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**The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation
India's longest road tunnel
(April 2nd, 2017)**



The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi dedicated India's longest highways tunnel - the Chenani- Nashri tunnel in Jammu & Kashmir- to the nation on April 2nd, 2017. The 9 kilometre long "Chenani – Nashri" tunnel on NH-44 which connects Jammu with Srinagar, will reduce travel time between the two cities by upto two hours. It achieves a distance-reduction of 31 kilometres, bypassing snow-bound upper reaches. The estimated daily fuel savings are to the tune of Rs. 27 lakhs. Besides avoiding large scale deforestation and tree-cutting, the tunnel will provide a safe, all-weather route to commuters travelling from Jammu and Udhampur, to Ramban, Banihal and Srinagar. The tunnel is equipped with world-class security systems, and is expected to boost tourism and economic activities in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

The project has been completed at a cost of over Rs. 2500 crore. The tunnel will not only reduce the distance between Jammu and Srinagar, but will also promote tourism in the valley, open up employment opportunities for the youth and give a boost to development in the state. The Prime Minister

thanked the Minister of Road Transport & Highways and Shipping Shri Nitin Gadkari and his team for the tunnel and appreciated the youth for contributing their labour for the development of the state. Shri Nitin Gandkari expressed happiness at India's longest highways tunnel being dedicated to the nation. He said that Rs 7000 crores will be invested in highways projects in Jammu and Kashmir in the next two years. He said a ring road will be built around Jammu at a cost of Rs 2100 crores and another one around Srinagar at a cost of Rs 2200 crores. Work on this will start in the next three months, he said. Shri Gadkari also informed that Zojila tunnel is being built between Leh and Ladakh at a cost of Rs 6000 crores. He informed that during the year 2016-17, Rs 1019 crore have been sanctioned for 72 projects in Jammu & Kashmir.

An ideal example of the government's 'Make in India' and 'Skill India' initiative, the 9 km long, twin-tube, all-weather tunnel between Udhampur and Ramban in Jammu & Kashmir is not only India's longest highways tunnel but also Asia's longest bi-directional highways tunnel. Built at an elevation of 1200 metres on one of the most difficult Himalayan terrains, the tunnel will cut the travel time between Jammu and Srinagar by two hours, bypassing about 41 kms of road length. It will also ensure an all weather passage on a route that often sees heavy traffic jams and disruptions due to landslides, snow, sharp curves, breakdown of vehicles and accidents. The tunnel is a part of the 286-km-long four-laning of the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway. The structure consists of a 9 km long, two-laned main tunnel with a parallel escape tunnel of same length. The two tunnels are connected by 29 cross passages at regular intervals along the entire length of the tunnel. These cross passages can be used for evacuation of vehicles and commuters in case of breakdown or any other emergency. There are two minor bridges on the south and north sides and 4-lane approach roads with Toll Plazas on both ends of the tunnel. The maximum height permitted in the tunnel is 5 meters and for checking the height special sensors have been installed just before the toll points at both ends. The tunnel has an efficient, transverse ventilation system. There are inlets bringing fresh air at 8 metre intervals and outlet for exhaust every 100 metres. There is also a fully-integrated control system with ventilation, communication, power supply, incident detection, SOS call box and fire fighting. Fitted with intelligent traffic mechanism, the tunnel has fully automatic smart control and no human intervention will be required for its operations. The tunnel is also equipped with advanced scanners to ward off any security threat. Very few tunnels in the world have this kind of fully integrated tunnel control. The project is also environment friendly. The time saving on the Jammu- Srinagar route will further result in fuel saving of approximately Rs 27 lakhs per day. Besides, the construction of the tunnel has avoided large –scale deforestation.

The Chenani-Nashri tunnel will have a very positive impact on the state economy. In line with the Skill India initiative of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the skill sets of local people were developed and improved, and they were engaged for construction of this tunnel. The project has provided employment to over 2,000 unskilled and skilled youth of Jammu and Kashmir as 94 percent of the work force was from the state. Around 600 to 900 people from across the country also worked on this project in 3 shifts over the past 4 years.

