

# MEDIA ADVOCACY FOR CHARISMATIC CONSENSUS BUILDING Policy and Politics in Practice

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## *Abstract:*

Challenging the status quo of polity is the basic and foremost characteristic of radical reforms and if this is done in a charismatic way, there are obviously elements of rhetoric in it. The Indian State in the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken several decisions which depict some kind of charisma; the first major example was demonetization, the second was surgical strike on Pakistan and third the bill for stopping Teen Talaq. These decisions provided force for a radical reform. These idealized forces of change attributed the leadership as visionary and charismatic. The elements of rhetoric in these decisions were emphasizing collective identity of citizens through demonetization, emphasizing sense of security and pride through surgical strike on Pakistan and emphasizing on self esteem of the followers by introducing bill to criminalize Triple Talaq. The aim of this study is to identify the consensus creating elements of rhetoric in the messages of radical reforms of the Narendra Modi led government in India. The findings of this study will further extend the dimensions of theory of Charismatic leadership by incorporating rhetoric of economic, social and political messages. This study was designed to empirically test the rhetorical nature of the speeches of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on radical reforms like demonetization, surgical strike and Triple Talaq issue. The variables to measure the rhetoric were frame alignment, trust building and agenda-setting. Findings of this study suggest that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has the ability to capture big audience through his charismatic speeches. The surprise speech of November 8, 2016 on demonetization had a cultivating impact on audience. The respondents perceive this move not only anti-corrupt but also as pro-poor initiative. Obviously the rhetoric in the message was to create preliminary consensus on series of economic reforms. Similarly, the way the message on surgical strike was revealed to the public by the Indian Army was unprecedented. This unprecedented and idealized move led to 'sense of bravado' which overtook the 'sense of sobriety' when leaders started commenting on it. But the respondents again appreciated the political will of the Narendra Modi government. In the recent political move, the Modi government introduced the The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 in Lok Sabha to criminalize the instant Triple Talaq. This was also part of radical reform agenda of the government intended to change the status quo. But the question is whether these issues will get addressed by political rhetoric or media trial? Is that much of rhetoric in name of radical reform is healthy for the democracy? Is this apparent will of the new leadership intended towards real social, economic and political development of the country?

***IndexTerms* – Media Advocacy, Rhetoric, Reform, Policy, Politics, Charisma, Narendra Modi**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Charismatic leaders have a crystal clear vision and are very sensitive to the needs of followers (Tan & Wee, 2002). They are usually risk-takers and do things that others are afraid of trying. People trust attractive leaders because they visualize the risk-taking capacity in them. History has example of such leaders who had negative and positive results because of their charisma. Adolph Hitler exercised his charismatic leadership for destructive purposes. On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhi used his personal appeal to inspire his followers to protest non-violently. Gandhi did fast to indicate selflessness and commitment to his beliefs. His attractive leadership helped him gain followers and attention. This ultimately proved a powerful tool to end the British Rule from Indian in a non-violent way.

Charismatic leaders possess three basic components: appeal, empathy and management skills. Such leaders inspire their followers through articulation of an organisational vision (House, 1977). They possess a particular trait or attribute (Conger & Kanungo, 1987) and by virtue of such trait they formally exercise authority or power (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993). In some respect, on condition that personal appeal is conceptualised as a personal characteristic of the leader, the evolution of charismatic leadership may well be viewed as a revival of the trait approach to leadership.

Narendra Modi has risen to power not solely because of the themes highlighted in his speeches but because of his rhetorical vogue. As Chief Minister of Gujarat, he attacked Congressmen politically, however additionally in person by coining acronyms and formulas. He arraigned the inaction of Manmohan Singh by describing him "Maun (silent) Mohan Singh". As a Chief Minister of Gujarat he claimed that he was "the chowkidar" of the state's treasury, guarding it from the greed of the Congress. And he added:

“Earlier, this cash accustomed get engulfed”. As a CM he said six crore Gujaratis are his family members and as a Prime Minister of India he says 125 crore Indians are members of his family. Throughout the 2013-14 Lok Sabha election campaign, he emphasized on his background as a former chaiwala (teaboy).

