

## **A Study on Drivers of Employee Engagement in Private Educational Institutions in Cochin City, Kerala**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In the modern challenging world, it is necessary for an organization to retain as well as engage its core asset, which is its employees. The engaged employee give their best in the organization as they work with their hearts. Educational sector being a sector of critical talent, the retention and engagement of its employees is a huge responsibility for HR. So, the concept of Employee Engagement arisen as an HR related activity, to achieve organizational objectives and goals effectively in this competitive and changing environment.*

*The study aims to gain a theoretical foundation about employee engagement and identify the major factors influencing the existing level of employee engagement in the Private Educational Institutions in Cochin City, Kerala, India. The data so collected through the structured questionnaire were subjected to exploratory factor analysis. The findings showed that major factors that influenced the engagement level of employees in the organization can be grouped under four heads namely, organizational factors, work relationship, individual relationship, and personal factors. The study concludes that every organization should identify and inculcate engagement factors in the organization to enhance its employee's commitment towards the organization and job in an emotional, physical and cognitive way which will ultimately result in organizational success. The study put forward the scope of future research in the same field by increasing the sample size in term of the employees from one institution or number of private educational institutions.*

**Keywords:** Employee Engagement, Human Resource, Engagement Levels, Organizational Climate, Retention factors.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In the modern era, a good majority of a committed workforce is needed for an organization to be effective and efficient. In order to achieve a competitive advantage, an organization should raise employee engagement as its key strategy. 'Employee Engagement' is the degree to which an employee is sympathetically and emotionally connected to his or her job and organization. And it is a workplace approach aimed to determine the commitment level of employees to organizational objectives and values.

An engaged employee brings innovation, high performance, and improved productivity and profitability by giving his maximum efforts in the organization. Nowadays, the employer's interests and needs have shifted to engaging talented employees rather than just retaining them. Increasing engagement level of employees is a hectic task to them due to the heterogeneity of the employee population. Employees become motivated and enthusiastic to work hard towards organizational goals as they are provided with comfortable working conditions. Thus, the HR professionals are trying to maintain good working conditions to inspire their employees to be engaged, go their extra mile, give their best and adapt in difficulties. Employee engagement

became vital for every organization to sustaining its growth and achieving organizational success. In this paper, the researcher tries to understand about the meaning and concept of employee engagement and to identify the major factors influencing the level of employee engagement in the Private Educational Institutions, as the educational sector is a sector of critical talent.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

(Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2010) in their resource-based study found a positive effect of intangible variables on high organizational performance and employee engagement. (Saradha H & Patrick, 2011) in their study found that the variable current career intentions had the highest influence and organizational citizenship behavior had the lowest influence on employee engagement. In the study (Joshi & Sodhi. J.S, 2011) found job content, work-life balance, team orientation, and monetary benefits as the common drivers of employee engagement for both executive and non-executive employees. In the study (Mone, Eisinger, Guggenhei, Price, & Stine, 2011) found performance management as the strongest driver of employee engagement. (Sarangi & Srivastava, 2012) in their study revealed that organizational culture and communication played a significant role in anticipating employee engagement consisting of vigor, dedication, and absorption. In the study (Pati, 2012) explored the concept of employee engagement and developed a multidimensional employee engagement instrument.

(Talukdar, 2013) the study found that leadership behavior has a strong bearing on employee engagement parameters and industrial relations whereas salary and benefits have a positive impact on industrial relations only. (Deepika & Thiruchelvi A, 2013) in their study explored various factors that influence employee engagement through a conceptual framework. (Smith & Macko, 2014) in the study revealed that employee engagement has a significant relationship with employee turnover. (Kotni & Karumuri, 2014) in the study revealed that the highest ranked engagement driver in the retail sector as Autonomy at work. (Sinha & Trivedi, 2014) in the study revealed that organization can attain the resource of a highly engaged workforce by providing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to the employees, fair work and the individual relationship between a leader and a member. (Thamizhselvi M, 2014) in her study found the honesty of the superiors, trust, strong motivation and clear communication of vision act as the strongest predictors and it leads to increased productivity and profitability of the organization.

