

## The Qur'ānic Concept of Divine Mercy and its Impact Upon Human Attitude and Behaviour: A Religio-Social Discourse

Mr. Muḥammad Ashfaq\*  
Dr Manzoor Aḥmad Al-Azhari\*\*

### Abstract

This paper has been developed focusing upon multiple manifestations of Divine Mercy stated in the Qur'ān regarding the human attitude and behaviour. A brief sketch of opinions and research conducted by social scientists in this regard have also been taken in to account. Specific verses about Divine Mercy encapsulated with different references of exegetical modes along with literal and technical elaborations of mercy epistemologically are the integral parts of paper. Employing analytical method, we may evaluate that how human attitude and behaviour have been addressed by the Qur'ān. This study concludes claiming better impacts upon society manifold flashes of mercy from Lord towards His devotee, from man to man and cosmos as well as from man towards other creation. Yet, this concept of divine mercy is not evaluated with diversified dimensions as we intend to explore in analytical framework. This Religio-Social Discourse (RSD) may project a scintillating personality seeking guidance from Qur'ānic verses. It is a message to mold human conduct saturating the needs of well-balanced persona which meet the standard of moral par-excellence.

**Keywords:** Divine Mercy, Qur'ānic Worldview, Human Attitude and behavior, Social Impact

### 1. Introduction

It has been acknowledged by religions and philosophies for ancient time that the Creator, is Merciful to all of His creature. There are number of dimensions of Divine Mercy addressing various aspects of human life. Qur'ānic verses regarding Divine Mercy expressed different root derivatives projecting meanings and understating towards walk of life. This study consists of discourse that has been developed from relevant Qur'ānic verses in relation to human attitude and behaviour that may result ultimately in the shape of social uplifting and amelioration. Literal and technical definitions of *rahmah* (mercy) is also an integral part of the study. Over and above observing proportionality among the verses one may discern that how human nature, thought and attitude is being addressed demanding good moral character molding the addressee towards the highest standards of behaviour. Divine Attributes mentioned at the end of the verse may also cause to manifest the practical aspects of human life.

What is Islamic epistemological concern, it may be estimated up to possible extent from the literal and technical understanding of the word mercy (*rahmah*). For example, *al-rahmah* is one of key term with numerous connotations mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. About mercy Ibn Manẓūr (d.1311) added that the word *rahmah* includes *Riqqah wal ta'ttuf* (delicacy, subtlety and kindness), *Maghifrah* (forgiveness), *Rizq* (sustenance and provision), *Ghayth* (Succor), *Ihsān* (benevolence and philanthropy), *Riqat ul-Qalb* (heart leniency), sympathy and compassion.<sup>1</sup> Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī (d. 1108/1109) expressed that *rahmah* has relation with the concept of benevolence (*Ihsān*) closely, where he added *rahm* with respect to womb and relationship (*qarābah*) and Lord's Mercy towards everything what He has created. Quoting Hadith about blood relationship Rāghib inferred that we may find two

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\* PhD Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, HITEC University Taxila, Pakistan

\*\* Associate Professor of Islamic Law, HITEC University Taxila, Pakistan

meanings of mercy as one is *Ihsān* a dimension of mercy from Lord and other is *riqqah* which is inbuilt in human nature where action motivated by compassion and leniency is the mercy from man towards man (and other humanity).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Ibn 'Āshūr (d.1973) also extended the concept of mercy as one's leniency and clemency toward good act.<sup>3</sup> It may be called as an act towards well appreciated attitude. Because, Al-Jurjānī commented that mercy is the determination to convey and deliver the good and (the moral values).<sup>4</sup> While Syed Amīr Alī added that Divine Mercy is one of the grandest and magnificent theme of the Qur'ān that expresses a deep conviction of love, where Divine Mercy covers creation completely.<sup>5</sup> Hence, it provides shelter to the whole creature.

