

Introduction

Tourism is currently the world's largest industry and the fastest growing sector of the market. Tourism is usually viewed as being multidimensional, possessing physical, social, cultural, economic and political characteristics. "Definitions of tourism share a range of common elements" (Dowling 2001, p24). Mathieson and Wall (1982) that tourism is the temporary movement of people to destinations out of their normal home and workplace, the

activities undertaken during the stay, and the facilities created to cater for their needs. Worldwide tourism is ranked second highest revenue-generating industry next to the oil industry. It is necessary to differentiate between different type of tourists to understand and analyse their purpose of visit. There are different ways to attract domestic and foreign tourists, we need to understand what types of services are required to attract and retain the customers. There is a large potential market for rural tourism especially for foreign tourists, which has not yet developed because government has not taken up any systematic approach to attract foreign tourists.

Sustainable tourism as one that, “Meets the need of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunities for future.” Similarly, the basic needs for sustainability are similar to Agricultural/ Rural / Farm tourism generally, ranging from trying to make large-scale of tourism activity with low environmental, socio-cultural damage to destination and its communities (Venkatachalam & Patwardhan, 2011).

In recent decades, the tourism industry has shown sustained growth in revenues and number of tourist arrivals, mainly through foreign exchange earnings, contributions to national income, generation of employment, business opportunities and has left extensive economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts almost every part of the world (Dabour, 2003). As a result, countries are focusing on the need to promote sustainable tourism development to minimize its environmental impact and to maximize socio-economic overall benefits at tourist destinations (Ahmed, 2013). Hence, sustainable development is achieved if the economical, social and ecological development of a country is done in a sound and fair manner (Filho, 2000). This means that in order to achieve sustainable tourism, sustainable practices must be achieved in every sector related with tourism industry and of view in involves sightseeing, travelling, visiting different places given the importance and magnitude of Rural tourism,

Rural Tourism in India: The basic concept of rural tourism is to benefit the local community through entrepreneurial opportunities, income generation, employment opportunities, conservation and development of rural arts and crafts, investment for infrastructure development and preservation of the environment and heritage (Mishra,2001). Rural tourism will bring people of different cultures, faiths, languages and life-styles close to one another and it will provide a broader outlook of life. It will not only generate employment for the people but it can also develop social, cultural and educational values. In Asia, especially in India, rural tourism in its true form is relatively new. The potential for rural tourism to be a major force in rural economic development resulting in poverty alleviation is yet to be realized to the fullest extent. Tourism growth potential can be harnessed as a strategy for Rural Development. The development of a strong platform around the concept of Rural Tourism is definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 74% of the population resides in its 7 million villages. Rural Tourism is one of the few activities which can provide a solution to these problems. Besides, there are other factors which are shifting the trend towards rural tourism like increasing levels of awareness, growing interest in heritage and culture and improved accessibility, and environmental consciousness. In the developed

countries, this has resulted in a new style of tourism of visiting village settings to experience and live a relaxed and healthy lifestyle.

Objectives:

The main aim of study is to measure the potential of rural tourism in Chunar. The specific objectives of the study are

- To clearly identified the concept and role of rural tourism
- To find out the impact of rural tourism to our society
- To identify the challenges and opportunities in rural tourism
- To identify the essential elements for development of rural tourism.

Research Methodology- The study has been conducted in Chunar region of Mirzapur district, the sample respondents comprising both tourists from different socio-economic category of society. The primary data is collected through questionnaires and personal interviews and the secondary ones is collected through various sources viz. journals, magazines, newspapers, websites etc, The data had been collected to understand the market potential for rural tourism to evaluate its positive and negative impact on the society, especially in the area of environment, economy and socio-culture. The survey was conducted using the convenient sampling method. Primary data was collected from 150 respondents by administering them a detailed questionnaire. The secondary data was collected from different sources. Simple statistical tools are used to analyse the collected data.

