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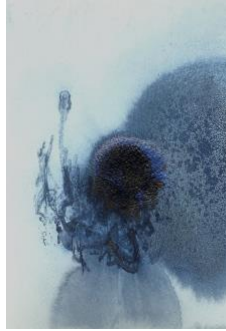
Editor: Swami Chidananda
Associate Editor: Dolly Seth

Mantra to Ponder

SEEING THE FORMLESS

Amidst Countless Forms Around Us

An open secret, which the Upanishads divulge is that all the names and forms around us are projections of our mind. Our own name and form are no exception. The word '*shareera*' normally means the body. This word however stands for all forms of images – physical, mental, gross, and subtle – that we have about our own identity and about others.



'Your sorrow will come to an end when you are able to see the formless amidst countless forms, and the imperishable among millions of things that are continuously persishing.'

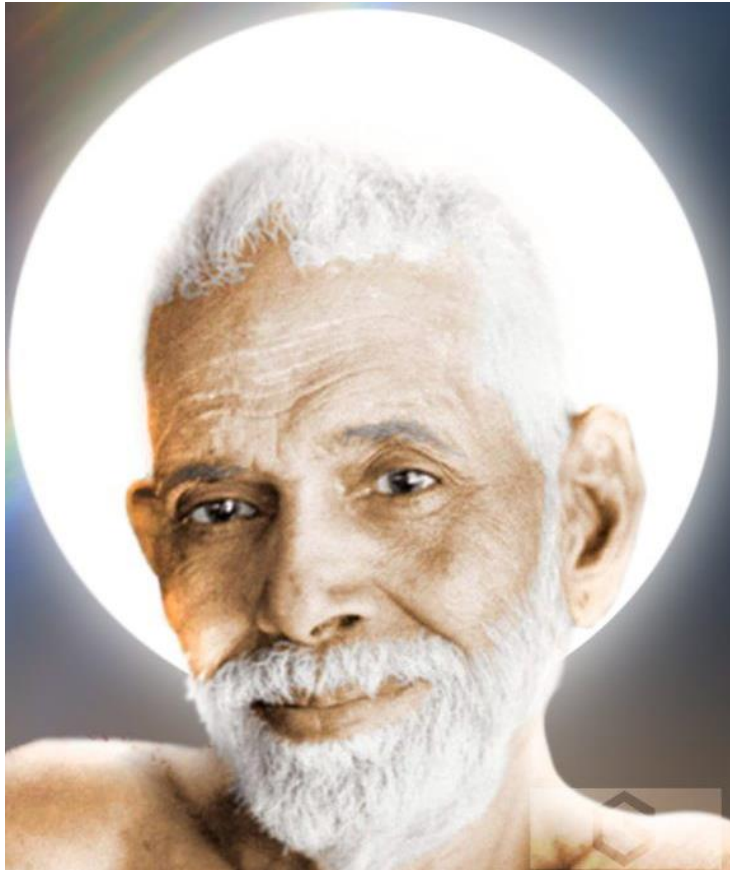
/ ashareeram shareereshu, anavastheshu avasthitam /

/ matvā dheero na shochati /

(Katha-Upanishad 1.2.22)

Control of the mind in initial stages, and seeing the falsity of the mind in advanced stages, constitute the progress in Vedānta study. The duality, which we perceive in spiritual ignorance is not true. When we behold the absolute oneness, the innumerable persons, things, and places of this world will become like a cinema show on the screen!

