

YEA!
SRI LANKA

Flip it.

magazine

RUN
RUN
RUN

Following
Christ to
Simplicity

THE
CHRISTIAN
AND LAW

WOMEN
AND THE CHURCH

TRUTH
EXPLORED!

ISSUE 01 | 2020



NCEASL
YEA!
SRI LANKA

A DECADE OF
HOLISTIC
DISCIPLESHIP
IN SRI LANKA

CHURCH

FUTURE



ABOUT THE

YOUTH EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE SRI LANKA

of the NCEASL

The YEA, an arm of the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka, is an interlink between young people and God's mission in our nation. We aim to connect the two; thereby, uniting and equipping youth to further God's mission in our land. We believe God's work in a nation is holistic: it touches and transforms individuals and structures through the gospel of Christ. The YEA exists to awake young people to this reality and fully engage them in God's mission in our land. To this end, we serve as a platform that unites and equips youth for effective Christian witness in the nation. To achieve our vision, we seek to equip young people in the area of holistic mission and leadership to impact the nation for Jesus.

*Some of our other initiatives include **PaanKade**, an online platform that promotes reflection and action on some contemporary issues, **X-change**, an offline platform that seeks to equip youth to grapple with pressing issues in society and the Nation Church Project that brings together Christian youth leaders from different churches to mobilise prayer for the nation.*

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Editorial

The world today is a strange place. We are, after all, facing a crisis of pandemic proportions. Sri Lanka has barely survived the Corona crisis. We've done well as a nation but yet the future seems bleak and uncertain.

Only a year ago we recovered from one of the most brutal acts of violence **our nation** has ever seen. The now much talked about and debated Easter Sunday attacks left a large dent in the already fragile, socio-religious fabric of our country. A year later, as we rise from the ashes, another crisis has pervaded our nation.

A casual glance at the past shows us that from ethnic and religious strife, insurrections and civil war to tsunamis, landslides and floods, Sri Lanka is and has been home to many challenges.

As Christian youth, how should we allow these **difficult realities** to shape our desire to see Jesus reign over our nation? Should the deep **need for reconciliation** and better understanding between communities be of importance to us as we bear the good news of the Kingdom? How far should we care about the social ills that ravage our communities? **Should we be concerned** with the political systems and cultures that have robbed our people of their dignity? Still more, how far should we allow those made **vulnerable and pushed to the margins of society** as a result of our nation's collective strife prick our conscience?

These are important questions for **Christian youth to grapple** with as we follow Jesus as a tiny band of believers in our nation. 90 percent of our neighbours do not know Christ. However, most of them have an opinion of, and some experience with Christians. We bear good news for sure! **The gospel is amazing.** However, have we done enough to leave the fragrance of Christ among our neighbours, in our communities and across our nation? **Have we, in short, while being bearers of Good News in our land, been good news to those around us?**

Today, with this issue, the NCEASL Youth Evangelical Alliance is launching **Flip it** a bi-monthly magazine to inspire Christian youth to follow Jesus into the nation, to seek transformation at every level of society. **Written by youth for youth,** what follows in these pages is an attempt to tackle difficult issues that presents a challenge to us as we live out our faith and strive to take the whole Gospel to our nation.

In this feature:

- **Women and the Church**
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- **Theology through Design**
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- **The Christian and Law**
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- **Handling Fees? Really?**
YEA

I find unfamiliar rooms and public spaces overwhelming. It's at times like these that I ask myself, "Are there women here?" Over the past few years, I've found myself asking this question more frequently, often to work out how fast a cry for help could be deciphered.

It's become a habit now, to try to uncover the possibilities and politics of a space. For me, the presence or absence of other women tends to dictate the terms of safety, accessibility, and even purpose. The question, "Are there women here?" has followed me home into deeply personal spaces.

