Exploring Visual Imagery: A Comparative Study of the Poetry of John Keats and Ghani Khan Imran Khan

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Abstract

The poetic works of John Keats and Ghani Khan need no introductory notes to illustrate without exception their positions in English and Pashto literature respectively. A study of English literature is incomplete by not including the poetic contributions of Keats, who is far more mature in his ideas as compared to his immature age. The same is the prestige of Pashto poet Ghani Khan in molding Pashto literature as per modern poetic trends. This study is a comparative analysis of visual imagery employed in the poetry of these two great poets, who belong to different lands, cultures and ages. John Keats, an English Romantic poet, incorporates vivid visual imagery in his poetic language to portray the theme of immortality, truth, and beauty to evoke the emotions of the readers. In contrast, Ghani Khan, a prominent Pashto poet, utilizes valid and apt visual imagery in his poetry to convey the theme of mysticism, nature, mortality of life, love, and beauty. The research also identifies gaps in existing cross-cultural comparisons and East-West literary conventions in the domain of the use of visual imagery in the genre of poetry. This research study places emphasis on the similarities and differences in the poets' approaches based on visual imagery and explores the effects of cultural contexts on their poetical expressions. At length, this study illuminates the role of visual imagery employed by John Keats and Ghani Khan in their respective poetry for a better comprehension and understanding of poetical expressions and to inspire the readers.

Keywords: Romanticism; Visual imagery; Comparative Analysis; Poetry; Imaginations.

Introduction

A comparative study is of utmost importance, especially in literature to highlight the current trends in literature of one country with that of another. This sort of comparison in literary genre leads us to new horizons and we can't understand an abstract idea from the point of view of its internal coherence without doing so concerning to its external social context. Moreover, this craze of comparison leads us to innovation and a better understanding of the theme incorporated by a specific writer of another country, culture, and age. A lot of research has been conducted over the last few decades to compare the poetry of our Pashto famous poet Ghani Khan with that of English Romantic Poets for commonality in theme and the use of other literary devices. Such studies have been done with respect to Romanticism, Colonialism, Post Colonialism, Feminism and Marxist perspectives as well as comparative elements in their poetry. The visual imagery which provides a deep understanding of the meaning of the poet's views has not yet been studied comparatively with respect to English Romantics and Ghani Khan. So, a lot of work is still required to be accomplished in this domain. As differed from the prior studies, this research compares different types of visual images applied by John Keats and Ghani Khan in their respective poetry. The present study uses the research methodology of comparative analysis will open up new horizons of knowledge with respect to the employment of visual imagery and comparative study as well. This research will explore the importance of visual imagery for portraying meaning in such a way that the readers will get a complete understanding of the text in hand and its further usage for better communication with others.

Focus of the Study

The importance of comparative study is manifold, especially in literature. Because the researchers get familiarity with the trends in vogue in the literature of a particular country. Then, that specific style or fashion of writing can be easily applied in the literature of other regions. This sort of comparison in a literary genre leads us to new horizons and allows social scientists to build broad theories that are applied in different contexts. Moreover, this passion for comparison leads us to novelty and a better understanding of the themes and other literary devices incorporated by a specific writer of another country, culture, and age. Research studies have been done with respect to Romanticism, colonialism, post colonialism, feminism and Marxist perspectives as well as comparative elements in their poetry. However, the comparison of visual imagery employed by Ghani Khan and other English Romantics is the neglected facet in this perspective. Visual imagery which provides a deep understanding of the meaning of the poet's views has not yet been studied comparatively with respect to John Keats and Ghani Khan in their respective poetry. The current research based upon the methodology of comparative analysis opens up new horizons of knowledge with reference to the application of visual imagery and comparative study as well. The study explores the importance of visual imagery for better comprehension of the text.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to compare the use of visual imagery incorporated in the selected poems of English Romantics poet John Keats and Pashto poet Ghani Khan. This research utilizes the concept and the use of visual imagery applied by these poets to portray their message in a more meaningful and comprehensible way. The research also aims to explore the similarities and differences in the use of visual imagery between Keats and Khan. The study investigates the influence of cultural contexts, personal experiences and artistic faculties on the use of visual imagery in their respective poetry. A comparative study is performed to analyze the selected poems from both the poets to discover the significance of visual imagery to invoke emotional resonance in their poetical works.