(Harshitha, 2015) in her descriptive concluded that employee engagement is a part of a corporate culture which helps to create an involved, productive and informed workplace in which everyone gets benefited and organization drive towards its goals. (Pandey, Sahlot, & Hadnoorker, 2015) the study found a strong correlation among 13 engagement drivers and it may vary organization to organization and can be classified in terms of job, team and supervisory levels. (Pandita & Bedarkar, 2015) in the study revealed that the drivers of employee engagement result in employee performance and which finally leads to organizational performance. (Lather & Jain , 2015) found a positive correlation between employee engagement and all leadership practices such as connect, career, congratulate, convey, clarity, contribute, collaborate, control, confidence, and credibility in the study. (Salimath & Kavitha, 2015) in their study found a significant relationship between organizational effectiveness and employee engagement in which the engaged and committed employee provides high effectiveness, better performance, and organizational wellbeing. (Gupta, 2015) the study found out that educational opportunities, open communication, and involvement of employees in companywide initiatives as vital employee engagement tools. (Mishra, Sharma, & Bhaskar, 2015) in their study revealed that among various predictors, situational factors influenced employee engagement more than personal attributes. (Rawal, 2015) the study found that employee engagement predictors such as team coordination, working environment and support from the organization are more favored in the public sector than private sector companies.

(Prathibha, 2016), in the study found that employee engagement and empowerment has a significant relationship with organizational commitment such that the fully empowered and engaged employee is considered to be a reliable and committed workforce. (Caesens, Stinglhamber, & Marmier , 2016) the study found that work engagement has a linear negative relationship with turnover intention. (Gupta & Sharma, 2016) in an exploratory study revealed that employee engagement is a continuous process and a psychological state that results in positive behavior of employees towards the organization. (Karumuri, 2016) in his study found that pay and benefits, image building process of the organization, encouragement of teamwork, leadership types and provision of equal opportunities which have a high impact on employee engagement levels. In the study (Prabhakar & Reddy G, 2016) found timely rewards and recognition, leaders' behavior and pay as the strong factors of employee engagement and it revealed that employee engagement is influenced by demographic profile of employees and organizational inputs.

In a study (Pandita & Singhal, 2017) found out that the work-life balance and employee engagement were

dependent and correlated in which the positive environment and internal motivation in the workplace enrich employee engagement in the organization. In the study (Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017) revealed that there is no universal way of increasing employee engagement, in which 'management of a successful leader' played a key role. (Anthony-McMann, Ellinger, Astakhova, & Halbesleben, 2017) in the study suggested that employee engagement measures have a negative relationship with workplace stress and burnout has a mediating influence on those relationships. (Jindal, Shaikh, & Shashank, 2017) in the study, certain engagement activities such as opportunities to share feedback on the manager, paternity leave policy, acknowledge employee contribution on real-time basis were advocated to retain and engage employees in the organization. In the study (Chug & Vibuti, 2017) found that organizational culture and communication play a significant role in determining the level of engagement in the organization. (Shehri, McLaughlin, Al-Ashaab, & Hamad, 2017) in the study discovered training and development, reward and recognition and organizational communication are revealed as the most enabler factors of employee engagement. In the paper (Madan, 2017) discovered that pay and benefits only attract and retain employees in the organization while appreciation for the employee's contribution makes them highly engaged. (Sugirtha & Sneha, 2017) in their conceptual study found workforce as the valuable asset and satisfying their need will enhance their loyalty and which in turn results in high employee engagement and more productivity in the organization.

In the quantitative study (Tenerife & Galingan, 2018) found that job satisfaction results in job engagement and which in turn results in organization engagement. (Czaplicka-Kozłowski & Stachowski, 2018) In the study found that majority of the respondents positively assess various factors such as attitude to work and organization, relations with superiors, learning and development, work organization, communication and cooperation in which one factor, 'remuneration and incentive' were critically evaluated and requires improvement. (Najeemdeen, Abidemi, Rahmat, & Bulus, 2018) the study found that the independent variables such as organizational support and organizational culture have a positive influence on work engagement. (Ugargol & Patrick, 2018) in the study revealed a positive relation between Flexible Work Arrangement options and employee engagement. In the study (Dwivedi & Kapoor, 2018) identified major engagement drivers in three sectors, among them 'Encourage employee development' emerged as the common driver. In the study (Mercy & Choudhary, 2019) found Organizational Supportiveness, Perceived Trust, Procedural Justice, Job Characteristics, Rewards & Recognition, Role Efficacy and Empowerment as the major drivers of employee engagement.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. The primary data were collected using a convenience sampling technique from 27 employees working in various private educational institutions in Cochin City, Kerala, India. Newspapers, official websites, e-journals, the HR department of the organization and other published sources constitutes secondary data. The data collected were subjected to exploratory factor analysis. A structured 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect the opinions of the respondents with varying demographic characteristics. And it consists of 14 variables identified from various literature and which were grouped under three heads such as

### **Organization:**

- Pride in working for a company
- HR service
- Monetary Benefits
- Grievance handling
- Managing change and preparedness for future growth

### **Relationship with head:**

- Training and development
- Performance appraisal
- Teamwork
- Interpersonal relation
- Career growth

### **Job:**

- Clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Job satisfaction
- Safety and security
- Opportunity for personal development

### **Theoretical Foundation on Employee Engagement:**

Ever since the evolution of employee engagement, numerous views and definitions can be derived from research and practice. (Kahn, 1990), defines employee engagement as “The harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances. He states that Engaged employee is one who is psychologically and physically present when occupying and performing an organizational role and he asserted that levels and extent of engagement for different dimensions may vary among employees”.