About Chunar Chunar is situated in the Vindhya range at a distance of 32 kms from Varanasi. Its District headquarter Mirzapur which is a very famous for its natural beauty, Historical events, Handicrafts & other Industrial setups and from the religious aspects as well. Especially Chunar town is existing in a triangular form on the right bank of holy Ganga and the left bank of the Jirgo. As Per Puranas the oldest name of Chunar was Charanadri as Lord Vishnu had taken his first step in his Vaman in carnation in the dynasty of Great King Bali in the age of Satyug. It also told that a very powerful man had travelled from Himalya to Kanya Kumari in the age of Dwapar and took rest here whose feet impression a rock became today's Chunar. The third one deals with Bhartihari, the ruler of Ujjain who came here for penance. A kingdom was later on built here. The fourth story sheds light on a rock statue built by Raja Sahadeo, who named the place as Nainagarh. However Chunar is highlighted after the visit of Babar followed by Shershah Suri, Humayun, Akbar, Aurangzeb and finally, the Britishers.

As of 2011 India census, Chunar had a population of 37,185. Males constitute 53% of the population and females 47%. Chunar has an average literacy rate of 57%, lower than the national average of 59.5%: male literacy is 66% and, female literacy is 47%. In Chunar, 16% of the population is under 6 years of age. Chunar (Mirzapur) Municipal Board (NPP) Name District City of Outgrowth Population census 1991-03-01- 27,778 Population census- 2001-03-01- 33,933 Population census-2011-03-01- 37,185 Source: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Delimitation Commission of India.

Chunar is located at a distance from Varanasi. In Eastern U.P. region Varanasi is one of the important place or hub for the international tourist. Maximum numbers of tourist used to visit for 2-3 days in Varanasi and stays in the categories of hotel available in Varanasi. It is true that the accommodation and other facility is easily available in Varanasi as compare to any other places in Eastern U.P., therefore it can be suggested to the tourist that there are many other potentials places are available in near by area of Varanasi and Chunar is one of them in this particular region. As this study will focus the importance of this aspect to be introduced in the itinerary of Varanasi and add Chunar as an Excursion place for Rural Tourism of Varanasi for one day inclusion.

Places to visit

- **Chunar Fort:** Chunar fort is constructed at a height of 80' to 175' from the land level of Chunar. The fort area is approx. 3400 Sq. yard, its length is 800 yard & width is 133 to 300 yard. At present the fort is itself worth seeing with Sonva Mandap, Raja Bhartihari Samadhi, Bavan Khamba & Solar Watch are the sight seeing places inside the fort.
- **Gangeshwar Nath temple**
- **Guru teg bahadur saheb gurudwara**
- **Dargah Shareef**
- **Durga cave temple**

Excursions:

- **Jirgo Dam-** Situated at distance of 14kms.from Chunar
- **Siddhanath Dari-** A beautiful water fall at distance of 14kms from Chunar.
- **Shakteshgarh Fort** – Ruins of the fort surrounded by natural beauty, situated at distance of about 25kms.
- **Lakhania Dari-** Beautiful water falls at a distance of about 28kms. From Chunar.

Potential for Chunar

- **Chunar Haat:** A haat can be develop in Chunar market like Pilpli in Odisha and Delhi haat for its handicrafts and Chunar as a place for the artisan and craftsman, Clay pottery makers

Impact of Rural Tourism in Our Society- Rural tourism can bring various benefits such as foreign exchange, employment, higher government revenues and the transformation of agriculture into a modern service industry, it can also damage many indigenous societies.

1. Economic Impact

Positive Economic Impact- It will create employment for the rural people of Chunar and generate income for them. The villagers will able to provide better food and education for their children.

- Create employment especially for the rural youth.
- Income level will rise.

- Generate foreign exchange.
- Demand for other goods and services will increase.
- Improvement in the public services.
- Generate revenue or the government.
- Modernization of agriculture and other rural activities.
- Local small businessman will be benefited.

Negative Economic Impact- The facilities provider and investors such as resorts, hotels and tour operators will be mainly from Varanasi, who takes away most of the profits. Most the products consume will be imported from outside, not produced locally. The economic benefits may go to urban communities and entrepreneurs. There is a chance that limited employment will be generated for the rural people due to their limited knowledge and exposure.