DO NOT BE WEAK-MINDED



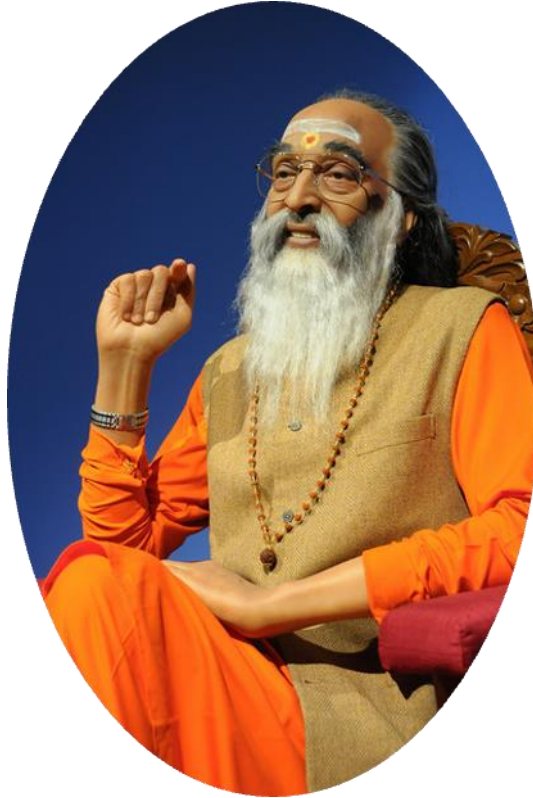
The Vedas say, with utmost clarity, 'You are That.' And yet, you have not gained steady abidance in the Supreme Self. You keep thinking (on how you may become happy). This is utter 'weakness of the mind'. The Truth shines all the time as your own true nature!

Shri Ramana Maharshi

(Verse 34 'āha sphutam..' in Saddarshanam)

[Most seekers, though well-read, are unsteady in their daily life behaviour and in their spiritual practices. They do not rein in their mind when it goes towards pleasures or matters of the world. As a result, all their scholarship goes in vain. Maharshi urges us to train our mind to stay with the truth that we appreciate in Satsangs. We must further support our spiritual exercises with firm adherence to noble values like truthfulness in daily transactions.
– Editors]

IS THERE REALLY A NEW YEAR?



There is no New Year that I know of.

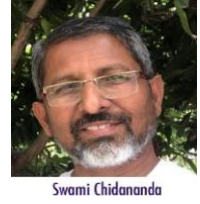
We, with our minds – its passions and hopes – conceive the coming year and the year that has gone off.

*Rest in Him who is ever the same in your heart and
watch the parade of events in the stream of TIME.*

Pujya Swāmi Chinmayānandaji

-

[Celebrating the New Year is all right as an excuse, a context or an occasion for greeting each other and for expressing goodwill towards relatives and friends. We cannot deny, however, what Pujya Swāmiiji says above. All this is our own mind's creation. The main job at hand is to strengthen our bond with God, no matter what day of the year it is. – Editors]



CAN GEETĀ CHANGE US?

/ Geetā can transform us if we take its advice seriously /

Imagine you are about to touch a live electric wire. Somebody at a distance screams, 'Hey, do not touch it! You will get shock!' Can her words change your possible action?



A lot of valuable advice that we find in best-selling books these days, in the self-help category at popular bookstores, is indeed an echo of the exhortations that Geetā makes. 'Do not get stuck in inaction,' for example, is what Shri Krishna forcefully says¹ to Arjuna. Action is the signature of life. When we stop acting, which means we do not move, we are practically dead unless it is one of those rare occasions where we might be taking a break to gather energy and to look for a creative way to go ahead. More often, we do not act because certain laziness overpowers us. We must overcome such lethargy in some way or the other. Geetā asks us to get up and move; to go from *tamas*² to *rajas*; and to rise from being a stone to expressing ourselves as a living being endowed with intelligence.

On a higher level, Geetā's revelations bring about a paradigm shift in those of us who are ready to change our way of seeing things. Our life is generally governed by a set of ideas, which is nothing but a universal conditioning (or programming) that is questionable when we examine life closely. Right at the beginning of his divine discourse, Lord Krishna says³, 'You were, you are, and you will be; you do not die!' With necessary preparations, our mind gets the philosophical maturity to receive such an extraordinary insight, which fundamentally changes our perspectives.

Thus, both on the levels of *dharma* and *moksha* (right living and emancipation), the teachings of the Song Celestial have the ability to change us. We must cooperate with these shining pieces of wisdom, which strengthen us through *satkarma* (good actions) and liberate us through *jnāna* (right knowledge).

Notes:

1 *mā te sangah astu akarmani* – Geetā 2.47

2 '*tamas*' binds us through making us lazy. Geetā 14.8

3 *na tu eva aham jātu na āsam, na tvam..* Geetā 2.12

Swāmi Chidānanda

4

DO NOT CHASE MONEY

Being mad after money will cause spiritual downfall.

