

RESISTING COLONIAL ORDER IN MANTO'S THE NEW CONSTITUTION: A POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUE

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ABSTRACT:

Resistance to colonization is the main focus of postcolonialism. The study has a postcolonial critique of the colonial ideologies and the colonized Indians' sense of resistance towards the colonial order as depicted Manto's short story, The New Constitution. It revolves around the main issues of resisting, self-identity, and cultural hegemony in the colonial setting. Through the contesting and the overturning of the colonial agenda's existing norms, Manto's selected story presents the readers with new viewpoints on history, politics and society. The protagonist, Ustad Mangu, becomes a strong symbol of revolt and rebellion, representing the collective struggle of the oppressed natives against colonial oppression. Through Mangu's character, Manto artfully captures the spirit of resistance that defined the struggle for independence in colonial India, highlighting the indomitable will of those who fought tirelessly for freedom and justice. The findings show that the selected short story throws light on theme of resistance against colonization by the colonized Indian.

Introduction:

Saadat Hasan Manto was born in Ludhiana, on May 11, 1912. He was a prolific Pakistani writer, playwright, and author whose impactful contributions have empowered his place as a renowned literary figure for depicting post-colonial issues. His depiction of the partition of India in 1947 demonstrates his skill in addressing the intricacies and human anguish associated with significant historical events. Despite facing charges of obscenity on multiple occasions, Manto's unwavering commitment to truth and artistic integrity remained unyielding, reinforcing his status as a fearless explorer of the human condition. Through various mediums, including biographical films, Manto's life and works continue to be celebrated, highlighting his influence on Urdu literature and his timeless ability to provoke thought and challenge societal norms. *The New Constitution* can be called a parable not only of the Government of India Act, but also of the "gradual" home rule being doled out in dribbles by the British to the Indians. It is deservedly treated as a classic". (Daruwalla, 1996, p. 128) *Naya Qanoon* (The New Constitution) is a thought provoking story by Manto. In this story, the writer focuses on the period of colonization in the Indian sub-continent. He highlights the impact of colonization, its violence and brutality on the Indian population, and the Indians' resistance against the tyranny and brutality of colonization. He criticizes the dual policy of the Britishers' who do nothing for the welfare, and prosperity of the Indian, who just show dream of prosperity to the Indians. The story revolves around the protagonist, Ustad Mangu, a tongawala in Lahore during the Partition of India. Mangu is filled with anticipation for the time when the Constitution gets enacted and his fellow Indians will be able to enjoy their freedom in its true sense as well as usher in a new era of equality for all the presently colonized people. He shows optimism in his conversation and interaction with the passengers regarding the enactment of the new constitution. When the new constitution is finally proclaimed, Mangu's excitement knows no bounds. Eager to test the boundaries of his newfound freedom, he seizes an opportunity when he picks up an Englishman as a passenger. However, the Englishman's arrogant demeanor triggers Mangu's simmering resentment towards the colonial oppressors.

In a lasting act of defiance, Mangu comes to physical blows with the White man and repeatedly exclaims the death of the Man of Law and the arrival of the new constitution and India's freedom. Nevertheless, his act of rebellion is only momentary as the law officers fire back quickly and succeed in their operation of arresting him. As Mangu faces the consequences of his actions, the story highlights the political conditions and the aspirations of ordinary individuals under the period of colonization.

This research paper focuses into the resistance against British colonial rule in India through the protagonist, Mangu in *The New Constitution*. Manto skillfully portrays the colonial India, and the impact of colonialism on colonized Indians. His poignant depiction of the partition of India in 1947 further emphasizes the complexities and human anguish associated with significant historical events. The protagonist of the story, Mangu embodies the prevailing sentiments of defiance and resentment towards the British Raj. Through verbal abuse and physical confrontation with a British soldier, Mangu's defiance against colonial authority, serves as a symbol of revolt against oppression. His actions reflect the collective frustration and indignation felt by Indians subjected to British rule, highlighting the pervasive hatred towards colonial oppressors. Furthermore, Mangu's portrayal as a representative figure highlights the indomitable spirit of those who dared to challenge the hegemony of the British Raj.

Research Questions:

1. How does Manto portray resistance against colonial order in his story *The New Constitution*?
2. What motifs and techniques are employed in the story to resist and challenge colonial ideology?