- The rural people can be exploited.
- The rural people have to depend on the urban entrepreneur, so the benefit may not reach them.
- The urban investor will take away most of the profit.
- Food, drink and necessary products will be imported from outside and not produced locally.
- Rural people may be under paid.
- Local artisan may not get benefited.
- Due to competition the local handicraft and farm produce products will be sold at lower price.
- Increase in the price of local agro products.

2. **Environment Impact-** The rural people of Chunar can learn to develop the healthy environment with proper sanitation, roads, electricity, telecommunication etc for better living on one side on other side the tourist can exploit natural resources and have a heavy impact on the environment.

Positive Environment Impact- The rural people of Chunar learn from the visitors how to lead a healthy and hygienic life.

- Learn the importance of preservation of natural resources.
- They will learn to use modern tools and technology.
- They will learn to preserve the natural habitats, bio-diversity and historical monuments.

Negative Environment Impact- The visitors may overexploit natural resources and it can have a heavy impact on the environment. In addition, rural tourism will require infrastructure, transportation and other facilities which can cause environmental distortion.

- Development of infrastructure may distort the natural beauty.
- Huge number of visitors may exploit the natural resources
- Natural ecology will be disturbed.

3. **Socio-Cultural Impact-** Since the income from tourism is much higher than what rural people can earn from agriculture, local Art and Culture etc, tourism has been accepted willingly in many rural areas in spite of its negative effects. It is widely recognized that such negative impacts on rural communities have

become stronger, and that rural tourism must be modified to give rural people its benefits. Poorly planned tourism can mean that villages are invaded by foreign visitors with different values, disrupting rural culture. The higher standards of living in urban tourist destinations have caused emigration from nearby rural neighbours, resulting in changes in the demographic structure and possible culture shock. Furthermore, employment and education can have a negative social impact. The younger generation may gain better prestige than their elders as they gain experience, jobs and money from tourism.

Positive Socio-Cultural Impact - The rural people of Chunar will learn the modern culture. They will learn to come out of their traditional values and beliefs. They will adopt different practice of modern society.

- Education and health of the rural community will improve.
- Provide higher standard of living or the rural people.
- Cultural understanding through fairs and festivals.
- Exchange of cultural beneficial for both.
- Foreign tourist will bring cultural change faster.
- Reduce migration of rural people to urban areas.
- Market for agro products and handicrafts will develop in rural areas farmers and artisans will develop a direct contact with the customers.

Negative Socio-Cultural Impact - Poorly planned tourism can affect the villagers. It may affect the traditional and cultural practices, agriculture and other allied activities.

- Can create disharmony in development.
- Modernization can affect their traditional values and cultural practices.
- Traditional products will be replace by modern products.
- Rural people may shift from traditional business to tourism activities.
- Decline in participation in rural traditional and cultural practices follows.

Factors Creating Hindrances in Sustainable Development of Tourism in Chunar : There are numerous challenges that are posed through diversified factors towards sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism in the study area:

Globalization: Globalization has eminently affected the local culture & ethnicity, customs, traditions, handicrafts and folklores in adverse result. The rate of dynamism in cultures has accelerated over the years. This trend continues at a higher rate than it used to be. This effect deeply and greatly affects the thinking and altitudes of the locals, towards the conservation of the very tangible and intangible heritage that contacts and sustain cultural tourism. Hence, the challenge is how to sustain tourism in this globalized world.

Tourism negative Impacts: Excess of tourist arrivals can bring exploitation and degradation to an area's social cultural, economic and environmental arenas if mechanisms to control and manage its negative impacts are not

in place. Good examples can be taken from crowds of visitors in festivals and fairs which imposes negative impacts of pilgrimage sites in the area.

Local communities' participation and involvement: The challenge on this particular area is how effectively, the communities are participating and involved in the planning processes. Local communities are subject to large influxes from tourism traffic, noise and possible price increase in goods and services. It is, therefore, necessary that their well being needs be addressed in the planning, development, implementation and management processes.

