

# The Role of migration on the changing language culture of the city: A sensory navigation of Bangalore's Marketplaces

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**Abstract:** As a global and social phenomenon, migration encircles a range of movements initiated by individuals or groups of people from one geographical location to another. From securing lives to receiving better employment opportunities, migrations have instrumented several changes. This research paper discusses the effect of Tamil migrations to Bangalore, influencing Tamil to become one of the predominant languages spoken in the city's marketplaces. The focal point of this exploration emerged from a series of conversations I got exposed to within a marketplace, where the vendors and consumers were heard speaking in Tamil rather than interacting in the state's official language, Kannada. The study has utilized a qualitative approach, using interviews as the primary method for data collection. It involved asking open-ended questions to converse with the vendors. I selected this particular method to understand the vendor's opinions on the language change in the city and the phenomena they have experienced. Using the theories of language change as the primary theoretical framework, the findings indicate that although Tamil remains dominant in the interactions with their fellow vendors, nonetheless, through their engagement with their consumers, they consider the markets as multilingual and multicultural spaces. Through the sensory approach, this paper aims to create a new scope for researchers in academicians in Sociolinguistics, South Asian Studies, and Urban Studies within the Indian subcontinent.

**Keywords:** Migration, Language Change, Tamil Migration, Bangalore, Marketplaces, Sensory Approach

## Introduction

Over the years, people have moved across towns, cities, states, and perhaps countries for a myriad of reasons. It is one of the most challenging decisions taken by them when they decide to move away from their homelands. Although movements within and across territories are considered a historical process, it is highly reflective in contemporary times. The term "migration" encircles a variety of movements and situations undertaken by people from all walks of life and backgrounds. In an era of rapidly increasing globalization, migration touches upon people within different states and countries rooted in trade and cultural exchange. Nevertheless, it has always been a heated topic of discussion more so in the current times than in the past.

Historically, India is identified as both the source and destination for internal and international migration. As Chinmay Tumble mentions in his seminal work *India Moving: A History of Migration*, "It is a well-established tradition in the country" (Srivastava). Although the beginnings of migrations to the Indian subcontinent can be traced back to the movements of the Aryans, the internal migration was comparatively less during the earlier periods. Most of the internal migrations are stemmed due to increased urbanization, employment, education, better standards of living, safety, environmental factors, and so on.

Apart from migration to and from the northern part of India, in the south, many Tamilians, Telugites, Kannadigas, and Malayalis extended their internal and international diaspora during the medieval, colonial, and even modern eras. Since many of them wanted to experience better standards of living, they moved after receiving invites from the neighboring states and countries. These were skilled in different labor forces which included artisans, traders, craftsmen, farmers, and priests from different sections of the society. This further widened their scope to flourish in the newly moved cities.

When a migrant move to a new city, town, or country, they come in contact with various factors. They are either political, cultural, environmental, educational or transport factors. Whereas under cultural and ethnic factors, one factor that has directly impacted the migrant groups is language change. A language is a tool that fuses people speaking different languages. Language sounds, words, and grammatical structures may be adopted or eliminated in a bilingual or multilingual environment depending on the number of speakers living within the area or district by coming in contact with other speakers.

In the south of India, Bangalore, also known as Bengaluru is one of the few districts that have a larger amalgamation of migrants from diverse cultures. It is the capital of Karnataka state in the southwest region of India. From its early days, Bangalore has had a rich history of welcoming migrants. Half of the city's population constitutes these migrants from different regions of the country. Data from 2011 census reports suggest that Tamil-speaking migrants hold a majority position compared to the other migrants of the city. Although other languages such as Telugu, Urdu, Hindi, and Malayalam are identified in the city, the migrants mainly spoke Tamil among their people.

The Tamil migrants were the constant contributors to the secondary sector. Since most migrants engage in informal jobs due to the lack of demanded skills, there has always been endemic competition with other migrants from Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and North-eastern states. These migrants have also faced competition against the intra-state migrants in terms of space.

From working as daily wage laborers under their masters, the Tamil migrants progressed by contributing to the social and economic development of the city.