Visit of Prime Minister of Malaysia to India (March 30 - April 4, 2017)



The Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency Dato Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, was visiting India between 30 March – 04 April 2017 accompanied by his spouse Datin Sri Rosmah Mansour. This was his third visit to India as Prime Minister, the last one in 2012. His visit followed the highly successful visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Malaysia in November 2015. Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak was also accompanied by a large business delegation consisting of many of the top companies and businessmen in Malaysia. The Prime Minister visited Chennai and Jaipur in addition to New Delhi. A number of bilateral as well as commercial agreements were signed during the visit.

State Visit of Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India (April 07-10, 2017)



HE Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh called on President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee at Rashtrapati Bhavan on April 9, 2017. Welcoming the Bangladeshi Prime Minister to India, the President fondly remembered his visit to Bangladesh in March 2013. He also appreciated the Prime Minister's visit in August 2015 to attend the last rites of his late wife. The President said Government of Bangladesh's gesture of honouring the Indian soldiers martyred during the 1971 Liberation War is highly appreciated in India. India considers it a demonstration of solidarity and a symbol of the unique history of bilateral ties. There is much that unites the two countries - a shared history and common heritage, linguistic and cultural ties, passion for music, literature and the arts. The President said India deeply appreciates Bangladeshi Prime Minister's role in giving a new direction to the India-Bangladesh relationship and making it what it is today – a strong, vibrant and exemplary partnership between two neighbours. He said that under the leadership of the Bangladesh Prime Minister, the country has made tremendous progress. The President said Bangladesh's commitment to strengthening democracy, rule of law, pluralism and human dignity and to ensuring peace, security and stability in the country is commendable. He congratulated Bangladesh on successfully hosting the 136th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Dhaka last week and also the 9th Global Forum on Migration and Development in December 2016. The President said India-Bangladesh relations are growing from strength to strength. Cooperation in the field of connectivity, power, energy, trade, capacity building and infrastructure development is especially praiseworthy. India is fully committed to be a partner in Bangladesh's economic development. Geographical proximity and connectivity are advantages that must be leveraged to mutual benefit. He hoped that the announcement of over USD 5 billion of Indian concessionary financing for infrastructure projects in Bangladesh over the next couple of years will usher in more development for Bangladesh.

State Visit of Prime Minister of Australia to India (April 09-12, 2017)



Prime Minister of Australia, the Honourable Mr. Malcolm Turnbull, MP., paid a State Visit to India at the invitation of our Prime Minister from 9 to 12 April. This was Prime Minister Turnbull's first visit to India. Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott had visited India in September 2014 and this was followed by Indian Prime Minister's visit to Australia in November that year. Prime Minister Turnbull and Prime Minister Modi have had substantive meetings on the margins of the G-20 in Antalya in 2015 and in Hangzhou in 2016. The Australian Prime Minister begun his visit with a ceremonial guard of honour at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 10th April followed by wreath laying at Mahatma Gandhi's Samadhi at Raj Ghat. External Affairs Minister called on him and this was followed by restricted and delegation level talks between the two Prime Ministers. He also called on Hon'ble President and Hon'ble Vice President. The Prime Minister hosted a banquet in honour of the Australian Prime Minister and his delegation. Prime Minister Turnbull also visited Mumbai where he met the Governor of Maharashtra and attended several events, including an interaction with key business leaders and an energy round table. The India-Australia relationship is more robust and multi-faceted than it has ever been before and both Prime Ministers and both Governments are committed to carrying this forward. Reflective of this breadth of engagement, a number of MoUs and Agreements were firmed up covering

Security, Environment, Sports, Science & Technology, Health, etc. In keeping with the vast potential that both sides see in economic and commercial engagement, a high-level business delegation is also expected from Australia. Australia has invested about US\$7 billion in India. Education and skills development is a key area of Indian engagement with Australia. More than attracting Indian students to Australia, this encompasses cooperation between educational institutions in both countries, joint research, tie-ups between Government and non-Government entities in India with technology centres in Australia. The extent of this bilateral engagement was in full view during the visit with a large number of tie-ups in this sector.