The Quality of tourism services: The quality of the tourism services available in the study area are not up to the mark. There is lack of good transportation services; lack of certified guides & escorts, poor dissemination of information near major tourist spots is a hindrance in the development of sustainable rural tourism in Chunar.

Lack of Government Initiative: There are shortages in various fields such as qualified experts, funding, marketing, facilities and amenities, poor policies, economic and physical planning mechanism, lack of funds for expansion of tourism are seen as issues pilgrimage tourism development.

Lack of Cooperation among stakeholders: Sustainable development of Rural tourism in the area requires that all those concerned learn to deal with conflicts and to explore the creative use of partnerships as a way of sharing knowledge, as well as risks, in tourism development. But it came to see poor cooperation and understanding among different stakeholders involved in touristic activity in Chunar.

Impact Assessment: The sustainable development of tourism requires a continue review of impacts of pilgrimage tourism activity on the area concerned but their lies a shortage of such type of assessment of programmes or policies from both government as well as private stakeholders. In Chunar, concerned authorities are negligible on their working patterns.

Availability of beggars around pilgrimage centre: There exist a crowd of beggars at centers which creates irritation among tourist visited. It indicates the poor management of centers.

Increasing pollutions and litter at the tourist spots: It has been noticed in the study area that during peak season heavy influx of Tourist visited Chunar such as during the festival of Festival seasons and in Monsoon and so on spread the huge amount of solid waste and sanitation problems which cause pollution in Chunar.

Poor road Side amenities: The amenities in Chunar is of poor standard such as poor conditions of cleaning up of road, railway stations, bus stands, poor quality of roads, road dharamshalas, drinking water problems, lack of proper information & communication, problems with local autodrivers and rickshawalas and so on causes interruption in sustainable development of tourism in the area.

Lack of safety & security of tourists: For the Tourists visits but there is lack of safety & security of tourism themselves and their luggage/baggage. There is no provision of tourist police in the area which build the negative image of place in present and potential visitors.

Challenges In Rural Tourism The major challenges of Chunar as a case study needs to preserve the local Art and Culture, Preservation and Conservation of Monuments and Fort and as well as the environment and natural

resources, the need for education, proper understanding for both tourists and local people, and the need to generate a democratic movement which helps people at all levels to participate in tourism development. These are some major challenges are-

- **Lack Of Basic Education** According to 65% of the respondents, lack of literacy is a major problem in rural tourism..
- **Language Problems** 75% of the respondents have said language can be one of the hindrances in rural tourism. Although Hindi is an official language, but in many parts of India people do not understand it.
- **Legislation Problems** 48% of the respondents have pointed out there can be legal problems. All hotels, motels and cottage are located in Varanasi and Mirzapur is having license are paying taxes to the government. According some respondent, the rural tourism should have a tax holiday or it should be tax free. There could be law and order problem.
- **Insufficient Financial Support.** 65% of the respondents have suggested that to start a rural tourism, sufficient fund is required to promote this business. Central government and State government should encourage rural tourism by providing financial support to start the project. Because it will create employment in rural areas and it will also help in flow of fund from urban to rural. It can help in preventing the migration of people from rural area to urban areas.
- **Lack of Trained Manpower** 61% the respondents said that there will problem of trained manpower from hospitality industry. The trained people in hotel management may not be interested to go to rural area to work. The rural people who will be appointed are required to be trained for discharging their duties. Decorating the cottages or suites and maintain them. The success of rural tourism totally depends on the quality of service provided to the tourist.
- **Underdeveloped People** 70% of the respondents said that a vast majority of the rural populations are uneducated and literate; they are bounded by the traditional values and customs. Their culture, religion, superstition have a strong influence on their attitudes and behaviors. But it has been observed that after globalization the rural economy started showing the aspiration to grow, the media is playing an important role in changing the mindset of the rural consumer. They are exposed to different technology by provided through government or non-government initiatives.
- **Lack of Proper Physical Communications** 80% of the respondents said physical communication will be a big problem. Nearly half of the villages in the country do not have all-weather roads and Chunar is affected by the same. For developing in tourism in any rural area we not only need all-weather roads but we also have arrange safe drinking water, electricity, telephone, safety and security, etc
- **Business Planning Skills** 48% of the respondents said that the rural people generally lack in the business acumen. To do any business, they require technical knowledge and skill to organize and maintain it. With the help of government or non-government organization they can prepare business plan. If some outside is preparing a project for rural tourism, the villagers should participate in developing and implementing the project, otherwise it will not going to give much benefit to the rural people.

