Implication of Nature Imageries in Puniyani's Tangsing

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Abstract

An anthology of Nepali Eco-poetry, Tangsing by Raja Puniyani includes nature imageries to focus its eco-theme in most of its poems. The two sections of this anthology as Eco-solo and Eco-chorus contain poems and poems in series respectively. So, the article investigates the nature imageries used in these poems and their connection with eco-theme in all the poems. The article analyses what imageries are used and how they directly and indirectly highlight to the human encroachment into nature and its consequences in future. To address these objectives, ecocritical theory, mainly the idea of Rachel Carson is used. Rachel Carson brings up the idea that how humans past activities leads them towards disastrous future related to nature and ecosystem of the earth. The significance of this study is to contribute to the reader to see the anthology seriously as a message to all human beings to save the earth and its ecosystem. The paper concludes that Tangsing is full of powerful nature imageries containing the ecotheme in almost all the poems in it. It paved the way towards eco-awareness through Nepali literature to address contemporary environmental issues faced by the world.

Keywords: Eco-theme, Imagery, land ethics, Nature, Tangsing

Use of Nature Imageries in Nepali Poems

The portrayal of nature in literature is found from the very beginning of literary studies; however, ecocritical study as the separate perspective in USA started in late 1980s and in Uk in late 1990s with the term "ecocriticism" and "green studies" respectively (Barry 239). A decade ago Nepali literature started to have the ecocritical study. Various ecological issues are found out during this period and those issues are portrayed in poems. Practically, the eco-awareness expressed through poems has unique significance (Tripathi 245). Nature imageries play powerful role to provide meaning to the poems specially eco-poetry.

Imageries are the powerful tools to provide sense to the poem. Abrams defines imagery as "One of the most common in criticism and variable in meaning, the term imagery refers to the mental pictures experienced by the reader to the totality of the components which make up a poem "(128). Imagery is thus, a mental picture created through words. He further clarifies " "imagery" as images taken collectively to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, where by literal description, by allusion, or in the vehicles of its similes and metaphors"....They might be auditory, tactile, thermal, olfactory, gustatory and kinesthetic. However, all these imageries help to make poetry concrete (129). So, imageries are related to our sense perception help us to create mental print in our mind in the poem.

Written by Raja Puniyani, *Tangsing* is an eco-poetry enriched with powerful nature imageries. The title of this anthology, *Tangsing* itself is an imagery which shows the closeness of Limbu people with nature (Shrestha). This sort of closeness along with regret is also presented by Carson in her book under the topic "A Fable for Tomorrow"-"There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings." (1) It shows the lamentation for the lost interconnectedness with nature which is only existed in fable. She also shows the way towards death through: "For the first time in the history of the world, every human being is now subjected to contact with dangerous chemicals, from the moment of conception until death" (4). Here her ideas show human beings' suicidal activities. Similarly, her idea "In an age when man has forgotten his origins and is blind even to his most essential needs for survival, water along with other resources has become the victim of his indifference" (11) shows pollution over water resources. Furthermore, the concept of earth ethics is also presented by Aldo Leopold by giving insight for the difference between the living earth and a dead earth. He states that " the earth itself is "dead"; life may teem on the earth's surface, but the whole Earth, per se, does not seem to be alive." (Callicott 164). The burning issues of environment includes the pollution with water, land, air, extinction of birds and animals, flood, draught, land-slide, rise in sea level, melting of snow, global warming, Carbon use etc. All these issues are portrayed through nature imageries in Tangsing.

Tangsing presents earth's transformation into dead planet from living one due to human hunger for materialism. There is a quote by Nietzsche that "The world is

beautiful but has a disease called man." The earth is degraded because of anthropocentric behavior of human beings (S. Kshetri). The collection includes sixteen poems and seven series of poems that focuses on the environmental crisis, ecological issues, climate change, environmental degradation, etc. Poet has taken the mythological term 'Tangsing' in a rhetorical sense from 'Tangsing-Takma-Mundhum', one of the six volumes of published Mundhums, collected, translated, and edited by legendary Bairagi Kainla. One of the critics from Sikkim University, Debendra Subba, reviews *Tangsing* by saying it raises the fine issues of natural preservation (*Tangsing*). Moreover, the forest lost from the world is transformed in the form of poems by Puniyani through his love letter to the earth (H.B. Kshetri). The critics have studied the themes of the poems. However, they have left the scope for the researcher to analyze its nature imageries and eco-theme. Therefore, the article aims to discuss the nature imageries and eco theme in the following section of this paper.