State visit of President of Nepal to India (April 17-21, 2017)



Rt. Hon'ble Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal visited India on a State Visit from April 17-21, 2017, at the invitation of President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee. This was the first State visit of the President of Nepal after assuming office of the President in October 2015. The visit reflected the priority that both India & Nepal attached to further strengthening of their age-old, unique, wide-ranging partnership, underpinned by shared historical and cultural linkages and strong people-to-people connections. During the visit, President of Nepal will meet with the President of India, Vice President and the Prime Minister. The External Affairs Minister and other Ministers will

call on the President of Nepal. Apart from official engagements in New Delhi, the President of Nepal will be visiting Gujarat and Odisha. The upcoming visit is in keeping with the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between the two countries, and will further deepen the cordial and cooperative ties that exist between India and Nepal.

Visit of High Representative of European Union to India (April 21-22, 2017)



European Union High Representative and Vice- President H.E. Ms. Federica Mogherini was on an official visit to India from 21-22 April, 2017. High Representative called on Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi. She held delegation level talks with External Affairs Minister, Smt. Sushma Swaraj and Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri M J Akbar. The talks were held in a friendly and cooperative atmosphere with exchange of views on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepening their Strategic Partnership. They reviewed progress on the commitments made during 13th India-EU Summit in Brussels in March 2016 including in the areas of counter-terrorism, migration and mobility, water partnership, clean energy and climate change action. Condemning the terror attack in Paris , External Affairs Minister emphasised that terrorism was the gravest threat to humanity today and both India and EU should strengthen their cooperation to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and demonstrate their firm resolve to show zero-tolerance for such acts. EU is one of India's largest trading partners with bilateral trade in

goods reaching US \$ 85 billion in 2016. EU is also the largest destination for Indian exports and a key source of investment and cutting edge technologies. India seeks enhanced level of investments from EU companies in its flagship programmes like Clean India, Namami Gange, Skill India, Start-Up India, Smart Cities, renewable energy and next-generation infrastructure. Both sides also discussed ways to take forward the India-EU Broad Based Trade and Investment Agreement. As the two largest democracies of the world, India and the EU are natural partners. India greatly values its multi-faceted strategic partnership with European Union and the two seek to strengthen multilateralism and rules-based global order for the peace and prosperity for one and all.

European Investment Bank Delivers \$214 Million For Indian Solar Projects

(April, 25, 2017)



Solar power projects across India have received another impetus, with the European Investment Bank announcing a partnership with the largest bank of India to disburse over \$200 million in debt. The European Investment Bank recently announced that it will provide €200 million to the State Bank of India to facilitate debt funding for four large-scale solar power projects in India. The total capacity of these projects is 530 megawatts. The debt finance will be delivered to project developers by a subsidiary of State Bank of India, SBI Capital Markets. Project developers are expected to back this funding with a total investment of \$693 million.

Vice President's visit to Armenia & Poland aimed at furthering friendship and cooperation (April 24-28, 2017)



The Vice President of India, Shri M. Hamid Ansari visited Armenia and Poland on April 24-28. This was Hon'ble Vice President's first visit to both Armenia and Poland. His visit to Armenia took place at a time when India is celebrating the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations with Armenia and therefore it was a landmark visit and it was second such visit at the level of the Vice President of India to Armenia. India has had the visit of President of Armenia in 1995 and 2005 and the President of the Armenian Republic. The Vice President said that the objective of his visit to Armenia and Poland was to further the friendship and cooperation. He said that Armenia has old cultural links with India. Armenia is a friendly country to India. The Armenian community in Kolkata had strong cultural presence, including the famous Armenian Church, added Vice President. The Vice President said that Poland is a strong trading partner for India in Central Europe and many Indian companies have a presence there and have made substantive investments. He added that Poland has some useful technology, including in areas such as clean coal and India is keen to work with them. Poland is an important member of NATO and they have been politically supportive of India in forums like NSG, he added.



Braking to Accelerate

Sanjeev Arjun Gaur, even at the age of 5, had the mind of a tinkerer, prying open his toys, to figure out the mechanics under the hood. It came as no surprise when he went on to pursue his dreams of becoming an engineer. However, much to the shock of his father, who retired as the Chief Medical officer of District Gautam Budh Nagar, and mother, a Government school teacher, he dropped out of college a few months later as he felt that he was wasting his time there.

