

## Study on Significance of Shura in Islam and its Practice in Contemporary Muslim Family Affairs

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### Abstract

The family is seen as an important stage in the various stages of human life. In order to run this family structure smoothly and peacefully, there must be a strong bond between family members. Understanding is the root cause of everything. Thus, the strong bonding depends on the capacity of understanding they possess each other. One of the most influential aspects of this understanding is making decisions by having a discussion with each other and valuing each and everyone's opinions.

Thus, the study aimed at evaluating the extent of the application of Shura in contemporary Muslim family affairs. Based on the purposive sampling method, a closed-ended questionnaire was distributed to one of each couple in hundred families out of 2390 families living in the Tambala area in the Polonnaruwa district of Sri Lanka. The review of the literature contributed to constructing its theoretical structure. The results indicate the higher application of Shura in child-related issues than spiritual and economic affairs among Muslim families.

This study would be a guide for future studies on family-related issues and the application of the Islamic guidelines on building an effective infrastructure of a healthy family.

**Key words:** Family structure, Shura, Practice, Polonnaruwa district, Couple.

### Background of the Study

The family is seen as an important part of human life. Family members are bound together in important ways at every stage of life. It is seen as a major influential resource in social interaction (Umberson et al., 2010). The marital relationship plays a vital role in defining the living environment (Umberson & Montez, 2010). Family and education are seen as important areas for developing the

economic status (Franceschelli & O'Brien, 2014). A healthy transformation takes place in the family structure only when Islamic practices are fully followed as was emphasized above. In this way, according to the Islamic religion, the sharing and discussion among the family members should be systematically implemented for the balanced movement of the family system. In that respect, the shura (discussion) takes place an important role in the Islamic family structure. It could be seen that Islam has given more importance to all spheres of life.

Shura" is derived from the past tense of the Arabic verb "shaara". The word "shura" (discussion) is synonymous with "tashavur" (mutual discussion). The Arabs use the term "sharat thapata" (to drive cattle for sale and choose the good). There was a term "Istishara" derived from this word which carries the meaning to elicit ideas from a skillful person. Similarly, it is also used in the sense of examining and clarifying all the parts in a particular matter. The opinions of others can also be found to be supportive (Ibn Manzur, 1995). The Arabic words shura, tashaavur, mashura, and istishaara are used to refer to the discussion and consultation.

Shura is testing to know the status of a subject or something else. In this way, the discussion in order to bring out the depths and breadth of a good deed, to remove the confusion, to reveal the ideas found in a subject, and to bring out the good aspects in a subject is called "shura" (consultation) (Ibrahim et al., 2004).

It could be seen many incidents in the Prophet's life where the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) consulted with his wives on a daily basis. Not only that, but also the significance of the Shura (discussion) is highlighted by the fact that the Prophet discussed with the Sahabah many things such as their travels, business, giving, buying, sermons, Islamic invitations, worship, and theological exercises. The following Qur'an verse states that the Shura should be included in all spheres of human life. The Prophet (PBUH) said that they have consulted and decided on any of their responsibilities. "(O Prophet) Come and consult with them in all matters! When you decide (to do something), leave the responsibility to Allah! For surely Allah loves those who are accountable"(Quran,3:159).

Similarly, the following verses of Qur'an are also considered as the verses which emphasize the importance of the Shura. "who respond to their Lord, establish prayer, conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, and donate from what We have provided for them; And those who have responded to their Lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend" (Qur'an, 42: 37-38). Consultation is also seen as one of the measures of a believer's faith.

Shura is seen as a very important aspect at the family level. Shura is not something that should be applied only in the political arena. It should be developed from the family level to the general life structure. Even during divorce, couples are required to consult (Qureshi). The Shura provides liberation to the individual, the family and the community (Alwani, 2007)". Moreover, the success of a family depends on collective and collaborative participation and shura (discussion). It is obligatory that the parents when they are involved in discussions they should include their children according to their age. In this way, children adopt the decision-making process in Islam (Alwani, 2007)."