Therefore, it may be added that mercy is the significant Divine Attribute to know anthropo-cosmic relationship with respect to the creator and human role for betterment. A correlation from Allah Almighty to cosmos and from man to universe and other creature. It includes man where question of compassion, love, forgiveness and kindness are important in these relative bonds. As Al-Maydānī (d. 2007) put the two aspects of mercy firstly of pain feelings for one who is afflicted with distress and secondly the feeling of pleasure for other those who have the pleasure.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, according to John L Esposito it doesn't include only the concept of forgiveness, however, it entails bounteous mercy with the idea of safeguard, protection, and rewards for humanity.<sup>7</sup>

The question of human attitude and behaviour, their mutual links and differences entering into overall discussions in the light of opinions given by social scientists where whole homogenous view has been managed to find out which is a central part of this paper. In order to grasp the concept of Divine Mercy from Qur'ānic perspective we may proceed to examine certain references elaborating the various dimensions of thesis combining different opinions together with what is the whole integral concept, in toto connotation and significance of subject where Divine Mercy associated with anthropo-cosmic entities and perceptions addressing human thought, attitude and behaviour functioning among the God, man and universe triangular nexus visiting data and reviewing literature from Islamic exegetical and philosophical insight in order to be familiar with Qur'ānic Weltanschauung, from whom we benefited from attaining the quality of moral par-excellence as well as to swing the pendulum of social life in better way.

This study intends to elaborate Divine Mercy with respect to Qur'ānic Scripture in order to grasp its possible homogenous and integral concept by means of exegetical and philosophical approaches with reference to human attitude and behaviour considering research of social scientists in relation to the betterment of social life that may cause to result a peaceful society. It is necessary to know well-saturated and universal concept of Divine Mercy from Qur'ānic perspective in order to actualize and operationalize the insight as per outlines defined by Qur'ānic Scripture towards betterment of social life for humanity and peaceful living around the globe.

This research finds the answer of the question that what are the practical living styles for humanity as demanded by the concept of Divine Mercy in the light of Islamic Milieu and its influence upon human attitude, behaviour and ultimately impact upon social scenario towards tranquility? Whereas this study attempts to verify the hypothesis that whether Qur'ānic concept of Divine Mercy provides the harmonic and peaceful flow of human life in the light of well-balanced practical guidance towards the human attitude or behaviour for

better social life or not? Research will be carried out by means of analytical approach consulting the available relevant literature and its review along with the study of different exegetical approach. Both perspectives either from Qur'ānic worldview or from the opinions of social scientists we may arrive at possible results regarding the role of mercy in relation to attitude and behaviour.

It may be added that the term mercy includes clemency, leniency, generosity, philanthropy, benevolence, compassion and love where the tenderness and sympathy as well as safeguard and protection are important characteristics epistemologically that may have those who have been blessed with the gift of mercy. All these elaborations are important attributes towards living scenario of society either partially or on approaching maximum demands of human thought linked with mostly transcendental and metaphysical aspects of attitude and behaviour projecting peaceful persona leaving impact upon society.

## 2. Analytical Approach Addressing Root Derivatives of Mercy

Qur'ānic worldview about mercy has been indicated and well-explained citing root word or without root derivatives directly mentioning *rahmah* and multiple references easily accessible from Qur'ān, hadith and Islamic literature for the benefit of society confronting various issue in any current context. But this paper has been developed emphasizing directly root derivatives. So, different roots have been mentioned in the Qur'ānic verses where trilateral roots (infinitive form), *rā ḥā mīm (r-ḥ-m)* are pointed out more than three hundred times at different places concerning Divine Mercy<sup>8</sup> may be studied from given Table-I. We may visit following roots listed below with particular examples as:

**Table-I Examination of Different (Qur'ānic) Root Derivatives of word (Rahmah)**

S. No	Root Derivatives	Qur'ānic Reference	Considering each Derivative of Word Mercy (rahmah) in relation to Human Attitude and Behaviour
01	<i>Ruḥm</i> 1 time	(18:81)	In this verse exchange of son with better son is highlighted with the son having good character and conduct and clemency that is the required to illustrate good attitude and modest behaviour.
02	<i>Marḥama</i> 1 times	(90:17)	This reference is mentioned one time in the Qur'ān also expressing conduct patience and tolerance urging one another for mutual co-existence, based upon compassion
03	<i>Arḥam</i> 4 times	(12:92) (7:151)	This nominative masculine singular noun ( <i>Isṁ Marfū'</i> ) has been stated 4 times in the Qur'ān where prophets like Moses, Jacob and Job ( <i>Ayyūb</i> ) and their dealing with human behaviour has been mentioned proclaiming Islamic God as Merciful.
04	<i>Rāḥimīn</i> 6 times	(12:92)	Other than two references, four references are same as mentioned against serial 03. Where one may find more than one expressions of mercy in only one verse of Qur'ān.(23:108/109)