We now look at an instruction, the fourth imperative in this series, that comes down to a bit gross plane. All of us need money to fulfil various needs of our life but it will do us harm in the spiritual context when the desire for money overshadows everything else.



Do not run after money (mā gridhah¹ kasyasvid dhanam)!

Ishāvāsya Upanisad, mantra 1

We must remember that our spiritual goal is to realize our true nature – the Pure Self – and the Vedāntas have declared it to be Pure Consciousness (or Awareness). Going from inert matter to spirit, the life principle, is what the whole spiritual journey is all about. Let us ask ourselves the question, ‘Is money inert or sentient?’ Let us not end up in a situation where the sentient is at the mercy of the inert!

Any obsession with wealth may lead us to material success and we may be celebrities too in this confused world of false priorities. From a higher point of view, however, a life devoted to gathering money is a life wasted.

In Bhaja Govindam, Āchārya Shankara says² – Know (the pursuit of) wealth to be evil! Life’s wisdom consists in ensuring that ‘there is a *place for everything but everything is in its place.*’ It is all right for some among us to be active in the field of finance, keeping an eye always on making larger profits and on reducing unnecessary expenses. Such people also are an asset to a healthy society for no society can survive if its treasuries go bankrupt. The point to be noted here, however, is that even people who deal with money need to have a larger vision. They may go after money with a sense of dedication towards the country’s interest, of which their own well-being is a part.

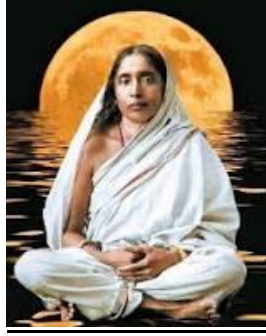
When taken in the special context of spiritual seekers, the earlier we let go of the excessive importance we give to money, the better it will be – for our inner journey to gather speed and lead us to more profound forms of happiness that are waiting for us. We must not therefore ever become slaves to money.

Notes:

1 *ākāṅkshām mā kārsheeh dhana-vishayām* – Bhāshya on Ishāvāsya Upanishad, mantra 1
2 *artham-anartham bhāvaya nityam* – Mundakopanishad, 2.2.5

Quote of the Issue

WORK WE MUST



How can a man's mind be all right if he does not do any work? Nobody can stay engaged in meditation and contemplation for 24 hours a day. Therefore, a man must work. By doing so his mind remains vibrant.

Holy Mother Sārada Devi

[Sri Sārada Devi (1853 – 1920), was the wife and spiritual consort of [Rāmakrishna Paramahansa](#), the well-known nineteenth-century Hindu mystic. Sārada Devi is also reverentially addressed as the Holy Mother (Sri Sri Maa) by the followers of the Sri Rāmakrishna monastic order. The [Sri Sārada Math](#) and [Rāmakrishna Sārada Mission](#) situated at Dakshineswar are based on the ideals and life of Sārada Devi. She played an important role in the growth of the Rāmakrishna Movement. – Editors]

Smt. Indira Gautam
Writes from the US

EVERYBODY CANNOT BE A LEADER

Tips from Vālmiki

Because there are power, privileges, glitter and glamour with leadership, everybody fancies being a leader. Communities want someone from their group to become a leader. Families will celebrate if a member from their side occupies a chair of importance.



Tom, Dick, or Harry cannot become a leader. When someone, not suited to lead, by skills, commitment etc., sits on a chair, it can spell doom to the organization.

Vālmiki says¹ in his *ādi kāvya*, “Countries and cities, which were at one time prosperous, get ruined if a man who has no self-control, and whose ways are not ethical, becomes their head.”

In these days of democracy at most places in the world, it is the responsibility of all of us, the citizens, to vote for truly fit persons. We should not be swayed by narrow considerations like caste, creed, colour of the skin etc.

When a leader has good control over what to speak and what to withhold, where to act and where not to, he (or she) will lead his (or her) organization, city, or country to great glory. Maximum people will then receive benefit.

Let us be aware of our responsibilities as leaders or as members of teams, and play our roles with care and dignity.