Research Objectives:

1. To examine the colonized Indians' resistance against colonial order in the story *The New Constitution*.
2. To assess the motifs and techniques used in the story to resist and challenge colonial ideology.

Literature Review

Postcolonialism refers to a theoretical framework and an academic field of study that emerged in the mid to late 20th century, primarily in response to the legacy of colonialism and imperialism. Postcolonialism seeks to critically examine the effects of colonialism on societies, cultures, politics, and identities, both during the colonial period and in the aftermath of decolonization. Basu (2022) focuses on Manto's depiction of the dark underbelly of society, where the commodification of human existence is starkly evident. He claims that Manto's depiction of prostitutes as victims of a diseased social order transcends regional boundaries, serving as a powerful critique of the widespread sexual oppression that Indian women experience nationwide. Manto's primary goal has been to reveal the underlying hypocrisy and insincerity around the concept of sexuality in his milieu.

Tiwari (2013) claims that Manto's Partition narratives make us understand the complex impact of Partition on individuals and societies. He begins by contextualizing India's Partition as a watershed moment in twentieth-century history, marked by massive violence, displacement, and trauma. Manto's short stories on Partition clearly depict the terrible realities of violence, kidnapping, displacement, and resettlement, bringing light on both physical and psychological consequences. These stories openly confront the complexities of masculinity and the fragility of sexuality within the tumultuous atmosphere of violence.

Kulshreshtha (2023) analyzes Manto's works to unravel the multifaceted nature of masculinities, challenging the singular definition of masculinity and emphasizes its diverse manifestations. He advocates an understanding of masculinity, addressing the complexities of male identity as victors, victims, oppressors, and oppressed individuals. He tackles the vulnerability of male sexuality during historical traumatic periods, particularly during India's Partition. "The masculine materialistic world was dominated by the colonial presence and the feminine spiritual world was seen as free" (Kulshreshtha, 2023, p. 6).

Mumtaz and Raza (2022) examine the trauma embedded within Partition, focusing particularly on Manto's pivotal narrative, *Khol Do*. Manto, known for his unflinching portrayal of the human condition, provides a raw and unfiltered lens through which to examine the horrors of Partition. The researchers scrutinize Manto's depiction of trauma, analyzing how he portrays the psychological and emotional aftermath of violence on individual characters. Manto's own journey from Bombay to Lahore and his encounters with the displaced and dispossessed likely informed his nuanced understanding of the human cost of Partition. Manto, a prominent Urdu writer from South Asia in the post-colonial era of the 20th century, relocated to Pakistan in 1948, despite his initial opposition to the partition that led to the creation of Pakistan. His decision to move was driven by the necessity to reunite with his family.

Ahmad (2012) writes about the intersection of intellectual work and politics in postcolonial society, particularly focusing on the writings of Saadat Hassan Manto. Through the analysis of two of Manto's short stories, *Naya Qanoon (The New Constitution)* and *1919 ki Ek Baat*, he revisits the historical context of the late 1940s and early 1950s in North India to understand the diverse engagements of intellectuals with politics.

Devji (2023) examines the relationship between constitutionalism and colonialism in pre-Partition India in *Naya Qanun*, a short story by Manto. This story developed in Lahore and referencing the act of 1935 in India, critiques the limitations of legal documents in guaranteeing true freedom and liberty. The protagonist, Ustad Mangu, eagerly anticipates the arrival of a new constitution for India. When he first learns about it, he can hardly contain his excitement. Upon its declaration, he is eager to explore its freedoms and test its promises.

Koves (1997) investigates the theme of partition Manto and Orkeny's short stories. Both writers used a sensitivity and skill in their narratives, avoiding moralizing and sentimentality, to engage readers and encourage agency. They share a common approach to storytelling, avoiding simplistic moral judgments and emotional manipulation. They encourage active engagement, prompting reflection and responses. Through their narrative strategies, they empower readers to confront difficult truths and grapple with the complexities of human experience during crises.

