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Festac '77

The Search For Roots

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What is there in common between the pyramids of Egypt which cost hundreds of slaves' lives to build, the ruins of Zimbabwe, the Benin bronzes and ivory masks, and the university of Timbuctoo which was a thriving centre of Islamic learning about five centuries ago? Nothing at all except that they were in Africa. Or what is there in common between the breast-baring of Ivory Coast dancers, American jazz, Trinidad calypso and a gallop of 4,000 Hausa horses recalling a distinguished and powerful Islamic past? Taken together, nothing at all. Yet these disparate elements from the past and the equally disparate elements from the present were brought together at FESTAC '77 — the second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture.

Festac '77 ended on 12 February when the flame — said to have been a gift from the Yoruba god Sango — was extinguished in front of 60,000 specta-

tors and the exuberant and ecstatic dancing of black performers from around the world at the Lagos national stadium. The month-long cultural Olympiad has been hailed as the most important convocation in Africa for more than a decade. Some 15,000 performers and tens of thousands of visitors from 58 countries came together to produce 'the greatest show on earth', 'a major feat' for the military rulers of Nigeria. The staggering cost has been put at between TT\$2,800 million and \$4,000 million representing about 15% of Nigeria's annual export earnings and exceeding the total gross national product of many of the black African, Arab and Caribbean countries represented at the Festival. The cost alone is one of the factors which has called into question the significance of Festac, although it is said that the special hotels, stadiums and housing complexes that have been built at Lagos and Kaduna would continue to be of benefit to the

people.

But Festac of course cannot be viewed in financial terms alone though on the other extreme some rather extravagant claims are being made as to its significance. It did cover music, dance, drama, cinema, literature and popular dressing. According to one correspondent, it was simultaneously like the Welsh annual international folklore gathering, the Cannes film festival, the world theatre season plus a literary congress and an international fashion show all rolled into one. The popular arts included a regatta at Lagos and horse racing at Kaduna but the central event was the Festac Colloquium, an intellectual gathering of some of the world's outstanding black academics who mingled with internationally renowned jazz musicians, singers, actors, painters and sculptors from Africa and the black diaspora.

But what was the aim of all this



ECONOMIC BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS IN ISLAM

The attitude of Muslim Man as producer, consumer, employer, employee, investor, creditor and lender of good loans

See Pages 9 & 10

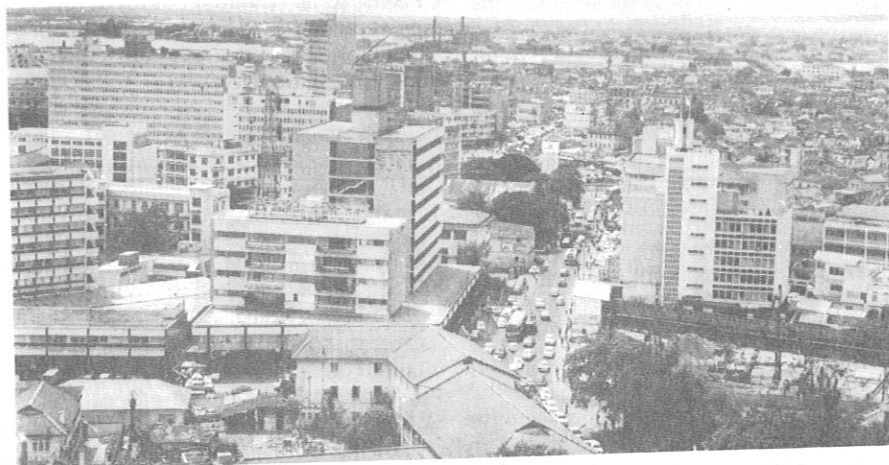
activity? According to General Obasanjo, the Nigerian Head of State, while declaring open the Festival, it was to carry on "the process of cultural renewal and communion of Black and African people from all over the world which was begun in Dakar, Senegal, fifteen years ago". It was an attempt "to recapture the origins and authenticity of the African heritage" and he expressed the hope that this cultural restoration would be a prelude to a greater political awakening".

For some, the "renewal and communion" was both exhilarating and painful. A New York musician was reported to be rapturous in joy. "The experience is changing my life and will change my music in ways I can't describe," he said. "The drums, the birds, the breeze in the palms — and all those people shouting: 'Welcome home, black American. Come home.'" But other Americans found it hard to take the pounding heat, the noise, the smells, the thieving and venality and the xenophobia of Nigeria's military dictatorship. One American woman was sour. "I think in America we blacks have got the best shake. I really do," she said. "People going to the bathroom in the streets—that really flipped me out. And look at those rich Nigerians. Where do they get all those Mercedeses?" Another reflected: "In the end you know you are more American than African. The empathy and the sense of brotherhood are real, but ultimately you realise that you are different—a foreigner just as much as a Ghanaian is a foreigner in Nigeria."

On the basis of this last observation, correct though it might be, it may be unwise to conclude that Festac had no cementing political implications. It did emphasise, among other things, the need for better communication among individual African countries (symbolised by the call to adopt Swahili as the lingua franca of Africa), the need for the correct interpretation of African history and a concern for the future development of Africa much beyond this decade "by which time all European political domination would have come to an end". It was this concern which made Festac in many respects an intensely political affair. Politics was the key note in many of the artistic presentations. There was for example a very pointed dance drama presented by the National Troupe of Nigeria which depicted a paradise in

Africa wherein there were only beautiful girls and this was rudely shattered by the coming of the white man with guns and all the commercial aspects of colonialisation. There were tributes to the freedom fighters of Soweto. Contributions from Guinea and Mozambique

ancestors is not necessarily a praise-worthy thing. A good example of this could be seen in the ceremony which was performed to open the Colloquium. King Moshoeshoe of Lesotho, President Sir Jawara (a Muslim) of the Gambia and President Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone



Specially built Festival Town in Lagos to accomodate participants

tended to emphasize the continuing call for liberation and struggle and social engineering on the Marxist pattern. But the tension between culture and the African political reality was painfully demonstrated when part of the Ethiopian delegation, styled "the star of Festac", had to return home during the Festival because of the military coup there. The greater part of the delegation remained and the search for authenticity and identity went on.