Indira Gautam

Note 1:

/ *akrita-ātmānam-āsādyā*

/ *rājānam-anaye ratam |*

/ *samriddhāni vinashyanti*

/ *rāshtrāni nagarāni cha || (Vālmiki Rāmāyana, Sundara Kānda 21.11)*

Health is You

ON MENTAL HEALTH

Why it matters as much as physical fitness

Our mental health is essential to how we think, feel, and act. It can impact everything from how we relate to other people to our self-esteem and even how well our immune system works. When thinking about how to live a long, healthy life, many people focus on their fitness or physical health. It is just as important to give our mental health the same care and consideration.

The connection

Our body and mind support one another, which means the actions we take to support our physical health can also benefit our mental health. Caring for our mental and physical health together can have a long-lasting impact our quality of life, reduce our risk for chronic illness, and increase our longevity.

The way we experience our mental health is often through our emotions and moods. The main difference between an emotion and a mood is how long they last. Emotions are automatic responses that only last for a moment. Moods are more stable; they can last for days or even weeks.

DO THESE TO SUPPORT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

- 1) Spend time outdoors in nature.
- 2) Do something physically active.
- 3) Maintain a consistent sleep schedule.
- 4) Eat nutritious meals regularly and stay hydrated.
- 5) Stay socially connected with others.

Emotions can be caused by a personally meaningful experience. The experience can be internal or external, such as when we recall a vacation or watch a scary film. The emotion

we feel in those moments occur automatically. Emotions help provide us with valuable information about our experiences and surroundings, such as something we are scared of or should avoid. They do this by releasing hormones and redirecting blood supply so that we can respond appropriately.

It may be difficult to know where a mood comes from because they can come from several experiences or may have no identifiable cause. Our moods can be influenced by our personality, the time of year, hormones, and our surroundings. While moods are less intense than emotions, they can still affect how we think about things and our reactions.



Paying attention to the differences between emotions and moods can give us more insights into our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. In Health, we can log both momentary emotions and daily moods to help us get a better sense of what is impacting our state of mind. When we log, it is also helpful to identify the emotion of mood that we are feeling most along with the things contributing to it. This can help us identify patterns.

(For queries on mental health, reach the website samaritansmumbai.org)

~(Note: The second part of the last issue's article on INSULIN will appear in the next issue, February 2024.)

DRAW INSPIRATION FROM THE LION OF VEDĀNTA
A Piece to Mark Swāmi Vivekānanda's Birthday



- 1) Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be.
- 2) See for the highest, aim at that highest, and you shall reach the highest.
- 3) It is a privilege to serve mankind, for this is the worship of God. God is here, in all these human souls.
- 4) Will power is the greatest power and the power of youth makes nation powerful.
- 5) Strength is Life, Weakness is Death. Expansion is Life, Contraction is Death. Love is Life, Hatred is Death.
- 6) Arise, awake, and do not stop until the goal is reached.
- 7) All power is within you; you can do anything and everything.
- 8) The greatest religion is to be true to your own nature.
- 9) In a conflict between the heart and the brain, follow your heart.
- 10) Youth is the best time. The way in which you utilize this period will decide the nature of coming years that lie ahead of you. True progress is slow but sure.
- 11) The world is the great gymnasium where we come to make ourselves strong. The more we come out and do good to others, the more our hearts will be purified, and God will be in them.
- 12) Be a hero.

{On this 12th of January 2024, it will be 161 years since Swāmi Vivekānanda took birth in Kolkata. We offer 12 of his quotes as above with reverence to him.}

Webinars



PRESENTED

The following webinars were held at 8.30 pm IST, on Sundays:

By Swami Chidananda		
December 17, 2023	Webinar #258	Understanding Hinduism, Episode 8*
By Dr Thimappa Hegde		
December 31, 2023	Webinar #259	Inner Strength and Fulfilment from Bhagavad Geeta

// * Episode 8 touched upon 'Reason versus Faith in Hindu Scriptures'

TO BE PRESENTED

The following webinars by Swāmiji will come up at 8.30 pm IST, on Sundays:

January 14, 2024	Webinar #260	Understanding Hinduism, Episode 9
January 28, 2024	Webinar #261	What happens when one dies?

