

India's Foreign Policy towards African Continent in Post Cold War Era

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Teaches

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Introduction

The direction of independent India's policy towards other independent sovereign countries was in fact shaped and determined during freedom struggle in thirties when it had almost become clear that India's independence was only a matter of time. India, sooner or later was to join the community of independent and sovereign countries. Indian National Congress under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru constituted a foreign affairs department within party to formulate guiding principles of foreign policy of Indian National Congress which indeed represented the main stream of Indian public opinion. It was also clear that the leadership of Indian National Congress will undoubtedly and naturally assume the leadership of independent India. Jawaharlal Nehru chose a team of bright young congressmen to help him in this major task of evolving India's world outlook. Ram Manohar Lohia, Syed Mahmood, K.M. Ashraf, Z.A. Ahmed provided necessary intellectual and academic input in the shaping of Indian foreign policy in its initial stages.

During the cold war period India's policy of Non-alignment helped India to interact with newly independent Afro-Asian countries and mobilize them against neo-colonialism and economic exploitation by erstwhile colonial masters. India under the leadership of Nehru vehemently championed the cause of freedom and world peace and provided moral and material support to national liberation movements in Asia and Africa.

New Dimensions of Relationships

India's growing economic strength has given a new direction to India-Africa relationship. Africa is the most potential emerging market for Indian products and enterprise and is also alternative source of energy security for India. India is perceived as role model for most African countries for harmonious fusion of democracy and development.

In post cold war period most of the African countries have witnessed a positive trend in their domestic politics i.e. a transformation from dictatorial or one party rule to a multi party democratic political order, presence of strong opposition and a constitutional provision for periodic democratic elections. The longing of political elite of African continent for rapid economic development combined with democratic political processes has ensured greater role for Indian enterprises both public and private.

The Organization of African Union (OAU) writes in its manifesto (on the behalf of the all heads of the states): "We are fully aware that in order to facilitate this process of socio-economic transformation and integration it is necessary to promote, popular participation of our people in the process of government and development."¹

Most of the African countries have been taking grant and assistance from Focus Africa Programme which was established during the 8th NAM Summit at Harare, under the leadership of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The countries which are continuously taking benefits are the frontline states like Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia. The renewal of the fund was guaranteed by NAM's 9th Belgrade Conference and in Jakarta summit. Jakarta Summit accepted Indian Prime Minister's appeal to accommodate more countries by granting more funds. \$250,000 dollar was granted to Somalia and to the SADC for drought relief and for the training programme of the election officials on the eve of elections in South Africa.

Fresh Engagements

To support Africa's development reforms and reform-orientated institutions, India established a new India-Africa fund in 2003. The fund allocates up to \$200 million in credits to various projects designed to promote African economic integration, within the framework of NEPAD. The relationship between India and Africa has become more cordial in post cold war era. Actually, this relationship has become diversified. India has a leading role in United Nations and it has put its reservations on various occasions in favor of African countries, particularly in the matter of neo colonial economic suppression of the Africans or the matter of the political interventions in Africa by big powers.

President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam visited Sudan in year 2003. It was after 28 years that any Indian head of the state visited Sudan. The Government of India opened its embassy in Congo after 14 years of closing.

India looks forward to Africa for its energy requirements. It is estimated that over next three to four decades India will exhaust its primary source of energy i.e. coal. In such a situation excess to dependable oil supplies is crucial for India's economy. The dependence on imported oil puts tremendous pressure on India to ensure her effective presence in Africa's oil industries. Around 70% of its oil imports come from Middle East. So, India has begun to focus its attention on Africa in order to diversify oil supply sources. Africa holds 9.4% of the world's oil reserves hence; Africa is becoming the focal point for India.

In recent years, Sudan has been identified as a new oil reservoir in Africa, where 5 lakh barrels of oil are being extracted every day. As a part of its oil strategy, India has increased its economic involvement in Sudan. The Government of India has provided millions of dollars in credit to Sudan to engage in more business opportunities with Indian companies.