Eco-theme through Nature Imageries in Tangsing

Tangsing has two sections respectively "eco-solo" and "eco-chorus". The first section "eco-solo" contains sixteen poems whereas the second section "eco-chorus" contains seven long poems in series. The meaningful connection is found between the section title and the poem's structure. The "eco-solo" section contains solo poems and the "eco-chorus" section contains the group of poems under the same title by giving the number for series. Moreover, the thematic analysis of the poems shows that almost all the poems in this work contains ecological themes such as pain of the earth, eco-voice of the earth as a living being. The starting of the work preceding the preliminary section contains an American Indian proverb as "We have not got this earth in free but we have found it from our children in borrow" (Puniyani 5). This proverb itself contains the whole message that *Tangsing* tries to convey through various poems. From the very beginning the eco theme is shown in the work by using nature imagery.

Tangsing is an anthology of experimental poems on ecological theme. Poems like "Prithwipeeda" contain the pains of the earth and voice of the earth as a living being. Almost all the poems included in it portray the eco-theme with the powerful use of nature imageries. The first poem "Janggali Phool"(Wild Flower) of the first section "Eco-solo", creates the image of a wild flower by saying "*Jun maatomaa phuleko thiyo u tyo maato aruko itihaas ubhine thaaun thiyo … u janggali phool thiyo*"(The place where it had bloomed, was the place to be the history of someone; Puniyani 11-12, my

trans.). This nature imagery shows that the earth is claimed by human beings as the place to make their history by forgetting that it is equally shared by other plants and vegetations. This wild flower is a powerful nature imagery that has a symbolic meaning that without getting due care from family member it sustains its life in itself. However, the place where it stands is also claimed by humans by forgetting that their essence started from earth.

The second poem of the first section "Chuchedhungaa" (spike-stone) starts with the quote by Pablo Neruda that laments for the lost rainfall and wilderness. This poem is the voice of the personified image of ancient rock that pleads to get back the lost essence or root of human existence i.e. nature and its freshness; wilderness and unencroached status. Likewise, another poem "Kutumba Katha" (Story of Kith and Kin) starts with the saying of famous Japanese poet, Kobayashi Issa that "No one is Alien in this world, we all are relatives under the tree of Cherry". The nature imagery 'green seed" used in this poem refers to be our dearest as we are interrelated to nature. It reminds us of our ancestors in the stone age where there was no distinction between humans and wilds. Gradually the demarcation is created between humans and nature and that leads towards their destruction as said by the poet that "Kutumba Khojdai niskeko manukhkhe, aafnai Kaatieko taauko hatkelaamaa raakhera samayako banda phaatakaghi Kaanpdai ubhieko samay ho yo ... Chuhiraheko tyo ragatsangai chuhiraheko chha kutumbako nasunine lokgeet pani " (In the search of relatives, the folk songs of kith and kin are dropping just like the blood from the own cut up head carrying on the hand; Puniyani,18-19, my translation). These images show the suicidal activities of human being by destroying the nature. In the same way the poem "Allergy", portrays the image of a 'lost key' of the one way track which was lost in the 18th century's industrial revolution referring to the starting of natural exploitation that modified humans as 'human like creature' as the allergy to the earth. The image of human being as 'human like creature' shows the degradation of human being by not maintaining their ethical status.

Likewise, the poem "Mahaapaihro" (Great landslide) shows that great landslide is the poem written by nature that can destroy houses, fields, hills, roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, buildings, villages and towns. Similarly, the poem "Hanggrayole Nileko Paangra" by giving the reference of "Hanggrayo" (a bird) suggests not to have unlimited exploitation of the earth but to use less than necessary to preserve the earth for coming generation. The preceding poem "Soisoilaa" (a folk song) portrays the image of sun, soil, water, jungle hills and says we are originated from nature by playing or singing soisoila" (a folk song) but now we are trying to destroy it. Similarly, the nature poem "Prithiwilai Prempatra (Love Letter to the Earth) starts with the quotation of Nicanor Parra that "The earth does not belong to us but we belong to the earth". This poem portrays ecopoems as the love letter written to the earth; however, this love letter will not stop to cut the trees, have the hole on ozone layer, extinct birds, release Carbon, melt snow, warm the air and so on. Though this is the speaker's love letter to the tree, bird, cloud and the entire earth.