In a metropolis like Bangalore, marketplaces are the soul of the city. In contrast to other cities of historical and commercial importance, Bangalore has the most diverse markets within the city. The histories of these marketplaces were shaped partly by different waves of migrations that transformed the city. This indicates the role of diversity in making the marketplace both multilingual and multicultural at the same time. In recent studies on migration concerning South Indian states, migrants who engage in business and trade belong to second and third-generation Tamil-speaking families. Their forefathers moved to Bangalore during the city's different waves of migration. Even after them, many folds of migrations took place in Bangalore, which is observed today. Altogether these migrants played a significant role in constructing the modern Bangalore city.

City spaces play an influential role in generating experiences. While walking in the city, our senses play a crucial role in navigating our rational grounds for knowledge and action (Spence 2). Sensory mapping is a new method of investigation that helps in recovering hidden layers of places and the rich sensory experiences bound by them. Methods used in the sensory mapping of the city unfold for two reasons mainly: To understand the embodied experiences within city spaces and to understand the quality of city space and its everyday use.

The present research idea emerged from a sensory experience encountered in a local market in Bangalore. I got exposed to a series of conversations within a marketplace where the vendors and the consumers were heard speaking in Tamil rather than talking in the state's official language, Kannada. I further developed the idea by generating two observations that have become integral in this research paper. Firstly, the city witnessed the migration of Tamil-speaking people from Tamil Nadu and Telugu-speaking people from Andhra Pradesh over the centuries for labor, trade, and better settlement. Secondly, despite knowing the language of both the state and others, the vendors chose to speak Tamil, Telugu, and other Indian vernacular languages to attract more consumers and maintain diversity within the marketplace.

In this paper, I argue the role of Tamil migrations on the changing language in the marketplaces through the sensory approach of listening to conversations among the vendors and consumers. The paper has explored further its three objectives that have become crucial to achieving the study's purpose. They are: To sensory map, the market sites in Bangalore occupied by the Tamil speaking vendors, understand the impact of migration on language over the marketplaces, and describe the current status of Tamil spoken in the marketplaces in Bangalore.

The market is a broad term. It encompasses any forms of trade facilitated between the buyers and sellers in an open setting. Studies on markets have been extensively pursued in commerce, business, and management. As a factor of urbanization, markets contribute to the functioning of socio-economic activities within the cities. Markets compose people from diverse cultures and hail from different sections of society. Over time the influence of such heterogeneity transforms these places into multilingual and multicultural at the same time. They have a rich tapestry of migration stories that come along with them. Hence the research paper aims to set an interdisciplinary direction on how the marketplaces of the city are explored through the concept of migration and, subsequently, its effect on language.

## Survey of Literature

Existing studies and literature define migration as the permanent or temporary move of individuals or groups of people from one geographical location to another, but it is much more than that. People initiate the movement for various reasons, right from seeking better employment opportunities to securing life from violent attacks (Zanker 12). The significant increase in the number of people moving within the states, countries, and across borders has made migration the most discernable and considerable facet of globalization. As we live in a world where movements of all types have intensified, migration has accentuated the significance of locations. This means that migrations and migrants restructure space and create places that reflect where people come from, how they have migrated, and their relation to the new society (Arif and Moliner 3).

As a social phenomenon, migration sets distant places concerning each other by creating specific relational spaces (Ibid 4). A space can be identified as embracing a network of places, which is a combination of the location (the answer to where?), locale (the site for materials), and a sense of a place (refers to both emotional and social attachment to place) (Agnew 607). As the patterns of migration become embedded in people's lives, it becomes comprehensive to accept multilocality as part of their everyday lives. For example, when migrants move to different diasporic spaces as part of their work contracts indicates work-induced mobility in the area. Their identity is extracted based on the references to their life experiences and place of origin. The migrants do not belong just to where they are; instead, they become part of a more extensive network of social and spatial relations.

In her work on viewing migrants, Massey argued place as extraverted. It is a thin network that connects each site, forming positive connections. Hence migrant areas cannot be only restricted to their immediate social relations and economic environment but also create a global web of ties among the scattered communities. It has become an essential factor that has contributed to the economic development and workforce planning of a country. They maintain different levels in degrees of contact with their place of origin (Rao 24). Migrants from groups based on their shared culture and ideology live in separate neighborhoods. When they try to recreate their culture at their place of destination, it results in cultural pluralism.