In year, 2000 Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL) signed a term contract with the Nigerian national petroleum corporation for importing 40,000 barrels of crude oil per day at the official selling price, for a period of one year. ONGC and ONGC Videsh Nigam Ltd. (OVL) participation in Nigeria's upstream sector has forged significant energy ties between the two countries. OVL acquired 45% stake in Nigeria's Akpo Oil and Gas field for US \$2 billion. It also won a 15% stake in block II of the joint development zone (ZDJ) of Nigeria and Sao Tome and Principe in 2005. Nigeria is heavily dependent on imported steel products. India has set up a joint venture to build a new steel mill in Nigeria. In 2005, a \$6 billion infrastructure investment deal was struck in Nigeria by ONGC Mittal Energy (a joint venture between India's state-run Oil and Natural Gas Ltd. and the world's largest steel maker, Mittal Steel). This deal with the Nigerian Government involves the construction of an oil refinery, a power plant and railway lines in Nigeria, in return for two blocks. This is seen as a major breakthrough in Indo-Nigerian energy cooperation.

India has become one of the major players in the field of infrastructure i.e. roads, railways, power plants etc. in its efforts to improve trade with Africa, the Government of India has taken various measures to boost financing of exports. Between 2003 and 2008, bilateral trade between India and Africa rose from \$ 6.5 billion to \$ 35 billion. Africa's exports to India doubled over the period 1997-2008. Similar trends apply to Indian investments in Africa that stood at \$ 3.7 billion in 2006-2007 and almost doubled in a single year to \$6.8 billion in 2007-2008. Imports from India to Africa also have increased about three-fold and mainly comprise manufactured products and, to lesser extent, food products. The vast majority of Indian exports to the region are manufactured goods, with the exception of Somalia which imported a significant quantity of sugar from India in 2003.

Indian firms have been operating in the infrastructural sectors in Africa. India's state owned engineering companies like IRCON and RITES (Rail India Technical and Economic Services) have also played a significant role in constructing road and railways in Africa. RITES have bagged contracts to refurbish and run always in Mozambique, Sudan and Tanzania. IRCON has constructed railways in Algeria and also working in the railway projects in Sudan, Nigeria and Zambia.

Apart from the Government, the private sector has also pitched in to explore the African markets, and now commands a significant presence in Africa. From the mid 1990, organizations like Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), and the Federation of Indian Exporter's Organization (FIEO) identified Africa as a thrust area and launched programmes to promote economic and business cooperation.

FICCI has identified 8 countries in Africa as top priority for India's exports. These are Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Mauritius, Ghana, Tanzania, Algeria and Sudan.

CII encouraged Indian companies to display their products in textiles, drugs and pharmaceuticals, food processing, machine tools, auto components, construction equipments etc. to the trade and business representatives of countries from Africa. In October 2006, a CII-sponsored "Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership" in New Delhi attracted over 750 delegates and produced business deals worth \$17 billion. The CII subsequently followed up in the summer of 2007 with a series of "regional conclaves" held in Kampala, Uganda, Maputo, Mozambique and Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire, which drew representatives of the public and private sectors from a total of forty-two African countries to meet with their counterparts from India.

Although Indian investment is mostly concentrated in the mining and oil sectors, there has been a diversification towards apparel, food processing, pharmaceuticals, retail, fisheries, commercial real estate and urban transport sectors. Indian conglomerates like the Tatas, the Kirloskars, and pharmaceutical firms like Cipla and automobile companies like Mahindra have all undertaken profitable projects in Africa. The Tata group has invested about US\$ 100 million and plans to triple that amount over the next three years. The Group claims to have employed 700 people in Africa.

In major prospects of coffee production, Tata Coffee entered into an agreement in 2006 with the Ugandan Government to set up a 3,600 metric tons per annum capacity plant in that country. The Ugandan Government at Jinja has allocated Tata Coffee 50 acres, about 60 km from Kampala.

In 2008, in New Delhi, India-Africa Forum Summit brought India's relations with Africa into limelight. Delhi Declaration mentioned that the relationship has been of mutual benefit and it is based on 'mutual trust, equality and solidarity.' That Summit can be seen as an attempt to forge closer partnership between India and countries from Africa and to address common goals and challenges they face.

