

Research Article

Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh): Shaping Political and Social Change with a Lasting Legacy

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Abstract

This paper examines Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) role as a political and social reformer in 7th-century Arabia and assesses the continued relevance of his reforms today. Prophet Muhammad's leadership came at a time of significant tribal fragmentation and social inequity. His migration to Medina in 622 CE initiated a transformative era, marked by the implementation of the Constitution of Medina—a groundbreaking document that unified disparate tribes and established a governance system based on principles of justice, equality, and collective responsibility, transcending tribal affiliations. In parallel, Prophet Muhammad's social reforms addressed prevalent inequalities by advocating for women's rights, including property inheritance, education, and marital consent, and improving the status and treatment of slaves through humane practices and encouragement of manumission. The introduction of Zakat, an obligatory almsgiving, sought to alleviate economic disparities and promote social welfare. These reforms challenged existing social hierarchies and fostered a more equitable society. The paper also explores how Prophet Muhammad's principles and teachings continue to shape modern discussions on governance, social justice, and human rights. His emphasis on justice, equality, and community remains pertinent in contemporary debates, demonstrating the enduring impact of his reforms. By linking historical context with modern implications, the study highlights the lasting influence of Prophet Muhammad's contributions in both historical and contemporary times.

Keywords

Prophet Muhammad, Constitution of Medina, Social Justice, Women's Rights Governance, Zakat, Gender Equality

1. Introduction

The 7th-century Arabian Peninsula was marked by profound social, political, and economic fragmentation, with pre-Islamic Arabia—often referred to as the "Time of Ignorance" (Jahiliyyah)—dominated by tribal divisions, entrenched inequalities, and a lack of centralized governance. [1] Tribal loyalty took precedence over collective well-being, leading to frequent inter-tribal conflicts and a society where social justice and equality were largely absent. Women were

marginalized, slaves were exploited, and wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few elites, leaving little opportunity for social mobility. Against this backdrop of social disunity and economic disparity, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emerged as a transformative leader whose reforms would fundamentally alter the trajectory of Arabian society and leave an enduring legacy on world history.

Prophet Muhammad's message of Islam was not merely a

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religious movement but also a comprehensive socio-political transformation aimed at addressing the systemic injustices that plagued Arabian society. His leadership was defined by a commitment to justice, equality, and communal responsibility, values that he embedded within the newly emerging Islamic state. The Prophet's migration (Hijra) to Madina was a pivotal moment in Islamic history, marking the establishment of a new political entity. Through strategic alliances, social contracts, and the implementation of the Constitution of Madina, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) laid the foundation for a cohesive state that transcended tribal affiliations and promoted social harmony among diverse groups, including Muslims, Jews, and other non-Muslim tribes [2].

His reforms were particularly groundbreaking in the areas of women's rights and the treatment of slaves. In a society where women were treated as property and slaves were dehumanized, Prophet Muhammad's teachings granted women rights to property, education, and autonomy in marriage, while encouraging the humane treatment and eventual emancipation of slaves [3]. These changes represented a radical departure from the norms of pre-Islamic society and laid the groundwork for the pursuit of gender equality and human rights in later eras.

Economically, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sought to address the vast inequalities that had become entrenched in Arabian society. His introduction of Zakat, a system of obligatory almsgiving, redistributed wealth to the poor and needy, fostering a culture of social responsibility and reducing the concentration of wealth among the elite [4]. Additionally, the prohibition of usury (Riba) and the regulation of markets were designed to create an ethical economic system that ensured fairness in trade and alleviated the exploitation of the vulnerable [5].

The Prophet's reforms extended beyond his time, offering timeless lessons for governance, social justice, and economic equality. The Constitution of Madina, one of the earliest written constitutions, remains a model for inclusive governance that recognizes the rights of diverse groups within society [6]. His vision for a just and equitable society resonates with modern efforts to address issues of inequality, human rights, and social welfare, underscoring the enduring relevance of his teachings [7].