05	<i>Arḥām</i> 12 times	(47:22)	This derivative having meaning e.g. womb, blood relation or kinship also predicts the good moral conduct as in verse (47:22) the derivative is mentioned where prohibition of disorder and mischief spreading, attaining power has been indicated while consecutive previous verse started with proclamation that best for them would one who is obedient having ethical talk and utterance.
06	<i>Raḥīma</i> 28 times	(12:53)	To save oneself from disliked behaviour in the society having values due to ill-commanding self is possible for whom Allah bestows his Mercy and He is All-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. This verse has been stated after mentioning the attitude and behaviour of Joseph (A.S).
07	<i>Raḥmān</i> 57 times	(25:63)	Walking style showing decent and gentle behaviour of servants of the Merciful God has been portrayed in the verse (25:63). Verse started with the sentence 'the devotees of <i>al- Raḥmān</i> ' expressing that when impolite people address them unpleasantly they replied saying: 'Peace' or reply peacefully.
08	<i>Raḥmah</i> 114 times	(3:8)	A social life blessed with standard moral excellence may deviate due to intension and inner feeling with another improbable way Qur'ān addresses this situation and tells us that hearts shouldn't deviate do that people of good conducts may be admitted to Divine Mercy.
09	<i>Raḥīm</i> 116 times	(2:37)	Out of 116 the verse (2:37) a reference of Divine Mercy from very beginning of the Qur'ān has been elaborated with different exegetical approaches in this paper (stated before Table-II under the title of Step-I)

Manifestation of Divine Mercy may be visited in the above listed different derivatives whereas serial five mentions derivative (*arḥām* whose singular is *raḥm*) mother womb. Various linguistic approaches integrated its meaning and domain into entire worldview of mercy that may also be analyzed in relation to the whole concept and overall view point attached with various derivatives. The mutual relation and feeling of sympathy among relative e.g. brothers and sisters etc. may also be called as due to the generation from the same womb (*raḥm*) that before any immoral and unethical event taken place these relations shows merciful behaviour with each other organically. Hence, all these references of mercy elucidate the Qur'ānic weltanschauung addressing attitude and behaviour rehashing overall social norm toward betterment and peace.

## 2.1. Modes to Comprehend the Qur'ānic Manifestations of Divine Mercy

This discourse may be divided into number of modes in order to visit the theme and topic of mercy with multiple dimensions that may be considered as an integral part of Qur'ānic Worldview or regarding any particular subject and domain indicated by social scientists. Following domains may be measured where each approach requires to be highlighted different aspects connected to the whole conceptual realm.

## 2.2. Divine Mercy and Expressions Associated with related Verses

Multiple manifestations of Divine Mercy may be observed as discussed in the Qur'ān and with respect to Holy Prophet Sayings. Divine Mercy may be divided into the forms considering the verses having the message of mercy. Dr. Saban Ali developed various principle e.g. mercy as golden principle avoiding conflict, guiding principle and principle of hope etc. in the light of Islamic theology where he addressed '*stimuli in cognizant self*' of Freud and pleasure principle as a manifestation of mercy taking into account human anger and revenge. He claimed from Islamic view point the mercy amends and justice deters.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.3. Exegetical Approaches and Correlation from Qur'ānic Perspective

This discourse may be demarcated into two further steps as:

**Step-I:** Exegetical Approach towards One Verse Elaboration

**Step-II:** More than One Verses Concerning Human Attitude and Behaviour

Under the title of Step-I, there are number of references concerning mercy, one may find that how it addresses humanity towards advancement and betterment. We may proceed further considering verse (2:37) with different exegetical approaches for example, Imām Qurṭbī put eight elaborations of this verse ended at the message of mercy in 5<sup>th</sup> elaboration he added that Almighty Allah returned toward his creation deputizing and considering the heart of the sinner to make it better molding it towards righteousness, (a person having merciful attitude as he blessed with) good moral conduct that may also be expressed by human limbs and organs.<sup>10</sup> From heart purification and enlightening it with lust-free thought and miseries. Hence, it results as impact upon the human organs to perform well for social amelioration. Moreover, Allah Almighty estimated the negligence of his creation and enacted for them sources of repentance with three stages. One out of them is to do in accordance with mercy... as if there is no mercy then there is no change of forgiveness leaving defaulter in the situation where no way to amend it may cause to spread disorder leaving bad impact on the social life.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Ibn Āshūr has added to the meanings of mercy that one who regrets and repents on his improper behaviour his repentance is fruitful.<sup>12</sup> Al-Māwardī also added in this regard that acceptance of repentance by God of Islam (Allah) at a large scale is only by dint of Divine Mercy what is working behind (this immeasurable bestowal of forgiveness).<sup>13</sup>

Step-II has been indicated in Table-II, we may visit Religio-Social Discourse in the light of some relevant Qur'ānic verses as: -

**Table-II Analytical Reasoning in the Light of Verses Concerning Subject Theme**

Religio-Social Discourse (RSD) from Qur'ānic Perspective Ameliorating Human Attitude and Behaviour: An Exemplification of Verses related to Mercy	Reference (Chapter: Verse)
Allah Almighty Addressed Prophet of Islam in the verse (3:159) expressing the soft attitude and lenient behaviour with the people due to Divine Mercy. Stern and hard-hearted dealing with people may	(3:159)

cause to disperse and scattering away from around one.	
Don't behave as a spendthrift and at least talk politely with poor members of society showing decent verbal behaviour if you are unable to cooperate them financially. It is obvious considering the proportional wisdom ( <i>al-Munāsabah</i> ) among Qur'ānic verses, where merciful dealing with parents has also been addressed.	(17:28)
Behaving niggardly has been denounced. Instead of avaricious attitude towards social dealing and spending for economic balance without fear of consumption of whole treasure. Because this treasure has been called as mercy that will not be expired.	(17:100)
Removal of distress from one's life an expression of mercy. One may behave in society in accordance with adopting Sunnah of Allah as how God deal mercifully.	(21:84)
Addressing a social vice (to restore the balance of communal life) it is added that who repent after false blaming and mend their ways, God may forgive them as He is the most Merciful.	(24:05)
Bestowal of Mercy has been prescribed with the condition of replacing evil with good (for social betterment).	(27:11)
Accelerating evil instead of good is not allowed. So, bestowed of Lord's mercy is conditional to the change of attitude.	(27:46)
Bad attitude of whispering suspicion and promoting mischief behaviour is indicated in consecutive previous verses of verse (07:203) and as a solution it, has been prescribed that Qur'ān a visionary book, mercy and enlightening source for humanity.	(45:20) (07:203)
Behaving rightly is a key to enter in the enclosure of mercy then one may acquire as a result into the Great Success ultimately.	(45:30)
A package has been given for better social impact associated with positive attitude and behaviour. one may observe following directions proportionally linked with the verses laden with the communication of mercy. Out of them some instructions are listed below succinctly: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate carefully the news launched by wicked person mongering mischief and disturbing the social living.</li> <li>• Don't harm the people unknowingly.</li> <li>• Affection and heart embellishment has been encouraged instead of disobedience and sins.</li> <li>• Reconciliation and (restoration of peace) and justice has been appreciated.</li> <li>• Brotherhood and Friendship is a sign of mercy.</li> <li>• Discouraged ridicule behaviour in the community.</li> <li>• It is not allowed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ to offence,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	(49: 6) to (49:13)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ to guess faults of others,</li> <li>○ to proclaim one with bad appellations (promoting bad character in the society)</li> <li>• Avoid most speculations and conjectures</li> <li>• Neither spy nor backbite.</li> <li>• Endorsed mutual peaceful living etc.</li> </ul>	
The true followers with the prophets for them Allah created mercy in their hearts and provided them balanced (social) life.	(57:27)
A psychological symbol indicated in the verse having message of mercy that Allah may bring friendship in the social environment what have been disrupted by you.	(60:7)

It is obvious from both steps of exegetical approach that mercy from Qur'ānic perspective incorporates multidimensional phases of human character and persona either overtly or covertly examined with different aspects along with affirmative as well as corrective measures. To bless with mercy and compassion is the question of responsibility and awakening conscious for social improvement. There are numbers of Qur'ānic verses having the message of mercy clarifying the psychological needs of humanity. For example, the golden principle of mercy and its hermeneutical understanding of Dr. Saban Ali Duzgun in relation to peace and conflict study.