And as it goes on, it may be appropriate to sound some caveats. So as Africa is concerned, there seems to be at least three main challenges to overcome in this respect. The first concerns the discovery of the past accompanied by a passionate and indiscriminate attachment to that past. It is essential to know the past but when this search for roots results in a worshipping of whatever is found without distinction as to meaning and worth, this is bound to lead to incoherence, confusion and hang-ups. Authenticity, relevance and identity are not necessarily found in a discovery of artefacts and relics or the ability to decipher hieroglyphics. The past through the study of history and anthropology is worthy of being researched and known and interpreted but the wholesale identification with the works of forefathers and

joined General Obasanjo, the Nigerian Head of State in a traditional Yoruba religious ceremonial tasting water, breaking of Kola nuts and sprinkling an alcohol libation to ensure the success of the Colloquium.

The adoption and promotion of anything and everything of traditional values and practices without assessing their intrinsic worth may betray a rather simplistic approach on the part of 'Africans' themselves. Curiously enough, the process can be seen to be encouraged from 'outside'. Consider Pope Paul's message of goodwill to Festac. The message 'encouraged all initiatives aimed at promoting and developing every form of culture, with a view to the integration of humanity and hoped that 'cultural renewal, while respecting legitimate ethnic values and national differences, would unite everyone in a fruitful collaboration, mutual spiritual enrichment and progress'. High sounding words that could only lead to hotch-potch.

A second danger, and one which strikes at the very *raison d'être* of the Festival, is the promotion of blackness which has been given a certain amount of intellectual ballast by Leopold Senghor, among others, who coined the expression 'negritude'. In many respects it is nothing more than an over-action to white racism from which people of colour have

suffered and are continuing to suffer terribly. The first festival of black arts which was held in Senegal in 1960 did much to boost this concept which, however, has taken a knock or two from the Festival just concluded. To begin with the name of the Festival was significantly changed from just Black to 'Black and African' arts and culture and not only black Africans but Arab Africans—Moroccans, Algerians, Libyans, Sudanese, Egyptians—participated. The inclusion of Arabs may have been a sop to OAU (Organisation of African Unity) policies and the idea of Arab-African cooperation which is finding expression in certain economic spheres. But it was the concept of blackness which drew the contingents from the USA, Canada, the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, South America and even so-called 'Afro-Aborigines' from Papua, New Guinea and Australia as a whole; this is what emphasized the racial exclusiveness of the Festival.

One of the most perceptive attacks on this 'black racism' came at the Festac Colloquium from Professor Wole Soyinka who described how, when he looked at his own language, he discovered a way of totally rejecting those concepts such as Black and African which were "an over-compensation for the distortion of his self-image by the European world of rampant racism". In Hausa, he discovered that the 'African' man called himself baiki mutaine; in Ga meedidzi and Yoruba eni dada. These terms had no connotations of racism.

APARTHEID

The recognition that the African self-image has been distorted would be a great step in the right direction. It is said for example that the only things which unites black Africans is opposition to apartheid and white racism in southern Africa and this is mainly because of the white versus black element in the equation. However, opposition to apartheid for the reason that it represents injustice as such and tyranny as such would help to turn the searchlights on tyranny and injustice within and among some of the black states themselves. There would then be a recognition that man's inhumanity to man very often knows no racial frontiers. In this context, the plea by some of the intellectuals at Festac for the release of imprisoned writers and intellectuals by African governments is significant. The

response reported is also significant: the plea was merely shrugged off by saying, "He who pays the piper, calls the tune."

Against this sort of background, what does one make of the final report of the Festac colloquium entitled "The Lagos Programme" which ended with "an appeal for unity and solidarity of black people in spite of their ideological differences and the diversity of their geographical and historical conditions"? Unity on the basis of blackness alone? It's as ridiculous as unity on the basis of whiteness or yellowness. Unity on the basis of race is not a great moral virtue, one might add, for how often have people so united to pursue wrong and immoral ends!

THE SOCIALIST TIDE

A third danger can be seen in the recommendation of the Colloquium to adopt "scientific socialism" as the ideology for all Africa. It can be said that scientific socialism so-called, where it has been invoked on the continent, has often tended to seed conflict, introducing patterns of relationships that are destructive of some of the best traditions. Whether we look at Ghana under Nkrumah in the past or Somalia under Siyad Barreh in the present, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that scientific socialism has brought great damage to the fabric and proper functioning of society.

AN ECHO OF REAL SOLUTIONS

Curiously, the people in Africa who seem to have the solutions to many of the problems being faced have only made a timid contribution. An echo of what these solutions might be was contained in the words of Alhaji Abubakar Gumi, former Grand Qadi of Nigeria, who offered prayers during the opening ceremony of the Grand Durbar at Kaduna. He said:

"One of the objectives of Festac is to revive the true culture and traditions of the people. In this part of the country, the Muslims are predominant and therefore it follows that the true culture and tradition of the people are Islamic in nature and essence. I have to remind us that Islamic culture and tradition are as old as Adam—the first prophet of Allah.

"The Islamic nature of culture and

tradition was never (in abeyance) and therefore any revival of culture and tradition must conform with the injunctions of Islam. Allah most High, says: 'The nature framed by Allah in which he has created man—there is no altering the basis of the religion of Islam. That is the right way of life.'

"This has been the correct way of life and the true nature of culture and tradition from the creation of Adam—the first prophet—to the last prophet, Muhammad. This is the guiding principle in any contribution which the people of this part of the country is making to Festac.

"It is the revival of the Islamic culture and tradition that we should be proud of and this should be the pride of Muslims universally, the world over. It is because of this we always pray to Allah for guidance in whatever we do. It should be understood, therefore, that we do not accept any revival of culture and tradition which contradicts Islamic injunctions which are the true basis of culture and tradition."

It is in these words that the search for relevance, identity and authenticity should begin. The true basis of culture spoken of by Alhaji Abubakar Gumi would get rid of all the racial hang-ups, the preoccupation with artefacts and relics for their own sake and with various artistic forms which often seem to have become in themselves the epitome of man's search for meaning and purpose in life. ■

The Editorial Committee of the Muslim Standard would like to see more persons writing and making use themselves of the columns of the paper. A person may choose to send a letter for publication or an item of news, he or she may deal with aspects of Trinidad and West Indian life or anything of interest and importance to Muslims in particular and the wider society and the Islamization process in general. That should give ample scope!

THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN MAZE TO ISLAM

Shelizah A Mustafa

Born into Christianity, a Catholic, believing in a Trinitarian God very strongly, believing that there was a God even though it all seemed meaningless, I was a bit confused about the teachings, the things we did, and the way we were taught. There were idols around, we even kissed them at times, but "do not worship any graven things" was a commandment. Confessing to "father" (the priest), and getting in more lies than anything else, making myself more and more in league with the Devil than with God; without my "fancy threads" I was not "there" at all, the whole thing was more like "render your clothes and not your heart". I got fed-up with the teachings of Roman Catholicism even their making Santa Claus into St. Nicholas made no difference to my condition: all I was getting was the crumb while they were collecting the dough and the wine. So it seemed.

I decided to throw away that old religion and get into something more modern. I chose Pentecost, and immediately I was saved by the pastor, who had an African tongue while "in the Spirit". My parents did not mind because neither of them had any belief. I lived next-door to hell, just preparing to enter it, not at all willingly.

I got fed-up of the new faith too. As I grew older, my parents also gave up patrolling my religious life. Around this time I started to really examine Christianity. On one side there were the idol-lovers with a big stock of medals and crosses for sale and on the other side there was the "healing and saving bunch". They made God look the way they wanted Him to, just a man — a dead one too! I was in a confused state and gave up on God. I just left the so-called "God-scene". I lived in much sin: partying (seeing the light), moving

around; no way out because there are more satan-lovers than God-lovers. My entire routine was work, sleep, eat, come home, then go out.

While I was yet a Catholic, I had encountered some teachings of Islam but I did not pay it any mind. It was not until September of 1976 when my husband and I went to the mosque to have some prayers said on our baby that we decided then and there to embrace Islam.

It was the day before Ramadan. All praise is due to Allah for guiding me this way since I am truly happy to learn the Truth. I had always heard that the truth shall set you free; that day I learned that to be free from Satan is good so that I could then serve God freely. I learned a new way of life. I knew that my purpose for being alive was that of serving God, the True God Whose name I now know—Allah. The God Who gave me ways by which I should be able to submit myself to His will. Before this, I really knew nothing about Islam because it was hidden from the people. I do not know the reason why this was done nor why it has been projected the way it has been until lately. Most of us thought that it was an Indian religion, like Hinduism or some cult in which the people pray to the moon and stars and some man called Muhammad. Today I know the real meaning of it and I know that it is the religion of humanity. The nations of this earth should have it because it is the way of real living, eating, dressing etc. and Salah (the Prayer) is one of its main ingredients.

I was taught the concept of Tawheed — the oneness of God — and it corrected all the blunders that Christianity had caused me to

make. I learned that I was not a slave of man as Christianity had taught me, rather, I am a devotee of Allah, the One True God. I learnt that true cleanliness is next to Godliness, a concept that was once seemingly impractical. Today, I have learnt to really pray (all praise is due to Allah), it was a bit tough at first, but practice makes perfect. I have also learnt to dress as a woman should and not as a prostitute although my nearest of kin (who are non-Muslims) laughed at me. May Allah have mercy on them.

Islam is new to me, but I was always a Muslim although I was unconscious of this. The Muslim women in this land, as I see it, have gone into hiding. Some prefer to be more involved in the lipstick, cutex and all other so-called "mod" ways of life. I believe that a Muslim woman should seek to be identified as such and not as one of the "chicks" of the block. Why should a Muslim man have his woman dress as some old street-walker in order for her to look like a woman? She was already created beautiful so she does not need the hot-pants, the mini-skirts and the false face to make others aware that she is a woman. There is nothing ancient about a Muslim woman's attire, so it is a waste of time talking about changes in it. If any Muslim man or woman really believes in Allah, His teachings and in Prophet Muhammad as the Final Prophet, then it is time that they start acting as they should and not be like the man who went to a vet to see about his eyes; he got blind.

Today is the day for us to set an example. Today is before us to project the proper image of Islam. We should not wait until tomorrow. It seems like only yesterday that the prophet left us a way to live, pray, eat, sleep and do things properly. I think that it is only right that we should put down our glasses of beer or give up whatever harmful practices we may be engaged in and try to please our Creator as He has showed us through the direction of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his faithful companions.

Many Muslims living in the last quarter of the twentieth century (fourteenth century A.H.) often pose the question as to how they can live as good Muslims in a society which is corrupt, immoral and secular, in which persons high in authority and even the ordinary ones have no genuine commitment to the principles of Islam. Having posed the question, they hardly wait for an answer and fling themselves headlong in chasing the good things of life by all means, lawful and unlawful, moral and immoral. Unfortunately the effort brings neither freedom nor security, but only adds to the individual's burdens of both sins and guilt.

Both the question and the problem, however, are not new. For centuries, chained to an oppressive or immoral social order, people in numerous social groups have asked this question. The long chain of prophethood culminating in the mission of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, has attempted to provide an answer to this very problem.

About the nature of the mission of the Prophet, Allah says:

"He enjoins on them good, and forbids them evil, and makes lawful for them the good things and forbids them the bad, and removes from them their burden and the shackles that were upon them..." (7:157).

During the span of 23 years of his mission we observe the Prophet and his companions living on the one hand under the most adverse conditions—without resources, support or power and subject to the most cruel and oppressive behaviour of the people of Mecca and for years they lived confined in a valley under the most trying conditions: on the other hand, not too long thereafter we see him as the beloved and uncontested ruler of the whole of Arabia with his companions reflecting the same glory, resplendent as bright stars—the fruit of the life-long mission of the last Prophet. His conduct in all these situations is an example for the believers as is the conduct of his companions. About the Prophet, Allah says:

"Verily you have in the Prophet of Allah an excellent model, for him who pins his hopes in Allah and the Last Day and who remembers Allah much" (32:21) About the companions of the Prophet, Allah says:

"And the foremost in faith are the first of the Emigrants (the Muhajireen)

"After internalizing the light of Islam in a long period of training in sacrifice and self-discipline, extending to over a decade, these very ordinary people burst forth on the panorama of the history of mankind as the finest examples of human strength and endeavour."