The next poem "4D Kabitaa" (4D poem) satirizes the virtual living of human beings by destroying the green earth through powerful imagery through these lines: "*Syalaamandarko DNA ropera lyaabma phalnechhau haami* "(by using the DNA of salamender, we will be born in the lab; Puniyani,44). This poem uses the images of human being as completely digital package ready to walk, fly or fight. Likewise, proceeding poem "Ek Hajar Amejan" (One thousand Amezons) creates the mental picture of the earth like burning Amezon. In the same way, the poem "Gaph Garam: Thietry" (let's have a talk: Theatry) shows the dramatic performance on global warming. It shows the child's curiosity for global warming after listening to the news and the parents' indifference to it. As the title mentions of theater, this poem mentions characters, dialogues, setting, context for one of the burning issues of present time i.e. increasing global warming that is leading to the destruction of the earth. On the thematic level the dialogues between the first and second character mentions the interconnectedness of each and everything in nature comparing the destruction of earth with suicidal act of human race.

Likewise, the next poem "Aba Ghar Maatra chha takrakka: phiksan Kabitaa" (Now only the House remained Alone: Fiction Poem) deals about the effort of Tista activist such as Minket Lepcha who had been awarded for her eco-documentry over Tista River. This fiction poem mentions the poem "Dam You are Damns" written by poet Denmit Lepcha. This poem questions the development done through dam and compares between money and river by creating the mental print of river helping human beings from ages. Furthermore, it includes the lines like: Prithwile ramaera bajairaheko gitarko taar nachudiyos...aba prithwee maatra chha takrakka. (I wish not to be broken down the wire of the guitar played by the earth happily,... now only remained the earth, all alone; Puniyani 60, my translation). This fiction poem brings the various environmental activists together to provide the sense of ecological preservation. The last poem of 'Eco-solo' is "Tangsing", a fiction poem. It depicts the picture of origin of the earth. It combines the virtual world in which human beings are completely lost and the natural world prior to human civilization or human existence. The poem says: eutaa robotle manchhesaga daataasex garera bharchual myatriks-kokhbaata byaeko chha euta pudko robomanchhe; yattikher ozon patrabaata chhirera aaeko altraa bhaayolet re-ko paraagbaata phuleko chha ilektronic kabaad pansaudai euta kaalo karban phul. (Robot having data intercourse with human being, gave birth to a dwarf robo-being through virtual matrix. Right now, a black Carbun flower is bloomed clearing the electronic wastage; Puniyani 63-64, my trans.). This poem shows the human desire for digital and artificial development rather than natural existence. Moreover, it brings the theme of Greta Thunberg, Swedish environmental activist. Her saying: "You are never too small to make a difference". Furthermore, it also mentions the poet Bairagi Kaila that the reference of him has the connection with the title of this poem as he was the scholar of Mundhum, Tansing and other cultural knowledge in Nepal.

The second section of the poem Eco-Chorus, contains seven poems and their series. The first series of this section "Rukh Reel"(Tree Reel) starts with the saying by Bertolt Brecht- "What kind of times are these, when to talk about trees is almost a crime?" The first series of this the poem "Rukh Reel- 1" (Tree Reel-1) portrays the picture of a tree talking to its owner mentioning that by seeing matured figure of its body, the greedy human being will cut down it and request to have love talk before its death. In the second series "Rukh keel-2", the same tree during the cutting mentions to the axe the five wishes before death and all the wishes are for the welfare of human beings. But the site where the tree belongs was of dam project site. The third series, 'Rukh Reel 3' presents picture of bark less, branchless tree as the last generation of middle-aged earth where the tree is just looking upwards for a natural dream to have bark and branch. But the world itself thinks real as virtual and virtual as real. This irony beautifully portrays the loss of the ecology. In all these series nature is pleading with human beings, expresses desire to live and let others live and dreams for complete existence.