As Prophet Muhammad's life and reforms continue to inspire contemporary movements for justice and equality, his legacy remains a guiding force for those seeking to create a more just and harmonious world. Through his emphasis on justice, equality, and respect for human dignity, the Prophet's message provides valuable insights for addressing the challenges of modern society, offering a framework for creating a more inclusive and compassionate world [7].

2. Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative methodology, combining historical analysis, thematic analysis, and interpretive ap-

proaches to examine the political and social reforms introduced by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 7th-century Arabia and their relevance in modern times. Primary sources, including the Qur'an, Hadith literature, and the Constitution of Medina, are analyzed to provide a historical context for the reforms, while thematic analysis identifies key themes such as justice, equality, and governance. Comparative analysis is employed to draw parallels between these themes and contemporary issues like inclusive governance, social justice, and gender equality. Additionally, secondary sources from academic literature on Islamic history and governance support the analysis, offering scholarly perspectives. The interpretive approach allows for an ethical and moral understanding of the Prophet's reforms and their application to modern governance and social justice frameworks, ultimately providing a framework for applying his teachings to current societal challenges.

3. Pre-Islamic Arabia: A Fragmented Society

Pre-Islamic Arabia, often referred to as the "Time of Ignorance" (Jahiliyyah), [8] was characterized by a tribal system that prioritized kinship and tribal loyalty over collective well-being. Tribal warfare was common, and there was little unity among the various Arab tribes. Women and slaves occupied a marginal position in society, with few rights or protections. Economic disparities were exacerbated by the concentration of wealth among a small elite, and there was little social mobility.

Against this backdrop of social inequality and tribal division, the message of Islam, as delivered by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), emerged as a call for justice, equality, and unity. The Prophet's reforms, both social and political, sought to address these systemic issues and lay the foundation for a more just and equitable society.

4. Migration

During the lifetime of Abu Talib, the Prophet (PBUH) received support from him as he led the Banu Hashim and the Quraysh tribe, preventing opposition against him [9]. However, after Abu Talib's death in 619, leadership fell to Abu Lahab, making it increasingly difficult for the Prophet to continue his mission in Makkah. The Prophet sought assistance from neighboring tribes and settlements, including Taif, but faced persistent rejection.

A turning point came when the Prophet (PBUH) met some people from Madina who were in Makkah for Hajj. The first significant interaction occurred in the eleventh year of prophethood when six pilgrims from Madina accepted Islam and returned to their city [10]. The following year, a delegation of twelve from Madina pledged allegiance to the Prophet, requesting that he send a preacher with them. Musaib bin

Umair was chosen, and his successful preaching led to widespread conversion in Madina [11].

In the subsequent year, seventy-two people from Madina came to meet the Prophet (PBUH), renewing their pledge of allegiance and inviting him to migrate. They committed to defending him and supporting him unconditionally. The Prophet permitted his companions to migrate to Madina, and they began to do so [12].

5. Social Contract

The concept of the social contract is a significant topic in modern political theory, but historically, states often formed through different means. One notable historical example of a social contract is the agreement made between seventy-two men from Madina and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This unique social contract was instrumental in establishing a new political entity.

In this agreement, these men, representing various tribes of Madina, formally pledged their support to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This pact was crucial because it facilitated the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Madina, an event known as the Hijra. By formalizing this support and establishing a political and social framework, the contract helped lay the foundation for the new state that would later evolve into the Islamic polity. This agreement can be seen as a foundational moment in Islamic history, marking the transition from a period of persecution to the establishment of a cohesive and organized community [13].

6. Commonwealth (Pledge of Allegiance)

Before the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) migration to Madina, a crucial pledge of allegiance took place, which played a significant role in shaping the political and organizational structure of the new state. This pledge was more than a mere promise; it included essential elements for the formation of a stable political system and governance.

The people of Madina, in their commitment to support the Prophet, agreed to several key principles:

1. **Obedience and Authority:** The people pledged to obey the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in all matters of governance and law. This meant that the Prophet's statements and directives would be treated as authoritative and binding. His leadership was recognized as the ultimate source of legal and moral guidance.