THE SEERAH* & THE BUILDING OF SOCIETY

Khalid Ishaque

* THE LIFE HISTORY OF THE PROPHET

and the Helpers (Ansar) and those who followed them in the best possible manner. Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him."

Amongst the foremost ones were many who died before migration—the Muhajireen who had spent a lifetime in Mecca in a society which was corrupt, unjust and oppressive. Yet Allah was pleased with all of them. The fact is, His covenant can be performed under all conditions because He says:

"O ye who believe! be heedful of your own selves. He who goes astray cannot harm you when you are rightly-guided." (5:105).

Each one is put to trial within the framework of his abilities and powers (6:165) and the Muslims are repeatedly informed that Allah could, if He has so

willed, make mankind a single united community but He in His wisdom has given Man freedom, which leaves him as capable of choosing good as evil. Under their covenant with Allah, the Muslims are without regard to the quantum of success achieved, obliged to do their duty in ease or in adversity.

If one were to check the list of the foremost amongst the believers, we do not see in their ranks all the stalwarts of Mecca but young men like Ali, slaves like Bilal and many others who to start with looked like nothing more than very ordinary people. Yet, after internalizing the light of Islam in a long period of training in sacrifice and self-discipline, extending to over a decade, they burst forth on the panorama of the history of mankind as the finest examples of human strength and endeavour. The message is clear. Adversity is not necessarily a barrier in the path of man's development, but on the contrary develops in men a strength not possible for those brought up in ease. And that great achievement demands great sacrifice and persistent effort. The political freedom may not exist, economic well-being may not be possible, yet the inner freedom of man cannot be taken from him, for only he is a real slave who wilfully surrenders his freedom—be it for wealth, women or property or to a political dictator.

The Prophet's mission commenced in Mecca. Amongst the very first suras of the Qur'an that were revealed—like al-Muddaththir, al-Humaza, al-Ma'un, al-Layl, al-Balad—the sinners given the most stringent warnings were the perpetrators of social injustices; the covetous rich who spent naught from their wealth on the needy, and the arrogant ones who had no pity or patience for the orphan or the seeker of help. The challenge of Islam was on behalf of the down-trodden and the oppressed of every class, colour or creed. In fact the prime cause for the confrontation of Islam with the greatest empires of the day was this concern for the oppressed.

Even after the establishment of supremacy over the whole of Arabia, Allah reminded the believers in Surah an-Nisa, of their mission in these words:

"And what is the matter with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and of the weak—men, women and children, who say, Our Lord take us out of this town whose people are oppressors and provide for us some friends from

Thyself and provide for us from Thyself some helper." (4:75).

It is possible in the light of this verse to understand what Rustam, the commander of the Persian armies, could never understand why the warriors of Islam spurned all offers of territory, wealth, trade or slaves; when asked what was the purpose of their expeditions if not these good things people aspire for, their answer was simple; it was:

"To make the slaves of men slaves of Allah only."

To a world divided by superiority sought on the basis of birth and caste and tribe, the Prophet brought a code of life which accepted no superiority by reason of accident of birth, colour or language, but only by virtue of moral excellence. This path of achieving superiority was open to all men or women, free ones or the slaves, the rich ones or the poor, within whatever the limits of their powers and resources. The Prophet is reported to have said:

"On the day of judgement no step of a slave of God shall slip until he has answered about four things, his body and how he used it, his life and how he spent it, his wealth and how he earned it and spent it and his knowledge and what he did with it."

The situational position in this behalf is no different for the modern man from that of those who lived during the Prophet's days. Even during the period of greatest adversity the effect of the revolution brought about by Islam was apparent in every Muslim. It was a new concern for fellow beings, for their lives, their needs, and for their honour. It could not be otherwise because having such a concern was the prime obligation of a Muslim under his covenant with Allah. The idea is beautifully brought out in the saying of the Prophet, peace be upon him:

"Behold God will say on the Day of Resurrection: 'O son of Adam! I was ill, and you did not succour Me.' Man will exclaim: 'O Lord, how could I have succoured Thee, the Lord of all the worlds?' And God will reply: 'Did you not know that such and such of My servants was ill and you did not succour him? O son of Adam! I asked you for food, but you did not feed Me.' Man will say: 'O Lord, how could I have fed Thee, the Lord of all the worlds?' Whereupon

God will say: 'Did you not know that such and such of My servants asked you for food, and you did not feed him? Did you not know that if you had done so, you would indeed have found it (again) with Me (i.e. rewarded for it)? O son of Adam! I asked you for a drink, but you did not give me drink.' Man will say thereupon: 'How could I have given Thee, the Lord of all the worlds, a drink?' But God will reply: 'Such and such of my servants asked you for a drink, but you did not give it to him. Did you not know that if you had given him to drink, you would have found it again with Me?'"

(Muslim on the authority of Abu Huraira)

How sacred is the life, honour and belongings of a Muslim is clearly reflected in the well known Khutbah during the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage. To emphasize this, the Prophet while circum-ambulating the Ka'bah said, as if addressing it:

"How good are you, and how attractive is your fragrance. How noble are you and how sacred is your station, but by the One in whose hand is the life of Muhammad, the status of a believer is higher than yours in regard to his rights of property and life; and that we should not think of a Muslim but in good terms." (Ibn Maja).

We often forget while dealing with each other, how often we commit a breach of this command. We often show each other no consideration or respect or fairness. We are all too willing to kiss the cover of the Ka'bah and have little regard for those whom Allah and His Prophet has ordered to be honoured. While confined in the valley of Sh'ib Abi Talib, the believers shared each other's griefs and suffering. Whatever was available to one was available for the dire need of all. The Prophet compared the community of believers to a body so that when the eye suffers all other limbs suffer in sympathy. When injustice or injury was done to one Muslim all were expected to rise to his aid. In fact justice is established only when the on-looker feels as concerned as the one oppressed. It is this concern, which made Abu Bakr say on assuming office of Khalifa:

"The weakest amongst you is the strongest in my eyes till I get him his due, and the strongest amongst you is weakest in my eye till I make him surrender what is due from him."

Once the Prophet, peace be upon him, observed:

"I visualise a time coming when a woman will travel from Hadramawt to Mecca alone on a she-camel, and she would have no fear in her heart except Allah."