Often towards a particular body, uniquely built with the power to determine both the personal and political:
The Church

The Evangelical Church has long-moved past disallowing women within its premises. This acceptance however falls short: **women are to have and to hold, to be seen but not heard.** As the #MeToo movement was gaining traction, its lesser known counterpart, #ChurchToo, offered similarly horrifying experiences of abuse silenced by the church's complicity. #ChurchToo however isn't a radically new phenomenon, rather it is a contemporary response to an **age-old problem.**

In fact, I am not even sure if it is only complicity that determined the church's response. I fear that the problem lies at a deeper level. A problem that Tamar, Hagar, Dinah, Bathsheba, and many other women in the Bible could not escape. A problem rooted in the withholding of power from women by those who presume that this power is theirs to withhold.

To be seen
but not heard.

WOMEN AND THE CHURCH

Tashyana Handy

Historically, the church has held two predominant views concerning women: **Complementarianism** and **Egalitarianism**. While Complementarians and Egalitarians agree that both men and women are made in the image of God, and thus are ontologically and functionally equal (Gen 1:26-27), complementarians believe that men and women can only exist within mutually exclusive, predetermined capacities, and thus must play certain roles to complement each other into a perfect whole. Egalitarians, on the other hand, believe that "roles" within the home, church, and society cannot be pre-determined and thus cannot be assigned to a gender.

equal?

The word 'role,' commonly used to define a function assumed by a person or thing in a particular set of circumstances is often fashioned to demand a fixed and specific set of behaviours from someone of a particular gender. Thus 'Equal' under complementarianism is read as, men are 'equal' in the way that they are determined to always be rulers, and women are 'equal' in the way that they are resigned to perpetually submit. The danger it seems, is that men are assumed to be "more equal" and thereby able to assume control and power over women. (See #churchtoo)

These fixed and specific sets of behaviours decided by gender are well documented in the bible, yet I often think about how their origins lie in God's punishment for mankind rather than his intended dream for creation. When sin entered the world and re-ordered God's relationship with man and man's relationship with one another, the curse on women (Gen 3:16) determined that women would have to live in submission to man and man would thereby dominate women. As Christians, our lives are a testament to Christ's redemptive power. And yet, why is it that we willingly remain subjects of a punishment that no longer applies to us? And who decides that this curse must continue?



IN THIS
IMAGE

This punishment doesn't just live in us but extends unchallenged by our refusal to fully accept Christ's redemptive power in our homes, in our churches and within greater society. While the church is not an unfamiliar space for many of us, it is an overwhelming one. With the authority to dictate terms of safety, accessibility, and purpose, shouldn't its leadership represent all of humanity? In attempting to limit, control and cajole women into surrendering their purpose, I wonder how much of Christ we are denying, and how much more of God's dream is left unrealized?



Following Christ to Simplicity

What did Jesus mean when he told His disciples to ‘follow’ Him? The new testament records about 22 instances Jesus called people to follow Him. A given number of these recorded instances are stories about how Jesus called his disciples- Peter, Andrew and Matthew are among them. The most obvious understanding of the word ‘follow’ would imply that Jesus called people to physically join Him. But the word clearly meant more. A disciple, in the time of Scripture, was someone who not only studied under and gained knowledge from his teacher, but also who stayed with, and imitated his teacher’s lifestyle and embraced his values. In today’s context, what does it mean to be a ‘follower’ of Jesus?

To answer that question, one should look at what type of lifestyle Jesus led on earth. “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58).

It surprises me that although Jesus could have chosen any lifestyle on earth, He chose one of bare minimum. From His birth in a manger to not having a place to lay His head and having had to ask His disciples to go fishing so that they can catch a fish with a coin and pay temple taxes, – Jesus’s inclination towards the materials of this world were minimal. Why? Maybe it was God’s bias towards the poor, His heart for those who are considered less fortunate in this world that led Jesus to come as one of them. Maybe by coming in poverty, Jesus identified Himself with people from every level of society. Maybe Jesus was so focused on His mission on earth that He chose a lifestyle that would not hinder it. It is probably all of this and so much more. But perhaps, it is also because Jesus wanted to show that life’s greatest treasure, joy, and abundance was the very presence of God. Nothing material or otherwise could be compared to this. Trying to do so would be idolatry. Replying to the rich young ruler’s question on what needs to be done for eternal life Jesus told him to “sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (Luke 18:22).

The question relevant to us from all of this is, whether we too, as Jesus’ followers should embrace a lifestyle of simplicity?