In Delhi Summit, mutual co-operation in key areas like trade, energy and on global issues like the UN reforms, terrorism and climate change was discussed between India and 14 African countries attending the summit. Africa was represented by the then current chairperson of the AU Commission, chairpersons of 8 RECs (Regional Economic Communities), chairperson of NEPAD and the five African NEPAD initiating countries. During the summit prime minister Manmohan Singh announced a number of initiatives that included duty free trade preference scheme for 34 African countries; grants for projects in excess of 500 million dollars over next five to six years in areas of railways, IT, telecom and power. India also offered to double the credit extended to African nations from the current 2.15 billion dollars to 5.4 billion dollars over next five years. The summit brought benefit to the African students with India pledging to double the scholarship available to them. Through India-Africa forum summit, India in fact institutionalized her relationship with Africa. It was decided that the forum will meet after two years interval to review the progress in relationship as outlined in the framework of cooperation. EU, Japan and China have also institutionalized their relationship with the African countries.

China is a main competitor of India in Africa whose total stake in African market is quite double to that of India. However, African leaders insist that "China and India should not be viewed as competitors or clients, but as contributors to Africa's development." Jakaya K. Kikwete, the President of Tanzania said that "the two emerging economic powers give Africa the hope that it is possible to transform African nations from abject poverty to higher levels of development."² China and India serve as models for Africa because their experiences hold lessons for developing countries on how to manage gradual economic and political transformation.

Political Dimensions

In early days of the Post cold war era India focused on ongoing various civil strives in Africa, especially in South Africa where the apartheid government was in last stage. In Angola also civil strife was at its peak, where Jonas Savimbi was supported by the West and by the South African apartheid government. The struggle in South Africa was of a special category where the black- white tension created a complex situation and African National Congress beautifully handled it. South Africa ensured 'one person one vote' constitutionally. Changes in political scenario compelled India to rethink its policy towards South Africa. Her major concern has been about the people of Indian origin of South African. Nelson Mandela handled situation effectively.

The Government of India showed patience when some Indian origins South African were killed in a civil strife. India Government criticized the apartheid Government for such racial bloodshed, and did not blame the post apartheid government, in the UN. Nelson Mandela welcomed the India government move and showed concern over the incidents and condemned it. He appreciated the Indian in South Africa for their patriotic work in Africa. Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and Dr. Monti Naicker and ANC leader Dr. A.B. Xuma did unite the South African blacks and the Indians for a common goal. When Dr. Mandela came to India he said that “actually it was composite struggle of the Natal Indian Congress, Transvaal Indian Congress and South African Communist Party and of African Nationalist Congress in South Africa”³. Mandela was the first foreigner who got “Bharat Ratna”.

India does not any longer have a choice with regard to staying aloof from the world. Her declared status as a nuclear power has changed the mindset of major powers.

Her commitment to liberalization of economy, while opening up opportunities for her vigorous and vibrant middle class, also puts an obligation on the part of the government to engage with the advanced, capitalist world.

Some observers like Stephen Cohen and Ross Babbage⁴ (1992) have interpreted India’s recent policies as indicative of her ambitions to obtain a super power status. At least in terms of rhetoric, quite discernibly, an attitude to that effect often lurks behind the moral postures and grandstanding by India’s leaders, when they are asked to pronounce themselves on global problems.

The IBSA partnership is still in its formative years and the best is yet to come. There is a need for intense consultation and communication to fructify the goals of IBSA. In the mean time, India and its IBSA partners need to ensure that they build on the successes achieved till now and recognize the fact that there will be significant challenges along the way.

A number of broad pointers can be drawn from India's peacekeeping operations in Africa. Since the inception of UN peacekeeping operations, India has displayed the capacity to make large contributions to UN peacekeeping activities in Africa. It has proved to be a reliable peacekeeper and has taken on an unparalleled humanitarian role. Nevertheless in Africa, the security environment continues to be perilous, with conflicts raging in various parts of the continent. De-escalating conflict and creating an atmosphere suitable for reconstruction and development is one of the most important tasks of the international community. It is this, objective that has been the driving force of India's involvement in UN peacekeeping operations in Africa.