The companions proved true his prophecy because all power within society was turned to serve only the larger moral commitment of the community. They could do so because they were willing to surrender today's immediate gratifications for a more beautiful tomorrow. And they were convinced that there shall ultimately be a day of reckoning, when they shall meet Allah and His Prophet.

On that day they will offer themselves as proof of fulfilment of his mission. What shall we have to say when we come face to face with the Prophet? That we endlessly chanted what a perfect guide he was without partaking of his guidance, that we called him the light of the world without kindling our souls with that light, that we proclaimed the Book he brought as the best law to live by without making it the rule governing our lives? Did he not order that "whoever sees a wrong: let him right it with his hand, but if he cannot let him protest orally, if even this is not possible then let him abhor it in his heart and this is the weakest state of faith"? The Qur'an is a book for those interested in good deeds and not magical formulae.

This is not all. Often by a process of glorification we raise the Prophet so high that he ceases to remain a model to be emulated. We depict him as one whose intercession would render otiose (of no practical purpose) the main thrust of Qur'anic teaching. We forget the clear declaration of the Qur'an:

"It shall not be according to your desires, nor according to the desire of the People of the Book. Whoso does evil shall be rewarded for it and he shall find for himself no friend nor helper besides Allah." (4:124)

Let us pray to God that he gives us the capacity to make our teaching the essence of our practice and our practice the essence of our preaching and to avoid the sins arising from preaching not followed by practice. Allah says:

"O you who believe, why do you say what you do not? It is hateful with Allah that you say what you do not." (61:3).

Courtesy: *The Muslim*, London.

TO THE COMPANIONS IN HEAVEN

The 12th Rabi' ul Awwal is normally celebrated as the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace. It was also the date of his death. The following is an account, by Jaafer S Idris, of the last days of the Prophet's life and the reactions of his devoted companions. It is a moving story with many lessons for us.

It is of the essence of Islam that God is of a nature that is entirely different from that of everything else. In this, God is unique; for everything other than Him there is something else which resembles in more than one way. There is a sharp distinction between Him and His creation. All this was very clear to the early Muslims; they therefore never believed that Muhammad had any divine element in him. Though a Prophet and Messenger of God, he was nevertheless human in the full sense of the word.

But he was an ideal human being. For those who knew him best and enjoyed his company for a long time this was a tremendous personal experience. They sincerely loved him more than anything else in the world including their wives, parents and children, and even their own selves. Their attachment to him was of a unique kind. And being human, it would have been too much for them if the man who meant so much for them were suddenly to leave the scene. Thanks to God this did not happen. The fact of the Prophet's inevitable death came to his dear companions gradually and in stages.

Not very long after the Hijra, when some Muslims were shaken and disturbed at the rumour of his death at the battle of Uhud, God prepared them for this in a verse which many learnt by heart. That verse was only one among many which affirmed Muhammad's mortality.

"Thou art mortal, and they are mortal; then on the Day of Resurrection before your Lord you shall dispute." (39:30).

"We have not assigned to any human being before thee to live forever; therefore, if thou should die, will they live forever? Every soul shall taste of death and We shall try you with evil and good for a testing, then unto Us shall you be returned."

Then when after his return from the Tabuk expedition in Syria, deputations of Arab tribes began to come to him from all directions to inform him of the acceptance by their people of Islam—so much so that that year was called the Year of the Deputations. God again sent down verses which were for many of his companions a clear indication of his death.

It was in that same year of the Deputation that the Prophet asked Abu Bakr to lead the Muslim pilgrims to Mecca and to proclaim there, on his behalf, that no polytheist would henceforth be allowed to visit the Holy Land. That was a preparation for the Prophet's own pilgrimage to be made the following year but it was also a sign among many others that Abu Bakr was the man whom the Prophet wanted to succeed him in the leadership of the Muslims.

Before departing for his pilgrimage the Prophet sent many of his companions to different parts of the now peaceful Arabia to instruct people in Islam. Mu'adh ibn Jabal was sent to Yemen. When the Prophet saw him off, he said, "You might not see me after this year, Mu'adh, and you might happen to pass by my mosque and my grave." Mu'adh was moved to tears but the Prophet consoled him saying while turning his face to al-Madina, "Those who deserve most to be my close associates are the God-fearing, whoever they be and wherever they be."

When the Prophet set out for pilgrimage (Haji) on 25 Dhul Qa'dah, he was accompanied by Muslims who came from all parts of Arabia. He explained to them in detail how to perform this form of worship and gave a comprehensive address in which he made it clear to everyone that that was to be his last Hajj (it was also his first) and made his farewells to them. Hence it is called the Farewell Pilgrimage. Here are some extracts of that speech:

"Your blood and your property are sacrosanct until you meet your Lord, as this day and this month are sacrosanct. You will surely meet your Lord and He will ask you of your works. I have told you. He who has a pledge let him return it to him who entrusted him with it. All usury is abolished, but you have your capital. Wrong not and you shall not be wronged.

"Satan despairs of ever being worshipped in your land, but if he can be obeyed in anything short of worship he

will be pleased in matters you may be disposed to think of little account, so beware of him in your religion.

"You have rights over your wives and they have rights over you. You have the right that they should not defile your bed and that they should not behave with open unseemliness.

"I have left with you something which if you will hold fast to, you will never be led astray—a plain indication: the Book of God (the Qur'an) and the practice of His Prophet, so give proper heed to what I say.

"Know that every Muslim is a Muslim's brother and that the Muslims are brethren. It is only lawful to take from a brother what he gives you willingly, so wrong not yourselves."

On this occasion of his farewell pilgrimage, and while the Prophet was standing in the valley of Arafat, the following verse was revealed to him:

"This day I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed my blessing upon you and I have approved Islam as your religion." (5:3).

That was the last ayah—verse—of the Qur'an to come from heaven. Again it was an indication that the Prophet of God would soon leave this world. If the Message in its entirety had been sincerely and clearly conveyed, what would the Messenger stay for?

A month after his return from the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet paid a visit to a nearby cemetery and prayed for the Muslims buried there. When he came back he found his wife 'Aisha whom he loved most complaining of headache, and told her that he himself was feeling a severe one. He was in the habit of spending each night with one of his wives but when his headache continued and developed into a painful fever, he took permission of his wives to be nursed in 'Aisha's house. When they agreed he walked from the house of his wife Maymuna to that of 'Aisha with the help of two of his cousins, al Fadl ibn Abbas, and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, his head bound up, his feet dragging. There he told 'Aisha that his pain was due to the poisoned food the Jews gave to him at Khybar, that feed the painful effect of which he always felt.

