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ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE NOVEL 'AKOOPAR'

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ABSTRACT

Anthropology is the study of human nature and societies in the past and present. It includes culture, tradition, ethics, norms, morals, nature or environment etc. The origin of Anthropology occurred in nineteenth century in western Europe and North America. It can be said that Anthropology is the connection between past and present, as it is related with the experiences of the people which is related to the society. "It is the study of everything and anything that makes us human." (Brown and McIlwraith) Thus, to know something more about it, researcher will discuss about the Anthropological element of the novel 'Akoopar' written by Dhruv Bhatt, basically Gujarati novel and translated into English by Piyush Joshi and Suresh Gadhavi in 2014. Which is based on the people of rural area of Gir in Gujarat. This paper is about the analysis of the text-Akoopar with the help of Anthropological study. Researcher will discuss about the harmonious existence of the people of Gir with the nature with the special reference to the novel 'Akoopar'. Researcher's aims are to know about cultural ethics, belief, social tradition, morals, identity, myth of the Title, artistic elements in the novel. Furtherly, to know Human being's kinship with animals, cultural and religious element of the novel, Interaction of Rural and Urban people, the importance of fauna and flora as well as milieu of that particular region i.e. Gir and inequality of Gir as depicted in the text and to know the interrelationship between village and other supra-local centres.

Keywords: Gujarati Literature, ethics, culture, tradition, nature, anthropology.

INTRODUCTION

"Anthropology is the science of human beings especially: the study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space and in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture" - Merriam Webster

"The word anthropology has a Greek origin. The Greek 'anthropos' means human and 'logos' means science and thus, anthropology represents science of human" (Barnard, 2000; 1) (as quoted in 'Diah et.el 155')
The origin of Anthropology is situated in nineteenth century in western Europe and North America. In academics, Anthropology consists of four fields i.e., Archaeology, Sociocultural, Biological/Physical and Linguistic Anthropology. "Anthropology usually has been defined as the study of other cultures, employing the technique of participant observation and collecting qualitative (not quantitative) data." (Hossain, Dewan et.el.)

So, Anthropology consists of Culture of particular region, caste, believe system, God of people, nature of people, geographical overview of particular region(ecology), role of religion in particular region, connection of history and modernity, language of people (of particular region), connection of people to nature and that particular region, gender etc. Indian Anthropology came in to scene in the twentieth century and British ideas kept emerging in Indian Anthropology. Some Anthropologists are W. H. R. Rivers, J. H. Hutton, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and C. G. Seligman. (Ghosh 2,3) "Anthropology is the study of human beings and human society as they exist across time and space." (anthropology.stanford.edu) It includes social tradition, cultural ethics, morals, biological diversity, identity, inequality etc. 'Akoopar' is a Gujarati novel written by Dhruv Bhatt. He is Gujarati poet and novelist, born in 1947 at Bhavnagar, Gujarat. This novel was published in 2011 and adapted in to play directed by Aditi Desai and also translated in English by Piyush Joshi and Suresh Gadhavi in November 2014.

'Akoopar' is the novel which signifies the mythological reference as far as the title is concened. The title of the novel is unusual in gujarati novels from others. Writer describes the mythological story of 'Mahabharata' here, and through this he describes the importance of 'Akoopar'. In this story, Akoopar is a tortoise which is the foundation, or base. Over this there was Shesh nag as per the fable, and the earth is believed to be balanced here. So, writer describes through the characters that it was the part of Gir that was exact below to it. In simple words it can be said that Gir is the 'Akoopar' for the writer. That's why in translated version writer uses word like infinite. By description of mythological story of 'Akoopar' he wants to say that Gir is the base of earth as Akoopar is the base of maintaining earth. Through this he wants to say that, if the Gir will be destroyed, then the whole world will be destroyed as the Gir is the base for him. So, he compares the whole Gir with the tortoise, 'Akoopar' which is the foundation, on which the earth is balanced.

As Parth Joshi suggests that Akoopar is,

"The text, being an extensive anthropological study of Gir region of Saurashtra (Gujarat), is highly culture-specific therefore the translation becomes an instance of Cross-cultural translation". (Joshi, Parth 45)

The researcher will illustrate Anthropological frame work by giving some Anthropological elements in the novel Akoopar in the original text (Gujarati) as well as in Translated version (English), which plays vital role in the novel. It will be about the kinship of people and nature, people and animal etc. and about the relationship between animate and inanimate. Researcher used Anthropological reading in this research paper. It is the close reading of the text Akoopar, using Anthropological ways.

ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE NOVEL 'AKOOPAR'

This paper is about the analysis of the text-Akoopar with the help of Anthropological study. So, here are some explanation and illustration for this.

"Literature becomes both a creation and creator of culture, with anthropology as observer/reader/interpreter. The dual role for literature and the repositioning of anthropology allows for a multiplicity of possibilities in reading, writing about, and interpreting people, places, and perspectives, real or imagined." (Angelis, 2)

Description of five elements

As per the description if the novel Akoopar, Narrator undertakes one project in which he should draw the paintings of Earth element. His friend Mita told something about this project that, "It is a huge project and equally large is the budget. As a part of the project, I require paintings of the five elements." (Joshi, 9) That five elements include water, space, ether, fire and earth. In which narrator should draw paintings on earth elements, remaining elements have already been assigned to others as per the description of the novel. These five elements are part of nature and the earth element is in narrator's hand for drawing, is destiny of narrator that connects past and present of him. He also chooses the place 'Gir' for the paintings of earth elements.

People of Gir and their relation with Gir

The whole novel is all about the Gir, the people of Gir and nature of Gir. People have too much attachment with Gir. Author discusses the real kinship between people, animals and nature of that particular region i.e. Gir.

Whether author talks about Sansai, Aima or anyone else. Each person has a personal unique connection with Gir. When Aima says 'Khama Gayr ne', it is difficult to understand for narrator that why she blessed whole Gir rather to bless particular thing or person. But with the passing of time he understands that for the people of Gir, Gir is living thing and it includes nature, people, animals, rituals, customs, tradition, language etc. The people of Gir have feelings, not only for the people or animals but for the nature too. Where people have performed wedding of hills with the hillock. This marriage was possible only through Rava Aata, who is blind man and adopted hill Ghantalo as his son. He also requested Lat Sahib to adopt Ghantali as his daughter. So, the marriage function is possible only through this guy i.e. Rava Aata. The whole Gir celebrates this occasion with the heart, that is called true friendship of people with nature. Writer describes the songs which people still sing;

"Ghantalo weds Ghantali, The Best man is Vanhadhor, Hiran and Meghal are present in the marriage ceremony And there is great pomp in the Gir." (Joshi 37)

People used to call hills with the names like, Ghantalo, Ghantali, Vanhadhor etc. Except this they used to call animals with particular name like, Girvan, Ramjana, Saryu, Jani etc. People's love towards animals, is incredible. Sansai's relation with Lions and Lajo's relation with her Girvan are the best examples for this, where words are less to explain it. In this way, people have strong bond with Gir. Bhatt presents this intimate construction of bond between Individual and the region in multifaceted way. "Anthropology encourages us to extend our perspectives beyond familiar social contexts to view things from the perspectives of others." (Brown and Mcllwraith) Writer shows kinship between humans and flora surrounding them. He defines 'kuvadiyo'-flora through the character of Aima. Aima describes that kuvadiyo is flora that rise in Gir. As per the belief and tale the originator Avad, who created world and everything including Gir. She created human beings, animals etc. then Ai commanded maldhari, "Never graze your cattle on the slope. There will be ample of grass in the Gayr. More than anywhere else. But see to it that reverence for the hey is maintained and your cattle do not graze on the hills. You can graze them on plains and also in the valley. This is all I want to say viral! (brother)" (Joshi, 99) By all these description writer shows bond between people and nature including their beliefs. Through the description of Avad, Aima explained the history of Khodiyar here. She said that "The real name of Khodi was Janbai. Janbai went to the underworld to fetch the urn of nectar, and she had to come back as lame one. Because of this she became known as *Langi* or *Khodi* (lame one). From that she became Khodal or Khodiyar. Thus human beings derive their names from their deeds and destiny." (Joshi, 97)