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Africa must also become competitive in the world markets for goods and services.⁵ India has focused its eyes on Indian Ocean where the American and most recently Chinese involvement is alarming the situation. So, India has made strategic agreement with South Africa, Mauritius, Somalia and Madagascar.

The countries like Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, South Africa, Zanzibar, Seychelles, Mozambique, Nigeria and Senegal have accorded due weightage by Indian government. India has signed several strategic treaties with these countries. With Mauritius India has ensured extradition treaty. Most of the African states have assured India for their support to permanent seat in United Nations Security Council.

India is providing humanitarian aid to many African countries either it is food in drought or by sending peacekeeping forces in turbulences. Uganda, Rwanda, Congo, Liberia are few examples. However few states of Africa have emerged as the focal point in Indian eyes. Mauritius, South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana are some of them. South Africa and Namibia both are rich in Uranium Production and for the vast necessities of India’s energy sector it is very important to forge permanent friendship treaty, while with Namibia India has made such a treaty recently.

By 2009, Indian enterprises had a total of \$750 million invested in 40 projects in Egypt alone in diverse areas like chemicals, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, garments etc.

Indian companies are active in chemical ventures in Morocco and Tanzania, copper mining in Zambia, oil in Mauritius and Madagascar, and telecommunications and textiles in Malawi. Vedanta Resources, a publicly traded metals conglomerate founded in Mumbai in 1976, has invested more than \$750 million in Zambian copper mines, and recently the Liberian parliament ratified a 25-year deal allowing Arcelor Mittal to launch a \$1 billion iron ore mining project that will eventually employ 20,000. In Uganda India is now the third largest source of foreign direct investment, after the UK and Kenya. Indian firms are now setting up cotton mills in Chad, cement plants in the Congo and even remaking the home of the late African statesman, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana⁶.

India's approach to improve its relations with Africa is one of the ways by which South-South ties can be strengthened, such as exploring areas of possible complementarity in trade, examining viability of joint ventures in selected sectors, and sharing appropriate technology on mutual advantage basis. It will also give the African countries an opportunity to come out from the neo-colonial ties with the west.

More importantly, as Indian aid and investments are not tied with any political conditions, it helps the African countries to frame their infrastructural and other development programmes on their own terms. The non-interference of the Indian Government in the political activities of African countries has been highly appreciated by the several African Governments.

From India's perspective, it needs the support of African countries to get a stronger foothold in various international forums, for policies regarding its nuclear issue, stand on non-proliferation treaty, or to convey its concern on the danger of international terrorism.

India's Africa policy ought to work towards those issues where Africa faces difficulty to meet developmental goals due to structural factors. Market would not be moving to these areas. One area where Africa faces such difficulty in the context of globalization is the building of knowledge society. One promising area could be the education for ICT (Information and Communication Technology). The knowledge society requires not only skills for ICT but also analytical skill and effective communication. This requires an education system geared towards it. It may however be pointed out while India has advantage over Africa in this sector but the premise of future relationship in the ICT sector lies primarily on the common objectives the two are pursuing- namely, creating opportunities for local communities to benefit from ICT's by providing support (seed money for local innovation and appropriate technologies), enhancing private investment in ICT infrastructure, and promoting national and international support for rural community based access.

Future Prospects

However for enduring partnership, efforts are needed to consolidate the component of emerging dynamic knowledge partnership by taking a few steps like the following:

- Setting up India Africa knowledge commission.
- India Africa public private consortium for creating infrastructure to promote innovative institutions like national, regional laboratories, IITs, IIMs etc.
- India Africa studies on mapping indigenous knowledge system.
- Joint workshops on developing data mining and data managing of indigenous knowledge.
- Joint incubator for ideas and sharing of infrastructure.
- India Africa joint venture in research and development.
- Asia Africa joint venture for promoting and marketing knowledge products.⁷

African countries on the western Indian Ocean littoral are maritime neighbor of India and with the unexplored reserves of oil and gas they have a significant role to play in helping India's energy security. India has non hierarchical political relations with African countries and therefore her quest for exploring resource of oil and gas in African countries should be viewed as win-win situation for both the sides.