Ahmad and Zager (2013) argue that Manto's literary oeuvre deal with the theme of resistance against British colonial rule in. Manto portrays the tumultuous period of revolt, violence, and bloodshed during India's struggle for independence. His short stories uncover the multifaceted dimensions of resistance, ranging from street protests and slogans against the Raj to instances of direct confrontation and rebellion. In the short story, *The Price of Freedom*, individuals expressed their discontent with British rule through protests, chanting against oppressors, and organizing anti-Raj gatherings and marches. Consequently, the British authorities began apprehending numerous demonstrators daily, though they often released them after brief or prolonged periods of imprisonment. *The New Constitution*, centers on a disillusioned coach driver's resentment towards British rule, embodied by disrespectful soldiers, and his misguided hope for change. It reveals the driver's psychological state, effectively employing irony. However, beneath the surface irony lies a deeper sense of hopelessness and confusion.

While several scholars have examined Saadat Hasan Manto's literary works, particularly his portrayal of resistance against British colonial rule, there remains a research gap regarding a postcolonial critique of Manto's short story *The New Constitution*. A critical examination of this aspect would contribute to a deeper understanding of Manto's engagement with colonialism and the complexities of resistance narratives within the context of South Asian literature and postcolonial studies.

Theoretical Framework

'Postcolonialism,' according to Bressler (1999), refers to a method of literary examination that focuses on literature produced in English within regions formerly subjected to colonial rule. Khan et al., (1998) assert that post-colonialism transcends being merely a chronological marker denoting the era following the decline of empires. Rather, it emerges as an emancipatory concept, particularly pertinent for literature scholars outside the Western world. It prompts a critical interrogation of established literary paradigms, empowering individuals to read texts from their own cultural context and to reinterpret canonical works from Europe through the lens of their unique historical and geographical positioning.

Postcolonialism refers to a theory or concept that critically studies the negative effects of colonization and imperialism upon cultures, languages, and the psyche of the colonized as a result of oppression, and atrocities of the colonizers to maintain their authority over the colonized. The relationship between the colonizers and the colonized is a binary one. The postcolonial writers condemn the colonizing mission of European countries. (Hasan, 2023, p. 15)

'Resistance' stands as a central tenet within the critical framework of postcolonialism. It serves as both the subject of postcolonial criticism and as a fundamental aspect of the postcolonial project itself. Despite some critical exploration, particularly in the late 1980s and more recently by scholars like Bill Ashcroft and Benita Parry, the concept of resistance has often been treated in a vague manner. It has been utilized to describe any form of struggle, regardless of its methods or objectives (Jefferess, 2003). As Ashcroft (2001) notes, 'resistance' has become a term susceptible to clichés and empty rhetoric due to its adaptability to diverse circumstances. Additionally, historian Cooper (1994) warns against overly broad interpretations of resistance, which may limit our understanding of historical contexts by overshadowing other aspects of people's lives. Scholars in the Indian subcontinent have played a pivotal role in documenting and

analyzing resistance to colonialism. Through their writings, they have highlighted various forms of resistance, including armed uprisings, civil disobedience movements, and intellectual dissent. These scholars have illuminated the agency of marginalized communities and challenged colonial narratives that sought to justify domination. By amplifying narratives of resistance, postcolonial scholars like Manto, have empowered communities to reclaim their histories and advocate for social justice and decolonization.

Postcolonial scholars take writing and reading from the margin as acts of resistance to expose the underlying cultural assumption of colonial authority and provide alternative readings... They resist and rewrite the dominant cultural values, codes, narratives, and behaviors of colonial discourse. (Bhandari, 2022, p. 93)

According to Harlow (1987), resistance embodies a deliberate series of actions designed to rid a people of its oppressors. This concept permeates the collective experience of enduring oppression to such an extent that it evolves into a distinct aesthetic principle with a semblance of autonomy. He asserts that resistance struggles “against the tyranny of the colonizing power or the oppressive comprador regime” (p. 39). Harlow (1987) contends that Ghassan Kanafani, a Palestinian writer and critic, introduced the term “resistance” in 1966. Resistance against colonialism exemplifies the indomitable human spirit in the face of oppressive rule. It encompasses a range of strategies employed by colonized populations to challenge exploitative systems enforced by colonial powers. Such resistance is characterized by the steadfast determination of colonized peoples asserting their autonomy and reclaiming sovereignty. Scholarly discourse emphasizes the intricate and evolving nature of resistance, reflecting a diverse array of tactics used by colonized communities to subvert colonial authority. From armed rebellion to cultural resistance, the strategies employed show an indelible desire for liberation as well as self-rule. Resistance on the other side demonstrates the identity of the natives and the resilience of their culture, the narratives of the colonialists which are dehumanizing being challenged, social and political change being catalyzed, and decolonization and dismantling of the colonial structures being led to.