It is emphasized that there must be a discussion between husband and wife in all aspects. Among them, the discussion on economic matters is the most important. It is considered that the opinion of their wives should be inserted in the case of men's careers. The views of women should also be taken into account in many areas related to the profession that the husband does. Women's views should be directly involved in decision-making, especially when business-related issues affect the family. (Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003). Islam also requires children to be included in the discussion. "Shura" is essential for divorced couples in deciding whether to breastfeed their children (Alwani, 2007). Shura is essential in providing education to children as well. The Shura is one of the most important principles in teaching the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Alwani, 2007). The discussion must be enforced in all Islamic businesses, and it should not be only as a political aspect, but it should be an all-encompassing aspect of society, as well as a useful aspect of human rights and the Muslim Ummah (Aziz, 2017).

Numerous studies have shown that the main factors contributing to the breakdown of family systems today and the increasing divorce are due to the influence of increased conflict between husband and wife (Scott et al., 2013), (Hawkins et al., 2012), (Gigy & Kelly, 1993). Lack of mutual discussion is considered as a major factor that is influencing the misunderstanding that leads to more conflicts between husband and wife. Discussion between husband and wife is obligatory in all matters (Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003). In today's Islamic family system, it can be seen the short appearance of Shura. The practice of Shura shows that the factor which causes the scarcity of discussion is, the husband makes his own decisions, and the wife and children make their own decisions. It also sometimes leads to the degradation of women in the family structure.

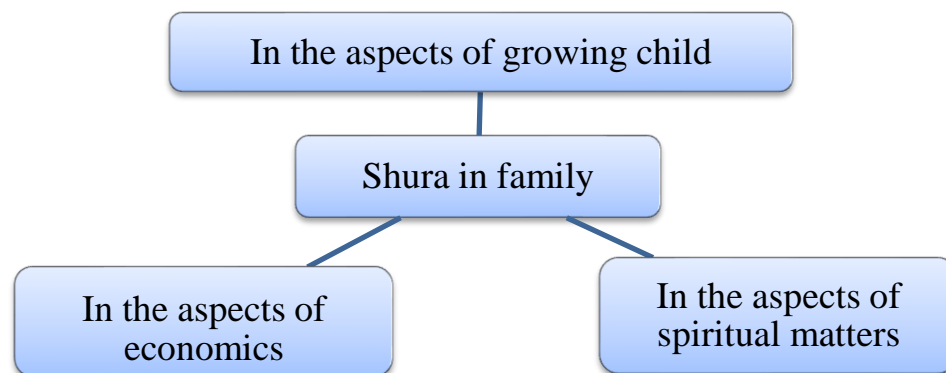
## 2. Objective of the Study

This study seeks to inspect the role of Shura in dealing with contemporary family issues among Muslim families.

### 3. Research Methodology

It is a quantitative research that was conducted by issuing closed-ended questionnaires to one of each couple in purpose-sampled 100 families out of 2390 families living in Tambala area in Polonnaruwa district of Sri Lanka. The collected data were analyzed through MS-Excel 2016. The review of topic-related secondary data helped construct its theoretical structure.

### 4. Research Structure



### 5. Literature Review

Mohiuddin & Islam (2016) analyzed the decision-making style in Islam based on the four objectives. Those four main objectives were based on how the Prophet (PBUH) saw the management of the *Shura* in their lives, presenting evidence-based sources that highlight the importance of the *Shura* in decision making, mentioning the benefits of the *Shura's* approach to decision making, and stating the benefits of decision-making based on a consultative approach rather than a decision-making approach. Similarly, how the *Shura* was seen in theory and practice in the time of the Prophet (PBUH) has been examined based on the *Shura* carried out in the War of Badr, the Battle of Uhud, and the Battle of Handak. As well as the position of the *Shura* in the time of the caliphs after the Prophet (PBUH) was clearly examined in the same way as it was seen in the time of Abu Bakr, Omar, 'Uthman, and Ali (R.A).

Aziz (2017) seeks to identify the application of *shura* based on the following questions: "What is *Shura*?, what are the basics of *Shura*?, what is *Shura's* position in Shariah's view?". The mentioned topics were deeply viewed in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, *Shura's* practice was discussed at AWQAF, a company established in Malaysia in 2010. It was found that every decision made in relation to the company is made in consultation with the other members of the organization. Furthermore, it was detected that the results of this review should be implemented by the *Shura* in the company concerned and all the decisions taken

will be inconsistent with the Maqasidhu Sharia. Ghadas et al. (2016) discussed the basics of *Shura* are witnessed on the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the Ijma Sahabah, and Siyasa Shariyyah.