Research Objectives

The following are the research objectives that were drawn:

- 1. To highlight the significance of visual imagery used in the poetry of Keats and Ghani Khan for better comprehension of meaning.
- 2. To discover the logical frameworks underlying the use of visual imagery by John Keats and Ghani Khan justify for their similarities and differences?

Research Questions

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1. What is the significance of visual imagery used in the poetry of Keats and Ghani Khan for better comprehension of meaning?
- 2. How do the logical frameworks underlying the use of visual imagery by John Keats and Ghani Khan justify for their similarities and differences?

Delimitation

The present comparative study is confined to the poems given below.

- 1. Ode on a Grecian Urn (John Keats)
- 2. Shandana; Ghani Khan's daughter (Ghani Khan)

Literature Review

The term imagery has been derived from Old French "imageries" which means figure, drawing or portrait. In literature; imagery is a sort of visual symbolism, or figurative language that exclusively appeals to the senses and create a mental image. This art is commonly used by writers/poets for a better portraval of their intended sense. The current study is the manifestation of the comparative use of this term in the chosen poems of both the poets. It is argued that John Keats and Ghani Khan have used visual imagery excessively in their respective poetic works. In this scenario, a bunch of research studies have been conducted on the poetry of John Keats and Ghani Khan. Kumar, A. (2019) says about Keats that, "His poetry is full of visual images, for Keats uses words to paint his poetic picture. A study conducted in 2017 by Naylor Amanda probed visual imagery in Keats' poetry that Keats ability to combine the senses allows the reader to produce lively images of the text. In parallel, Ghani Khan's poetry is also a mosaic packed with colorful visual images. According to Iqbal, Awan, Ullah, and Ali, N. (2014) Ghani Khan's poetry has many elements found in modernist literature such as use of allusions, free verse, modernist sensual imageries, symbolism and distrust in religious doctrines and government institutions. The visual images incorporated by Ghani Khan in his poetry reflect beauty, love, cultural and spiritual subject matter. Ghani Khan's poetry is an umbrella , covering multiple facets of life, encompassing the domain of realism, romanticism, rationalism, mysticism, materialism, nature, ignorance, and exploitation of ordinary men at the hands of local elites (khans) and the half-educated preachers (mullahs) (Ahmed et al., 2022). So, it is well-justified that the thematic study of the poetry of Ghani Khan has been highlighted at every forum, but its form and make-up especially the use of visual imagery has been ignored at all. In contrast, without a doubt, the works of John Keats have been widely analyzed for its each and every facet.

Another comparative study in 2021 titled, "Counter-Orientalist Approach: A Comparative Exploration of Thematic Universality in English Poet John Keats and Pashto Poet Ghani Khan" reveals that the comparison is only confined to the thematic issue only while the use of literary devices like, symbols, imageries, metaphors etc. have not been addressed. Although, these poets have a great love for beauty and use visual imagery in ample to engage their readers emotionally. The style of expression of both the poet is natural one. Despite some similarities between the poets there is contrast as well. The visual images employed by Keats is more ornate while that of Ghani Khan is simple and straightforward.

Previous studies (Bacha and Bibi, 2010); (Khattak, 2011); and (Bezar and Tareen, 2018) have explored a comparison between Keats and Ghani Khan, reflection of social reality in Khan's poetry, and the elements of modern poetry from Ghani Khan's selected poems. Bacha and Bibi (2010) have too investigated similar elements in the poetry of Ghani Khan and John Keats with the perspective of romanticism. Iqbal et al. (2014) perceives some modern key features of the poetry of Ghani Khan like; rejection of authority, fragmented narrative, and scattered visual images. This study explores the neglected area of comparison between John Keats and Ghani Khan with the perspective of visual imagery. In the current research, visual imagery employed by both the poets has been investigated on the base of similarities and differences underlying the works of these poets within the context of their cultural and biographical differences. From the previous studies it is concluded that both poets, although belonging to different eras, used similar diction up to some extent for a better portrayal of their intended meanings. Therefore, this research is conducted to compare both Keats and Ghani Khan's poetry based upon the use of visual imagery.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework for this comparative study is the Conflict Theory formulated by Karl Marx. The theory is applied to compare the visual imagery employed in the poetry of Keats and Ghani Khan to conduct this research. In Marx's words Conflict Theory is defined as, "Society as a whole is more and more splitting