Research Methodology:

This research involves a qualitative approach to analyze Manto’s *The New Constitution* through post-colonial lens. The study will begin with a thorough literature review to establish a theoretical foundation, drawing on existing scholarship on postcolonial theory and Manto’s works. Primary data will be collected through close textual analysis of the selected story supplemented by secondary sources such as scholarly articles and books. The analysis will focus on identifying themes, symbols, and narrative techniques that resist colonial order, guided by key concepts of postcolonial theory such as resistance.

Textual Analysis

The New Constitution is a wonderful tale. *The New Constitution* by Saadat Hasan Manto is an anticolonial narrative which explains the idea of the resistance of colonial ideology through the figure of Mangu, a tongawala. One of Manto’s most distinctive characteristics was the fact that he did not hesitate to write about the problems of the society where he has plenty of references to colonialism and the results of the colonial rule in South Asia. Here, he homed in on the bestiality of disempowerment in the colonial context, unearthing the suffering and mistreatment inflicted

upon colonially oppressed people. As a critic, he condemns the colonizers that are presented through the character Mangu who is not only rebellious with activities of anti-colonial but also his self-government. The plot is the base that shows the dilemma of colonialism and the struggle for equality and independence for many years. Mangu, who stands for the powerlessness, is the embodiment of what the masses can complain about. The colonial authority's attitude to him shows his ambivalence, which is a mixture of indifference and hostility. However, he has no plans at all to become the servile of the British authority and through his outright and vivid rejection of the rule by Britain as a symbol of a colonial oppression; he becomes a symbol of disobedience against all colonialist powers.

The British rule in India was based on a story of cruelty and arrogance, with the English treating the locals as inferior. Indigenous people's core human rights are under assault. Governance, the judiciary, and government were viewed as tools employed by the British to repress indigenous peoples and deny them rights. As Britain's reign ended and anti-colonial sentiment grew, India experienced uprisings and riots in response to colonialism. People were increasingly aware of their rights and began to demand fair treatment and recognition as humans. Political parties hostile to British rule tried on shifting international dynamics, fueling instability and resistance. Incidents of bombings and arrests became commonplace across Indian cities, reflecting the heightened tensions of the time. Mangu, the protagonist of the story voices his intense hatred and anger against the British Raj. He epitomizes a voice of resistance against the dominance of the British who wish to rule the Indians in the light of their own commands. He "had intense hatred for the British. He used to tell his friends that he hated them because they were ruling Hindustan against the will of the Indians and missed no opportunity to commit atrocities" (p. 71). The unjust treatment of "the gora soldiers of the cantonment" was "responsible for Ustad Mangu's rather low opinion of the British" (p. 71). Their presence in his homeland was an affront to him, and he resented their authority, viewing them as arrogant overlords who treated Indians as inferior servants. The language they spoke, whether Urdu or Hindi, he dismissed contemptuously as 'gitpit.' Mangu's interactions with other Tongawalas highlight his deep-seated hatred and resistance against the colonial agenda. Through discussions with fellow Tongawalas, Mangu showcases his awareness of the violence perpetuated by the colonial forces against Indians. These conversations serve as a platform for expressing shared grievances and frustrations towards colonial oppression, fostering a sense of solidarity among those who resist the colonial regime. Mangu's participation in these discussions highlights his active engagement in anti-colonial discourse and his commitment to challenging colonial violence and injustice.

The protagonist of the story, Mangu faced the mistreatment and disrespect from British soldiers who "used to treat him like some lower creation of God, even worse than a dog" (p. 72). Mangu shows defiance and resistance against British oppression, he also expresses his frustration and anger towards the mistreatment he faced from a British individual. "After an argument with a drunken gora, he would remain depressed for the entire day. He would return to his adda in the evening and curse the man to his heart's content" (p. 72). He shows resistance against them through abusing them. He derogatorily refers to British as 'goras,' comparing them to human monkeys, white mice, and even lepers. His, this action is symbolic of hatred and resistance against the colonial agenda. "When he saw that his new customer was a gora, feelings of hatred rose in his heart" (p.76). He claims that he is "sick and tired of these offshoots of monkeys .The way they order us around, you would think we were their fathers' servants!" (p. 72). Mangu's

character embodies revolt and rebellion against the British Raj through his defiant actions and outspoken opposition. His refusal to conform to colonial authority and his willingness to challenge British dominance reflect a spirit of resistance and defiance. Mangu's conflicts with British individuals and his refusal to tolerate their mistreatment symbolize the courage and determination of those who dared to defy the British Raj, inspiring others to join the fight for independence.