2. **Justice and Equality:** An important aspect of this pledge was the commitment to uphold justice without bias based on tribal affiliations. This was a significant departure from the tribal norms of the time, where justice was often influenced by tribal loyalties. The agreement emphasized that justice should be applied impartially, ensuring fairness and equality within the new community.

The establishment of the commonwealth in Madina was

marked by the following organizational elements:

1. **Autonomous Tribal Units:** The new state was organized into autonomous tribal units, each retaining a degree of self-governance. This structure respected the existing tribal identities and allowed each tribe to manage its own internal affairs to some extent.

2. **Appointment of Leaders:** The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) appointed leaders for each tribe, ensuring that they were aligned with the new state's values and objectives. These leaders were responsible for overseeing their respective tribes and implementing the directives issued by the Prophet.

3. **Cohesive Alliance:** Despite the autonomy of the tribes, the Prophet (PBUH) established a cohesive alliance among them. This alliance was based on mutual respect, shared values, and common goals, creating a unified political entity. It was a delicate balance between maintaining tribal identities and fostering a collective sense of belonging to the new state.

This pledge of allegiance and the resulting organizational structure were foundational in creating a functional and just society in Madina. It laid the groundwork for a political system that combined respect for tribal traditions with the establishment of a unified state governed by principles of justice and equality [13].

7. Foundation of the City-state of Madina

The pledge of allegiance at Uqaba was a crucial moment in the establishment of the city-state of Madina, marking the recognition of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as its leader. Although the political structure and leadership of the state were effectively established before the Prophet's arrival, his subsequent actions in Madina were instrumental in solidifying and formalizing the new state. Upon reaching Madina, the Prophet Muhammad undertook three major initiatives:

1. **Construction of Masjid Nabvi:** The Prophet Muhammad built Masjid Nabvi, which became a central focal point for the new community. This mosque was more than a place of worship; it served as the epicenter for religious gatherings, administrative affairs, educational activities, and social interactions. It was a symbol of the new state's identity and a practical space for the daily functions of the community [14].

2. **Muwakhat (Brotherhood):** To integrate the emigrants (Muhajirun) who had moved from Makkah with the local Muslim families (Ansar) in Madina, the Prophet established a system of brotherhood known as Muwakhat. This initiative created strong bonds between the two groups, fostering mutual support and collaboration. It was a vital step in ensuring social cohesion and stability, as it bridged the gap between the newcomers and the local residents, facilitating their integration into a unified community [15].

3. **Charter of Madina (Mithaq al-Madina):** The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also formulated the Charter of Madina,

which is often considered the first written constitution in Islamic history. This document outlined the principles of governance and social order for the new state. It established a framework for political organization, including the rights and responsibilities of different groups within the community. The Charter promoted justice, mutual respect, and collaboration among the diverse tribes and religious groups in Madina, laying the groundwork for a well-structured and harmonious society [6].

Together, these actions were crucial in transitioning from a state of precarious establishment to a well-organized and functional polity. They provided the necessary infrastructure, social cohesion, and legal framework to support the growing community in Madina.

8. The Constitution of Medina: A New Political Order

The Constitution of Medina Mithaq al-Madina is considered one of the earliest written constitutions in human history [6]. This constitution, drafted by the Prophet (PBUH), aimed to create a unified community beyond tribal affiliations, initially including Muslims from Quraysh and Ansar, and later extending to non-Muslim tribes. It assured equality and equal rights for all citizens, established legal principles for the first time in a tribal context, and centralized the power of war and peace [6].

The Constitution of Medina unified the diverse tribes of Medina, including Muslims, Jews, and pagan Arabs, under a single political entity. It outlined the rights and duties of all citizens, regardless of tribal or religious affiliation, and established principles of mutual defense, collective responsibility, and the peaceful resolution of disputes. Importantly, it recognized the religious freedom of non-Muslims and guaranteed their protection within the community.

The Constitution represented a significant departure from the tribal-based governance that had dominated pre-Islamic Arabia. By promoting principles of justice, equality, and collective responsibility, the Prophet established a new political order that emphasized the well-being of the entire community over individual tribal loyalties [12].