(Maslach and Leiter, 1997), viewed engagement as reverse burnout and (Maslach et al., 2001), consider engagement as the opposite to the three burnout dimensions such as exhaustion, cynicism, and sense of inefficacy. He states it as “A persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure”.

(Luthans and Peterson, 2002), defined “it as the strong desire for the employee to remain part of his organization and to use all his efforts, faith and potential to achieve its goals”.

(Schaufeli et al, 2002), define employee engagement as "a positive fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. They add that engagement is not a momentary state, but is a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior".

(Harter et al., 2002), view of employee engagement was 'individual's involvement', 'satisfaction' and 'enthusiasm for work'. And also he states Engagement is something when organizations want their employees to give 100% in all the domains such as productivity, creativity, and innovation. He defined employee engagement as “a distinct and unique construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components associated with individual role performance”.

It is the degree to which employees put maximum effort into their work, in the form of extra time, energy and brainpower. (Towers Perrin Talent Report, 2003), explained the employee engagement concept as “the sum total of behavioral aspects reflected by people in an organizational setup. It can further be demonstrated by employees in the following ways:

- By having a strong belief in the mission, vision, and values of the organization.
- By having an internal desire to bring about improvements in the organizational processes.
- By having an involvement in the company’s business and strategies.
- By having a sense of respect and support for others in the organization.
- By having an inner desire to learn something new and put it to organizational use”.

(Hewitt Associates, 2004) shaped employee engagement by treating it as “an attitude which shapes the employee's desire to say (act as ambassadors of the organization), stay (increasing their tenure in the organization) and strive (stretch beyond simply and expected for the organization)”.

(Wellins and Concelman, 2004), suggest that “employee engagement drives exemplary performance. This positive energy is an “amalgam of commitment, loyalty, productivity, and ownership”.

(Robinson et al., 2004), defined engagement as “a positive employee attitude towards the organization and its values, involving awareness of business context, and work to improve job and organizational effectiveness”.

The most known definition of (Wiley, 2006), is that “the employee engagement is the extent to which employees are motivated to contribute to organizational success, and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing tasks important to the achievement of organizational goals”.

Gallup defines engaged “employees as people who work with passion and feel much attached to their work”. “They are also responsible for innovations and they are pushing the organizations forward” (Krueger and Killham, 2006). Engagement can be defined as “the relation of the employee to the organization and its leader, including:

- 1) A strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values,
- 2) A willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and
- 3) A strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.

Indicators that determine the level of employee engagement are:

- Availability of inspiring working environment and development;
- Opportunity to participate in decision-making and responsibility;
- Provision of internal and external training for employees of all ages;
- Flexible working hours and teleworking;
- Remuneration and well developed bonus system;
- Additional benefits”.

“It is making employees work with not only their minds and body but also with ‘hearts’. Engaged employees and organizations will “go the extra mile” for each other because they see the mutual benefits of investing in their relationship”. (Treaty, 2007) explains the concept of employee engagement by considering “it as a strategic partnership between the employees and their organization. In this partnership, both the employees as well as the organization have mutual interdependence”.

(Newstrom and Davis 2007), define it as “the extent to which an employee identifies himself with the organization and wants to continue to be part of it”.

(Macey & Schneider, 2008), Employee engagement was defined as an “individual’s involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work”.

(Czarnowsky, 2008), “Employees who are mentally and emotionally invested in their work and in contributing to their employer’s success”

(Lucey, 2009), have deciphered that "Employee engagement is how each individual connects with the company and the customers".

(Shuck & Wollard, 2010), distinctly defined employee engagement as “an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes”.

(Kruse, 2010), Employee engagement is “the emotional commitment an employee has to the organization and its goals, resulting in the use of discretionary effort”.