Al-Raysuni (2011) elaborates *Shura* in terms of four parts: *Shura* in Islamic guidance and construction, basic issues in the act of *Shura*, *Shura* from the period of prophet Muhammed (S.A) throughout the history, *Shura* in the contemporary world – How to build it?. It has been talked about the significance of *Shura* along with its objectives in the part occupations and objectives of *Shura*. They have mentioned around ten uses of *Shura* which also include the right idea being conveyed to the right people, freeing oneself from mental desires and influences, prevention of arbitrary authority and encroachment, and teaching obedience.

Qureshi (2016) examines how the importance of the Shūrā is discussed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Moreover, it has been mentioned that Shūrā should not focus solely on political issues. Similarly, the need to use it in the decision-making of the believers is also mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah. He added that all the decisions must be taken based on the Shūrā.

Although the above-mentioned studies talk about the practice of Shūrā in business activities and institutions, political affairs and social activities, studies on the practice of Shūrā in family matters are rarely found in terms of research articles. Thus, we have not found any study on the practice of Shūrā in Sri Lankan Muslim families. Therefore, this survey has been carried out as a way of filling that research gap.

## 6. Results and Discussion

The main areas where the Shūrā should be included have been identified as growing up a child, spirituality and economics and the results obtained based on these studies are as follows:

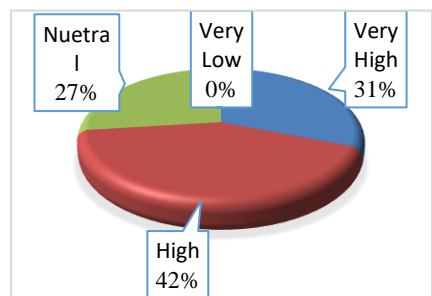
### 6.1 Shūrā in raising up a child

In the view of Islam, raising a child is a duty of the parents. The hadiths make it clear that the Lord has given children to their parents in a dignified manner and that both are responsible for that honor. Abu Huraira (R.A) announced: "Prophet (S.A) said that a man's each and every action will be cut after his death except three things: 1. Standard Charity, 2. Useful Education and 3. Dua from his well-raised children." (Muslim: 3358). Let us look at the extent to which Shūrā is practiced in planning regarding the proper upbringing of his children in today's family structures in accordance with the above hadith. Data obtained from the three main areas: naming a child, providing them education, and teaching them discipline has been analyzed in these three different perspectives.

### 6.1.1 Naming a child

Prophet Muhammed (S.A) said, “Every child is in pledge for his Aqeeqah, so slaughter (the animal) for him on the seventh day, shave his head and name him” (Ibn Maajah: 2580). In this way we can see that one of the main responsibilities of the parents is to give the baby a beautiful name. Now let’s have a look at how this act is performed in the contemporary situation.

Commenting on the status of Shūrā between husband and wife in naming a child, 31% of the

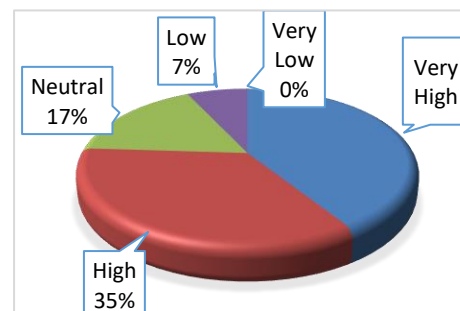


participants claimed that Shūrā is very high between them in this matter while 42% of them said it as high. 27% of people were neutral about this. And no one agrees on the statement that there is no discussion between them about naming a baby. Therefore, the above analysis reveals that there is Shūrā between the husband and wife regarding naming the child.