up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—Bourgeoisie and Proletariat" (Marx and Engels 1848). The bourgeoisie holds on major resources and high position of society due to their supremacy, control, and capital assets. In contrast, the proletariat is the labor group, afflicted and oppressed from the laws and poverty. The constant effort of conflicting group bring forth the achievement in development and progress of society (Croser, 2019). The main concept of the conflict theory is that there is a continuous in the activities of different social classes. The unjust distribution of power and authority lead to conflict in society. The competition is not only for tangible resources but also for intangible goods such as social status, domination or oppression (Koop, 2021). As, it is obvious that Keats and Ghani Khan both belong to different social background, cultural contexts, literary epochs, and political structures. So, the Conflict Theory is valid to study their poetry. The selected poems of John Keats and Ghani Khan are analyzed on the basis of the use of visual imagery in their respective poetical works.

Research Methodology

The researcher employed a qualitative research methodology in this comparative study. Creswell (2018) argues that qualitative data analysis covers the process of obtaining data, constructing, interpretations, and producing written reports. In the study qualitative research methodology is incorporated for the purpose of assessment of the selected texts. Data was collected in two ways. The poems; "Shandana" by Ghani Khan and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by Keats were selected as primary data for the study. Secondary data were collected from the published books and the articles written about different perspectives of their poetry. In the first phase as procedure of analysis, Ghani Khan's poem "Shandana" was read and marked out the words and phrases in which visual imagery have been used. In the second phase, Keats' poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn" was read and analyzed with the viewpoint of visual imagery. In the third phase, both the poems were comparatively analyzed in order to unearth the use of visual imagery from both the poems for seeking the findings of the present study.

John Keats

John Keats was an English Romantic poet, who was a doctor by profession. He was born on October 31, 1795 in London (England). He was the eldest son of Thomas and Frances Jennings Keats. In 1803 Keats was sent to Clarke's school in Enfield and won his first academic prize in 1809. In 1815 he finished his apprenticeship with Hammond and registered as a medical student at Guy's Hospital. Medical training in this hospital took up a big portion of his writing time and he became increasingly in a dilemma about it. He wrote his first poem, "An Imitation of Spenser", in 1814, at the age of 19. At this age he was strongly drawn by ambition as well as inspired by fellow poets such as Leigh Hunt and Lord Byron. In 1816, Keats received his license to practice as a physician and surgeon, but he resolved to be a poet, not a surgeon. In 1816, Leigh Hunt published Keats' sonnet "O Solitude" in his magazine The Examiner, a famous magazine of the day. One of the main characteristics of Keats' poetry is its richness of visual imagery, notably in the series of his odes. He used poetic imagery to portray his extreme emotions. His most popular and analyzed odes and poems in English literature are "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "Ode to psyche", "Ode on Melancholy", "Ode on Indolence", Endymion, "Sleep and Poetry" and the sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer". "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is his famous ode that is rich in visual imagery to its fullest.

Ghani Khan

Abdul Ghani Khan is a Pakistani Pashtun philosopher and poet, also known is "Mad Philosopher". He was born in 1914 at Hashtnagar, Charsadda in 1914 in the home of a famous Pashtun political activist Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Ghani Khan was renowned for his poetry both nationally and internationally (Khan, 2013). He has used a unique style and structure in his poetry that is contrary to the traditional style and

structure of Pushto poetry. His poetry is Romantic in nature and can be compared to the English Romantic poets for the inclusion of Romantic elements. Although, his all poems are rich in the use of visual imagery, but the researcher in this study is concerned with his versatile poem, "Shandana" (Ghani Khan's daughter).