In Akoopar there is third person narration through unnamed narrator. The language is totally indigenous. (kathiyavadi dialect) Through this novel author exposes many secrets, which he had during his journey of Gir. Writer tries to put some anecdotes here from his experience. This novel is all about one unknown narrator, who entered in the Gir for his project on five elements in which he should draw the painting on Earth element. When he entered in the Gir, he does not know anything about that particular place. Therefore, he is asking the question to himself as well as others about his own fact. Reader can come to know about his fact by his questions. For instance- when he saw the Girnar during his journey towards Gir. Immediately he had a question in his mind, "What is the elemental form of the earth?" (Joshi, 12) The another question he raised to Aima during their meeting, that why Aima blessed whole Gir rather to bless any particular place, person or thing? The intuition which he has towards Gir, that he is pouring it in his paintings. Thus, his paintings as well as the inner voice of his own eternal soul and his questions proves that he belongs to Gir. The way he is asking questions to himself about his ownself, that place and about the people of that region, that proves that his ancestor as well as he himself belongs to Gir. His kinship with Gir is as old as the Gir is.

Human being's kinship with animals

Fauna is one of the important element in anthropology. Author explain some characters minutely as far as fauna is concern in the novel, i.e Sansai and Lajo. Sansai is the character loaded with bluntness, curiosity, kindness, care and has love towards animals especially lions. When narrator encounters first time with sansai, he realises that Ramajana and Sarayu is names of lioness. She is talking with them as they were human being. Another instance is, when Aima said to narrator, "Respect towards the insects is maintained. You are a stranger. You may not be able to do so." (Joshi, 18) Once someone talked about lions and Gir that, "*Aa gam jangle ni had*

ma nayth. Naksha parmaney aaya gayr nath lagti. Pela to havaju aaya no aavta. I to hamne gayr ma vadhi gya atle bara aavta thya.” (Bhatt, 119) Sansai replied very tactfully to this that, “Naksavali Gayr aapde nayth joti. Ine turis haru rakho. Aapde to jya havaj halyo I bdhiye Gayr. Pasi bhle I ghedne dariye poge ke bayada na dungre jay.” (Bhatt, 119) she added that, “Havaju vadhi gya atle bara nikli gya se e badhi vatyuu chhapani. Gayr kyan lagan keva’y ani bayrnave hu khbar pade? Hasu to e se k Gayr ni malikoyr aapde re’va mandya;toy Gayr na jiv matare aapdi aamanya rakhi. Inee jigya dabati gay em e andar jata gya. Pasi vdhtu j jay to havaj kyo ke bija jiv, jay kya?” (Bhatt, 120) When Dhanu explain one of the incidence to narrator he said, “Le tami nayth hambhlyu? Motabhai atle Havaj nanabhai atle Dipdo. Aa badha ami gel ma padela nam. Dipda ne to kok var Dipakbhai hotn kai daiye.” (Bhatt,159) They are treating animals as human beings. When lions attacked on kiran at that time instead of saving Dhanu they escaped from that place. While Dhanu not only saved Kiran from lions but also is not blaming the lions. Though he is in hospital and couldn’t speak due to his injuries, he explains the incident very well to narrator in favour of lions. Dhanu laughed and said, “Pans pans rayt padi ryha siye to ye koi di aavdo garm nath thyo. ‘I noogano aaj mathe aavi gyo?’” (Bhatt, 167) Narrator shocked by his words and became emotional, he encouraged Dhanu that, “Janavar che. Kyarek dago dai pan de.” (Bhatt,168) Dhanu answered that, “Havaj dago no kare. Tain sabut se ke ino mane marvano ino vsar j no’to.” (Bhatt, 168) Then he gave three proofs for this and said that;

“‘There are three proofs-one, he did not hold me from the throat.’ Showing the second finger he said, ‘he did not even shake his head, otherwise he would have torn off my shoulder.’ And then lifting the third he said, ‘I was fallen down but he did not sit on me. Had he sat on me as he would do on the kill, his weight would have...’ Dhanu stopped talking and then once again said, ‘His intention was not to kill me.’” (Joshi, 183) and added at last, “You would not come across such a noble animal as the lion is.” (Joshi, 183)