The type of lifestyle we lead is often a choice. Each of us will stand before God one day and give an account of how we used the time, resources, talents, gifts, and money He entrusted us with. We also will have to give an account of whom we served – God or money? “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matthew 6:24).

Jesus, through His life on earth, showed us what a life of simplicity looked like. It was not a lifestyle that testified to God’s presence and working through the materials and physical resources He possessed and acquired over time. Rather it was a lifestyle of relying on God for ‘daily’ bread – a lifestyle of contentment in sufficiency; in short, an abundant life (not a life of abundance), where Jesus’ ‘lifestyle’ did not get in the way of God’s work in and through His ‘life’.

Today’s Christian passionately worships God singing songs like ‘Christ is enough for me’. Songs that testify to God’s very presence in life being sufficient and fulfilling. Considering what we proclaim, maybe we need to look at our lifestyles and ask ourselves ‘is He really enough?’.

MAIN FEATURE:

THE CHRISTIAN AND LAW



Shalomi Daniel is a lawyer by profession. She is the legal and advocacy coordinator of the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka. We sat down with Shalomi to talk about her journey in law, passion for justice and her faith as it relates to her profession.

Q1

What made you get into law?

As I was nearing the end of my school career, I was looking at how best I will be able to help those in need and address social issues. I completed my Advanced Level examinations, and I was eligible to pursue a LL.B. at the University of Colombo. I felt that entering the legal profession will open up avenues for me to help those in need, especially those in need of legal representation and to highlight concerning issues in society. I was also encouraged by my parents, and a few others from both school and church, to pursue my studies in the legal field. Therefore, I decided to pursue my studies in law and embark on a career in the legal profession.

Q2

In your line of work, are there any individuals that you draw inspiration from?

Yes there are many individuals in the legal profession as well as in other fields who inspire me, with regards to their commitment to a cause, their perseverance despite discouragements and even threats to their safety and wellbeing and their passion to serve the people even if it means giving up lucrative career options.

Q3

How do you view the law as a Christian?

I believe that the law can be used as a tool for both good and evil. It has the potential to be progressive, inclusive and ultimately serve justice. On the other hand, laws can also be draconian, discriminatory and result in grave violations of human dignity. Therefore, I believe as Christians we have to hold the law up to certain basic Biblical values such as human dignity, non-discrimination, justice and non-marginalization of the vulnerable. Hence, while being law-abiding citizens is integral for the smooth functioning of society and to ensure order prevails, I believe that it is a sign of a democratic and 'thinking' society to be able to critically think about and challenge laws that are draconian in nature or discriminate any segment of society.

Q4

Have there been any challenges that you've faced as a Christian because of the nature of your profession?

There are certain underlying issues I have encountered such as delays in cases progressing in the Court system. The delays cannot be attributed to one group alone and requires a conscious effort on the part of the litigants, the lawyers and the judiciary to ensure that the case moves forward without undue delays. Therefore, each lawyer has to make an intentional effort to ensure that they give each case its best, that they always keep the best interest of the client in mind, and that they abide by a good work ethic.

Q5

What are some of the justice issues that you feel passionate about?

There are quite a few human rights issues that I am passionate about, such as the Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), language rights, freedom from torture etc. However, I will elaborate on one of these, namely, the Freedom of Religion or Belief. Locally and internationally, FoRB is increasingly being violated with different religious and belief communities facing discrimination and violence. The right to have or to adopt a religion or belief of each individual's choice is recognized as a fundamental and absolute right in the Sri Lankan Constitution, as well as in various universal human rights treaties. Despite this, across the world many are killed, abused, and discriminated against, just because they subscribe to a particular religion or belief.



Q6

What is your view of the Church in Sri Lanka in relation to justice issues?

As Christians, we worship a God who has been passionate and vocal about justice from the beginning of time. The Bible calls us time and again to speak up on behalf of the vulnerable and the voiceless. We see the prophets throughout history calling out those who were embroiled in corruption and violence. God has consistently shown Himself to be a defender of the downtrodden and calls His children too to be a voice for justice – to be the salt and light of the world.