One day he asked his wives who

were gathered around him to pour over him seven skins of water so that he might be able to go to his mosque nearby and address the people. They did and he was able to go out and speak. He started by praying for the martyrs of Uhud and then told the gathered Muslims about a servant of God whom God had given the choice between this world and that which was with Him and he had chosen the latter. Abu Bakr perceived what the Prophet meant and wept. The Prophet meanwhile had heard that some people were not happy with 'Usama who was only twenty being commander of the expedition to Syria which was already planned. To these he said, "Despatch 'Usama's force, for though you criticise his leadership as you criticised the leadership of his father before him, he is just as worthy of the command as his father was."

When he went back his pain increased so that he could not lead the Muslims in prayer. Abu Bakr, on his orders was asked to assume that responsibility. The Companions who visited him could see by touching him the severity of his fever, and he told them that his pain was double that of ordinary men, that a believer is tried according to his faith, the stronger the faith the harder the trial, and that pain helps to expiate sin.

On Monday morning, 11th Rabi'ul Awwal 11 A.H., the Prophet felt slightly better and could walk to his door. The Muslims were praying the dawn prayer led by Abu Bakr. He raised the curtain of his door and stood to behold them. They were almost distracted from their prayers for joy at seeing him, and he motioned to them that they should continue their prayers. "He smiled with joy when he noted their mien in prayer," said Anas ibn Malik, the companion who had served him for ten years. "I never saw him with a nobler expression than he had that day."

Almost all the Muslims were pleased, thinking that the Prophet had recovered or had at least become better. But his experienced uncle 'Abbas had a different impression. "I swear by God," he said, "that I recognized death in the Prophet's face as I used to recognize it in the faces of the sons of Abdul Muttalib (the Prophet's grandfather)".

He was right. The Prophet's pain increased, and feeling that his end was near, began to remind the Muslims visiting him of some important matters. He told them among other things about the importance of performing prayer and being kind and fair to their prisoners of war and ordered them not to follow the example of Jews and Christians and make

his grave a place of worship.

When he began to feel the agony of death, he started to pray for himself, "O my Lord, forgive me, be merciful on me and let me join the company of those in heaven." He said on that occasion that one must die expecting the best from God. His head was on 'Aisha's bosom. He began to put his hand in a nearby bowl of water and rub his face and say, "O God, help me over the agony of death." Someone entered carrying a 'siwak' (toothstick). The Prophet looked at it so 'Aisha borrowed it from the man and after chewing it to make it soft gave it to him. He brushed his teeth vigorously. 'Aisha then realised that he was saying, as if in answer to someone, "May (I prefer) the companions in heaven. (I prefer) the companions in heaven." Later she said that he was answering the angel who had given him the choice whether to die or continue living. 'Aisha felt that he became heavy on her bosom.

The Prophet Muhammad—peace be upon him—had passed away, at the age of sixty three, surely to join the company of those in heaven. She laid his head on a pillow and started to cry along with the other women.

'Umar ibn al-Khattab and al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba were the first to see him after that. Al Mughira told 'Umar that he thought that the Prophet had died but 'Umar rebuked him for saying so and went out and told the people in the Mosque that the Prophet did not die and that he would not until he had got rid of all the hypocrites. Then came Abu Bakr. When he saw the Prophet he said, "Surely we belong to God and to Him we return. The Messenger of God—peace be upon him—has died." He then kissed his forehead and said, "O my Prophet." He kissed his forehead again and said, "O my chosen friend." He kissed him for the third time and said, "O my most beloved friend."

He then went straight to the Mosque to speak to the people who were still listening to 'Umar. "O men," he said, "if anyone worships Muhammad, Muhammad is dead. If anyone worships God, God is alive, immortal." He then recited the verse revealed on the occasion of the battle of Uhud: "Muhammad is naught but a Messenger. Messengers have passed away before him. Why, if he should die or is slain, will you turn about on your heels? If any man would turn about on his heels, he will not harm God in any way. And God will recompense the thankful." (3:144).

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ECONOMIC BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS IN ISLAM

The attitude of Muslim man as producer, consumer,
employer, employee, investor, creditor and lender
of good loans

by Sabahaddin Zaim

Both capitalism and socialism have a materialistic view of life. They are different in their methods but the ideal man in both systems is one whose behaviour and attitude is based primarily upon economic self-interest. Islam does accept that there is the inclination for personal interest in human nature but this is subject to higher ideals and principles. Islam first educates Muslim man according to Islamic principles and only then leaves him free, so to speak, in economic life. In an ideal Islamic society, therefore, a man in economic life is not a natural 'homo-economicus', but an educated MUSLIM MAN behaving in accordance with Islamic principles. To understand what these principles are and how they operate, let us try to analyse the attitudes of a Muslim man in various aspects of economic life.

I. The Attitude of Muslim Man as producer.

1. Basic Attitudes of Muslim Man

(a) Muslim man will be well-balanced in his economic behaviour. As the most

honourable of all creatures and considering everything as a trust from God, the guiding principle of his life is to obey the commands of Allah. These relate to the proper use of all resources in the widest sense.

(b) Muslim man is a type of man who asks Allah: "Our Lord, give unto us in the world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good and guard us from the doom of Fire." He works for eternal life as if he is to die tomorrow and works for the worldly affairs as if he will never die. His is a balanced outlook between the material and the spiritual exemplified in the command of God:

"When the prayer is ended, disperse in the land and seek of Allah's bounty and remember Allah much that ye may be successful." (62:10)

(c) Muslim man is one who studies according to the order of Allah, from childhood till old age, believing that science is a lost property of man. He attempts to find the most appropriate job and profession to earn his livelihood according to his natural and obtained abilities.

2. The Attitude of Muslim Man as Employer.

(a) If Muslim man is an employer in trade, agriculture or industry, he has a sense of confidence that as a private entrepreneur, his right of business and the right of his property and heritage is protected by the state.