Discussion and Analysis

The selected poems have been analyzed for the incorporation of visual imagery. Visual imagery refers to the imagery which produces a mental image and can be visualized by the mind's eye when relevant words are used in a poem. The words describe something in such a way that manipulate a visual structure in the mind of the reader. Physical structure, color, shape and size are included in the category of visual imagery. It appeal to the sense of sight in the mind in such a way that readers or listeners become able to envision something while reading something or listening to someone. The great Greek scholar Aristotle tells about the importance of visual imagery, "The soul never thinks without an image." Following are the verses taken from John Keats' poetical work, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "Shandana" written by Ghani Khan for the incorporation of visual imagery.

Ode on a Grecian Urn

At the very first, visual imagery used by Keats in this Ode is its title, "The Grecian Urn" that creates a beautiful image of an Urn in the mind of its readers/listeners. In the first stanza the poet tells about the nature of the urn;

"Thou still unravished bride of quietness."

While reading this 'unravish'd bride', a visual image of a handsome and a young bride is produced in the mind of readers. The bride seems to be sitting in a beautiful chair in a beautiful wedding location and wearing beautiful marriage-dress. This visual image is more captivating, because it compares the beauty and purity of the urn with that of a handsome bride.

Another visual imagery indicating the urn is;

"Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme."

It means that there are some maps/drawings on the surface of the urn that can express tales of ancient times better than the writings of the historians. This visual imagery take our imagination to some ancient times and tells about a tale in more details than books of history.

The 'leaf fringed legend' is also a visual imagery which indicates that the urn has a decorum with various scenes, especially with the green leaves of trees.

"What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape."

The first stanza ends with visual imageries; men of gods, maidens, mad pursuit, struggle to escape, pipes/timbrels and wild ecstasy. All these images produce vivid pictures in the mind of its readers.

"What men of gods are these? What maidens loth? What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape? What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?"

In the second stanza the poet describes the visual imagery of a young piper sitting under some trees that represents rustic life with its captivating scenery;

"Fair youth, beneath the trees."

The poet then shows via words a beautiful image of two young lovers. Although, they are very near to kiss one another, but there is a gap between their lips. The poet then motivates them not to be upset, because

they will be in love in this manner forever. And the girl shown on the urn will always be beautiful. This imagery creates a sense of immortality of the scene.

"Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss, Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve; She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss, For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!"

The poet then narrates a visual image of boughs full of green leaves, and melodist piping songs. Keats thinks that the greenery of the leaves on the boughs and the melodist songs of the pipes will be there forever on the surface of urn, in the same way his suffering of misery and frustration will never end. He says;

Ah, happy, happy boughs! That cannot shed Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu; And happy melodist, unwearied, For ever piping songs for ever new;

Another visual imagery used by the poet in the third stanza, continues to produce a vivid picture in our mind. The visual image is of a procession going towards a place of worship. The image of an unknown priest who leads a young calf for the sacrifice. The calf of up-raised head is decorated with garlands of flowers. The green altar also represents visual imagery in the given stanza. The poet says;

"Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?"

Visual imagery has also been shown in the following stanza and that is of a *little town situated by a river* or a sea shore or a mountain and a strong castle built therein.

Keats says;

"What little town by river or sea shore Or mountain built with peaceful citadel,"

In the last stanza of the poem, the poet expresses his emotions via lucid visual imagery of the urn as 'Fair attitude' that contains marble men and over-excited maidens, and 'cold pastoral' as;

"O Attic shape! Fair attitude! With brede Of marble men and maidens overwrought, With forest branches and the trodden weed; Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!"

At length, John Keats' use of visual imagery is very vivid and captivating, so, creates a beautiful picture in the mind of the readers. This beautiful usage of visual imagery not only shows the powerful imaginations of the poet, but also provide an easy understanding of the meaning and theme of the poem. The theme of immortality has also been highlighted in every stanza of the Ode.