Global trends in international trade, economic, social and political relations continue to forge closer integration among countries and regions. Trades in goods and services and movement of capital and human resources continue to grow tremendously assisted by accelerating sharing of technology across national and regional borders. Yet all indicators show that the continent performance has been poor, marginalizing it in the global trading system.

The current world status quo poses two broad challenges for Africa. First, Africa faces the challenge of creating an environment that will promote public private sector partnership in investment in order to achieve high economic growth, create employment, reduce poverty and meet the MDGs. Secondly, Africa also faces the challenge of becoming a full and competitive participant in world affairs including trade and investment. Hence in Konare (2006)'s view, Africa must increase its power in international decision making bodies. Africa

REC's (Regional Economic Communities) are the building blocks and drivers of the integration process; there is a need that they be aligned with the processes of NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and the AU (African Union). In fact, there is a need for both RECs and NEPAD to be complimentary. One is the engine of the AU programmes and the other is the driver for integration. Governance is the practice of good government and it remains, essentially, a fragile process that depends on the restraints of the ruler and the tolerance of the ruled.

The concept of governance is not new; it has been around in both political and academic discourse for quite some time, referring in a generic sense to the task of running a government or any other appropriate entity, like a business or a professional organization.

India and Africa that have a long history of political and economic cooperation must now extends its partnership and nurture its ongoing relations with a new focus, such which would enable them to confront and resolve the challenges of the post colonial and post cold war era. Any such initiative would however have to be a dynamic effort that would necessarily has to work its way around the already long standing traditional bonds that these African countries still maintain with the former metropolis. They form a distinctive bloc and France, on its part, continues even today to maintain a special organic relationship that ensures loyalty to a tradition of commitment and solidarity.

Africa in future is likely to have more famines and become more dependent on food and food imports. In this perspective India should help African farmers to added products. Given its experience of the Green Revolution, India should extend technical expertise in agricultural skills, which could help productivity.

On the gender issue, India should recommend for and help by providing cash and other incentives to girl students as has been successfully done in Bangladesh, Mexico and Brazil. Cooperation could also be extended by providing services of teachers and other technicians with incentives.

In the field of health and health care services , including HIV/AIDS illnesses, malaria and tuberculosis which have over the years acquired epidemic proportions, India should give assistance to check their spread and provide effective care and support for those afflicted by the disease providing them counseling, facilities for testing and preventive measures to check transmission from mother to child. India could also help mobilize resources estimated at \$7 billion by the World Health Organization, which are well beyond African countries domestic budgets.

India could also initiate technical cooperation and provide expertise in science and technology to African countries. The first priority to expand the defence relationship from being merely that of facilitating arms transfers to that of defence cooperation. "Post 9/11, no country can live in isolation or pretend any more that conflicts, civil wars and pandemics that stalk Africa are not their concern. As international linkages of terrorism become evident and war thirst spills the borders in the continent, there is an increasing realization that the world needs to take a closer look at security structures for Africa and develop an enduring stake in the continents stability and prosperity." India could assist in training, setting up training institutions, medical assistance, disaster relief, technical assistance in revitalization of infrastructure, maintenance of diverse equipment and of course goodwill visits by ships.

Both India and many African states have long coastlines and security of maritime interests is a mutual concern. Our maritime interests include trade, offshore oil, and vast potential of minerals, sea bed resources and fishing interest in EEZ. Also, a large percentage of African imports and exports flow through their ports.

This fishery has a huge potential for offshore fisheries development. FAO studies show that entire West Indian Ocean, 75 per cent of fishery resources is currently being fished at their maximum biological productivity. The other 25 per cent are over exploitive and require better management. The catches are normally dominated by large and small pelagic and demersal fish species.

Among the major strategies for raising India's presence in these countries are setting up production ventures in them with buy-back arrangement.

This was among the suggestions made in an IIFT study on some of these countries, where items like cashew nuts and polyester figured. Similarly precious and semi precious stone can be mined and the production can be brought back to India. The approach, which we have also been following, is to participate in development projects. With our participation, there will always be fallout on our expertise and industry which can back up our economic participation with good business. India, incidentally has contributed significantly to the training of African personnel through its public sector undertakings like RITES, HMT, MECON, etc. The national small industry corporation has particularly played a useful role in East Africa, which has led to the development of small scale industries there. India has still a large scope for participating in building up basic infrastructure in these countries, especially in the transport sector, shipping and ports.