In this unstable environment, many in the subcontinent saw the advent of new legislation as a sign of hope. Despite their foolish confidence in politicians, they hoped for positive change in their circumstances, only to be disillusioned. Ordinary people's lives were marked by hardship and unmet promises, with many dying silently, their hopes for a better life dashed by the harsh realities of their existence. Mangu exemplified ordinary people's innocence, honesty, and passion. Mangu believed in the necessity of legal and systemic changes to overcome colonial rule and regain independence through political and legal means. Mangu's joy upon hearing about a new constitution for India and his exclamation, "The hell with 'em all" (p. 72)! after enjoying lassi at his friend's shop, signify moments of happiness and defiance, indicating hope and determination for a better future free from colonial rule. Ustad Mangu epitomizes not just an individual character, but a collective embodiment of the naive masses who are deceived by empty promises. Like many others, Mangu eagerly anticipated the Government of India Act 1935, viewing it as a beacon of hope and liberation from oppression of colonization. "The news that a new constitution was to be implemented had brought him at the doorstep of a new world" (p. 72). The new constitution was a force that would disrupt and challenge the exploitation of the poor by colonial powers. "The new constitution is going to be like boiling hot water is to bugs that suck the blood of the poor" (p. 73). "A delightful cool settled over his heart when he thought of how the new constitution would send these white mice...scurrying back into their holes for all times to come" (p. 73). The new constitution serves as both a dream and a tool of colonial manipulation by the British. On one hand, characters like Ustad Mangu perceive it as a beacon of hope, symbolizing Indian sovereignty and liberation from colonial rule. However, the British's actions and dismissive reactions to Ustad Mangu's joy show that the new constitution may be a flimsy attempt to maintain colonial authority rather than liberate the colonized Indian people. The conflict serves as a metaphor for the complicated relationship between the colonizers and the subjects in which reform pledges can just be a tool to preserve colonial rule.

The New Constitution centers on a financially struggling tongawala's embitterment towards colonial authority, symbolized by British soldiers, and his misguided optimism for financial prosperity after the enactment of Act 1935. Every day, Mangu roamed the streets with his Tonga, trying to hear other people's comments about the projected implications of the new law. Mangu, on the other hand, was fortunate enough to be a driver who took people to the district court and listened to their discussion on the much-anticipated advent of the Government of India Act of 1935, which would take effect on April 1st of that year. He believed that an instructive conversation would free native peoples from the bonds of debt and other financial difficulties associated with colonization. Such a finding made Mangu extremely happy, to the point that he no longer desired to flog his horse because he was no longer worried about money. Finally, after disembarking his guests, Mangu would generally visit the Anarkali shop, enjoy a glass of lassi, and seek out his pals to celebrate his impending happiness. Mangu deduced that the Tsar of those days could have been the mastermind behind these constitutional changes.

As April 1st came, his exhilaration and confidence in his imagined independence grew to fever pitch. More than one individual, Mangu represented the thoughts of the majority of third-world citizens, who were continually disillusioned and unsatisfied under the enormous exploitation and tyranny they endured. Mangu was convinced that this new Act would change the fate of the Indian people, who had been oppressed by dictatorial rulers. In a fit of rage, Mangu lashed out at the soldier, mercilessly beating him and proclaiming the dawn of a new era under the new law. Despite efforts by bystanders to restrain him, Mangu's fury knew no bounds as he continued to assault the soldier, exclaiming triumphantly about the supposed changes the new law would bring for Indians. However, his jubilation turned to despair when policemen arrived and apprehended him. Even while imprisoned, Mangu persisted in proclaiming the virtues of the new law, only to be disillusioned when informed that the oppressive old laws still held sway, relegating Indians to subjugation under English rule.