The discourse analysis of Modi’s speeches as Chief Minister of Gujarat and Prime Minister of India gives a good clue of his rhetoric vogue. As a CM he frequently used three words “gentleman”, “lady” and “friend”. During 2013-14 Lok Sabha election campaign the most frequently used words were “friend”, “Congress” and “BJP”. And in his tenure as PM the most frequently used words are “our”, “cooperation” and “India”. The comparison of Independence speeches of last three PMs of India also shows that Modi has a different rhetoric identity as he used “sister”, “brother” and “team”. This triad reveals his intention at establishing a personal connect with the people. This practice is evident in his monthly radio address “Mann ki Baat” as well. Words like “sister” and “brother” recommend that the variant of this sort of discourse that Modi prefers is family-oriented. This approach is in tune with the Hindu nationalist ideologues. For them, caste and class based social divisions were secondary and uniting the Hindus was primary objective.

As Prime Minister, Modi prompts a privileged relationship with people using words like “you”, “brother”, “sister”, “friend”, “people”, and “mother”. The other usually observed difference in Modi’s speeches is that he approaches the question of economic improvement in a non-technical way. He prefers to use words like “poor”, “electricity”, “rupee”, “money” and “village”, whereas former PM Manmohan Singh preferred to use technical words like “growth”, “development”, “policy”, or “institution”.

Obviously the speeches of PM Modi have a personal appeal. This study aims at identifying the elements of charisma in the speeches of Modi through Rhetoric Analysis. The researcher has specifically focused on Rhetoric of Demonetization, Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas (With all, development for all) and Surgical strike in this study.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The power to capture audience through hanging address plays a vital role in the formation of personal appeal (Bryman, 1992; Kanungo, 1987; Hartog & Verburg, 1997; Shamir, 1994). Despite the apparent accord on the importance of attractive rhetoric, the link between the content of the speeches and attractive leadership has not received a lot of attention from theorists and researchers. Some studies have quantified rhetoric of U.S. Presidents and some have analyzed the utilization of linguistic devices (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Bryman, 1992; Holladay & Coombs, 1993, 1994; Winner, 1984; Verburg, 1997). Communication strategies (Fiol, Harris & House, 1999), image management (Gardner, 1998) and vision delivery (Coombs, 1993, 1994) have remained the area of investigation in such studies.

The role of rhetoric content in attractive or charismatic leadership remains to be explored particularly from Indian perspective. This study argues that action and delivery alone can’t make followers for a leader. The attractive leader uses themes in a particular language to create psychological effects. This is the idea of frame alignment. Frame alignment (Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford, 1986) refers to the linkage of interpretive orientations of audience and leaders. The charismatic leaders frame their vision and interpret events to make them appealing purposeful to their followers (Kanungo, 1987, 1994; House, 1999). For such a frame alignment the charismatic leader (a) stresses on change in status quo (b) appeal to the history and (c) increasing the capabilities and identities of the followers.

Winner (1984) claimed that charismatic leaders link their current actions to past events by citing historical examples. In line with their earlier theory, Shamir et al. (1994) analyzed a speech of a charismatic leader, Jesse Louis Jackson, and found that Jackson created many references to historical events and historical figures in linking his ideas. He also found that totally different metaphors were utilized by Jackson in his speech to stress a shared collective identity whereas Roberts (1985) found that the leader helped followers feel as part of the discourse. Burns (1978), Bass (1985), Bennis and Nanus (1985) stressed that charismatic leaders demonstrate determination, optimism, authority, and confidence in themselves and also the ability to accomplish the mission and understand the vision. John Locke (1991) asserted that authority plays a vital role in decision-making and in gaining others’ trust. In their analysis, Snow et al. (1986) described the frame amplification method.

Weber (1947) expressed the need of charismatic leaders to “prove” their extraordinary powers to the follower. The followers of Weber also argued that success serves to validate the leaders’ personal appeal and affirm his extraordinary power (e.g., Conger, 1989). Etzioni (1975) argued that personal appeal is non-inheritable and it is achievable by the leader. House (1977) argued that charismatic leaders interact in such a way that they create their own image of ability and success. Therefore personal capabilities have been the most investigated area.