9. Social Reforms

Women's Rights

Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) social reforms were pivotal in addressing the deep-seated inequalities prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabian society, particularly regarding the treatment of women and slaves. Before the advent of Islam, women had very limited legal rights and were often considered property rather than individuals with agency. Prophet's teachings introduced significant changes that greatly enhanced their status and rights.

1. Marriage Rights:

Consent: In pre-Islamic Arabia, women frequently had no say in their marital arrangements; marriages were often arranged without their consent. Prophet Muhammad's reforms established that a woman's consent was mandatory for a marriage to be valid. This change was transformative, as it recognized women's autonomy and gave them a crucial role in deciding their marital futures [16].

2. Property Rights:

Ownership and Inheritance: Previously, women had little to no legal standing when it came to property. They could not own land or inherit wealth from their families. Prophet Muhammad's teachings revolutionized this by granting women the right to own and inherit property. This allowed women to control their own financial resources and provided them with economic independence and security, which was a major departure from earlier practices [16].

3. Right to Education:

Duty of Learning: The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stressed the importance of education for both men and women, declaring that seeking knowledge is a religious obligation for every Muslim, regardless of gender [17]. This principle marked a significant shift in a society where women's access to education was limited. By advocating for women's education, Prophet Muhammad not only promoted their intellectual development but also enabled their fuller participation in social and economic life [16].

These reforms collectively represented a groundbreaking shift in the status of women, aiming to uplift them from their marginalization and grant them equal rights and opportunities within society.

10. The Status of Slaves

In addition to championing the rights of women, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sought to improve the status and treatment of slaves. Although slavery was a deeply entrenched institution in pre-Islamic Arabia, the Prophet encouraged the humane treatment of slaves and promoted their manumission. Islamic teachings stressed the equality of all human beings in the eyes of God, regardless of social status, and encouraged acts of charity and kindness toward slaves [1].

1. Humane Treatment:

(1) **Encouragement of Kindness:** Prophet Muhammad's teachings advocated for treating slaves with dignity and compassion, a stark contrast to the often brutal and dehumanizing conditions they endured in pre-Islamic Arabia. He instructed slave owners to ensure that slaves were well-fed, well-clothed, and treated with respect. This humane treatment was intended to improve their quality of life and rectify the harsh practices of the time [1].

(2) **Rights and Fairness:** Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized that slaves were to be treated as part of the household and not merely as property. He advocated for fairness in the treatment of slaves, including just

and respectful interactions, as well as providing them with appropriate rest and leisure [18].

2. Manumission (Freeing Slaves):

(1) **Virtue of Liberation:** The act of freeing slaves was considered highly virtuous in Islam. Prophet Muhammad encouraged his followers to liberate enslaved individuals as an act of piety and charity. This was not only a moral obligation but also a way to atone for sins and earn spiritual rewards. The Prophet himself freed several slaves and supported initiatives that promoted manumission [19].

(2) **Gradual Abolition:** While complete abolition of slavery was not immediate, the emphasis on manumission helped to gradually reduce the number of enslaved individuals. The Prophet's encouragement to free slaves helped to integrate these individuals into society and provided them with opportunities to live as free persons [4].

3. Equality of All Humans:

(1) **Spiritual and Moral Equality:** One of the core principles of Islamic teaching is that all humans are equal in the eyes of God, regardless of their social or economic status. This principle was revolutionary in challenging the entrenched social hierarchies of pre-Islamic Arabia. By affirming that all people are spiritually equal, Prophet Muhammad aimed to undermine the societal norms that justified slavery and to promote a sense of universal human dignity [5].

(2) **Encouragement of Charity:** Prophet Muhammad's teachings encouraged acts of charity and kindness towards those in less privileged positions, including slaves. He highlighted those good deeds, such as helping and freeing slaves, were ways to attain God's favor. This emphasis on charity helped to foster a culture of compassion and empathy [1].