After this incident reader came across the reality that people of Gir have bond toward animals, their beliefs towards animals and trust on them, which can be shown in Dhanu’s character. Another important incident is the act of demises of Lajo’s Girvan by lions. People are mourning for its demise. When Sansai went to save Girvan, Lajo stoped her and said that “Have re’va de. Havaj tapi gye gaavadi bachse nai. Bav pidai ne marse. Ina karta have ine raste ine java de.” (Bhatt, 138) Though she lost her cow she laments like this, “Ghar ni chhodi jevi gay nu dan tamne didhu se.tamara ne’ tamara basodiya na pet thare. Biju to tmney hu kav!” (Bhatt,139) Another instance is when Sansai that, “Janavr aapdi hayre re’ta sikhi gya. Aapde inee hayre re’ta no sikhya.” (Bhatt, 121) Another important act is, when Sarpanch – Rani is defencing shark, by recalling her family members. Rani, the Sarpanch convince the fishermen for not fishing the endangered species of the fish. Thus, these characters are enough to say that surrounding nature, harmony between people and kinship of people with animal play vital role in this novel.

Relationship between Old ethics and Modernity

Old ethics and tradition are one of the important aspects of the novel ‘Akoopar’. People have their own customs and rituals in the Gir. If anything, wrong is happening in the Gir, then Aima blessed whole Gir by saying ‘Khama Gayr ne’. (Bhatt 3) At that time narrator could not understand why Aima blessed whole Gir. But with the passing of time he got the answer that for Aima Gir is animate region. So, she blesses whole Gir rather to bless particular thing or person. At the same time when Vikram said,

“Kaik hoi to j kiak aave!” (Bhatt 131)

“If there is something, only then it strikes one’s consciousness.” (Joshi 143)

“Culture is the ‘air we breathe’. It sustains and comprises us, yet we largely take it for granted. We are not always consciously aware of our own culture.” (Brown and Mcllwraith) Here, it is narrator who doesn’t know his own past which is now connected with his present. He does not understand what Vikram wants to say. He even does not know the meaning of that line. But the real meaning of that line, we can see in his paintings. Which shows his relationship and intimacy with Gir. It is the connection between the morals of Vikram’s words and modern paintings of narrator. The atmosphere of the Gir affects a lot in his paintings. Thus, milieu is

responsible for that. The Gir attracts the modern painter to draw the old paintings about it. Which is almost intuition of narrator. And that paintings also proves that, the narrator belongs to Gir.

Cultural and Religious elements of the novel- 'Akoopar':

"Cultural identity is, to a large extent, an ideational construction of the real and the imagined, and its edifice has an obvious purpose: it's a machine for survival which uses the past and the future to reinforce the present." (Brown and Mcllwraith)

Religion and culture of particular region or people is one of the important characteristics of Anthropology. Writer clarifies the culture of Maldhari in the novel, and explain the difference between dress like pernu and jimi. When Lajo talks with Ratnba about her friendship with Sansai and their childhood, Ratnba said, *Tu bav Sansi Sansi kari mars te tari benpani ne ka'k hamzav ke hve moti thy peynu pere ne jimi pervanu ek koyr mele.*" (Bhatt, 170) Writer discusses the cultural and tradition of Maldhari women. As per the culture of Maldhari, married women must wear pernu, and if the girl is virgin then she must wear jimi. Except this the marriage between Ghantalo and Ghantali is also one of the cultural elements of the novel. Turn towards religion, the history of Khodiyar described by Aima is the best example of the novel. "From our Indian view-point the ulterior object of the science of Man is, or should be, to understand the meaning and goal of human existence, – the trend, direction and aim of human culture and civilization, the eternal spiritual reality behind life and society, the *Sat* behind the *Asat*, and to ascertain, as far as possible, the laws that govern the thought and behaviour of man in Society." (Roy; 1937: 243) (as quoted in 'Ghosh, 12,13') Here, writer describes the importance of Sat and Asat in life of human being with the help of religion. Sansai's description of the difference between 'Temple' and 'Thanak' is one of the instances in this novel. She said that, "A temple is an abode of God. Since It is the house of God one can have decorations and aartis. Whereas a thanak means the seat of the infinite in the open." (Bhatt, 167) In temple we can find that people done aarti with instrument and sing Bhajans. But the thanak is the place of infinite where one just sits in the aasan, no need to any aarti and instrument. According to Sansai, one cannot sit even for two minutes at that aasan, as thanak does not require the show off. She added that, "Others who have faith in Temple should go straightaway. The world is full of temples." (Bhatt, 167) In these way through the characters, writer discusses about the religious and cultural elements the novel, 'Akoopar'.