News

Mumbai, Dec 5, 2023: West Indies shakes hands with India: Shri Ravi Bhārati, who studied in Sāndeepany Sādhanālaya between 1991 and 1993, lives in Trinidad with his wife Rādhikā. Both of them run a Spiritual Centre in their country called Param Dhaama Ashrama. Along with ten others from the island in the West Indies, Shri Ravi Bhārati is on an India tour. Swāmiji, along with Renu Gāndhi and Harish Kānchan, hosted this group at Govinda, the restaurant at ISKCON, Juhu. Needless to say, the conversations over lunch (Shri Krishna's prasād) touched upon quite a bit on Vedānta studies.



Friends from Trinidad in Mumbai, Dec 5, 2023

(Shri Ravi Bhārati at extreme right in light yellow shirt)

December 9, 10: Talks under the banner of Indica Moksha: These two online talks were received very well. Shri Nithin Sridhar from Mysuru welcomed Swāmiji and introduced him to the audience, spread across the world. He read out questions at the end of each of the two talks, and Swāmiji answered them. Many messages of appreciation were received later in the days to come.



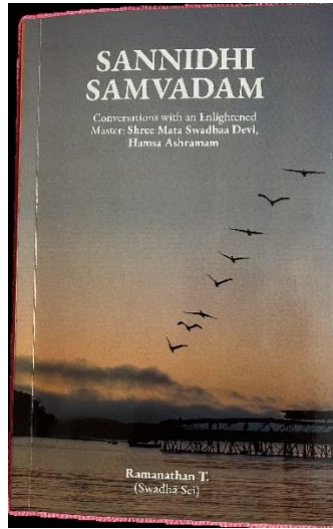
Two online talks, Dec 9, 10

Bengaluru, Dec 22, 2023, A Get-together at ADVAITAM: Some of the former students at Sāndeepany Sādhanālaya, Mumbai, got together at Advaitam, near Doddaballāpur, to the north-west of Bengaluru, on Dec 22. Shri Ravi Bhārati from Trinidad, Prāchārya Mahendra Mahārāj from Raigarh (Chattisgadh), Coomār Comsāripally from Bengaluru, Brni Vibhā Chaitanya from Pune, and the host Swāmi Advaitānanda – all these had studied in Powai, and their resident āchārya was Swāmi Chidānandaji. Two former members of CHYK (Chinmaya Yuva Kendra) – Gopal and Satyanarayan – had also joined. This happy event had informal sharing of thoughts, going around the serene campus of Advaitam, bhajans by Rabi Bhārati and Prāchārya Mahendra, talks by Advaitānanda and Swāmiji etc. The gathering of about 15 participants concluded with partaking of delicious lunch prepared by Smt Padmā Srinivās and her team.



A Happy Gathering at Advaitam, Dec 22, 2023

Anusoni, Dec 23, 2023, Geetā Jayanti Celebrated: The Hamsa Ā shrama, founded by Pujya Swāmi Virājeshwarānandaji, is located near Hosur (T N) at a village called Anusoni. About a hundred devotees gathered on Saturday, the 23rd, to celebrate Geetā Jayanti at this serene place. Swāmi Tanmayānanda, the principal trustee of the āsrhama, and Swāmiji spoke on the occasion in the afternoon. There were poojā, havan and chanting of the entire Geetā in the morning. A book 'Sannidhi Samvadam' was also released on this occasion. Swāmiji stayed for three days after this and gave lectures on Ramana Maharshi's 'Geetā Sāra', which is 42 verses that the Maharshi had selected from Shri Krishna's Geetā having 700 verses.



During this 9-day tour of Bengaluru and some āshrmas around Bengaluru, Brni Vibhā Chaitanya and Swāmini Amrutānanda accompanied Swāmiji and joined all the Satsangs at various places. Swamiji also visited the Suvarnamukhi Samskriti Dhāma for a day and had discussions with Āchārya Dr M Nagarāju, the President of the Centre.