Advertisement and sales promotion will play a very important role in creating awareness and attracting the customers.

- **Trained Tourist Guide** According to 57% of the respondents availability of trained guide is a problem. The guide plays an important role in attracting tourists. Some of the respondents pointed out that the guide should have thorough knowledge about the place and he or she should be able to generate interest in the mind of tourist to visit the site. The guide can show the album, video film, brochure to give knowledge about the places. The guide should give what he promise during booking.
- **Communication Skills** 71% of the respondent has pointed out the communication will be a major problem. Language and education is the basic hindrance in communication. The ability to communicate effectively is essential. Much of success will depend on your ability to give warm welcome to tourists. They have to understand the tourist wants and needs.

Opportunities

75% for the respondents are interested for rural tourism, if the trip can bring pleasure and relaxation of body and mind. Once in a year, urbanites have expressed their interest to go for rural tourism. Especially to those area where there is beauty of natural elements like mountains, forests, river front, lakes etc. Along with that traditional customs, handicraft of the rural flock, traditional foods and their hosting style and the cultural programmes. Chunar potteries of Chunar have developed some unique selling proposition to attract domestic and foreign tourists. As tourists become more and more educated, more aware of facilities available and more experienced, so their expectation has also increased. People are interested to explore new places. Rural tourism in India has great future, since it not only provides natural elements of beauty but also the indigenous local traditions, customs and foods. Direct experience with local people can be a unique selling proposition to attract tourists. Every state in India has some unique handicraft, traditions and foods. If Chunar can be developed as a Tourist Haat for the Tourist then the Rural tourism should not go for a mass marketing. Rural tourism should develop different strategy for different segment to make it successful. Trying to appeal everyone is a common mistake. To be effective and successful, marketer need to focus on particular segment or segments at a time. Some of the different segments for rural tourism are available for the tourists if the focus will be given to:

- **Family** Family's top preference is entertainment and natural tourism. Cultural tourism is the next choice. All five types of rural tourism i.e. natural, cultural, health, ecotourism and village tourism are interesting for the families.
- **School Children** The school children are interested for excursion, sporting activities like skiing, trekking, camping, river rafting etc. They are interested to study flora and fauna, the native exotic of rural India. They are also interested to study the cultural and traditional values of rural India.
- **Foreigners** Foreign tourists are interested in any type of rural tourism. But they are mostly interested in cultural tourism and health tourism. The tour operators have to market them efficiently and effectively.

- **Corporate** They are interested in natural tourism with entertainment and health tourism.

Recommendations

As tourism development usually involves the financial, socio-cultural and natural resources of an area, it must be designed and managed in a way to achieve economic, social and cultural sustainability. Some of the suggestions that would improve the tourism industry and make it more sustainable include:

Diversifying the areas of tourism: The tourism industry in Varanasi has mainly concentrated on pilgrimage tourism and neglected other forms of tourism to a large extent. It should diversify into other areas, like farm and rural, tourism which have the potential for future growth and development like in underdeveloped areas like Chunar of Mirzapur district etc .

Improving the infrastructure facilities: Tourism development causes increased use of infrastructure like, road lines, railway stations, accommodation facilities, drainage and sanitation facilities etc. need to be enhanced immediately for faster tourism development.