### 6.1.2 Educating the child

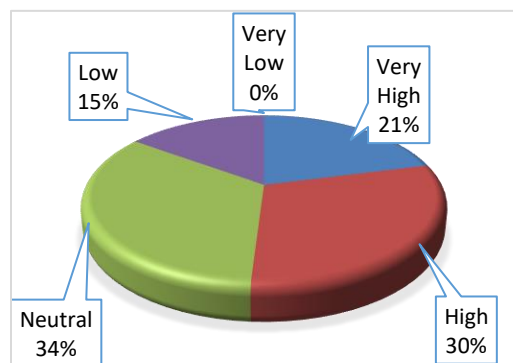
One of the major responsibilities of the parents is to provide a balanced education for better child-raising. It plays an important role in raising children to be disciplined and cultured. An example of this is the teaching done by Luqman (Alai) for his son to train him which has been mentioned in the Holy Quran (Al-Quran: Luqman: 16-19).

Husbands and wives are considered to be at the forefront of the analysis of how the Shūrā is currently practiced in Muslim families in relation to child education. 41% of the participants claimed that Shūrā is very high on this matter while 35% of them said it as high. 17% of them were neutral about this statement while 7% of them claimed it was too low. At the same time, the analysis makes it clear that no one is absent from the Shūrā regarding the education of children.



### 6.1.3 Teaching discipline to the child

Moral cultures are aimed at the highest level of faith. The Prophet (S.A) said: “the best in you is the best in your moral cultures” (Bukhari: 3559). Prophet Muhammed said: “Whoever Allah has given three daughters and is kind towards them, will have them as a reason for him to be admitted into paradise” (Muslim: 2629).



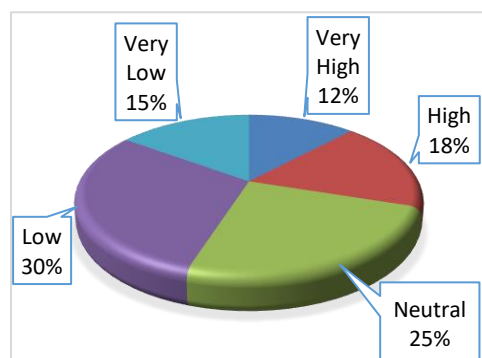
Throughout the analysis, 21% of the participants consider Shūrā to be the most prominent part of the husband-wife relationship regarding the teaching of discipline to children. In this regard, 30% of them claimed that there are more Shūrā among them, 34% of them were neutral while 15% of them mentioned it as low. At the same time, it is clear from the analysis that neither husband nor wife is in a position to not discuss the morals of their children.

## 6.2 Shūrā on Spiritual Matters

The goal of a believer is to gain paradise. The exemption can be achieved only when one acts with the intention of being for Allah in all areas of personal, family, and social life. Allah says in the Qur'an: "But those who have faith and work righteousness, they are companions of the garden: therein shall they abide forever." (Al-Quran, 2:82). There are many verses in the Qur'an and Hadith that suggest that human life should be situated in such a move towards Paradise. The position of the spiritual discussion between families in this way is based on the results obtained through the discussion of sharing of religious matters, discussion of virtues and benefits, and discussion on prevention of good and evil.

### 6.2.1 Discussion on sharing religious matters

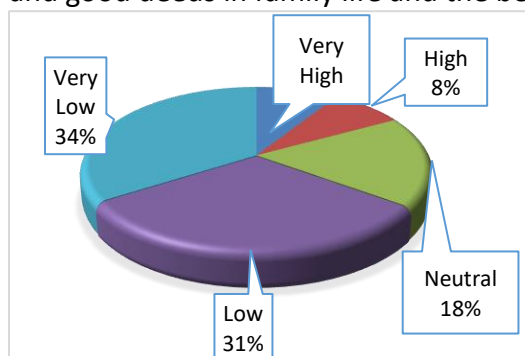
Spiritual thoughts make family life alive. Hence, family life is enhanced when spiritual matters are discussed and practiced by husband and wife. We can find many examples from the Prophet Muhammed's (PHUB) life in this regard. Ayesha (R.A) once asked the Prophet (S.A): 'O! Messenger of Allah! what should I say in my supplication, if I come upon Laylatul-Qadr? He said: Say: O Allah, You are Forgiving and love forgiveness, so forgive me.'" (Ibn Maajah: 3850).