The second poem of this section "Taarma Baseko Charaa" (A bird sitting on Wire) starts with the quote by Arundhati Roy "Tiniharuko chuchobaata chaadimaya raal jharna thaalyo. Ek ek gardai tiniharu haangaabaata Jhare. Murdaa bhaera. Ti budhaa mitrawat parewaaharu mareko bisayamaa dheraile dhyan dienan. Yasai chahin dhyan dinalaai aru aru dherai kuraa thie" (Silver like saliva started to flow from their beaks. They began to fall down from the branch one by one being corpse. Most of them did not care about the death of those old, friendly pigeons. By the way, they had many other things to have attention; Puniyani 81, my trans.). This quote creates the mental picture of a dying birds due to electrical shock on wire. This sort of issue is discussed by Carson in the chapter "And No Birds Sing" as: "Over increasingly large areas of the United States, spring now comes unheralded by the return of the birds and the early mornings are strangely silent where once they were filled with the beauty of bird song (29)". All the series of this poem focus for the same theme presented by Carson. The first series of this poem "Taarma Baseko Charaa-1" (A Bird Sitting on Wire-1) as it creates the image of the death of birds because of unmanaged electric wires. It warns assuring the destruction of birds as the destruction of human beings too. Similarly, the second series of this poem - "Taarmaa Baseko Charaa-2" (A Bird Sitting on Wire-2) portrays the vision of returning back of birds to its own forest from wire or cities. Likewise, the succeeding series "Taarmaa Baseko Charaa-3 (A Bird Sitting on Wire-3) shows the place for birds to live through this stanza:

Yo shahar ho Yahaa charaalai thaun chha Lugaa sukagune taarma Teliphonko taarma Bijuliko taarma Ra

Pinjadaaharumaa (This this the town; so, the place for birds is on the wire used for hanging soaked cloth or telephone wire or electric wire and in the cage; Puniyani 86, my trans.). This poem expresses the lack of trees and the place for birds preceding the next poem "Taarmaa Baseko Charaa-4" (A Bird Sitting on Wire-4) which prints the image of man rolling with the wire just like the same bird in the wire. Similarly, the next poem "Taarmaa Baseko charaa-5" (A Bird Sitting on Wire-5) contains the imagery in this stanza: jasari baschha manko haangaamaa eutaa sundar shankaa eutaa mitho dhokaa eutaa gulio glaani

taarmaa baseko charaajastai (Doubt, deception, lamentation remained in the heart just like a bird sitting on the wire; Puniyani 88, my trans.). This poem compares the condition of a depressed bird in the month of May / June on sunny day with the doubt, deception, regret like negative feeling in the heart. Finally, the last poem of this series "Taarmaa Baseko Charaa -6" (A Bird Sitting on Wire-6) depicts the image of a confused bird for either to fly or to stay in the wires, by saying that because that bird always gets a dream of a upset branch cut to the ground. In this way all these poems in this series "Taarma Baseko Charaa" (A Bird Sitting on Wire) portray the miserable condition of bird because of environmental degradation or deforestation through nature imagery related to the bird.

Carson in the chapter "Earth's Green Mantle" expresses that "the earth's vegetation is part of a web of life in which there are intimate and essential relations between plants and the earth, between plants and other plants, between plants and animal" (17). The same theme is found in the succeeding poem of this second part "Hariyo Mims" (Green Memes) along with its four series. The first series "Hariyo Mims-1" (Green Memes-1) justifies eco theme through this imagery:

Hariyolaai Bistaaro lakhetdaichha Pahenlole Hariyole pahelo hunu

Hariyoko mrityu thiyo (Green is gradually chased by yellow. Turning of green into yellow is the death of green; Puniyani 94, my trans). The poems in these series moves around the theme of green not only simply a color but the color of life; color of nature; and the gradual change of green into yellow as the death of nature as well death of life. Similarly, the poem Hariyo Mims-3 (Green Memes- 3) shows materialistic perception of humans through these lines:

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Hariyolaai

Kewal hariyo paisa dekhchha (He sees green only as green money; Puniyani 96, my trans). It shows people's perception towards nature only as resources to earn money

not more than that. Similarly, the next poem of "Hariyo Mims-4" (Green, Memes-4) questions the existence of robo-humans through these stanzas:

Maanchhe aafai Narahepachhi Prithbimaa

Aakhir

Kaskaa laagi

Banaaunu ho

Robomaanab (To whom to create robo -human if the humans themselves will not remain in the earth; Puniyani 97, my trans). These stanzas from this poem create the imagery of extinction of human beings from the earth. In the same way, the succeeding poem "Baaisaun Sataabdiko Mantra" (Enchants of Twenty Second Century) is started with the paragraph from *Silent Spring*

Kasaile bheu napaaune chalmaa euta bikat kaalo chhaya hamimaathi ghasriraheko chha. Yo kaalpanik trasadi haami sabaile bheu paaune gari ekdin sajilai ek kathor yathaartha hunechha.... amerikaakaa anaginti saharharuma basantako aawajlai ke-le chaahi mauna garaaeko chha ta? "A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know. What has already silenced the voices of spring in countless towns in America?" (Carson 1).

This idea shows the disastrous consequences of natural destruction though the focus is for American context.

This poem contains seven series in it all creating the imageries of virtual human beings and their virtual activities. These just transform the relationship between robots and human beings in twenty-first century. They lead us to the twenty-second century and portray our condition in that digital world. The first series "Baaisau Shataabdiko Mantra - 1" (Enchant of Twenty Second Century -1) uses the images like 'dijital phool' (digital flower), 'bharchual chumban' (virtual kiss) and 'Robo-phedaangmaaharu' (Robo-priest). All these virtual images of living existences show the transformation of living world into digital world and satirizes the reality. Similarly, the second poem of this series is "Baaisau Sataabdiko Mantra - 2" (Enchants of Twenty Second Century-2). It shows the human dependency on data and creates the picture of the death ceremony of own existence with the phrase *aba hami malaami jaanchhau manuwaa sabdaharuko* (Now we attend the death ceremony of the human beings; Puniyani 102, my trans.)

It highlights our dependency upon artificial intelligence forgetting the reality and freshness of nature. In the same way the third series of this poem "Baaisaun Sataabdiko Mantra -3' (Enchant of Twenty Second Century-3) depicts the picture of dystopian world where hybrid human being of Twenty second century will listen through censors not ears, see through camera not eyes, think through computer not mind as that will be the terribly beautiful phase in the coming digital age. Furthermore, the next poem, "Baaisaun Sataabdiko Mantra-4" (Enchants of Twenty Second Century-4) portrays the picture of deserted earth after war through this stanza

paani siddhiepachhi baaluwa khaaun Ra

Jiudo mamima Pheroun aaphulai (le

Pheroun aaphulai (let's eat sand after finishing water and change ourselves into alive Mummy; Puniyani 105, my trans). These lines from the poem create the picture of deserted world that will face the running out of water resources and suggests that we should drink only sand as there will be no water. Human beings who are responsible to create such situation are just like dead body which lacks ethics specially, ecological. In the same way, the succeeding poems "Baaisaun sataabdiko Mantra-5" (Enchant of Twenty Second Century-5) "Baaisaun Sataabdiko Mantra- 6"(Enchant of Twenty Second Century-6), and "Baaisaun Sataabdiko Mantra-7' (Enchant of Twenty Second Century-7) portray the dystopian world in twenty second century where only some units of degraded versions of human beings are left otherwise everywhere the digital beings would cover the earth with their billions of data. Roberts are pointing at human beings by saying "living fossils". It shows the human civilization at the threshold to be extinct along with the loss of natural life on the earth.

The fifth poem of the second section is "Jungle Shelfy" starts with the quote "Jangallaai marubhumitira lakhetdai janggalko amarataako geet gaairahechhu ma" (I am singing the song of infinity of forest changing the forest into desert; Puniyani 111, my translation). This poem contains six series. The first series "Jungle Shelfy-1" presents Jungle as a novel which did not get any loyal reader. It leads to the second series "Jungle Shelfy-2' mentioning that our identity was in the forest which we had lost many years ago. Furthermore, the next poem 'Janggal shelfi- 3' shows the

consciousness that along with the development problem are also born. It suggests for not being the slave consumer of machines but for being back to the forest or to nature through this expression:

Aau ma bhaetira ma Jangle Hun F gulaam kanium

E gulaam kanjumar... (Oh! slaved consummer. Come towards me. I am the jungle; Puniyani 116, my translation). Similarly, Janggal Shelfi-4 portrays the apology of human beings with "Jungle" confessing that their own children had burnt the forest. It shows human being's a suicidal- activities to destroy own origin.