Prophet Muhammad's reforms on slavery were designed to address the systemic abuses and injustices of the time. By advocating for humane treatment, encouraging the manumission of slaves, and emphasizing the spiritual equality of all individuals, Prophet Muhammad sought to transform the practice of slavery and promote a more just and compassionate society. These reforms aimed to elevate the status of enslaved people, integrate them into society as free individuals, and challenge the broader social norms that supported inequality [4].

11. Zakat: Addressing Economic Disparities

Economic disparities were a prominent issue in pre-Islamic Arabia, where wealth was largely concentrated in the hands of a privileged few. To counteract these inequalities, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) introduced Zakat, an obligatory form of almsgiving that is one of the Five Pillars

of Islam. Zakat mandates that Muslims allocate a portion of their wealth to assist those in need, thereby advancing social welfare and mitigating economic inequalities [8].

The institution of Zakat was instrumental in fostering social responsibility and enhancing community solidarity. By redistributing wealth and ensuring support for the impoverished and vulnerable, the Prophet's reforms challenged entrenched social hierarchies and encouraged the development of a more equitable society [20].

In the 13th year after the beginning of Nubuwwah, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his devoted followers, guided by divine wisdom, undertook a crucial migration from Mecca to Medina. Upon their arrival, they encountered a city struggling with significant economic inequalities rooted in various factors. The establishment of the Islamic State of Medina represented the start of a challenging mission for the Prophet (PBUH) to address and transform the economic conditions of the community [13].

The following are the key elements of the Islamic economic system guided by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to address these economic challenges, including:

1. **Institutionalizing Zakat:** Introducing obligatory almsgiving to ensure fair wealth distribution within the community.

2. **Encouraging Voluntary Charity:** Promoting acts of kindness and voluntary charity to support the less fortunate.

3. **Prohibiting Usury and Interest (Riba):** Banning usurious practices and interest-bearing transactions to reduce economic disparities.

4. **Regulating Markets:** Implementing regulations to ensure fairness and integrity in commercial transactions.

5. **Establishing Bait-al-Maal:** Creating a central treasury for the effective management of communal resources.

6. **Implementing Taxation Systems:** Introducing taxation to support state functions and the welfare of its citizens.

7. **Managing Post-War Assets:** Developing strategies for the fair distribution and use of war spoils and resources acquired from conflicts.

8. **Enforcing Equitable Inheritance Rules:** Instituting just inheritance laws to ensure fair wealth distribution.

9. **Modernizing Business Practices:** Adapting traditional business norms to align with Islamic ethical principles.

10. **Promoting Permissible Investments and Discouraging Begging:** Encouraging lawful investments and discouraging begging as a means of livelihood.

Through these comprehensive reforms, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established a pioneering model for economic transformation that remains relevant across different eras. His systematic approach to addressing economic issues in Medina offers timeless lessons on reducing inequalities and building a just and equitable society.

12. Prophet Muhammad's Enduring Legacy in Modern Times

The political and social reforms introduced by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 7th-century Arabia have left an enduring legacy that continues to resonate in contemporary times. His principles of justice, equality, and communal responsibility have profound implications for modern discussions on governance, social justice, and human rights, illustrating the timeless nature of his vision for a fair and equitable society.

One of the most groundbreaking contributions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the Constitution of Medina. This early document was remarkable for its approach to governance, which emphasized justice, collective responsibility, and religious tolerance. The Constitution was innovative in its ability to unify various tribes and religious communities under a single political framework, fostering an environment of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence [21]. This was a significant departure from the tribal rivalries and sectarian conflicts that characterized pre-Islamic Arabia.

The principles embedded in the Constitution of Medina provide valuable insights for contemporary political systems. In today's increasingly diverse and globalized world, the document's emphasis on inclusivity and respect for minority rights offers a model for building cohesive and pluralistic societies [22]. Modern governance structures that strive for fairness and equality can draw from the Constitution's approach to ensuring that all community members, regardless of their background, are treated with dignity and respect. The idea of collective responsibility and the recognition of diverse groups' rights underscore the importance of creating political systems that are not only just but also capable of fostering harmony among varied populations.