## III. PROPOSITIONS OF THE STUDY

This study aims to test the following propositions

1. PM Modi articulates the threats in his speeches to push his own idea
2. PM Modi articulates futuristic goals in his speeches to promise an attractive future
3. PM Modi has motivated the followers to take big challenges for change
4. PM Modi has aligned himself with the identity of the followers
5. PM Modi has amplified specific themes to win the trust of followers
6. PM Modi has delivered speeches which reflect self confidence

#### IV. METHOD AND SAMPLE

Content analysis was done to analyze the themes, values and threats expressed in speeches of PM Narendra Modi to test the presence of above six propositions empirically. Berelson (1952) defines content analysis as "a technique of systematic and empirical description of the manifest content of communication". In this study, inferences made of the speeches represent the behavior of the orator. Narendra Modi has emerged as India's one of the most noted statesmen and successful politician. His speeches are full of enthusiasm and vision for a change. Previous analysis of speeches has substantial proof to demonstrate that his speeches have charismatic elements. The time-frame of 2014-2017 was chosen for this analysis.

To ensure reliability of the data precise and defined themes were enlisted. Two coders were trained and employed for the job. Inter-coder reliability (Krippendorff, 1980) was found to be within the limits. Next, the numbers of themes coded by each coder were tabulated for every class. The classes were in agreement of the themes. Cohen's Kappa was found to be 0.78.

#### V. RESULTS

The objective of the study was to analyze the rhetoric in PM Modi's speeches in context of six propositions. All these propositions were found to be valid based on the themes, associated threats and values. Altogether 15 speeches from the period May 2014 to December 2017 were analysed. Out of which 3 did not match the themes of this study. So the analysis is based on 12 finally selected speeches. The themes included: policy on economic reforms (Demonetization, Black Money, Benami, Articulation of threat to Indian Economy, Digital Payment Apps, banking regulations, anti-corruption initiatives), policy on socio-economic reforms (Economic empowerment of the marginalized, Jan Dhan Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana), Politics on National Security (Surgical Strike, Infiltration, Other border issue, Indo-Pak ceasefire violations), Policies of Indigenous development (Make in India, Digital India, Skilled India).

*Table 1: Type of themes identified in PM Modi's Speeches (N=12)*

Theme categories	Number of Speeches	Percentage of Speeches (%)
Threat to Economy and Steps of refinement (Demonetization, Anti-corruption, Black Money and Benami Property).	7	58.33
Discussing futuristic goals and Policies of Inclusion (Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas)	5	41.66
Motivating the followers for a big change (cashless economy, digital initiatives, skilled India)	6	50
Aligning his own identity with the followers' identity	4	33.33
Amplification of specific values and themes	7	58.33
Inculcating Specific Values	6	50
Self-confidence and success	8	66.66

Out of the 12 speeches studies, 7 speeches had corruption and anti-corruption moves of the government as dominant themes. The articulation of threats to Indian economy was a common theme in speeches of PM Modi. In overall 36 threats identified in speeches of Modi, 17 threats were related to black money, corruption, disproportionate assets etc. It was evident that threat to Indian economic system because of corruption, black money and Benami were of the utmost concern in the speeches. Announcing the demonetization move on November 8, 2016, PM Modi said "My dear countrymen, In the last two and a half years, we have brought into the open nearly 1 lakh 25 thousand crore rupees of black money belonging to the corrupt. Honest citizens want this fight against corruption, black money, benami property, terrorism and counterfeiting to continue. Which honest citizen would not be pained by reports of crores worth of currency notes stashed under the beds of government officers? Or by reports of cash found in gunny bags?" He further said "To break the grip of corruption and black money, we have decided that the five hundred rupee and thousand rupee currency notes presently in use will no longer be legal tender from midnight tonight, that is 8th November 2016. This means that these notes will not be acceptable for transactions from midnight onwards. The five hundred and thousand rupee notes hoarded by anti-national and anti-social elements will become just worthless pieces of paper. The rights and the interests of honest, hard-working people will be fully protected. Let me assure you that notes of one hundred, fifty, twenty, ten, five, two and one rupee and all coins will remain legal tender and will not be affected".