As a feature of cultural pluralism, migration leads to establishing contact with other languages. Although transparent, both migration and language interact in a complex way (Kerswill 2). Depending on their time of exposure to the space, they either learn the language or continue speaking in their native language. One of the most remarkable linguistic effects of migration is the formation of new dialects. This happens when the migrants try to infuse their language of origin with the language of their destination. Migrants who have exposure to speaking only a single language tend to encounter such a phenomenon. As migration varies in space, time, and motivation, the type of migration and language vary in contact (Ibid 3).

Better language proficiency ensures better assimilation of migrants to the host city/country. Through language, the migrants are guaranteed better job opportunities, among other things (Adesera and Pytlikova 342). Gaining language skills influences several non-economic outcomes for migrants, such as social integration, building more extensive social networks, active political participation, civic engagement, educational attainments, healthcare benefits, and family life. Language assures migrants to learn about other determinants of migration. Despite being essential to understanding the language of the host city/country, migrants communicate in their mother tongue when they come in contact with other fellow migrants coming from the corresponding place and identity.

India has a rich history of migration. People started moving to different areas from time immemorial. Sikhs, Nepalese, Tamil diasporans, and Indian returnees were some of the significant South Asian communities who migrated from India and scattered around the regions of Europe, North America, Middle-east and the Indian ocean (Varrel 8). Interestingly, some of them migrated within the country at the state and regional levels. City spaces are critical in constructing migrant landscapes (Brickell and Datta 2016). Cities reflect and influence the migratory movements, politics, identities, and narratives on the intersection between place and displacement, location and mobility, and settlement and return. The unprecedented growth of migration to cities is due to the push and pull factors resulting in socioeconomic pressures at the place of the destination (Singh and Biradar 75).

The Tamil migration or Tamil diasporans constitute a significant part of the migration history in south India. This migration took place in different waves at different periods. Right from medieval times, the rulers of the Chola dynasty, a prominent Tamil Thalassocratic empire that ruled South India, encouraged people from Tamil Nadu to move to the different regions of Karnataka. They aimed to spread their settlements by increasing their growth of trade and commerce, building religious settings, and establishing 'Agraharas' and offices of the kingdom for administrative purposes (Surebanker 604).

Bangalore holds a more significant concentration of Tamil migrants than the other Karnataka districts. Even after the decline of the Chola rulers, Tamilians continued to migrate to Karnataka, specifically to Bangalore (Ibid 605). Kempegowda, a chieftain under the Vijayanagara Empire and the founder of Bangalore city, invited many skilled artisans, traders, and craftsmen from the neighboring states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh to migrate to the new city to pursue their vocations. Even during the reign of the Mysore Kingdom, Tipu Sultan, also known as the Tiger of Mysore, is reported to have invited migrant laborers from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh to support the development of his military industry (Dev).

The process of creating neighborhoods in Bangalore was one of the transnational practices of elite migrants. This study justifies that a combination of global actors, both the state and the regional economic and political entrepreneurs, are included in making a local place. However, after the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire, the British Colonial rule period transformed the city's demography (Kumar). After the British engineers discovered the proximity of Bangalore to other cities, they constructed the cantonment in the town. As they already had a base in the Madras Presidency, they brought in many skilled laborers from Tamil Nadu to Bangalore for the construction. Pavanann, in his book '*Naan Kanda Bengaluru*,' highlighted that T Ananda Rao, Arcot Mudaliar, and K Sheshadri Iyer were referred to as the makers of modern Bangalore. All these three eminent Tamilians came to Bangalore in three distant periods. Their contributions to the city span from encouraging education for children from all social classes, building schools for girls, building hydroelectric power stations, and introducing various administrative and social reforms to better the people and the city. They were also responsible for making town areas like Malleswaram and Basavangudi, which have become some of the prominent busiest areas of the city today.