Sanjeev did a variety of things after. He worked in the sales department of an advertisement firm, entered the marble business, started an event and exhibition management company, and also joined the team of Padma Shri Aamir Raza Husain, a well-known name in theatre, and dabbled a bit in acting. India's most promising and socially relevant and scalable innovations "While working with the theatre company, I created a moving and revolving platform that could carry about 700 people for the famous plays like 'The Legend Of Ram', based on Ramayana and 'Fifty Days of War' based on the Kargil war." says Sanjeev.

One day when his car had been sent for servicing, he took a cycle rickshaw. Sitting behind, his trained curious eye noticed that the rickshaw peddler struggled to pedal and tried his best not to brake in traffic because it meant that he had to expend extra energy to get the rickshaw moving again. At that moment Sanjeev realized that maybe he could create a device for storing the pedal's energy, which could be released later when the peddler needed the rickshaw to move forward. A regenerative braking system was the answer.

Over the next several years, Sanjeev kept tinkering away. He spent six years to arrive at a prototype that he was satisfied with. During this time he made over two dozen configurations on the computer and finally made a working prototype, which weighed a bulky 22 kilos. He worked on four more prototypes to finally arrive at a practical device that is about 7 kilos now. Sanjeev named his invention, Dhakka (push) brake. He tested the brake with rickshaw peddlers in Noida and their response has been extremely positive.

He is currently working on separate design, to develop a wheel, which comes pre-fitted with the Dhakka Brake and will be lighter. Sanjeev anticipates that it will be ready in the next six months. He also hopes to bring down the cost once he starts manufacturing.

Sanjeev is looking for funding upto Rs 50 to 60 lakh to start a separate social enterprise, although he is in talks with a few funders for this, but the process is taking time. A serial innovator, he also made designs for trash management and energy generation systems but is unable to develop them further due to a paucity of funds.

FOCUS

Journey of the Women of Indian Diaspora : Carriers of culture, Preserves of identity

Journey into the unknown

The journey of indentured labour from India to Mauritius and to other destinations such as Suriname, Guyana, Reunion Island, Fiji, after the abolition of slavery in 1834 is one of history's untold sagas. The Indentured Route which brought the Indian Diaspora to these countries, has many similarities to the Slave Route but is less well known. It is a journey that is less well chronicled and sometimes conveniently forgotten. In many cases, the Diaspora and their journey led to the formation of modern democratic nation States. Their quest for political empowerment is one of the most interesting examples of the evolution of democracy, pluralism and multi-ethnicity in these regions. Their journey thus poignantly highlights the history of these countries during this period.

The journey of the women of Indian Diaspora as carriers of culture and preservers of identity was no easy one because of the circumstances in which they made the journey and the patriarchal nature of Indian society. The



(External Affairs Minister laying wreath at Apravasi Ghat, Mauritius)

voice of the silent majority, i.e. woman, has been rarely heard in the historical documents which record the statements of the literate and thoughts of the influential. The part played by Indian women in the great 19th century Diasporas which have irretrievably transformed so many former colonies of the British and French Empires, has been especially undervalued. Indian indentured women have tended to be portrayed as dependents and spouses, reluctant to migrate, and of negligible labour value, or as lone females of dubious virtue. Such characterisations were the work of contemporaries – the European officials who authored so many of the documents we use today – but they have been echoed by many later historians.

Historical origins: Journey into the past and preservation of links with Mother India

The paucity of women initially, apart from being a serious social issue, necessitated marriages across social barriers and sometimes across religious boundaries. However, the indentured and particularly the women never lost their links with their past, with their culture, their language or their religion. They ensured the preservation of these links with Mother India, along with the celebration of traditional festivals, be it Holi for the Hindus or Muharram for the Muslims. It was often the woman in the family who played an important role in ensuring that Bhojpuri was spoken within the family. We must acknowledge that these indentured women who remained wedded to their oral traditions and language, played an essential role as a carrier of this culture.