*Table2: Type of threats identified in PM Modi's Speeches (Numbers of Threats N=36)*

Theme categories	Number of Threats Identified in Each Category	Percentage of Total Number of Threats (%)
Threat of Corruption	7	19.44
Threat of Black Money	6	16.66
Threat of Benaami properties	4	11.11
Threat of Pseudo-Secularism	3	8.33
Threat of Social ills (Triple Talaq)	5	13.88
Threat of Infiltration and National Security	4	11.11
Threat of Internal Conflict	2	5.5
Threat of past ideologies	5	13.88

In his speech after the demonetization move, during winter session of the Parliament in December 2016 PM Modi said "In our country, ruckus in Parliament or not letting it function had happened earlier too. It was a little longer this time. But there is an essential difference. Earlier, ruckus and disruptions happened because of massive scams and graft, when the Opposition would unite and fight on the principle of honesty. This is the first time when treasury benches have taken a step against corruption and many in the Opposition have come together to support the dishonest. Political values has fallen so much that opposition parties are brazenly speaking in favour of the dishonest, something that used to be done secretly earlier".

Threats of social and political ills (triple talaq, caste based politics) and threats to national security (infiltration from Pakistan and ceasefire violations) were ranked second and third. Generally PM Modi spoke of the inclusion of all the sections of the society in the process of development (Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas).

*Table3: Type of Values identified in PM Modi's Speeches*

Theme categories	Number of Values amplified	Percentage of All values Amplified (%)
Value of Good Governance	6	22.22
Value of Corruption-Free Governance	4	14.81
Value of Democracy	2	7.40
Value of Inclusion and Pluralism	4	14.81
Value of Women Development	2	7.40
Value of Honesty and Self-regulation	2	7.40
Value of firmness of Agenda and Action	4	14.81
Value of National Security and patriotism	5	18.51

The election manifesto of BJP in 2014 carried a slogan 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'(with all, development for all) together with Ek Bharat, Shresth Bharat (One India, Supreme India). This theme has reflected in the speeches of PM Modi since he took office. The 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas' slogan was offered to other nations as well in the BRICS summit in which PM Modi said "the development agenda of the BRICS countries lies with "sabka saath, sabka vikas" we need to work together to create a greener world and mitigate the menace of climate change." During the election campaigns of BJP in Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections, Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas was strategically used to streamline the electors in party's favour.

The firmness of action on national security agenda was also part of Modi's speeches in India and abroad. India had conducted surgical strikes on terror pads across the LoC on September 29, 2016 after the Uri attack. In June 2017, in a community reception speech in Virginia (USA), PM Modi said "India has succeeded in telling the world about the need to uproot the menace of terrorism and the surgical strikes conducted across the LoC prove that the country can defend itself when needed." He stressed on the historical fact that "When India talked of terrorism 20 years back, many in the world said it was a law and order problem and didn't understand it. Now terrorists have explained terrorism to them so we don't have to." Modi said India has been a victim of terrorism, but "the world did not and cannot stop us. We have succeeded in conveying to the world the deleterious effects of terrorism on India."

The analyzed speeches of PM Modi have reflections of value of good and corruption free governance (36%), Value of inclusion and development of marginalized section (14.8%) and Value of firmness on agenda (14.8%) and action on matters of national security (18.5%). This is empirical evidence to the proposition that the speeches of PM Modi have all the value based elements of Charisma in noticeable proportions and this unique charisma comprises of policies of reforms and polity of inclusion.

## VI. DISCUSSION

### *Surgical Strike Rhetoric*

In September 2016 the country saw a remarkable declaration by a high-positioned military authority addressing the country on the 'surgical strikes' done by the Indian Army. A great part of the open deliberation after the strikes were centred on some political gatherings requesting confirmation of the strikes, which in the assessment of some is identical to obscenity, since how might you scrutinize the Army? The Army is past all inquiries, investigation and all that they say is to be acknowledged without challenge. One should not forget that the Armed Forces are only an instrument of the state, similar to other organization. It must also be noted that this happened for the first time after independence that — in any event on open record — India has entered Pak Occupied Kashmir) for a surgical strike.