Languages that are spoken in metropolitan cities usually have a mixed vocabulary, where one can get vocabulary from more than one language. It is speech that connects language among the other city dwellers from heterogeneous communities. The regulators of such languages are in marketplaces, railway stations, bus-stand, auto-stand, tea stalls, and tourist spots, and only they can make it possible. A good percentage of all prominent Indian language speakers residing in urban spaces in such a multilingual situation is to be found. To take the example of using such language in the market is to know about something and get something. The 2011 census data reveals that almost all the prominent Indian language speakers are exposed to such a situation. Tamilians embrace Kannada culture and call Karnataka their home. The migrant laborers were allowed Akshraya houses and lands by the government. Although their mother tongue is Tamil, they are fluent in Kannada. Apart from teaching Kannada to the children belonging to the migrant communities, the teachers employed in public schools learn Tamil to help the Tamil migrant community (Lakshmana). Even after adopting the culture and customs of the alien culture, they have been the target of several linguistic-based violent attacks. One was the Cauvery water dispute that targeted many Tamil migrants and their businesses. Even the previous conflicts on the water sharing issue forced many migrants to move back to their lands.

As the city of Traders, Bangalore's marketplaces are quite diverse and have traders and vendors from different parts of the country. The inscriptions written during other period gives details about the migrants in Bangalore's marketplaces (Malli). Hence the public

spaces in Bangalore were openly multilingual. It is not necessary to communicate in Kannada. Thus, the presence of Kannada is turning out to be weak. Before independence, the Tamil migrants lived near the Cantonment area. They spoke Tamil throughout the 20th century, and its effects can be observed even after that. Statistics from the 2011 census reveal that most interstate migrants to Bangalore are from Tamil Nadu.

However, diversity and cosmopolitanism have been a central part of Bangalore's character. Being the lowest among the other state capitals in withstanding the city's primary spoken language, migration influenced Bangalore to become both a multilingual and multicultural city. Bangalore became a historical multilingual city with a share of the Tamil-speaking population after Kannada (Barman). Something interesting about the Tamil migrants is that most migrants are permanent settlers and have resided in the city for generations. Although the migrations to Bangalore started way before the pre-colonial period, the multilingual culture has evolved throughout the years until now.

The available research on Tamil migration to Bangalore focuses on tracing their history back to the colonial and postcolonial contexts. But studies focusing on the effects of migration in marketplaces within the city are less explored. Since sensory mapping is an emerging field of investigation, no studies are available on researching the market by language experience. With the help of qualitative research methodology, the study aims to fill several gaps by establishing a connection between migration and marketplaces, language and marketplaces, and the influence of Tamil migration on the language of the city. Hence more comprehensive research is required to explore the connection to achieve the purposes of my study.

As I built the research idea from a personal experience, it required a subjective point of investigation. As a result, the primary research methodology adopted for the study was qualitative. Further, I approached the study through interviews with vendors from different marketplaces within the city for data collection. A set of fourteen open-ended questions was curated as part of the procedure. The reason behind asking open-ended questions was to understand the vendors' opinions on the language primarily spoken in the market, the inclusion of other languages, and the changes they have experienced in their day-to-day lives. As the research specifically required vendors who are migrants from Tamil Nadu as the interviewees, I chose market sites based on their recognition and the majority of the areas settled by them. The three potential market sites chosen were KR Market, Chinanpalaya Market, and Kalasipalayam Market. Initially, five market sites were selected to pursue data collection. Due to the constraints faced by COVID-19, and lack of cooperation from the vendors' side, depending on their majority population and accessibility, I narrowed it down to three prominent market places. These interviews were handled speaking Kannada and Tamil and, at times, mixing both when necessary. Twelve interviews were conducted with nearly four interviewees from each of these places. Due to inappropriate responses, out of twelve interviews, I selected ten interviews for the final analysis.

## Results and Discussions

The data collected through field interviews revealed that vendors based in KR Market, Chinanpalaya, and Kalasipalayam are primarily descendants of Tamil migrants. Concerning their origin, the vendors identified that most of them migrated from Tiruvannamalai and Vellore, followed by Salem, Cuddalore, and Kallakuruchi. Five of interviewed vendors belong to the third generation, four to the second generation, and one to the first generation. They moved from these districts to Bangalore, respectively.

One of the primary motives behind the vendor's families' migration to Bangalore was to improve their living standards. The data described almost all of their families did not have any stable source of income back in their hometowns. When enquired about choosing Bangalore over other locations, the vendors identified the earning opportunities shared by their families, friends, and relatives played an influential role in their migration. Some of them directly came intending to start a business; others started as daily wage laborers and later set up their business in the market. Except for one vendor, the rest of them inherited the business set up by their parents and grandparents. Apart from earning their livelihood, the vendors are of common opinion that migration to Bangalore benefitted in accessing resources without any difficulties. For instance, providing proper education to their children was not possible back then in their hometowns. Although not economically well off, the vendors identify they can manage their daily living after settling in Bangalore.

