

# The Evolving Role of Teachers in Shaping Indian Higher Education and Society

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**Abstract:** *Indian Higher Education has experienced phenomenal expansion since independence. The recent developments in communication and technology have removed all barriers of time and distance. A teacher plays a prominent role in bringing about social change and transmission of wisdom, knowledge and experience of one generation to the other. Children who are the potential wealth of the nation are under the influence of the teacher. The success of a nation depends on the quality of its people, which, in turn, depends on the younger generation. Teachers are the source of inspiration and guidance in the academic life of the students. In India, the position of the teacher in society was sacred from ancient times. In the Vedic and Post Vedic period, the place of the teacher was second to that of God. The teacher was acknowledged as the repository of all knowledge. Society believed in the teacher and his capacity to mould the younger generation. It admired his scholarship, dedication to duty and his intellectual and moral stature. His austere lifestyle and simple needs were considered as exemplary virtues to be imbibed by the younger generation. He occupied a very high position because he was not only the custodian of knowledge but also because he was a man of character and discipline. But today the status of the teacher is deteriorating. Teachers are not given much respect as it was given in ancient India.*

**Keywords:** teacher influence, Indian education, societal change, knowledge transmission

## 1. Introduction

Education is the process of facilitating, learning or acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and attitudes. Education plays a vital role in the life of a nation. The character and quality of people depend on the education that is provided to them at different levels. Knowledge and wisdom have been regarded as the highest virtues of man. Powar (2011) states that education leads to the development of the human mind with an emphasis on values and correct behavior. It should inculcate in the individual knowledge and skills that are necessary for both personal and national development.

## 2. Teaching at Different Levels

Pre- primary Education refers to pre-school education for children three and six years. The earliest official Committee to touch on the importance of pre-school education was the Sargent Committee in 1944. The Seventh Plan (1985-1990) was a landmark in the history of pre-primary education. The National Policy on Education 1986 was developed which laid a strong emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The objective of ECCE is the total development of children from birth to six years when their intellectual and physical abilities begin to develop. Secondary Education refers to education in classes IX and X leading to higher secondary classes XI and XII. It prepares children between the teenage years of 14 to 18 for entry to higher education or for the world of work. Education also referred to as tertiary education or post-secondary education has as its components teaching at undergraduate and post graduate levels, research and social service activities or extension activities. It includes education of equivalent level offered by open and distant learning and by professional training institutions.

### 2.1 Higher Education – Global Scenario

Powar (2002) has stated that the modern Indian Universities have their roots in European institutions. During its 1000 year existence, starting with the establishment of the first of the modern universities in Bologna in 1088, modern higher education has evolved. Traditionally higher education has been elitist in character and majority of the students were selected from the higher echelons of the society. During the Medieval Age the emphasis was placed on religion and liberal arts, especially philosophy and literature. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, science and technology became important in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the entry of the working class into the realms of higher education and slowly it began to acquire a more open character. The end of World War II saw the emergence of developing nations and the massification of education with higher education acquiring an egalitarian character.

### 2.2 Higher Education in India

In the Ancient Period education involved an integrated study of religion, philosophy, science and ethics. Education was imparted at the ashram of the rishi or home of the guru. The Brahmanical system produced eminent scholars like the mathematician Panini, astronomers Aryabhata, physicians Dhanwanthri and Charaka and the surgeon Sushruta. With the advent of Buddhism, monasteries Viharas flourished. Institutions like Taxila, Nalanda, Vallabhi and Vikramshila were the precursors of the modern university. In the medieval period, with the advent of Muslim rule, the study of Islam became important for the Muslims. School education was in Makhtabs and Pathsals while higher education was in Madrasas and Gurukuls.

### Major Events in the History of Indian Higher Education

Today India's higher education system is the third largest in the world in terms of students, next to China and the United States. The present format of higher education in India started

in 1857 with the inception of Universities in the three Presidency towns of Madras Bombay and Calcutta.

- 1) The Indian Universities Commission (1902) inquired about Universities established in British India. It was formed on the recommendations of Lord Curzon to make reforms in University education in India. It was led by Sir Thomas Raleigh. The recommendations included regulations for reformation of University Senates in Indian Universities, greater representation of affiliated colleges in the Senates and stricter monitoring of Institutions by the Universities. It also made recommendations for reform of school education, curricular reforms at Universities, recommendations on education and examinations, research as well as student welfare and state scholarships.
- 2) The Indian Universities Act (1904) was passed in 1904. It was the outcome of the deliberations carried out to ascertain the needs of contemporary Higher Education with an aim of devising remedies to such problems as a library, laboratory, hostel buildings etc. It sought to tighten University control over the affiliated colleges by providing for their periodical inspection by the Syndicate or their nominees.
- 3) The Government Resolution on Education Policy was passed in 1913. 3 cardinal principles in the education policy where
  - a) The curricula of primary and secondary schools should be more practical and useful.
  - b) Facilities for higher education should be provided in India so that Indian students may not have to go abroad.
  - c) Instead of increasing the number of Institutions, their standard should be raised. The Resolution provided for expansion of University Education considering the existing 5 Universities and 185 colleges as insufficient.
- 4) The Calcutta University Commission 1917 was established under the Chairmanship of Dr. Michael Sadler, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Leeds. Although originally formed for the reform of the Calcutta University, It made a thorough assessment of the entire University system in the country.
- 5) There were 5 Universities in 1921. 6 more Universities were established and their number rose to 11. Prior to Independence 9 more Universities were established and in total there were 20 Universities. The era of social reconstruction inevitably followed in the wake of social and economic reconstruction initiated by the National Government after 1947, education being the chief instrument for reconstruction and transformation of society. The first steps taken in the direction of educational reconstruction were the appointment of a series of Commissions to survey, study, review and recommend improvements in different sectors of education. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.
- 6) University Education Commission (1948), popularly known as Radhakrishnan Commission established under the Chairmanship of Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan to examine the development of higher education in the country and make recommendations regarding its improvement and expansion. The Commission made important suggestions for improving the standard of