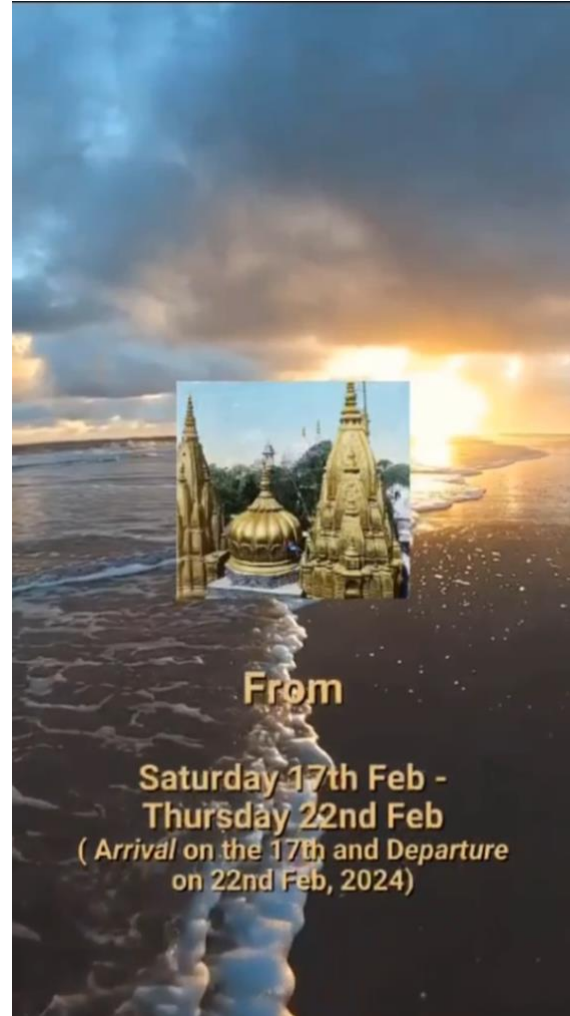
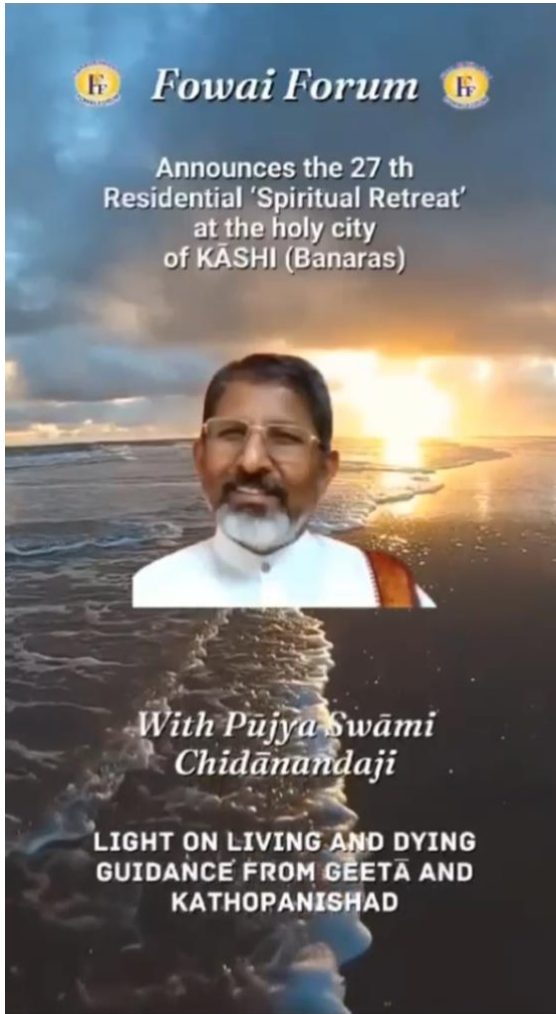


Ranjan Bhat took the three spiritual teachers to the beautiful Natarāj Park in J P Nagar, First Phase, Bengaluru, Dec 27, 2023.

Upcoming Events

Bengaluru, January 17, 18, 2024: Two offline talks in Kannada will be held at the Shankara Jayanti Mandali, 3rd Block, Jayanagar, by Swāmiji on the topic '*Live Wisely, Live Happily*'. These are open to public and will be at 6 pm on both the days.

Kāshi Retreat, Feb 17 – 22, 2024: The FOWAI FORUM will hold a five-day Retreat at Kāshi Ānandam, a Spiritual and Wellness Vedic Village, Shool Tankeshwar, Vārānasi. The theme will be 'Living and Dying' – Guidance from Geetā and Kathopanishad. Please write to fowaiforum@yahoo.com if you wish to join.



(AUPA is the short form of AUPANISHADA-PURUSHA, the truth of the sacred source called Upanishads. This e-newsletter comes from Project Manager of the website: aupa.in – Upanishad Wisdom).

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