During 1999 Kargil war, the then Indian government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee had asserted that Indian army didn't cross the Line of Control. Regardless of whether that was a matter of quality of leadership or shortcoming has for long been debated. But, the way surgical strike declaration was made is demonstrative of the way Modi has been instrumental in sending a message to the world that India is capable of conducting such strikes as and when required. The Indian military was allowed to react to any truce infringement at LoC and along the International Border with full powers and adequacy. A shaken Pakistan clearly couldn't acknowledge it. Its Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) put out two articulations. The principal proclamation was that "Two Pakistani fighters met Shahadat". It proceeded with: "there has been no surgical strike by India" rather there had been cross fringe fire.

The surgical strike rhetoric was instrumental in proving the proposition that Modi is a charismatic leader and has the ability to take actions.

### *Rhetoric on Demonetization*

On November 8, 2016, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that 500 and 1,000 rupee notes have been demonetized. This was done, according to Modi, in light of a legitimate concern for dispensing with tax avoidance by focusing on purported "black money" and money related to extortion. On New Year's Eve, in his address to the nation, he conveyed his second real discourse on the subject of demonetization and, in some ways, left the Indian individuals with similarly the same number of inquiries as earlier and no answers. The drive for demonetization had started as an obvious war against black money. The New Year eve's address also centred on the curse of black money. Modi started by expressing gratitude toward the people of the nation, for their patience and called them crusaders against corrupts. Underlining the problems faced by people he said that the scores of letters he got in regards to demonetization were an indication that individuals have faith in the government on the issue of demonetization. While Modi lauded bank representatives and other stakeholders, he made a pledge to taking the Indian economy back to its feet. When discussing demonetization as a campaign against corrupt, neither he nor his administration nor has the Reserve Bank of India discharged clear figures on how supportive the 50-day time span has been in the administration's endeavour to weed out black money.

Demands for more practical anti-corruption policies have played a vital role in Indian electoral politics for many years, a trend that has arguably got intense in recent years. The India against Corruption Movement (IAC) in 2011 and the BJP's success in the 2014 general elections are overwhelming examples of it. IAC was the most successful movements in twenty first century in India (till date), aimed at lobbying for the "Lokpal"- an independent ombudsman as anti-corruption authority. The language of the Prime Minister's announcement on November 8, 2016 makes clear that demonetization was the exercise to "purify the country". He declared the common man as crusader of this exercise against the corrupt. Modi's rhetoric on demonetization has serious impediments for future anti-corruption programmes because it has already bifurcated the nation into being righteous and the corrupt without having identified them. By doing so he has institutionalised corruption as a cultural drawback and not the drawback of the policy or law. Like troopers fighting external threats, the electors were motivated to "fight a war against the internal evils" of corruption, black money and counterfeit notes.

The other side of this argument, of course, is that critics and opponents of demonetization lack patriotism: *Which honest citizen would not be pained by reports of crores worth of currency notes stashed under the beds of government officers?* Modi asked once he proclaimed the policy. The argument was made to assert that only the corrupt would be against demonetisation. Speaking to BJP MPs on Decemebr 16, 2016, Modi condemned the behaviour of opposition parties in parliament, saying: "While the govt is functioning against corruption and black money, the opposition is defending the corrupt. The Prime Minister reiterated this argument on more than three occasions afterward. Through demonetisation, Prime Minister Modi effectively depicted himself as a pioneer willing to take definitive action against tax evaders. While the long term affect of demonetisation is yet to be seen, the observations so far indicate that demonetisation did not target noncash-based transactions.

Another attribute in PM Modi's speech on demoneziation was appeal to the past. In his address PM Modi said "Today I want to make a special request to all of you. You may recall the economic situation in May 2014 when you entrusted us with an onerous responsibility. In the context of BRICS, it was being said that the "I" in BRICS was shaky. Since then, we had two years of severe drought. Yet, in the last two and a half years with the support of 125 crore Indians, India has become the "bright spot" in the global economy. It is not just we who are saying this; it is being stated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank." Modi further correlated corruption with terrorism and said "Terrorism is a frightening threat. Many have lost their lives because of it. But have you ever thought about how these terrorists get their money? Enemies from across the border run their operations using fake currency notes. This has been going on for years. Many times, those using fake five hundred and thousand rupee notes have been caught and many such notes have been seized".