The vendors pinpoint Tamil as the common tongue spoken at home among their families. The data indicates that the elders and children have been taught to read, write, and speak in Tamil. Even after living here for years, vendors did not come across any changes in their language. Similarly, there are not many changes keyed out in Tamil used by other vendors and buyers in the marketplaces. More than changes in the language structure, they identify changes in the region-specific dialect used by them. According to the Substratum theory of language, Thomason posits that language changes due to the interaction with other languages and cultures. The theory suggests that language change occurred mainly through trade and invasion in the past. This can be extended to the case of migration, as the migrants' language changes when they come in direct contact with the native speaker of that language. When the vendors initially moved to the market for labor, trade, and settlement, their language changed when they contacted the native Kannada speakers. When the vendors identify changes associated with region-specific dialect, they recognize them from the daily conversations with their fellow vendors. Some have borrowed certain words and sentences from the other region-specific dialects of Madurai and Tirunelveli. In one of the interviews, a participant pointed out that:

*“Since some of our parents and grandparents come from different places, we speak Tamil differently. People from Madurai and Salem speak Tamil with a lot of respect compared to people from districts. For example, in the market,*

*there are vendors from Madurai who tell 'vangom' and 'pongum' (please come and please go), whereas we mostly tell 'va' and 'po' (come and go). There are changes in the kinds of words they use. Living here all these years, at times we also speak like them.*" A, Kalasipalayam

When the vendors borrow lexical terms and sentences from the other region-specific dialects through their contacts, it adds to the dialect spoken by them. This can also be rendered to provide a richer language than changing what already exists in the marketplace (Thomason 340).

Apart from Kannada, other languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and Urdu are widely spoken and can be heard in the market. Since most of the vendors identify themselves as Tamilians, they interact with their fellow vendors in Tamil. Also, the vendors' level of interaction with the other vendors is minimal. They come to do their business and go back, leaving no room for interaction with others apart from their fellow vendors next to them. When asked about instances of unknowingly mixing between two languages, most of them do not accept it. Whereas some identify it as a usual issue encountered in the market while talking to their customers. A mixed languages situation primarily arises in a Bilingual or multilingual setting. Despite the fact that most of the vendors based in these three markets are of Tamil origin, the customers who visit are from different cultural backgrounds. Interestingly, the mix takes place between Tamil and Kannada. A first-generation vendor during the interview expressed that:

*"When I talk to customers who are either a Tamilian or a Kannadiga, often my language gets mixed. Instead of talking Tamil to a Tamilian and Kannada to a Kannadiga, I speak the opposite. For example, to a Kannada speaker, I might ask 'yevalom vennum' instead of 'yeshu beku' (How much do you need). Similarly, when people tell 'eerulli' for onions, I sometimes tell 'vengayum'."* S, Chinanpalaya.

As part of the cultural transmission, language is passed on from one generation to the next. Similarly, vendors from the second and third generations are most likely to learn the language and speak it fluently. Along with Tamil, Kannada also gets passed on from their parents. In the case of vendors from the first generation, apart from the direct contact with the Kannada speakers in the market, they do not interact in Kannada with their family members as Tamil is their mother tongue. In this way, it can be interpreted that vendors who mix languages are primarily from the first generation in the markets.

When the vendors came to the market, they learned Kannada and adopted it imperfectly (Ibid). As mentioned earlier, in the process of cultural transmission, they pass it on to their children and other people in the social group altering the language. As migrants, proficiency in Kannada is essential to assimilate quickly into the indigenous cultures of Bangalore. Most of them agree that this helped them generate better income and establish themselves within the markets. In contrast, some believe it is not necessary. Even today, few second and third-generation vendors who live in these markets do not speak Kannada. It can be interpreted that they are the ones who choose not to talk about the language because the majority of the people near them interacted in Tamil. As the state language, the vendors recognize the importance of learning Kannada. However, no one particular language is required; instead, the situation forces us to learn multiple languages. Except for one of them, the rest of the vendors from different generations learned Kannada over the years. During the interview, the particular vendor detailed that:

*"Earlier, since most of them over here speak in Tamil, I never felt the importance of speaking in Kannada. Although I had learned Kannada during my school days, I never had a situation to speak fluently. Forty years before and now, people who do business next to me are Tamilians, and we carry on our friendly interactions in Tamil. But now I have customers who speak different languages. Although Kannadigas visited the market and started the business, I believe more and more Kannadiga vendors and customers started moving in the last twenty years. Today when my children and grandchildren make fun of me after listening to my Kannada, I realize my mistake of not learning to speak properly. So now I make it a point to interact with my grandchildren only in Kannada. Apart from Tamilians and Kannadigas, we also have many Hindi-speaking customers and laborers who work in the market today"*. V, K.R Market

But, in recent times, the market has witnessed many customers from the North, along with the others. Some of the vendors recall that, when they initially moved to Bangalore, more than Kannada speakers, a notable percentage of Tamil speakers came to the market. Now Kannada has overtaken, followed by Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and also at times English. Then and now, the number of Tamilians visited has neither increased nor decreased. But it has been identified as moving at a constant rate.

The vendors are of a similar opinion about the diverse interaction in the marketplace. Depending on the people who come to the market, the vendors switch between different languages based on the consumer's choice. In these three markets, the vendors have witnessed the rise of the Hindi-speaking population visiting the market. Because of this, the vendors are left with no choice but learn Hindi., which opened the possibility of learning Hindi to interact with them. Although in terms of interaction with the other vendors, Tamil holds first, there are multiple languages involved when it comes to the customers. As long as these matter, proficiency in one language is of least importance. In continuation to the previous point of command, the vendors highlight that people come to the market to earn their living. Depending on the consumer's choice, the vendors switch between languages. To recall one of the participant's responses, they said:

*“In our market, there is no one language spoken, but there are many. If a Hindi consumer talks in Hindi, we need to respond in Hindi. Similarly, when they talk in Tamil, we reply to them in Tamil. I think the changes in the past twenty years affected how the place was recognized and known.” V, K. R Market.*

In his work on functional language theory, Halliday argued a language is a tool that changes according to the needs of those who use it (Halliday). The marketplaces have become so diverse from other destinations in the city. Compared to the other places in the city, interactions in the marketplaces are different and keep changing depending on the context we use to fit within the surroundings. Through this, we can understand that apart from Kannada and Tamil, the vendors interact in other languages to meet the particular needs of the situation.

### Concluding Remarks

With the development of urbanization, diversity in the culture and the migration patterns over the years have found a base in changing language patterns of cities (Singh and Birdar 6). From being recognized as the Tamil Markets of Bangalore, migrations have impacted the language patterns of the markets. Through sensory mapping, the present study indicates the vendors from all three markets are identified as descendants of Tamil migrants. At the same time, my paper aimed to argue about the different waves of Tamil migrations to the city that influenced Tamil to become the dominant language spoken in the marketplaces of Bangalore, which we can experience through the sensory approach of listening to the conversations among the vendors and the consumers. From analyzing concepts such as region-specific dialect, mixed language, language proficiency, and diversity, the results and findings indicate that although Tamil remains dominant in the interactions with their fellow vendors. Nevertheless, through their engagement with their consumers, they simultaneously consider the markets as multilingual and multicultural spaces; therefore, as Thomason argues, language changes according to the needs of the people who use it.

However, the study has certain limitations. Since the vendors' interactions with their fellow vendors and consumers were limited, many did not agree to the interview. As the markets are usually busy throughout the day, due to time constraints, some of the responses given by the participants were vague and one-liners at the same time. It was challenging to analyze it. As this study was conducted by selecting three prominent marketplaces in the city, researchers can expand the study to other market areas in Bangalore. As this study was focused on Tamil-speaking migrants, researchers can also pursue it by concentrating on the Telugu-speaking migrants in the markets. It was identified that along with the Tamil-speaking migrants, the city is also home to a vast Telugu-speaking migrant population. Also, the vendors highlighted the increasing usage of Hindi in the market. Researchers can set future studies in this direction by exploring the effects of the migration of North Indians to Bangalore.

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