The next poem in the second section "Eco-chorus' is "Nadi Portret" (Portrait of River) contains eight series in it. The series of this poem present river as infinite existence, origin of civilization and compares with the penancing mother whose purity is grabbed by other. "Nadi Portret – 4" (Portrait of River -4) presents river as self-sufficient to provide water, cloud, storm, sound, wind, fish, pearl, electricity, speed, story and life and asks the human beings " Oh! carbon-child What do you have to give to me? Likewise, "Nadi Portret-6" (Portrait of River -6) shows the imageries of human encroachment over the river where as "Nadi Portrait-7" (Portrait of River -7) shows river as the origin of every myth and story of the world as well of human civilizations. And the last series of this poem "Nadi- Portret -8 (River Portrait-8) pictures the dried out condition of all the rivers leading to the end of human existence by mentioning the allusion of Prometheus not stealing fire from heaven but stealing water for human beings. The last poem of this section is "Prithvipeedaa" (Earth Pain) that includes seven series. It starts with a stanza by kewalchandra Lama as

Prithbile ramaaera bajaairaheko Gitartko tar nachudiyos Prithilai plaastikko Jholaamaa haalera kataa jaadaichhau timi (If only the suit

kataa jaadaichhau timi (If only the guitar played by the earth had not broken down. Where are you going keeping the earth in the plastic bag; Puniyani 133, my trans). This idea shows the pollution created by plastic bags which is one of the main causes of environmental degradation. The first series of this poem "Prithvipeedaa- 1" (Earth pain-1) presents the issue related with the degradation of the earth and our search for new planet leaving the colonized planet, the earth as dead one. According to Callicott, Aldo Leopold also focuses for earth ethics specially land ethics and people's concern for soil as economic resources (155). Just like Leopold concern, this poem also presents the images of people's consumerist behavior without thinking earth as living planet. In the same way the second series of this poem "Prithvipeedaa- 2" (Earth pain - 2) presents the issue related with extinction of birds from the earth giving reference of a crow and its necessity in "Kag Tihar" (Hindu festival). In the same way, the next series of this poem "Prithvipeedaa-3" (Earth pain-3) presents the auditory imageries of the sound of frogs that has the connection with, rainy season. If we stop to listen this sound, that will lead to us to the degradation of earth or the death of the earth.

Likewise, the succeeding poem "Prithvipeedaa- 4" (Earth Pain -4), using the symbol of the bird satirizes the human desire to colonize the moon or the Mars. It compares the sensitivity between birds and human desires. Birds, who are there to fly, returns back to earth but human beings who have just learn to fly, make plan to colonize other planets leaving the earth. Similarly, the next poem "Prithvipeedaaa -5" (Earth Pain-5) shows the attempt to search the place to live on earth but find only the smoke. Likewise, the following poem "Prithvipeeda- 6" (Earth pain -6) presents the concept of earth-summit only as the transaction of earth in reality not for the preservation of it. Finally, the last page to "Prithvipeeda - 7" (Earth pain-7) shows the analogy between human activity and other creature's activity creating -difference in result for the same action. It says the earth worm loves the earth and eats soil whereas human being loves the soil and eats the earth that means harms the earth. All these seven series of the poem "Prithbipeedaa" (Earth Pain) show the pain, problem, misery of the earth only because of human activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Tangsing*, an anthology of Nepali eco-poetry by Raja Puniyani has included various nature imageries. By using these different sorts of imageries, it has portrayed the eco- theme that laments for the already lost ecosystem of the earth and human being's engagement in virtual world forgetting own existence or root i.e. nature. Moreover, it has portrayed the three eras of human civilizations namely past, present and most often future. By using various nature imageries all these poems try to show the inter- connection of the past human deeds to destroy nature; its effects at present and the possible consequences in future.

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