(Sarkar, 2011), opined that “employee engagement serves to gauge and determine the extent and type of association an employee has with the organization. Finally, the common definition is the idea that employee engagement is a desirable state where employees are enthusiastic, dedicated and energized to achieve organizational goals”.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

**Table 1: indicates the Demographic Profile of the Company**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	3	11.1
Female	24	88.9
Age		
21-30	24	88.9
31-40	2	7.4
41-50	1	3.7
Above 50	0	0
Qualification		
PG	2	7.4
PG & NET	24	88.9
Others	1	3.7
Length of Service		
5yrs & below	22	81.5
5-10 years	3	11.1
10-15 years	1	3.7
15 years & above	1	3.7

**Table 2: Factor: Organization**

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total employees
Pride in working for a company	15	10	2	0	0	27
HR service	5	15	6	1	0	27
Monetary Benefits	3	2	8	13	1	27
Grievance handling	7	14	4	2	0	27
Managing change and preparedness for future growth	11	13	1	2	0	27

**Table 3: Factor: Relationship with Head**

Factors	Strogly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total employees
Training and development	7	13	5	2	0	27
Performance appraisal	4	17	4	2	0	27
Teamwork	14	12	1	0	0	27
Interpersonal relation	10	13	3	1	0	27

**Table 4: Factor: Job**

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total employees
Clarity of roles and responsibilities	10	14	1	2	0	27
Job satisfaction	15	11	1	0	0	27
Safety and security	4	11	6	4	2	27
Opportunity for personal development	8	12	5	2	0	27

From the above tables, it is found that employees became more engaged if “pride in working for company” followed by “managing change and preparedness for future growth” under the head ‘organisation’ and “teamwork” and “Interpersonal relation” under the head ‘relationship with head’ and “job satisfaction” and “clarity of roles and responsibilities” under the head ‘job’ give more importance. Other variables also have influence but the employees give top priority to the above-mentioned variables, which were the total of frequencies given to strongly agree and agree. So the analysis indicated that the information regarding these three factors empower the management to understand whether the employee is engaged or not and thus the organization giving adequate consideration to those factors will achieve a high level of employee engagement.

#### KMO and Bartlett's Test:

**Table 5: Reliability of Data**

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.648
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	167.288
	Df	91
	Sig.	.000

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test were done to determine the suitability of factor analysis for the study. The factor analysis is applicable if its value is high, that is in between 0.5 and 1.0 and not applicable if it is a small value indicating other variables cannot explain the correlations between a pair of variables. Here the value of KMO measure was 0.648 and Bartlett's test was 0.000, hence it can be interpreted that the collected data was suitable for the factor analysis and 64.80% of the sample has no error and have an acceptable and desirable level of significance.

#### Communalities:

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
PRIDE	1.000	.678
MANAGING CHANGE & PREPAREDNESS FOR FUTURE GROWTH	1.000	.764
HR SERVICE	1.000	.474
GRIEVANCE HANDLING	1.000	.804
MONETARY BENEFITS	1.000	.864
TEAM WORK	1.000	.672
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	1.000	.712
PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL	1.000	.821
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS	1.000	.562

STUDENTS ATTITUDE	1.000	.789
CLARITY OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	1.000	.757
SAFETY AND SECURITY	1.000	.549
JOB SATISFACTION	1.000	.628
OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	1.000	.402
<b>Extraction Method:</b> Principal Component Analysis.		

Communality is the amount of common variance experienced by all the factors with known variables. The method used for factor analysis was principal component analysis, which considers the total variance in the data. The primary concern is given to the extracted communalities resulted through extraction of factors and its initial communalities were 1. For the appropriate measurement of factor analysis, 0.4 or greater communalities are necessary as higher the communalities specified, higher the number of variances in the variable that has been extracted by the factor solution. Here Table 6 showed that the extracted communalities are high, and hence all the statements are acceptable.

#### Total Variance Explained:

Total Variance Explained									
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.401	38.580	38.580	5.401	38.580	38.580	4.096	29.261	29.261
2	1.679	11.990	50.569	1.679	11.990	50.569	2.388	17.058	46.319
3	1.289	9.209	59.778	1.289	9.209	59.778	1.502	10.725	57.044
4	1.107	7.909	67.687	1.107	7.909	67.687	1.490	10.643	67.687
5	.961	6.862	74.550						
6	.921	6.579	81.128						
7	.684	4.888	86.016						
8	.594	4.243	90.259						
9	.432	3.085	93.343						
10	.305	2.182	95.525						
11	.228	1.629	97.155						
12	.191	1.363	98.517						
13	.113	.805	99.322						
14	.095	.678	100.000						
<b>Extraction Method:</b> Principal Component Analysis.									