Therefore, I believe that as children of God who is so passionate about justice, and having been created in His image, we are called to reflect not only His love, but also his passion and dedication for justice, in this broken and fallen world.

Q7

In your opinion, what are some justice related issues that the Sri Lankan church should take notice of going forward?

There are several issues the church can address during this time period. As stated before, FoRB violations are an increasing concern in this day and age. The church should not only speak out on its own behalf, but on behalf of other faith communities too, who face violence and discrimination. Further, there is increasing abuse against women and children. Many cases of domestic violence were reported during the COVID-19 lockdown with victims being trapped at home and unable to seek help or escape the abuse. Combating corruption that is entrenched in various aspects of our day to day lives can be yet another issue that the church takes on. There are so many more issues that the church can highlight and champion. When we think of the church taking on justice issues, it does not have to be on a large scale or require a large amount of money or manpower. Even seemingly small steps – facilitating a discussion on pertinent issues; refusing to share hate content online; championing a rights violation at the local village or town level – are all vital measures that the church can take to stand up for justice.

Q8

Why do you think more Christian youth should get into the field of law?

I personally believe that more Christian youth should be involved not only in the field of law, but also in the political arena. Both the legal and political arenas provide the platform for public engagement and influence. On the other hand, both fields at times carry a negative connotation especially in the Christian community as they are considered 'liars', 'thieves' and 'corrupt'. Whilst this reputation is not entirely undeserved, it is also essential that something is then done to change this situation. Christian youth can take in Biblical values of compassion, justice, transparency, righteousness and truth into these fields and not only serve their communities better, but also change the corrupt and fallen systems within these professions as well.

Q9

The current situation in the country regarding justice can at times be very frustrating. What keeps you going? What makes you not lose hope?

While it is ideal if we can see immediate results and changes, championing justice is often a long process. Changes cannot be expected or seen overnight. However, we can be confident that every small action we take, every conversation we ignite, contributes overtime towards ensuring change and establishing justice. Further as we work towards a larger goal, we can also be ensured that there will be small wins along the way – it might mean influencing one individual, bringing about change in one provision in the law or even starting off a conversation on a topic that is overlooked. While it is natural to get discouraged and be on the verge of giving up, we draw strength from the fact that God, is a God of justice, and He sees our efforts and our good intentions; He is definitely working behind the scenes to use every small thing we do, and our sincere dedication to justice to make everything beautiful in His time!



TRUTH EXPLORED!

From days ancient, the people of God resorted to many ways to articulate the mystery of God. After all, as seen in the Bible and particularly the Old Testament, there was a sense of incomprehensibility about the Most High that appeared to underline the effort made by the Biblical authors to present Him and his plans to its readers. Accordingly, in the Scriptures, we see different strategies and methods employed such as metaphors, different literary genres and styles to describe God. This is an aspect of Scripture that we oftentimes miss in our engagement with it!

Our God is the Creator God. Made in his likeness and image, we too, as human beings, are endowed with the power of creativity. This includes our potential to look at the Book we so revere and articulate the God we meet in it in new and fresh ways. This allows us to make a compelling case about his character, plan and vision for human life and the world.

The enterprise of creatively and imaginatively communicating God's word is a worthy exercise in today's complex world. In an age of fancy digital technologies, social media and information, capturing and communicating God's word in engaging ways, but yet one which is faithful to the text is a must for the Church!

RUN

IT'S TIME TO
WORSHIP

So how do we express Biblical truths today? More than just an open-ended question, there's a personal note in that question as well. How do WE express Biblical truths? Through the YEA, we are trying to explore a way of expressing our beliefs and truth in a not-so-common way. **Design.**



 Join us here: @yeasilanka

Reading isn't everyone's cup of tea, nor is sitting still and listening to sermons. But when it comes to design and art, there seems to be something we can all relate to. Therefore, through the YEA's Theology through Design initiative on Instagram, we are trying to explore how we could communicate the truths of the Bible and the hope we have in Jesus Christ, through a slightly different format, and one which we can all relate to more commonly. We want to show that theology doesn't only need to be communicated through books, arguments or sermons, but can be communicated through letting our creativeness flow and expressing this in whatever form that may take.



RUN

Handling fees? Really?