### 3. Social Scientist Concerning Attitude and Behaviour in relation to Mercy

We may visit various research conducted by social scientists concerning attitude and behaviour and their mutual relationship either both are unrelated e.g. attitude does not impact on the behaviour as stated by Richard LaPiere on the other hand Wicker finds that attitude influences behaviour strongly his methodology and procedure to get result was better comparatively. In contrast, other views are also there in which first behaviour impacts attitude and then attitude influences behaviour also. Further, Rajvinder Samra added that number of social scientist agreed upon that attitude structure is not unidimensional and total dimensions are not known but attitude is of multidimensional.<sup>14</sup> So, attitude and behaviour are mutually linked and behaviour may have the position as precursor towards attitude concerning social life or vice versa. Schopenhauer (d. 1960) compensated his conversation with the word mercy while discussing the distress and suffering of the world.<sup>15</sup> we may add that in justifying the painful situation of society to get rid of distress, he pondered over mercy considering a solution philosophically. As each one is intrinsically worthy of respect whether the other person's behaviour is not good. Similarly, respect is also known as active sympathy by a person having rational approach.<sup>16</sup>

Attitude is meant by a feeling, disposition, manner and position about person or thing, tendency of mind where *attitude of should* and *attitude of will* have been deliberated.<sup>17</sup> Whereas in the light of Collins Dictionary, what you think and feel about something is an attitude particularly when it is expressed by behaviour.<sup>18</sup> Scholars of psychology working for social betterment considered that social behaviour remain under the impact of attitude where components of behaviour are either verbal of non-verbal and overt.<sup>19</sup> Moreover,

Joseph Primm remarked that attitude may be visited relating to the serving other, a positive attitude is a driving force making world better in shape around you.<sup>20</sup>

Attitudes are always seen as precursors of behaviour, as determinants of how a person will actually behave in his daily affairs.<sup>21</sup> For the solution of any problem attitude and behaviour relationship is important to be clarified and behavioural measure is the dependent factor related to attitude while attitude and belief are not isolated swimming happily in the mind where cognition organization plays the key roles towards behaviour due to external or internal factors.<sup>22</sup>

Kant's (d.1804) concept of treating humanity as one's own person or other all are equal in respect it may have impact on society so we should treat with manner.<sup>23</sup> Thus, swiftly changing of social scenario traditional values and professional ethics are also at stake here we required care, trust and empathy.<sup>24</sup> i.e. we may render it as expression of mercy and compassion, reducing various factors instigating toward unappreciated behaviour. Furthermore, recently journal of 'Sociology of Religion' Oxford University in the latest issue 2019 added a research that religion is a social phenomenon and its impact reached beyond the individual and can influence many important aspects of society. There are many ways to explore these influence.<sup>25</sup> Religious subcultures may have a broad impact upon behaviour, attitudes, and important social outcomes.

Atkinson and Bourrat commented, it supplements our thought that the creed of faith in God and eschatology shows ethical and moral attitude concerning specific behaviour.<sup>26</sup> While Saroglou showed that at least some indications are also there where religious feelings influence prosocial behaviour due to internalized prosocial values.<sup>27</sup> Dimensions may be other than material aspects as Schuller added that happiness is not related to the material thing, and all the money in the world may not buy happiness.<sup>28</sup> As a result, for behaviour nourishment and its better execution number of opinions are there that may be exercised either from earthly and from material viewpoint or in the light of spiritual vision and insight.