Mangu resents towards the British colonialists, who treat Indians with disdain. He expresses his desire to be free from colonization and displays anger against the colonial oppression. "As God is my witness, I'm sick of suffering and humouring these Lat sahibs. Every time I look at their blighted faces, my blood begins to boil in my veins". Ustad Mangu's determination to extract compensation from the British customer for a previous expense, reflecting a form of resistance against colonial exploitation by seeking reparation or compensation for losses incurred "The fourteen annas and a half he had spent on the plume should be recovered from these people, he decided" (p. 76). Ustad Mangu's internal turmoil and anger towards the British customer, depicts his resistance against colonial domination through his intense emotions and desire for retaliation. "His entire face was laughing, but inside his chest roared a fire ready to consume the gora. Ustad Mangu freed his left hand of the reins that he had wrapped around it and glared at the gora standing in front of him, as if he would eat every bit of him alive" (p. 76). Ustad Mangu's aggressive stance and threatening demeanor towards the British customer reflect his resistance against colonial oppression, as he asserts his power and defiance in the face of the colonial presence. "He was quite sure it was the same fellow with whom he had clashed the year before. That uncalled for argument had happened" (p. 76). This line suggests a history of conflict and tension between Ustad Mangu and the British customer, indicating ongoing resistance against colonial domination manifested through confrontations and disputes. "He could have smashed the man into little bits, but he had remained passive because he knew that in such quarrels it was tongawalas mostly who suffered the wrath of the law" (p. 77). Mangu's act of physically confronting and beating the British "Gora" represent defiance against oppression and a refusal to submit to colonial rule, demonstrating the strength and determination of those who resist the colonial agenda through direct confrontation.

Ustad Mangu's knowledge of the power dynamics in the workplace, as well as his decision to remain inactive in the face of obscenities flung at him by the British customer, show strategic restraint as a form of resistance against colonialism. "Then his fist rose like an arrow leaving a bow and landed heavily on the gora's chin" (p.77). Ustad Mangu's quick dismissive response to the British customer based on his nationality indicates his opposition to colonialism, since he refuses to serve those linked with the colonial power. "Well, sonny boy, it is our Raj now" (p. 77). This statement, uttered by Ustad Mangu while thrashing the British customer, indicates a declaration of Indian sovereignty by reclaiming authority and control over their own land and affairs. "Those days are gone, friends, when they ruled the roost. There is a new constitution

now, fellows, a new constitution” (p. 77).Ustad Mangu’s celebration of the new constitution’s implementation acts as a symbol of independence and self-government. He repeated exclamation of new constitution while being taken to the police station advocates for the changes brought about by the new constitution. “What rubbish are you talking? It’s the same old constitution” (p. 77).This attitude from the police officers undermines his excitement for the new rule constitution.

Briefly speaking, *The New Constitution* tells a story of resistance, encouraging unyielding opposition against colonial authority. Manto, through his protagonist Mangu, emphasizes the colonized’s repressed voices, challenging the dominance of colonial language while upholding their innate dignity and humanity. Mangu’s stubborn refusal to obey the colonial officer’s orders, despite the approaching threat of violence, exemplifies his rejection of marginalization and assertion of autonomy. Mangu’s activities underscore the importance of decolonization, criticizing colonial rule by placing it in the perspective of a ‘new constitution’ imposed by colonial powers.

Conclusion

The New Constitution by Manto throws light on strong hatred against the British Raj through the protagonist Mangu by depicting the theme of resistance against the colonization. Mangu registers resistance against colonial order through his hatred against the ‘goras’, through his verbal abuse to the English, and through his beating the British soldier. He represents all the Indians who are fed up with the British Raj, and demonstrate resistance against the colonial order. The British mistreat the Indians as the inferior beings. Mangu shows extreme hatred and resistance against them by calling them monkeys and so on. Through his character, the story vividly depicts the spirit of resistance and defiance that characterized the struggle for independence in colonial India. Mangu’s refusal to submit to colonial authority and his willingness to challenge the mistreatment of Indians exemplify the courage and determination of those who fought against colonial oppression. As a representative of the anti-colonial movement, Mangu inspires others to join the cause and highlights the indomitable spirit of those who dared to defy the British Raj in their quest for freedom and justice.

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