So, when looking at the position regarding the discussion of spiritual matters in contemporary families, 12% of the people suggest that there is too much Shūrā, 18% said that the Shūrā is high, 25% were neutral, 30% claimed as low while 15% of them claimed it as very low. They also claimed that it does not take place continuously between them and it happened occasionally according to the need.

### 6.2.2 Discussion on virtues and benefits

Virtues and favors are aspects that are related to the everyday events of human life. Discussion on issues related to these in this way has many aesthetic consequences. Narrated by Abu Huraira (R.A): A man came to the prophet. The prophet (S.A) sent a messenger to his wives to bring something for that man to eat. But they said that they had nothing except water. Then Allah's Apostle said: who will take this (person) or entertain him as a guest? An Ansari man said: I do. So, he took him to his home and said to his wife: Entertain generously the guest of Allah's Apostle! She said, we have got nothing except the meals of my children. He said, prepare your meal, light your lamp and let your children sleep if they ask for supper. So, she prepared the meal, lighted her lamp and made her children sleep, and then stood up pretending to mend her lamp, but she put it off. Then both of them pretended to be eating, but they really went to bed hungry. In the morning the Ansari went to Allah's Apostle who said, Tonight Allah laughed or wondered at your action. Then Allah revealed: But give them (emigrants) preference over themselves even though they were in need of that and whosoever is saved from the covetousness such are they who will be successful. (Bukhari: 3798). The aforesaid hadith highlights the inclusion of the Shūrā in the practice of virtues and good deeds in family life and the beneficial effects that result from it.



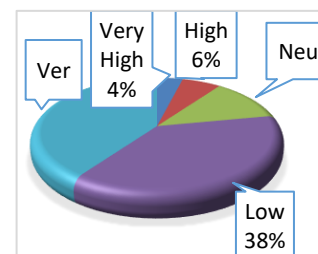
The following is the purpose of the discussion on such benefits as Islam has provided. 9% of people think that there is too much Shūrā among them regarding the execution of duties while 8% claimed it as high. 18% of the people were neutral about this and 31% of them claimed it to be low while 34% of them said it was too low.

### 6.2.3 Preventing evil and doing good

One of the main teachings of Islam is that Muslims should be socially conscious and role models for better social change. It is the expectation of Islam that it should start from the family, the basic unit of society. In this way, it is imperative that there should be a positive side to family life and a positive outlook. Al-Quran explains this as follows: "Oh you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from the hellfire..." (Tahrim: 6). This verse makes it clear that it is obligatory for the other members of the family to behave and guide in a way that protects them from harm. Therefore, it is important for family members to have a discussion about the benefits of preventing bad things. When compared with contemporary family situations, its status is as follows.



In this regard, 4% of people think that there is too much Shūrā among them regarding preventing evil and doing good while 6% claimed it is neutral. 38% of them claimed it to be low while 40% of them said it was too low.



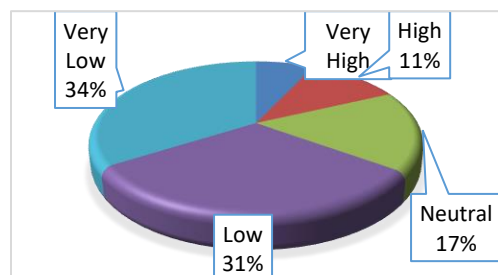
### 6.3 Shūrā in Economic Affairs

Economics is seen as an essential factor in managing the family structure. In this regard, the Qur'an states: "... But Allah had permitted trade and forbidden Riba..." (Al-Quran 2:275). And the Prophet (PHUB) was asked, 'What type of earning is best?' He replied, "A man's work with his hand and every transaction which is free from cheating or deception" (Al-Tabarani, 13939). Thus, the following results, illustrate how business, income, and other forms of discussion related to the economy are practiced in today's family structure.

#### 6.3.1 Discussion with wife regarding husband's occupation

It seems best to consult with the wife regarding men's careers. The views of women in many areas regarding the occupation of the husband should also be taken into account. Women's opinions should be directly involved in decision-making, especially when business-related aspects and issues affect the family. (Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003).