The rhetoric on demonetization had theme of corruption, terrorism and contemporary political history. This further supporters the proposition that Modi's speeches are drafted in a manner that the intensity of threat get articulated well from it.

### *Rhetoric on Triple Talaq*

On August 22, 2017, the Supreme Court of India gave the much anticipated judgment and made instant 'Triple Talaq' unlawful. It is workable for the secularists to see a rationale behind this demonstration. It resembles contending that Hindu patriots were meddling into the individual laws of the Muslim people group and furthermore endeavouring to extend themselves as 'heros' of Muslim ladies. Indeed, an inquiry stays unanswered, why previous governments did not endeavour to annul this terrible, fierce and male centric practice. The truth of the matter is that these secularists had no guts to questions this malpractice. One conceivable reason, we accept is that with regards to a risky association with the larger part group, the minorities regularly feel defenceless. The appropriate response lies in a really dialogic and populist culture in which there is neither the oppression nor ghettoisation of the minorities.

In British India a process of socio-religious change gave another importance to the elements of Hindu culture. Dayanand Saraswati, Jyoti Rao Phule, Periyar, Ambedkar and Gandhi were the reformers in true sense. Despite the fact that these monstrous practices keep on prevailing, there was a good endeavour to get rid of these and a need was felt for steady change. Gandhi communicated it flawlessly as he stated, 'If my heart does not allow I wouldn't support a practice regardless of whether the religious sacred texts have endorsed it.' However the procedure of internal stirring and access to new instruction was moderately less among the Muslim groups. Even Syed Ahmad Khan's endeavours stayed restricted to upper rank Muslim elites.

Indeed, in present times, history is rehashing itself. What we see is that the Muslims in India get portrayed as- the customary pastorate having non-reflexive understanding of Koranic philosophy and high class Muslims consolidated with the rigid framework of ideology. The change never originated from within from either of the class and this prompted the Supreme Court to pass a judgement on instant "Triple Talaq". On Demeber 31, 2017, without referring to the bill which got passed in the Loksabha, PM Modi said: "The hardship faced by Muslim mothers and sisters over triple talaq is not hidden from anyone. After years of struggle, they have found a way of freeing themselves from (the practice) of instant triple talaq." PM Modi said the mantra for the New Year should be "reform, perform, transform" and called for 'sabka saath, sabka vikas' (together with all, development for all).

## VII. CONCLUSION

Right now, the Indian polity is in a period of transition. Defenders of liberal-secular ideology are on decline. The Hindutva ideology is getting acceptance. These progressions have produced new followers for the BJP and PM Modi. What remains to be seen is that whether the Indian people will retain the values of pluralism and secularism in the backdrop of present leadership. Charisma is simpler to perceive than to define. In PM Modi's personality, there are elements of charisma as it was in the personalities of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. But, the question is whether this charisma is needed at all? The alluring speeches of a charismatic leaders may excite the masses for a change, but when the change is not visible on ground, will that charisma sustain the ideology of a party.

The way Modi has acted in his three years tenure as PM has created rhetoric of "Modi versus all." This was reflected in one of the election rallies of PM Modi in which he said "woh kehte hain Modi hatao, mein kehta hoon corruption hatao" (They say eliminate Modi, I say eliminate corruption)".

Barely any contemporary Indian leader can match the charisma of PM Modi. This is the reason that even the tweets of Modi are being researched. The study by University of Michigan's (UM) School of investigated PM Modi's tweets over a six year time frame and found that his tweets were full of sarcasm. His tweets termed Rahul Gandhi as 'Rahul Baba' and 'Shahzada'. By using such words Modi was actually flagging that the Congress has lost its roots. The study also pointed out that Modi strategically changed the idea of Hindutva and focussed on India First to increase his acceptance during the 2014 Loksabha elections. Another study by Pew Research Center found that PM Modi is the most accepted leader in India. These findings support the propositions made in current study.

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