(b) In such a state he is careful to have decent gains in business life, especially remembering the saying of the Prophet: "An honest and decent businessman will be taken together with martyrs and lovers of Allah." He does not leave his property idle, having to use it in useful fields with the aim of being beneficial to mankind, and without creating harm and hardship for individuals and society. He has to pay his Zakat (the purifying tax) proportionately according to his property. He does not waste his property and neither is he a stingy man. He applies well the Islamic inheritance law.

(c) Muslim man knows that these properties are not obtained solely by his capability, but by the mercy and permission of Allah. He knows that "Allah enlargeth livelihood for whom He wills and straiteneth it for whom He wills." Muslim man knows that everything in the world, including man, belongs to Allah, who is the real Owner. "Allah is the sovereign of the heaven and the earth and all that is between them..." He knows also that certain sections of the society including the needy and the outcast has due shares in his wealth. Therefore he spends his money reasonably in the way of Allah,

(d) Muslim man takes care of his workers and provides them with contentment treating them well, paying their wages in just and right amounts and at the right time. He remembers what the Prophet said: "There are three types of people whom I shall be against. One of them is the man who didn't pay the right wages to his workers after their work."

(e) Muslim man regulates the workload of workers in a moderate and reasonable level remembering the warning of the Prophet: "Do not make them responsible more than their capacities."

(f) Muslim man refrains in his business life from deceit, fearing Allah who said, "Woe unto the defrauders." (83:1)

3. The Attitude of Muslim Man as Employee.

If a Muslim man is a wage-earner or self-employed, he behaves according to the following Islamic principles:

(a) He is proud of the physical and mental efforts in his job, because he remembers the command and promise of Allah: "Man has only that for which he makes effort. His effort will be seen and afterwards he will be repaid for it with fullest payment." Accountability and reward in the life Hereafter are primary motivating forces. This applies to the employer as well.

(b) Muslim man is aware of the fact that most of the Prophets have worked physically and mentally to earn a living. Prophet Dawud was a garment maker and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was once a shepherd.

(c) He takes into consideration the following suggestions of the Prophet in his daily work: "The man who is working to support his family is on the path of Allah; the man who supports his old father and mother is on the way of Allah as well."

(d) Muslim man has the following attitudes in his daily work: He is clean, decently dressed, well-tempered; he complies with agreed and reasonable regulations and orders and is a hard worker. He cooperates with others, tolerates criticism, takes care of tools and uses materials economically; he works efficiently and pays attention to the health conditions and safety regulations.

(e) After his work, Muslim man is grateful to Allah for his job and income and is not envious. He does not bear a hateful attitude towards his employer. In case of difficulty, he knows that Allah says to him: "We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops, but give glad tidings to the steadfast." (2:155-7).

(f) Muslim man also has a confidence against social risks in economic life because he is sure that the Muslim community will provide for social security and support him and his family in case of hardships. This requires a high level of consciousness and concern in the Muslim community.

II. Basic Points in Income of Muslim Man.

There are basically three kinds of incomes for a Muslim Man. They are wage, profit

and rent.

1. He refrains from the gains of interest and usury. He knows that it is not permitted to have gains out of his money without having risk or investment. Therefore he is careful that his gains are based on two important factors: labour and economic risk.

2. In his gains of business, Muslim man seeks to have decent gains, paying attention to the criteria of illegitimate (HARAM) and legitimate (HALAL).

3. He spends his effort through legitimate means to increase his gains, but, realising that absolute equality among gains of men is not possible, he does not envy the incomes of others.

4. Muslim man refrains in his business life from easy gains coming out of gambling and other games of chance, and out of illegitimate sources as profiteering, hoarding etc. He remembers the warning of the Prophet: "Whoever makes profiteering will have a great sin."

III. The Attitude of Muslim Man as Consumer.

On this subject we should ask this question: How, why and where should a Muslim man spend his money? How should he behave as a Muslim man? So far as spending is concerned, there are four possibilities in economic life:

(a) A man spends at first for his consumption to satisfy his needs.

(b) If his income is in excess of his needs, he makes saving.

(c) He may hoard his savings as gold, silver, and other jewellerys, or

(d) He may invest his saving into production, either having a new establishment, or joining a company etc.

If we take first the spending of income for consumption, the main principle in this field is the Islamic belief that the level of spending for consumption is not the only function of income. Consumption, however, is determined by some basic Islamic principles.

1. A Muslim man is not supposed to spend his income for consumption of alcoholic beverages, gambling and for other illegitimate purposes. Consumption in Islam is limited by ethical legitimacy.

2. Muslim man should refrain from spending on luxurious and conspicuous

consumption and making a demonstration because he knows that according to Islamic principles such an economic attitude is banned for a Muslim. The Prophet has warned Muslim man saying: "Allah will not forgive the sins of three kinds of men, and one of them is the type of person who spends his wealth for conspicuous consumption". Therefore Muslim man should limit his consumption within the level which satisfies his needs. He should not incite and provoke the jealousy of the poor through showiness.

3. Even in the legitimate fields, he should also limit the level of consumption by quantity, refraining from wasteful attitudes because Allah commands him:

"O children of Adam, look to your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but be not wasteful. Indeed, Allah does not love those who are extravagant." (7:31) "Indeed the squanderers were ever brothers of the devils and the devil was always an ingrate to his Lord." (17:27)

4. While Muslim man is not permitted to be extravagant, on the other hand he is not supposed to borrow unless it is necessary. He should behave economically and regulate his consumption according to his income. because he remembers the Prophet saying: "May Allah prevent me from sin and borrowing." If it is necessary to borrow, Muslim man makes a written agreement with sincere intention to repay and does pay back in the right time because the Prophet says that "it is unjust to extend the repayment time if he is able to and this kind of people will be punished. Also, "Whoever borrows with pure intention Allah will pay for him and whoever borrows with the intention of prodigality (extravagance), Allah will ruin him."

Due to these Islamic principles the level of consumption of a Muslim man is limited. According to economic theory, it is necessary to increase investment for economic development. To facilitate this, the consumption level must be regulated. The attitude of Muslim man in consumption both stimulates and accelerates the rate of economic development and provides social balance without provoking the jealousy of the poor. These principles of Islam if made international will go a long way towards better international relations.

To be continued in the next issue, in sha Allah.