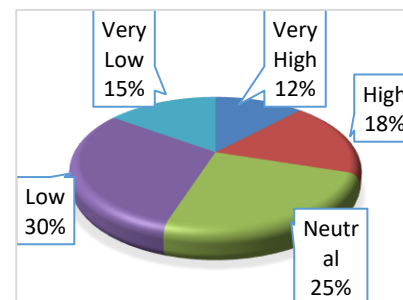
So, when looking at the position regarding the discussion of occupation with wife, 7% of the people suggest that there is too much Shūrā, 11% said that the Shūrā is high, 17% were neutral, 31% claimed as low while 34% of them claimed it as very low. It is noteworthy that those who say that sharing of business matters between husband and wife is more prevalent are those who engage in government jobs.



#### 6.3.2 Discussion on income management

"Make not the hand tied like a niggard to the neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that they become blameworthy and destitute" (Shūrā Isra: 29). The above verse of the Qur'an makes it clear that when spending, one should manage it in a neutral manner without being stingy or extravagant.

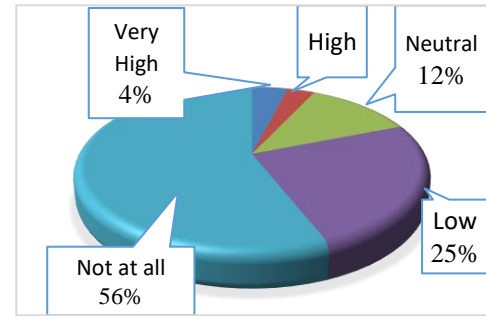
So, when looking at the position regarding the discussion on income management, 12% of the people suggest that there is too much Shūrā, 18% said that the Shūrā is high, 25% were neutral, 30% claimed as low while 15% of them claimed it as very low.



### 6.3.3 Carrying out inheritance distribution on the Islamic basis

One of the most important responsibilities of the family members that the Qur'an emphasizes is the division of inherited wealth. The following Quranic verses can be taken as evidence for this. "From what is left by parents and those nearest related there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property is small or large - a determinate share." (4:7). "But if at the time of division other relatives or orphans or poor are present, give them out of the property and speak to them words of kindness and justice." (4:8).

Therefore, the above verses of the Qur'an make it clear that there is a compelling need to discuss partition. The following results illustrate how the practice is seen in contemporary Muslim families. 4% of the people suggest that there is too much Shūrā, 3% said that the Shūrā is high, 12% were neutral, 55% claimed as low while 56% of them claimed it as no.



## 7. Conclusion

Based on the results obtained above, the results indicate that 73, 66, and 50 percent of the discussion are on child-raising, naming, educating, and teaching discipline, respectively. Also, studies show that Shūrā is especially important and very high in educating children. Studies also show that discussions on religious issues, such as sharing religious matters, discussing virtues, and preventing evil and doing good are some situations where Shūrā is very high (17%, 30%, and 10% respectively). The results show that much of the Shūrā is in the gifts and favors bestowed on others in connection with spiritual matters.

Similarly, when looking at economic discussions, the results show that discussions with the wife about the husband's occupation, discussions on managing income, and their apportionment on an Islamic basis are more common in which Shūrā is considered to be high which are 18%, 30%, and 7% respectively. The results make it clear that there has been very little discussion on inheritance among these factors.

Overall, the amount of discussion between husband and wife is very much influenced by child-related issues. Rather it was found that discussion on other aspects selected for study was less frequent. Therefore, it is possible to know that the discussion between husband and wife is less when looking at the family structure in general.

**8. Suggestions / Recommendations:**

- Taking steps to make all Muslim families aware of the necessity of Shūrā.
- Islamic guidelines should be provided for the implementation of the practice of Shūrā in the family structure.
- The guarantee of maintaining the health of the relationship between husband and wife when the implementation of Shūrā is implemented in every family should be pointed out from the life of Prophet Muhammed (S.A).
- Steps should be taken to use social networking sites to raise awareness of the need for Shūrā between husband and wife in the family structure.
- Provide guidelines for the husband to consult with his wife on economic and special activities in the family.
- Provide guidance in which both parties can prepare themselves for the positive effects of spiritual discussions on family structure.
- To provide opportunities for their own children to gain knowledge and experience related to their involvement in Shūrā in the family structure by involving them in consultations.

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