Aima's blessing for whole Gir - 'Khama Gayr ne':

'Khama Gayr ne' is the blessings for whole Gir from Aima. The meaning of that blessings is 'May the Gir be blessed'. It plays very important role in the novel, as the novel starts with the words like 'Khama Gayr ne' and also ends with the same words. Aima gave such blessings to Gir. If anything, wrong happens in the Gir, Aima blessed whole Gir by saying 'Khama Gayr ne'. it does not matter that it is related to human being, nature or animal. She just says 'Khama Gayr ne'. The reason behind that is for her, Gir is living region. If we living being have any problem in any part of our body, then our whole body suffers. At that time our parents blessed us not that particular part of body. As the same way if Gir faced any problem related to nature, animal or human being then Aima blessed whole Gir, by saying Khama Gayr ne. So, it can be called the second title of the novel 'Akoopar'. As because the whole novel is all about that blessings spoken by Aima – 'Khama Gayr ne'. It is one of the important elements of anthropology. "'Belief' refers not just to what we 'believe' to be right or wrong, true or false. 'Belief' also refers to all the mental aspects of culture including values, norms, philosophies, world view, knowledge and so forth." (Brown and Mcllwraith) And here it is Gir's 'belief' that effects on narrator, that can be shown in his paintings and his questions for Gir.

Interaction of Rural and Urban people

Writer illustrates the difference between the people of Gir and Urban people, through this novel. Writer describes different types of incidents which shows us the difference between the rural people particularly about the Gir and Urban people. The incident of circuit house is the best example of that. When lion try to attack Kiran, who belongs to urban area, Dhanu pushed Kiran to a side and stood before the lion. Dhanu save him from the lion without care about own self. Contrary, Kiran and his friends escaped from that place instead of saving Dhanu

or help him medically. In this way, the lion attacked Dhanu's shoulder with his paw. Whom belong to Gir – the rural area. So, through this writer wants to describe that there is vast difference between the people of Gir and urban people. Though Dhanu is suffering because of Kiran, his mother Ratanba said, "One behaves according to one's capabilities". (Joshi 181) In these way, she does not say any abusing words for him. Another instance is the bond between Dhanu and Dorothy. When narrator asked Dhanu, "What is this 'No problem'?" (Joshi, 63) Dhanu laughed and said, "It is our gimmick"? (Joshi, 63) and added that, "The one from Ethiopia is not so good at English and I, who am sitting in front of you, can hardly make any distinction between either Gujarati or English. How would I communicate? The sahib asked me to be with her all the time." (Joshi, 63) here author shows care, love, feelings towards other person through the character of Dhanu in this novel. So, he questions his sahib about communication with Dorothy. Then he added that, "The solution that the sahib suggested was, he called both of us to his office together. He told me, Dhanu, see, this madam has come to study the lions. You have to take her across the sanctuary. See to it that without consulting you she does not take a single step. If she does not obey, I will send her away along with her books and papers. That's my responsibility. But you have not to neglect your duty. If you do, you know your job would be over." (Joshi, 64), and about communication, "*mane keedhu ke dagluy halta pela dorthi balse ke any problem? Ivadi I puse pasi mare harkhaye charey koyr joi levanu ke I hale I marage ke inaa koi kam ma, kai jokheem to nayth ne!*" "*Pasi jokhim hoi to mare ke'vanu paroblem hu paroblem kau atle ine aagal nai javanu. No paroblem kau to j ivadi I ji karti hoi I kari hake.*" (Bhatt, 59) Another example is the interaction of Sansai with Mamur. When Mamur said Reshma, "*Dekho, bura mat manna par kehna padta he. Ab bombe me aane ka socho. Hamara hath batao tum log jangle me pade reyke apni life khamkha khrab kar rhele he. Jusab ko smja smja kar thak gye.*" (Bhatt, 98) at that time Mamur didn't want to believe in the people of Gir and their relation with Jusab. Reshma replied that everybody is good in Gir. Though he sticks to his point and said that, "*Phir bhi tum log kom se dur pad gayel hei. Men estramse alg ho gyele. Bura mat manna. Muje to jo lagta hei wo ke'ta hu.*" (Bhatt, 98) Reshma didn't argued with him. She became as silent as Jusab. Then Sansai replied him, "*Parveen fai, Jushbo kom thi nokho padi gyani vat karo to have mare kevanu se. tmey khotu no lagadta. Mamur fua tamey hambhdo, city ma tamara sokra gher no hoi to tmne dvakhane lay javavalu koy no jde I khabr nayth.?*" (Bhatt, 99) and added that, "*'Jane de...' vali vaat reva diyo. 'Inaku hamajna nai...' I vatey muki diyo. Vayt to hamjvani j se.*" (Bhatt, 99) "Sansai became furious. Reshma tried to be calm her but taking her aside Sansai continued to speak, 'Uncle, Auntie, both of you listen! You can go to anybody's nes in the Gayr...'" (Joshi, 109) and added that, "Let alone the nes of the Gayr. You can go to Mendarda which is about twenty-two kilometres away or Keshod, about fifty kilometre away. Just go and ask for credit to the tune of five to ten thousand rupees in the name of Jusab, the Maldhari and you would not listen to 'no.'" (Joshi, 109) Writer describes cast, culture, religion, language through different character in the novel. Through all these incidents he explains the bond between people of Gir towards other people. Sansai has not any blood relation with Reshma or Jusab. Though she raised voice on behalf of them to Mamur. And gave him explanation of importance of Gir and its people. So, writer wants to convey the message through this novel that, people of Gir have affection for Gir, love toward animals and human beings. While urban people have not any kind of value of the emotions. May be the surrounding atmosphere is responsible for that. As Gir is Gir which is priceless and at the same time valuable too.