In addition to his contributions to governance, Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) advocacy for social equality and women's rights has had a lasting impact on contemporary discussions about gender equality and social justice. His reforms, which included promoting the education of women, granting them property rights, and ensuring their equitable treatment, were groundbreaking in a historical context where such rights were not universally acknowledged [20]. By addressing these issues, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and just society.

His teachings on the importance of education and equal opportunity continue to influence modern efforts to promote women's rights and address social inequalities. For instance, contemporary movements aimed at improving educational access for women and advocating for gender equality can find inspiration in the Prophet's emphasis on these values [23]. His reforms challenged entrenched social norms and provided a framework for advancing women's rights that remains relevant today.

Moreover, the Prophet's approach to social justice, which included advocating for the fair treatment of marginalized

groups and promoting economic equity through mechanisms like Zakat, provides important lessons for addressing current social issues. His commitment to alleviating poverty and ensuring that the needs of the less fortunate were met highlights the importance of social responsibility and community support [24].

The legacy of Prophet Muhammad's reforms underscores the enduring relevance of his principles. His emphasis on justice, equality, and respect for human dignity offers a timeless framework for addressing contemporary challenges. As societies grapple with issues of diversity, inequality, and social justice, the values championed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continue to offer meaningful guidance for creating a more just and compassionate world.

Prophet Muhammad's reforms from 7th-century Arabia continue to influence modern discussions on governance, gender equality, and social justice. The principles of justice, inclusivity, and social responsibility that he introduced provide valuable lessons for contemporary societies. His legacy demonstrates how foundational values can guide efforts to build equitable and inclusive communities, offering timeless insights into creating a fair and just world for future generations.

13. Conclusion

The enduring legacy of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) reforms from 7th-century Arabia provides a profound and relevant guide for contemporary society. His visionary principles of justice, equality, and communal responsibility have transcended their historical context to offer valuable insights for modern governance, social justice, and human rights.

The Constitution of Medina, a pioneering document in its time, exemplifies the Prophet's commitment to inclusive governance and collective responsibility. By unifying diverse tribes and religious communities under a common political framework, it established a model of governance that emphasized respect for all members of society, regardless of their background. This approach was groundbreaking, as it moved away from the tribal conflicts and sectarian divisions that plagued pre-Islamic Arabia. In today's globalized world, characterized by diverse and often polarized communities, the Constitution of Medina serves as a timeless example of how to build cohesive and pluralistic societies. Modern political systems that seek to foster harmony and fairness can draw inspiration from the document's principles of inclusivity and respect for minority rights, striving to create environments where every individual is treated with dignity and equity.

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad's advocacy for social equality and women's rights has had a profound and lasting impact on contemporary discussions about gender equality and social justice. His reforms, which included promoting education for women, granting them property rights, and ensuring their equitable treatment, were revolutionary for their time. These advancements laid the groundwork for a

more inclusive and fair society. Today, as we continue to work towards gender equality and address social disparities, the Prophet's teachings on the importance of education and equal opportunity remain deeply influential. Contemporary movements aimed at improving educational access for women and advocating for gender equality find inspiration in the Prophet's reforms, which continue to challenge entrenched norms and push for progress.

Additionally, the Prophet's emphasis on social justice, particularly through mechanisms like Zakat, underscores the importance of community support and economic equity. His commitment to alleviating poverty and addressing the needs of the less fortunate highlights a fundamental aspect of social responsibility that remains highly relevant today. The principles of Zakat and economic equity offer valuable lessons for addressing contemporary social issues, reminding us of the importance of ensuring that resources are distributed fairly and that support is provided to those in need.

The legacy of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) reforms is a testament to the enduring relevance of his principles. His emphasis on justice, equality, and respect for human dignity provides a timeless framework for addressing contemporary challenges. As societies grapple with issues of diversity, inequality, and social justice, the values championed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continue to offer meaningful guidance for creating a more just and compassionate world. His reforms from the 7th century offer foundational values that can help guide modern efforts to build equitable and inclusive communities, demonstrating how timeless insights can shape a fair and just world for future generations.

Conflicts of Interest

The Authors declare no conflicts of Interest.

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