The Journey of the Indentured Indian women : Carriers of Culture and Preservers of Identity

Through the letters, petitions and statements of the Indian indentured women, a cogent analysis can be made of their role in developing identity and maintaining cultural linkages with their past. Scholars have noted that despite the efforts by the colonisers to impose a new form of slavery on the Indian indentured, the role that these women assumed was significantly different from that expected of their slave predecessors.

This was possibly due to the fact that women were unequally integrated into capitalist production and into the plantation economy in particular. This was in contrast to the central participation of female slaves in plantation agriculture in the pre-abolishing period.

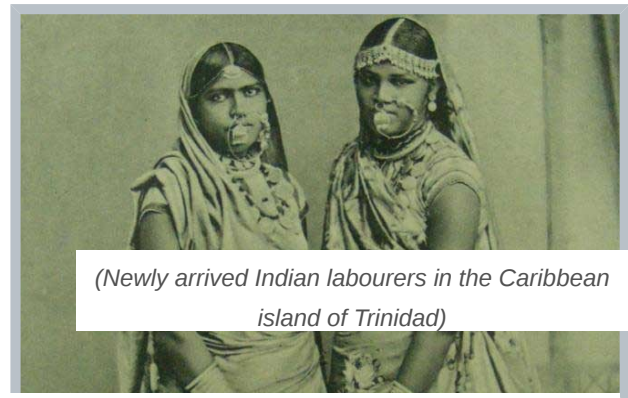


(Newly arrived Indian labourers in the Caribbean island of Trinidad)

As a result, the position that women enjoyed in the indentured society has not been recorded in a sympathetic manner. They have either been referred to as a 'sorry sisterhood' of Indian women tricked into going abroad or from marginalised social classes or castes or again referred to as 'abandoned women', picking and choosing husbands for themselves. There is no consensus in the

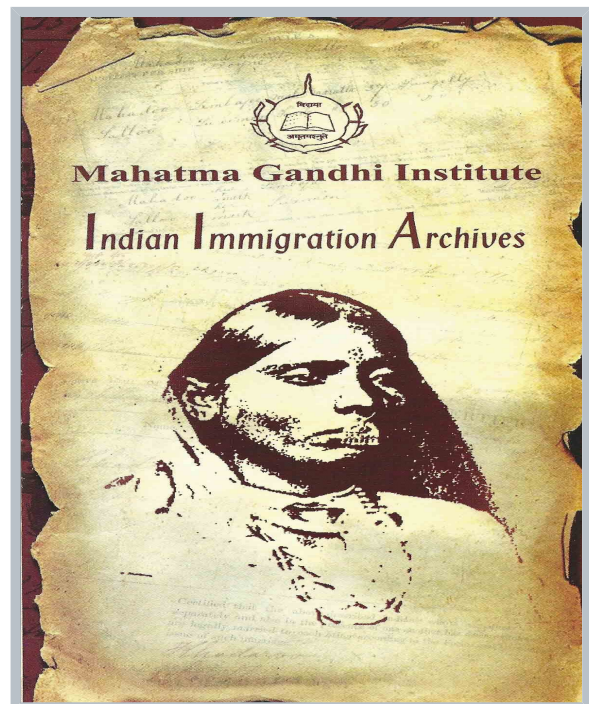
available literature as to their actual position in the society at that time. Neither version is accurate and have been rejected by later historians, particularly feminist historians. The latter have also sought to exculpate women from charges of immorality as replicated in the traditional historiography of the period. The women at that time did seek to be treated as individuals, not as a commodity. They did strive to recreate stable partnership and happy family life in their new homes. Nevertheless, the skewed ratio between men and women indentured in the early years had an impact on the development of stable family life. It was only later that the colonial Government decided to sponsor family migration and women indentured labour. This approach differed according to the colony concerned. The increasing number of Indian women indentured immediately injected a new dynamism to the cultural creativity of the indentured population and the re-establishment of some of the norms of family.