**“Though the bribe is small
yet the fault is great”**

– Sir. Edward Coke

Bribery. The word makes many uncomfortable. Yet, it is a frequent phenomenon in Sri Lanka. For many, the opportunity presents itself in subtle forms; it is in the 'handling fees' paid to a 'guy' who ensures your documents get processed faster, the 'additional charge' included in driving school fees which guarantee you get your license, the 'hamper' or 'gift' given to the class teacher which warrants your child becoming a prefect, the big notes slipped out when pulled up for violating road rules. The list goes on. Sooner or later, the opportunity to wrongfully use wealth or favors for personal gain will present itself to us. Then what?



Why is bribery wrong? The Bible is clear and unambiguous about its stance on the matter. The main reason for bribery to be rebuked and warned against is because it is a means of perverting justice (Proverbs 17:23, Isaiah 5:23, Isaiah 1:23). A country's laws, processes, and systems, despite their loopholes, flaws, and the inconveniences, are in place for the wellbeing of society. Sometimes, what is best for society may not be beneficial or convenient for individuals. When one chooses to bribe, he chooses to not subject himself to the law or process, and it is made possible by his wealth and/or influence. When done by multiple individuals, this contributes to increasing the inefficiency of systems and manipulating laws. The constant expectation for additional incentives when (not) enforcing laws, and manipulating processes leads to the corruption of legal and other systems while making it difficult for those who do not have the resources to obtain services with ease. This results in a vicious cycle which oppresses the poor and helpless further. Bribery permits wealth to determine one's moral and legal obligations. To sum up, bribery starts with corrupt individuals and spills over to corrupt laws, processes, and systems, – perverting justice.

“And gradually, though no one remembers exactly how it happens, the unthinkable becomes tolerable. And then acceptable. And then legal. And then applaudable.”

- Joni Eareckson Tada

Sadly, many chose to deny the role they play in the issue of bribery. We choose not to question the legitimacy of such requests for the sake of convenience, using words such as 'handling fees', 'gifts', 'clearance charges' so that we don't feel like it is something wrong. We may even go to the extent of justifying the greater good of our actions – 'becoming a prefect helps my child's university admission!'. But like any other sin, bribery too can be dealt with only once it is admitted. The next time you are asked for 'handling fees', pause. See it for what it is. Call it what it is. Be willing to be inconvenienced. Be willing to be right. Be willing to do right. Right by you, right by society and right by God.