Improving the safety of tourists: Today many tourist specially women are facing many problems from the local people, especially as they do not maintain the hours and come back to the hotel or guest houses late at night. Many of the foreign women have faced molestation and other problems

Use of appropriate promotional technique: Proper marketing and promotion should be implemented in achieving sustainable tourism development. The promotional activity must be acquainted in accurate advertisement of unique characteristics of the area in order to create knowledge of the same to the existing as well as potential tourists.

Focus on the use of eco-friendly products: By taking into account need of sustainability, the focus should be given on the use of eco-friendly products by the various stakeholders. For that purpose, strict laws should be applied in the locality for sustainable tourism development.

Conservation of natural and cultural heritage: Tourism Stakeholders should give proper concentration on the conservation of natural and cultural heritage that is essential for economic sustainability of the region.

Proper regulations and legalization: The government should develop strict standards and regulations for environmental and cultural impact assessment, monitoring and review of existing and proposed tourism development in accordance with local community.

Research and statistics: For the sustainable development of the tourism in the study region, local government and/or other concern authorities maintain the records of the tourists visited to that place, it is beneficial for the

planning and policy formulation as well as emphasis should be given on the research and different projects related to sustainable development of tourism.

Facilitates manpower training and development: There should be constant mechanism for training and developing manpower of international quality. The local people should be trained and aware about implications of tourism development so that they improve the quality standard of hospitality services in the area to ensure the sustainability of tourism at Varanasi.

Use ICT for enhanced productivity and service quality: ICT implementation can provide reliable and speedy information regarding prominent tourism locations, connectivity through rail, road and airlines etc. It should be provided at various prime tourist locations for proper dissemination of information to tourists.

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Chunar in Mirzapur district is not given a proper attention by the government. Governments should recognize importance of rural tourism at priority and help in creating healthy competitive business environment. Government should try to generate data for decision-making bodies investing for developing the human resources, create adequate facilities and suitable infrastructure like accommodation, roads, airport facilities, rail facilities, local transport, communication links and other essential amenities become essential for development of rural tourism.

Conclusion: The study tries to assess the tourism potentials of Chunar and tries to find out the prospects of Rural Tourism opportunities. This research tries to simply tabulate the data so collected and analysis and interpretation done accordingly in order to meet the objectives stated above. The study tries to incorporate only high end International tourist staying at star category hotels in Varanasi. The general belief that only tourist duration of stay is 2-3 days and most visited places is river front (Ganges Ghats) at sunrise and in the evening for Ganga Arti and Sarnath. The myth is broken by this study where they are ready to part away with the recognized itinerary or ready to incorporate Chunar as a new potential aspect and a new travel experience. Even service provider thinks so that lack of novelty has led to repeat tourist of only 5-6% in Chunar. Rural tourism has emerged as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation,

employment generation, environmental regeneration and development of remote areas and advancement of women and other disadvantaged groups in the country apart from promoting social integration and international understanding. It can help inflow to resources from urban to the rural economy. It can prevent migration of rural people to urban. Both short-term and long term planning, implementing and monitoring are vital in avoiding damage to rural areas. Environmental management, local involvement, sound legislation, sustainable marketing, and realistic planning are crucial for development of rural tourism. The government should promote rural tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change. There needs to be sustainable tourism approach through Rural tourism prospects in Chunar, the need of the hour is the marketing skills right from branding, packing, FAM tours of service providers of tourism generating areas, travel writers etc for Chunar and its importance in tourism point of view and explain them the importance of Rural Tourism. The role of Public sector and Private sector will be more to develop Chunar as a potential hub for Rural Tourism to the International tourist as it has a tremendous potential to development. The lack of Government (especially tourism departments) initiatives whereas apathy of local service providers has been a genuine reason behind it for not getting due attention. There are lot of potential in Chunar as a new prospective approach for tourism point of view by rejuvenating and developing the dyeing ceramic pottery industry there which is in a very bad shape. A Chunar Haat can be also developed as a concept of Pipli Handicraft Village of Odhisa and Delhi Haat. There is a strong needs to be a descriptive study on the said subject and this study for enhancing the interest for further researches on this field where feasibility aspect is taken care of.

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