The above is true for the women indentured across the Caribbean, Mauritius and Fiji. In the Caribbean and



(Newly arrived Indian labourers in the Caribbean island of Trinidad)

(Indentured women; Photo Courtesy: The Alma Jordan Library, The University of the West Indies)



(The Indian Immigration Archives [National Archives of Mauritius.] contain records pertaining to the Immigration of Indentured Labourers)

in Mauritius, the archives that have been preserved and the oral records and letters of these women provide touching testimony to the manner in which they preserved their individual religion and their culture, especially the Bhojpuri culture. Some writers have noted that in the Caribbean as well as in Mauritius the humble indentured women came with two sarees, a lotta and a copy of the Tulidas Ramayana. It has been often noted "Indian culture was born and survived in the Caribbean out of this spiritual necessity of a community." We could add that this was largely due to the contribution of these indentured women.

The struggle of these women demonstrated, above all, the capacity of these indentured women to initiate change, to react to injustice, to preserve their culture and to develop their identity. This was despite the oppressive State laws, Plantation codes of conduct and communal sanctions or family control, specifically designed to limit their mobility. The role of these women was therefore complex and diverse and they richly and fully contributed to the settlement and development of the communities to which they belonged and to the creation of the nation states that developed later, whether in the Caribbean or in Mauritius or Fiji.

The source material from which these conclusions have been drawn are mainly through the letters written by Indian women to their relatives abroad or by indentured women to their families in India. These provide an extraordinary and revealing glimpse into the life of these first generation women settlers. Supplementary information can be found from the petitions and statements of these women contained in the Immigration Offices of those days and now in national Archives, whether in Mauritius or in the Caribbean or Fiji.

Concluding Reflections

This is a complex topic. It is unfortunate that scholarship in this field of inquiry is marked by the frequent failure of scholars and intellectuals to transcend the geographical, conceptual and chauvinistic parochialism that has become a hallmark of contemporary plantation studies in general and indentured labour studies in particular.

Equally unfortunate is the lack of interest internationally in the Indentured Labour Route, despite its acknowledged role in shaping the contours of socio-economic, cultural, and political life and contributing to vibrant democracy's such as in Mauritius, in the post-colonial era. There is a need to highlight the need for the constitution of an international network of scholars working on indentured labour for the purpose of fostering new perspectives on these systems and deepening our understanding of the indentured experience in all its complexity.

Let me conclude by an emotive poem by my friend and younger brother Rabin S Baldewsingh, leader of the Surinami Hindustani community in Netherlands and Deputy Mayor of The Hague, who became very close to me when I was Ambassador to Netherlands. Rabin often spoke of the folklore, legends, music and dance centered around the 'Lalla Rookh', the first jahaj to bring the jahajibhais and bahens to Suriname. In his book of poems, entitled 'Tamanna: Endless Longing' which I released at the Gandhi Centre at The Hague in June, 2013, his poem on 'Lalla Rookh' symbolises the triumph of human spirit of those who undertook this journey into hell. It states :

"I am not the only one
in this narrowness of imprisonment
where men
play men
where men
surpass animals.
This is surely no dream
This weeping, this grief.
No, this trek will not lead to liberation:
it is the isolated destination in hell"

ITPO's Fairs in Pragati Maidan , New Delhi

Sl. No.	Name of the Fair	Location	Dates	Products	HOD
1	Smart City India Expo(in association with M/s Exhibition India)	Delhi	May 10-12, 2017	Infrastructure development, materials & technologies, green & autonomous transport and water technologies	GM(JGS)
2	India Wellness expo (in association with M/s Exhibition India)	Delhi	August 29-31, 2017	Health India Expo, Biotech India Expo, Organic India Expo	GM(SRS)
3	Electricity India (in association with FICCI)	Delhi	Dates yet to be decided	Green energy, solar energy, wind energy, electricity generation/distribution related products Mobile phones & accessories,	GM(VM)
4	Telecom India (in association with FICCI)	Delhi	Dates yet to be decided	telecommunication equipment & parts, Switches & Switchgears, Antennas, Wi-fi & transmitters	GM(VM)
5	Tex-Styles India	Delhi	Feb/March, 2018	textile items-Cotton yarns, fabrics & Home Furnishings	GM(JD)
6	Tex-Styles India	Kolkata	Feb/March 2018	textile items-Cotton yarns, fabrics & Home Furnishings	

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