Shandana (Ghani Khan's daughter)

This poem by Pashto famous poet Ghani Khan is written on the birth of his daughter Shandana. The poem is rich in the use of vivid visual imagery and can be aptly compared with Keats' Ode on a Grecian Urn. The poem is captivating due to the immense use of visual imagery carefully selected and presented in an exquisite way that evokes emotional resonance of its readers. His use of beautiful visual imagery paints a striking picture of beauty piled up in the creation of his daughter Shandana. The poem allows its readers to visualize the beauty by the use of words as done by John Keats in his Ode on a Grecian Urn. Through the use of well-crafted imageries, Ghani Khan captures the essence of his subject, inviting readers to immerse

themselves in the use of vibrant scenes he creates, thus enhancing the overall impact of his poetry. The vivid visual imagery not only represents the aesthetic qualities portrayed by Ghani Khan of his surroundings but also serves to convey profound philosophical insights which make the poem "Shandana" a powerful identity and existence for its richness of visual imagery.

In the starting lines the poet portrays his emotions by the use of a visual imagery as "A drop of moonlight drowned in beauty's moonlit waters" and "A splash of starlight" as;

A drop of moonlight
Drowned in beauty's moonlit waters;
A splash of starlight
Woven in the dreams of youth;

The upcoming lines are immensely rich in the use of visual imagery as; "Fine lips from the crescent formed", "Rays from two bright stars" and "ocean of eternal love" are its vivid examples;

Fine lips from the crescent formed; Rays from two bright stars Spilt on an ocean of eternal love;

There are others visual imageries used by the poet which continue to produce a crystal clear picture in the mind of the readers. These images are "both the flowers", "its loving bee", and "the branches of timeless tree."

Both the flower, its loving bee, And the nightingale's sweet song. When your fingers searched The branches of the timeless Tree of time;

The poet then expresses his imaginations via words and describes beautiful visual image of "a fair rose bathed in celestial light." The poet attributes the tears of his daughter to his sadness and her laughter to his joy. "Tears and laughter" are also visual images well-crafted in the given verses.

They located this fair rose, Bathed in celestial light. All your tears and our laughter, All our longings and our joys.

Then, there is a galaxy of visual imageries in the undermentioned verse as; "the drop of the new moon", "the pleading eyes", "and the heavens", "the pearl", and "the black ocean." These images produces beautiful imageries in the mind of the readers/listeners;

The drop of the new moon Spared us of her light. When I, my pleading eyes Turned to the heavens; The pearl you brought From ecstasy's dark ocean,

An exquisite necklace of visual images has been presented by the poet in the following lines as; "the trembling fingers", "the proud folds of my turban", "the dance of butterfly", "little dew drop bathed in light", "stolen blossom and the garden of god."

And placed, with trembling fingers, In the proud folds of my turban; And, the dance of the butterfly; Little dewdrop bathed in light;

Stolen blossom From the garden of the gods;

In the last verses of the poem, the poet squeezes out his feelings by vivid visual imageries as; "Two streams joined in a little rivulet", "another Abaseend", and "unwind through flowering fields".

Two streams joined in a little rivulet; Grow little one, become another Abaseend; Unwind yourself through flowering fields, Across your native land.

It is clear from the analysis of the Ghani Khan's poem Shandana that the poem is packed with a beautiful mosaic of visual images which makes the poem to create bewitching effects on the readers/listeners. The use of these charismatic and dazzling images in the poem manifest lofty thinking and imagination of the poet. Moreover, the use of such visual images in the poem enable the readers to fully understand the meaning and theme of the poem.

Findings/Results

A comparative study is often preferred, because it broadens our views and opens up new skylines of knowledge because there is a comparison between two writers/poets who belong to two different countries, cultures and languages as well as ages. *English Romantic poet John Keats and Pashto famous poet Ghani Khan are famous for the use of rich visual imagery in their poetry. Such visual imagery not only enthrall the readers but, also makes a distribution to create lucid pictures in the reader's mind.*

The first similarity between these poets in the use of visual imagery is that they incorporate the elements of nature to portray the desired meaning. It means that the visual imageries they employ in their poetry are closely related to the elements of nature which are very much familiar to an ordinary common man. John Keats uses the images of flowers, trees, mountains, river and riverside to explore the themes of beauty. In the same way, Ghani Khan incorporates natural elements such as, mountains, rivers, riverside, ocean, flowers, moon and stars etc.