With trade and economic cooperation being the mainstay of relationships between nations in the post GATT era, it is sharing of each other's economic strength that sustains goodwill among nations.

Under the circumstances, India has adopted its approach to suit its own programme of economic development, while sharing its strengths with other countries.

In the case of Africa, India not only see an abundance of natural resources, but also the advantage of special access for its products to markets in Europe and the United States. Therefore current policy, which is shared by many African friends, is to join hands, where Africa provides India the raw material, and India provide the capital and the production wherewithal to manufacture goods for the African markets, and the Indian market, export to third countries. Along this kind of association, India will be infusing into the economies of its African friends, technology, expertise and also production and marketing skills by way of training personnel. India see's this relationship more or less like the one that India itself has built up with a number of advanced countries, wherein it has benefited from technology, training as well as capital. In a way India is replicating in the African continent the process through which it built up its industrial base and capital assets.

As even the existing political institutions prove inept in managing the global transformation, there would be greater demands for change at institutions like the United Nations. India would have a prime place in leading role in that change.

India again found the necessity for partnering with other developing countries into building a more equitable global order. Shyam Saran the prime minister's special envoy and a former foreign secretary articulated that fact in an address to an audience in India in India Habitat Centre on 28 Feb.(2009). He said, "the political observe of this (rising investment in sources of commodity production and natural resources) would be a strong outreach in Africa and west Asia and other developing countries, revitalizing our developing country constituency through targeted initiatives."⁸

To summarize, India's approach to improve its relations with Africa is one of the way by which south-south ties can be strength, such as exploring areas of possible complimentary in trade, examining viability of joint ventures in selected sector, and sharing appropriate technology on mutual advantage basis. It will also give the African countries an opportunity to come out from the neo-colonial ties with the west. More importantly, as Indian aid and investments are not tied with any political conditions, it helps the African countries to frame their infrastructural and other developmental programmes on their own terms. The non interference of the Indian government in the political activities of African countries has been highly appreciated by the several African governments.

Africa is certainly at crossroads. One path holds possibilities for further turmoil, decline, marginalization and unprecedented crisis. The other holds possibilities for the reorganization, re-conceptualization and realignment of political and economic models, of ideologies and of structures of power, production and exchange. While the current situation of declining investments and aid might appear to be negative, it also affords the region unique opportunities to carry out fundamental restructuring without the degree of foreign interference which prevailed during the cold war. Such restructuring will be very difficult and can not be guaranteed. But it is the only option open to Africa if it is not to be excluded from the emerging global order or relegated permanently to the backwaters of the new global divisions of labor and power. Ongoing changes in the post cold war era will compel Africa, regardless of opposition from governments and entrenched elites, to make fundamental changes or face a rapid process of disintegration. Adebayo Adedji has argued that Africa needs "three new orders...a new national economic order, a new regional economic order and a new international economic order."

Conclusion

The return of Africa in world focus is an important development of the 21st century. Many countries of Africa are on the path of commendable economic growth. As a World Bank report says, Africa is turning the corner from poverty and debt to prosperity and wealth. There are now 16 countries that have achieved annual growth rates in excess of 4.5 per cent for more than a decade. Even more than that, the resource rich continent is inviting attention from all over the world because of its tapped and untapped black gold- as oil is often described as- and vast mineral resources that have become the necessary ingredients of economic growth. As a result most countries have woken up to the importance of Africa. Commodity producing countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia, Sudan and the Congo and agricultural power houses like Kenya and Tanzania and rapidly globalizing countries like South Africa, Mauritius, Tanzania and Benin, many African countries were richly endowed with commodities like natural gas, oil, copper, iron, coal and timber etc.⁹

India in a way is revisiting Africa. The efforts have only recently gained momentum. It will be some time before India can establish a new kind of and a more durable presence in the vast, diverse and resource-rich continent of Africa.

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