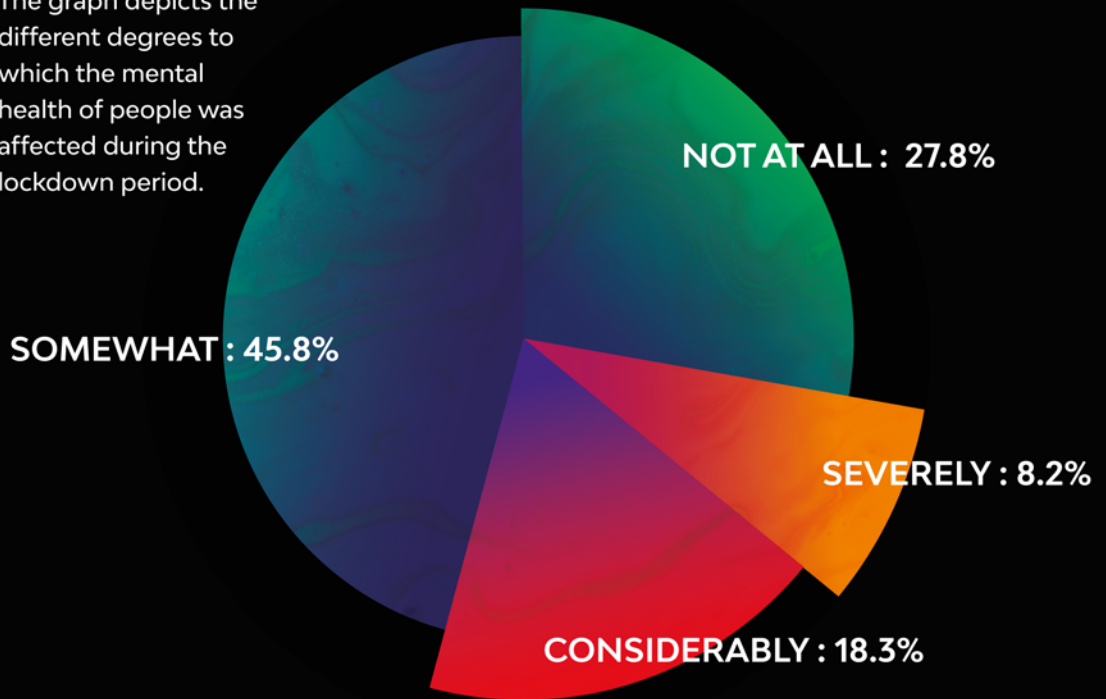


SURVEYING THE IMPACT OF

COVID-19

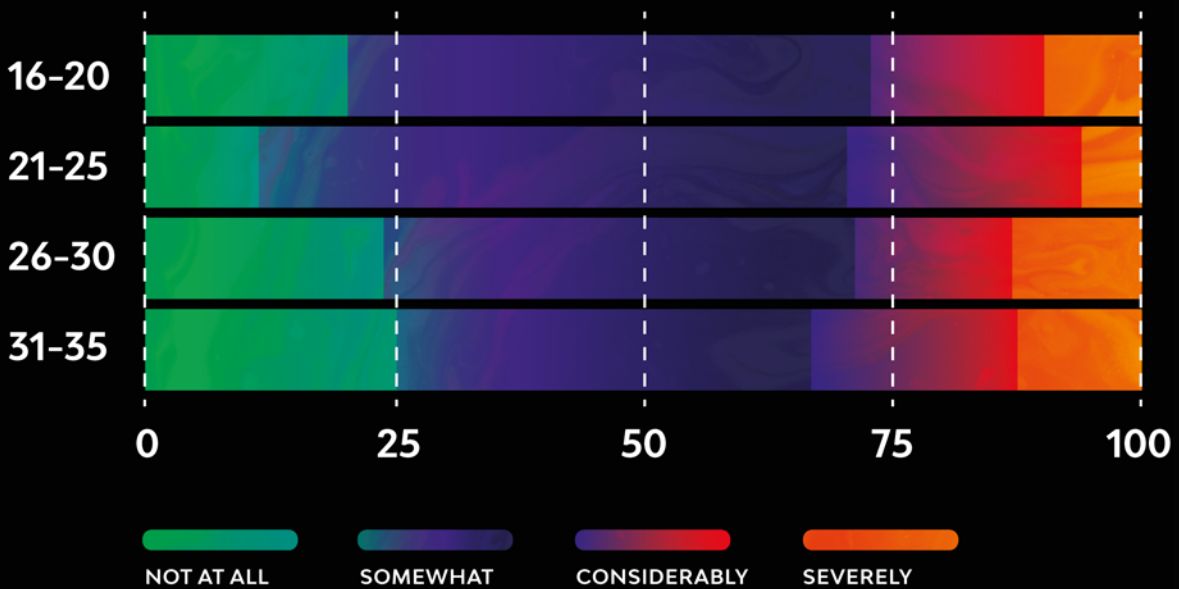
The YEA conducted a survey on the Impact of COVID-19 on young people to shed some light, mainly, on the mental health and financial impacts of the pandemic, along with the resulting lockdown which ensued. Age groups ranging from 16 to 35 were considered for this survey. In total we received a total of 183 responses from 16 number of districts.

The graph depicts the different degrees to which the mental health of people was affected during the lockdown period.



As seen above, a considerable number of individuals were affected mentally due to this lockdown and the isolation that followed.

Further, when investigating the financial impact of the lockdown, the survey revealed how the impact was felt differently through the age groups, with different levels of financial stability and necessity.



Other areas surveyed included - the degree of personal development experienced in lockdown, social media use, knowledge of COVID preventative measures and access to basic facilities. We hope to discuss this topic more in the coming editions.

Stay tuned!



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A DECADE

**HOLISTIC
DISCIPLESHIP**

IN SRI LANKA

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