Whereas religious matters in Islam are not dead and cold but are dynamics playing pivotal role in social behaviour. Quoting scholars of behaviourism Zufiqar Ali Shah added that Omnipotence and Divine Mercy jointly reinforce each other, encouraging and invigorating the behaviour what is required,<sup>29</sup> showing the mutual link of social betterment in relation to merciful environment. The Prophet of Islam is '*a mercy for the worlds of whole creature*'<sup>30</sup> '*full of mercy towards the believers*'<sup>31</sup>, and those who are around the prophet are also '*full of mercy towards one another*'.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, this extends to all human race, and to all conduct and behaviour. Certainly, if you have nothing to give, at least have a smiling face and a kind words.<sup>33</sup> This paradigm from Qur'ānic perspective and Prophetic Sayings inculcate and demand social life based on standard moral values respecting the sentiments of each other's. So, we may understand form Qur'ānic worldview considering fundamental epistemological domain and message expressed by verses as well as from outlooks of social scientists. Further, we may extend our comprehension on subject theme and its various implications comparatively.

#### **4. An Integration Between Both Dimensions**



From Qur'ānic concept, it is obvious that development in the life pragmatically improving human attitude and behaviour projecting peace and reconciliation is a message for humanity. The moralities from subject theme have wide-reaching methodology and framework in the light of relevant verses demanding serenity, tolerance, blood relations and their mutual links organically, watchfulness about ill-commanding self, endorsing moral par-excellence and civilized style of social life. What is the importance of God, man, and universe nexus and to exercise what is necessary ethically? All have been demanded by Qur'ānic worldview as sketched quoting some relevant references. On the other hand, social scientist discourse also represents the mutual relationship of attitude and behaviour and its prevailing situation with the concept of mercy. For example, one may judge Fishbein theory regarding the relationship of attitude and behaviour visiting in the light of reference where Qur'ān addressed the humanity taking into account the concept of Divine Mercy. For instance, he discussed three variables, fundamental factors and determinants toward behaviour. What is moral to perform a behaviour from attitude, normative belief either from personally feeling or from society and stimulus to go along with social standards etc.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, the remarks of social scientists may also be analyzed visiting the relevant thoughts from Qur'ānic perspective. A lot of guidance that may saturate the thought of social scientists are there in the Qur'ānic verses. These verses provided directions for social amelioration with the demands either to do or to stop what is being done with corrective and preventive measures.

##### **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The Qur'ānic concept of demands the practical development in the life improving human attitude and behaviour projecting peace and reconciliation. It is obvious that mercy is not just question of salvation and solution concerning soteriological aspects only. In the light of Qur'ānic guidelines, mercy plays a pivotal role to determine how to confront the clashes provoked and triggered against the well-balance and dynamic social tempo to solve the issue properly saving peaceful landscape. It may be added the Divine Mercy acts as active sympathy to actualize tranquility in the social rhythm considering humanity acquiring the characteristics of the best moral conduct. As the fundamental discourse of mercy according to Islamic philosophy projects epistemologically with exceptional purview which has been endorsed by Qur'ān and Prophetic Sayings with the slogan that *Divine Mercy encompasses each and every thing*. It is crystal clear that dimensions specified in the Arabic root derivatives of mercy (*rahmah*) may also presents hypothetical consideration positively evaluating opinions of social scientists analytically in relation to concept of Divine Mercy from Qur'ānic perspective. We may add that the principles from subject theme have universal frame work developing thought demanding patience, tolerance, emotional intelligence, blood relations and their mutual links organically, vigilance towards ill-commanding self, sanctioning moral par-excellence and decent style of social life, God, man and universe nexus and to behave as Allah's vicegerent adopting all these characteristics and norms adopting them in the modern context, we may conclude that it looks like more than what human intellect acquired where mercy may be considered as a panacea to treat issues concerning attitude and behaviour that are fundamental stone of personality. As greater the tussle and waging a war either nuclear weapon or unethical

use of bio technological or otherwise the role of Qur'ānic concept of mercy and compassion among humanity may not be ignored. It contributes towards social amelioration from layman to that of think tanks, dignitaries and decision makers i.e. leading elements of society providing them guidance from merciful milieu of Islam. As a future research agenda, it may be indicated on Likert scale to represent people's attitudes about any matter switching the golden principles of mercy from Qur'ānic perspective to exercise by them in their daily life because transcendental aspects of social life, ethics, belief, customs and religion and spiritual realm may not be overlooked.

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