Keats is a popular poet known for his lush and colorful description of objects that appeal to the senses of the readers. Similarly, Ghani Khan uses the same techniques of colorful environment and objects to visualize his ideas to produce emotional resonance.

Another similar aspect of both the poets is their use of nightingale as symbol. In Ghani Khan's poem "Shandana" it is mentioned as;

Both the flower, its loving bee, And the nightingale's sweet song.

On the Keats' side there is a complete ode to nightingale to represent the use of this bird as symbol.

Moreover, a striking common element in the poetry of both the poets is that they use visual imagery to evoke strong emotion in the hearts of the readers. Keats' visual imagery produces the feelings of zeal and melancholy, while that of Ghani khan creates deep love towards cultural identity and pride therein.

Another similarity in the poetry of Keats and Ghani Khan is that they both worship beauty as the common subject. Keats glorifies the beauty of the natural world while Ghani Khan hunts for beauty in cultural context. So, when the subject matter is same then, definitely there will be similarity in the use of visual imagery to portray the ideas pertaining to beauty.

There are not only similarities between Keats and Ghani Khan in the use of visual imagery in their poetical works, but bear differences as well. John Keats often employs visual imagery for an ideal description of the beauty of nature to evoke the emotions of readers. On the other hand Ghani Khan incorporates visual imagery to glorify the beauty of local culture, homeland, folklore and the essence of strong religious beliefs. Keats's imagery is characterized for its detailed descriptions and engagement of multiple senses to create vivid picture in the reader's mind. His use of color, light, and texture enhances the emotional depth of his

poetry. In its contrast, Ghani Khan creates emotional connection with his readers with a more straightforward and accessible style. His visual imagery is direct and focusing on the essence of the subject rather than embellishing it with ornate details.

Keats frequently uses visual imagery symbolically, where specific images represent larger themes such as immortality and beauty. For example, the nightingale in Keats' poetry symbolizes the eternal beauty of art and nature. On the other hand, Ghani Khan's poetry often interweaves visual imagery with philosophical and mystical themes. His visual images evokes its readers through the reflection of the sense of mortality of life, love, beauty, and the human condition.

Conclusion

This is the conclusion of this research work. The research is a comparative analysis of the use of visual imagery in the poetical works of John Keats and Ghani Khan. This study has attempted to include Pashto poet Ghani Khan in the group of Romantics poets and to give an international fame to this poet by comparing his poetry with that of John Keats. This is a qualitative research employing the comparative methodology that has investigated visual imagery used by Ghani Khan and Keats in their respective poetry. John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" has been compared with Ghani Khan's poem, "Shandana" for the use of visual imagery. These poems act as primary data for this research work and have been analyzed for the comprehensive use of visual imagery. The collected data are analyzed comparatively. The study manifests that there are similarities as well as differences in the incorporation of visual imagery by both the poets. These significant parallels and distinctions elevate our understanding of both the poets' artistic expressions. John Keats visual images, often evokes the beauty of nature and the immortal nature of arts, entice the readers to immerse themselves in the depth of his poetical expression. On the other hand, Ghani Khan's visual images reflect the cultural and the mortal nature of beauty which create the themes of identity and mortality.

In the poetical works of both the poets visual imagery has been utilized as a powerful tool that engages the readers to the text emotionally. Keats's visual imagery gives prominence to natural beauty and the everlasting nature of the beauty of art. In contrast, Khan's work is based upon reality and the ephemeral state of life, beauty and art.

Moreover, this research accentuates the importance of visual imagery in poetry for a better understanding and comprehension as well as emotional engagement of the readers. Visual imagery not only enhances the aesthetic quality of poetry but also serves as a channel for easy understanding of the common. In this scenario, future research could further investigate how these visual elements influence reader interpretation and emotional response, thereby expanding the discourse on the role of visual imagery in poetry. This research is a start up in opening up new domains in the realm of comparative study about the vitality of visual imagery. The upcoming researchers and readers are encouraged to provide valid and well-founded criticism to this study. They are expected to carry out a more appropriate comparative analysis to get more comprehensive findings and conclusions.

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