Artistic element in the novel

'Akoopar' is the novel loaded with the artistic elements. There are two artists in the novel as per the description of the writer. One is Aima and another is narrator. Both are the great painters. Narrator paints everything in the Gir with the touch of modernity. While Aima paints everything with help of the story of Mahabharata. Narrator paints on canvas, while Aima paints on clothes. One paints his own present experience in his paintings. While one paints the past experience of the characters like Draupadi, Krishan, Arajun etc. of Mahabharata in his paintings. So, it can be said that both are artist but with different taste. One belongs to modernism while other belongs to history. So, readers can find the artistic element through both these characters. It is one of the important elements of the novel which is related to anthropology. So, the character of Aima and Narrator becomes bridge between history and modernity through their paintings and experiences. This is enough to say that this novel is anthropological novel.

However, one of the research paper explains, "Unlike, a historical fictional novel most of the accounts of the real life events and places are not narrated as they took place in the history. Hence, these descriptions lack artistic grandeur." (Shukla and Bhatt) But it is author's simplicity which is enough and can experience the reader of artistic grandeur. Surely this novel is blend of imaginative as well as realistic event of past which connects the present. Though author represents each situation with his own artistic way. When Vikram says narrator, "*Tu gayr no so ka to thato ja s*" in kathiavadi dialect, it is not that much effective as far as narrative style is concern. But it becomes efficacious as far as the experience of narrator is concern. He focuses on his experience about Gir rather to plot or narrative style. Through the discussion of above-mentioned points, it can be said that 'Akoopar' is the novel which is based on anthropology. This shows different nature of people of particular region. The whole novel is based on particular place and the people of that region i.e. Gir. Harmony of the people with nature and other people is central idea of the novel, as far as the anthropology is concerned. Except this there is the description of different culture and religion of the people in this novel. Their beliefs, morals, ethics, surrounding atmosphere all are well described by the author in the novel. So, it can rightly be placed in the category of as an anthropological novel.

CONCLUSION

Hence, from the above discussion, it can sum up that Anthropology is central ideology in the novel as well as ecocriticism. As above mentioned, points are enough to say that, Akoopar is anthropological novel. This novel is not only dealing with society but also concerning with the culture, tradition, religion, region, nature, animals, language, caste etc. They are equally pivotal, which plays vital role in the novel. Through the description of characters' writer says many things about fauna and flora as well as milieu of that particular region i.e. Gir So, it can be rightly say that 'Akoopar' is an Anthropological novel.

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