LETTERS & COMMENT

THE PROCESS OF UPGRADING STANDARDS

On behalf of the executive and members of the Al-Ikhwan Muslim Youth Organisation, I wish to congratulate you for a wonderful job you have been doing in helping to propagate Islam throughout the nation.

However, after reading your December issue (Dhul Hijjah), with special reference to the article entitled 'NON-STARTERS', we felt that publication of this article should have been withheld. A Muslim brother does not abuse or slander his brother in public or moreso in a public paper like yours which is widely read by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. We are not condoning the mistakes of the Maulana in his books but at the same time we feel that (the reviewer) should have spoken to him personally instead of making his mistakes public. This sort of criticism would only lead to conflict and frustration among our Muslim community.

I hope you have taken this note of ours in good faith and continue to promote Islamic ideology in your paper.

Yours in Islam,
S. MOHAMMED,
Montrose, Chaguanas.

The reviewer writes:

I deeply appreciate the comments of the brothers from Al-Ikhwan Muslim Youth Organisation and the spirit in which they were written.

May I point out however that the review of Brother Waffie's works was not at all motivated by a desire to 'abuse or slander' the brother in public. Brother Waffie himself would know this because we have a good brotherly relationship with each other and I had in fact spoken to him about his work, in a quite frank manner, before the review was published.

But even if I did not speak to the brother before-hand, I think that he would be the first to appreciate that an author who takes the responsibility of publishing his writings automatically accepts that these writings would be assessed even in the most stringent light through reviews in newspapers etc. Reviewers, like authors, also have a responsibility to the public.

May I add that the opening and closing paragraphs of the review honestly represent the spirit in which it was written. They point not only to the need to

encourage creativity but also to the need to upgrade standards for the benefit of our growing community. An excess of sensitivity and censorship does not help the process. And to be frank does not imply that we cannot have genuine brotherly relationships.

A.W.H.

PRISON HELP

Dear Brothers,

May the peace of God be upon you all.

I have been receiving regular copies of The Muslim Standard and occasional visits from various brothers. My interest in Islam has grown into a knowledge of Islam in spite of the fact that we have no prison Imam. As you know, Imam Haniff has left us for Paradise (in sha Allah) and no one has replaced him here. All the other religious bodies have chaplains attached here.

There is one question I want to have a clear answer on — what kind of economic system does Islam prescribe for a society? I know that Zakat is a standing law that embraces many facets of Islamic society but what else does Islam say on economy? Could you publish an article on this or lend me a book on it?

Respectfully,
Denis Fletcher.

■ **Editor's Note:** We hope that the article on 'Economic Behavioural Patterns in Islam' which is to be continued in the next issue (in sha Allah) would give some idea of the principles on which the Islamic economic system is based. But there is an extensive and growing literature in this field as Muslims begin to grapple with some of the challenges being posed by the present international economic order and the problems associated with implementing the Islamic order. Two pointers to the current Muslim concern with this problem is the setting up of the international Islamic Bank and the forthcoming Islamic Economic Conference to be held in London in July, some of the findings of which it may be possible to publish later on.

On the question of an Imam to visit the prisons, we hope that the competent authorities, the ASJA, would soon appoint a replacement for the late Imam Haniff..

AMIN - RUSHING INTO JUDGEMENT

The overt reaction of Zionist and Christian opinion to events in Uganda has been nothing short of hysterical. In the case of the death of the Anglican archbishop, apart from Amin's statement that he died in a car crash, it must be admitted that no firm facts existed to point definitely to an alternative conclusion. Yet immediately after the reported death, screams of 'murder' echoed through the world and calls for Amin's deposition came thick and fast. The simple fact is, that apart from Amin's word, we just don't know what happened. The archbishop may well have been executed, but we don't know. Even the International Commission of Jurists over-reached itself and rushed into judgement. This certainly shows a lack of impartiality; it might also indicate the sort of pressure groups that operate within international organisations.

It should be noted that both the Israeli Zionists and the Christians have their reasons for hating Amin. He expelled the Israelis from Uganda which was a base for Israeli penetration into the whole of Africa; and as far as the Christians are concerned Amin appears to be giving too much encouragement to Muslims, reversing the colonial trend whereby Christians were brought into Uganda and fostered at the expense of the Muslim presence.

Such facts need to be considered when assessing the output of the exceedingly skilful international news media. It has the capacity to create villains and heroes at will. And it may be at times so criminally deceptive as to make today's villains tomorrow's heroes and vice versa. A notable example of this was the building up of Nasser of Egypt as the outspoken champion of Arab unity and the rights of the Palestinians on the one hand and the enemy of Israel and western imperialism on the other. And when he died, both Israeli and western opinion mourned the passing away of a "restraining influence in the Middle East".

The point being made is this: that we have to be very careful in dealing with the news in the press, radio or TV and not accept anything and everything on face value.

AHMADI LABEL REMOVED FROM T.M.L.

Farouk Khan

The Trinidad Muslim League has finally freed itself from the stigma of "Ahmadiyyat" or "Qadianism" that has been attached to it for a number of years. This move was made recently at its Annual General Meeting held at the League Centre, St. Joseph.

Imam M A Hafeez of the St. Joseph Jamaat put forward a motion to dissolve the League's affiliation to the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam of Lahore. He argued that the decision to affiliate which was made in 1968 under the leadership of Dr M A Aziz was unconstitutional. He also argued that Lahore had recently given permission for the formation of another Ahmadi branch in Trinidad. This branch was recently formed and is being led by a former president of the TML, Mr. Aziz Ahamad. This, he said, made the League's affiliated position obsolete. The motion was opposed but when voting took place, it

was carried unanimously.

It may be remembered that when the League took the decision to affiliate, it met with the disapproval of a large faction of members, many of whom were foundation members. This led to the expulsion of these members, all of whom were non-Ahmadis, by the Council of the TML, the majority of whom were Ahmadis. The expelled members then sought a court injunction to restrain the Council from expelling them. This matter, however, was later dropped as the two parties made a compromise. The League existed with two factions, one of Ahmadis and the other of non-Ahmadis, for some years.

As the non-Ahmadis recently gained a majority in the Council, the move to restore the League to its original doctrines of the Ahle Sunnat wal Jamaat (adhering to the four Sunni jurists) was easily passed.



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