#### Variance explained:

It is required to conduct an Eigen values analysis to explain the maximum variance shared by each factor. Through component extraction, a minimum number of components sharing a maximum volume of variance resulted and those factors whose Eigen values greater than one were extracted. Here, Table 7 indicates the appropriateness of factor analysis by extracting four factors having a fair percentage of variance, which is 67.687% of total variance, from a total of 14 statements. But this variance is not evenly distributed among all the components, so a rotation of the component matrix is done. The component matrix shows the loadings of different components to the components extracted and it is complex as it shows the correlation of factors with many variables. So VARIMAX, a commonly used rotation method is adopted to transform complex factor matrix to a simpler one which is easier to interpret. After the rotation method, the variance is now uniformly distributed in a range of 29.261% – 10.643%, which was 38.580% - 7.909% before rotation.

### Rotated Component Matrix:

Rotated Component Matrix				
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
MANAGING CHANGE & PREPAREDNESS FOR FUTURE GROWTH	.843			
TEAMWORK	.803			
PRIDE	.779			
SAFETY AND SECURITY	.671			
CLARITY OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	.657			
OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	.622			
GRIEVANCE HANDLING	.594			
PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL		.849		
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT		.760		
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS		.515		
STUDENTS ATTITUDE			-.839	
MONETARY BENEFITS				.764
JOB SATISFACTION				-.666
HR SERVICE				.564
<b>Extraction Method:</b> Principal Component Analysis.				
<b>Rotation Method:</b> Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
<b>a.</b> Rotation converged in 7 iterations.				

The four factors so extracted in the rotated matrix are subjected to an analysis of factor loadings for the interpretation and naming of factors. It is done by identifying the variables that load highly under the same component. The VARIMAX rotation with Kaiser Normalization resulted that 7 out of 14 statements under 'Factor 1', 3 out of 14 statements under 'Factor 2' and 'Factor 4' and 1 out of 14 statements under 'Factor 3' have factor loadings  $\geq 0.5$ . This highlights that the factors measuring the perception of employees towards employee engagement in the organization can be grouped under the head of four main factors.

### NAMING OF THE FACTORS:

The following are the four factors identified as per the factor loading in Table 8:

#### Organizational Factors:

Seven statements falling under the first factor are (1) Managing change and preparedness for future growth, 2) Teamwork (3) Pride (4) Safety and security (5) Clarity of roles and responsibilities, (6) Opportunity for personal development (7) Grievance handling. These statements showed that organization should motivate the employees by focussing on these factors and which will help them to improve their level of employee engagement.

#### Work Relationship:

Three statements falling in 'Work Relationship factor' are (1) Performance appraisal (2) Training and development (3) Interpersonal relations. The statements in this factor indicate that the leader should give the utmost care in the development of employees and maintaining a formal relationship with all members.

#### Individual Relationship:

Only one statement falling in this factor is the students' attitude. This indicates that the student's attitude towards the teacher influences his or her job. A positive attitude of students is important for motivating and engaging employees (teachers) in the institution.

#### Personal Factors:

Three statements falling in this factor are (1) Monetary benefits (2) Job satisfaction (3) HR Service. This indicates that employees can be motivated by providing them with adequate pay and bonus, satisfying job and good HR service.



## CONCLUSION:

In an organization, the workforce is considered as the core asset and retaining as well as engaging the workforce is the major challenge faced by the HR professionals. Employee engagement, a tool to retain the best talent is a crucial aspect for the organization. Various reviews showed that there is a huge number of factors which influence the engagement of employees in the organization. Our study attempting to understand the concept of employee engagement and identify the drivers of employee engagement in the selected private educational institutions in the Cochin city, Kerala revealed that the major influencing factors come under four heads namely organizational factors, work relationship, individual relationship, and personal factors. Various effective employee engagement initiatives such as effective two-way communications, appropriate leadership style, open and honest environment introduced in organizational level, relationship with the manager and the job level will make the employees more engaged. The engaged employee is emotionally connected to the organization and give his or her hundred percent. This study suggests the institutions to concentrate more on those identified factors for motivating and enhancing the commitment level of employees in physical, emotional and cognitive dimensions. The study concludes that the employee engagement initiatives in the sample institutions are positive as its employee engagement level is way high from the level of engagement in other institutions. The study put forward the scope of future research in the same field by increasing the sample size in term of the employees from one institution or number of private educational institutions as it is a wide topic for the research.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

I am very much delighted to present this research paper entitled “A STUDY ON DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN COCHIN CITY, KERALA” with great pleasure, I express my sincere gratitude to Smt. Mini Joseph, Head of Research Centre, K.G.College, Pampady for her assistance and directions throughout my research period.

I am immensely grateful to all my teachers and friends, who have directly or indirectly inspired me throughout the work.

Above all, I bow my head in profound gratitude before God, the Almighty, for the showering on me to complete this research paper successfully.

With Sincere Thanks,  
P.ROHINI KRISHNA  
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