University education in the country. Introduction of a 3 year Degree course for the first University degree, greater use of tutorial system of instruction, formulating of new aims, emphasis on developing new knowledge and critical thinking rather than mechanical passing of examinations, establishment of rural Universities and introduction of moral education were some of its salient recommendations. To co-ordinate the University education in the country, the establishment of the University Grants Commission was also recommended.

- 7) University Grants Commission (UGC) is a statutory body established in 1956 through the Parliament. It is responsible for coordination, evaluation and maintaining standards of higher education in India. The UGC recognizes the Universities to award Degrees through the affiliation process. The affiliation process allows colleges to run the recognized courses of the Universities in Arts, Science, Commerce, crafts, Law, Pharmacy and other specific areas. The colleges are affiliated to the respective Universities across the 28 Federal States as per their geographical proximity. These colleges are run by the State Governments or private Trusts.
- 8) Indian Education Commission 1964-66, popularly known as Kothari Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Kothari by the Government of India on 14th July 1964 to advise the government on the national pattern of education, general policies and principles for the development of education. It submitted its report in 1966. It suggested the 10+2+3 pattern of education in all parts of the country. It also emphasizes vocational, technical and science education. The report stressed that there be
  - a) A radical in the quality and standard of higher education and research.
  - b) Expansion of higher education to meet manpower requirement.
  - c) Improvement of university organization and administration.

The unique feature of this report was that it was the first report to have a comprehensive review of the entire educational system. The Commission opined that education is the most powerful instrument of national development. It provided the foundation for the National Policy of Education 1968.

In 1976, with the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment of the Constitution, Education was included in the Concurrent List. It became the responsibility of both the Centre and the State.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 envisaged education for development and education for equality. It was formed to take higher education to the masses. Distance Education Council (DEC) was formed which led to the surge in the number of students pursuing higher education through distance mode through the establishment of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) which standardizes, approves and affiliates open education system. To standardize the process and quality of engineering colleges, UGC established All India Council for Technical Education. It is an autonomous body responsible for taking Engineering and Technology education to all sections of the society across India. UGC, the nodal agency for setting quality standards had set up an autonomous body called National Assessment and

Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994 in order to systematically tackle the issue of quality in higher education and assesses the ranking of Institutions at national levels. Internal Quality assurance Cell (IQAC) is responsible for maintaining quality standards and co-ordinates curricular, extra-curricular and research activities of the institute.

On 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2005, the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, constituted the National Knowledge Commission under the Chairmanship of Sri Sam Pitroda. The Commission was to advise the Prime Minister's Office on policies related to education, research institutes and reforms needed to make India competitive in the knowledge economy. NKC proposes the following set of initiatives: Access to knowledge, knowledge concepts, knowledge creation and knowledge application. Many of the recommendations have been implemented in areas such as Libraries, e-governance and translation, higher education, vocational education, entrepreneurship etc.

Rashtriya Uchchathar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 2013 aims at providing strategic funding to eligible State Higher Education institutions. The funding would flow from the Central Ministry through the State Governments/Union Territories to the State Higher Education Councils before reaching the identified institutions. The funding to States would be on the basis of a critical appraisal of State Higher Education Plans, which would describe each State's strategy to address issues of equity, access and excellence in higher education.

Arts include Humanities, Social Sciences and Languages. Sciences include Home Science, Education include Shiksha Shastri, Shiksha Acharya, Vidhya Varidhi, Vachaspati etc. Engineering and Technology includes Agriculture, Engineering and Technology, Dairy Technology, Architecture etc. Medicine includes Ayurveda, Dentistry, Homeopathy, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, Unani, Physiotherapy, Neurotherapy, Siddha etc. Agriculture includes Horticulture, Sericulture, and Forestry etc. Veterinary Sciences include Fisheries, Dairy Science, and Animal Science etc. Others include Library Science, Music, Performing Arts, Journalism, Mass Communication, Physical Education and Social Work etc.

### 2.3 Higher Education Scenario in Kerala

The history of modern education can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the region came under the East India Company. Both the Christian Missionaries and colonial administration established educational institutions. The London Missionary Society in South Travancore, the Church Missionary (CMS) in Central Travancore and Kochi and the Basel Evangelical Mission (BEM) in Malabar were the pioneers in this field. Sir Charles Wood, the President of Board of Control of the East India Company prepared a detailed proposal for the expansion of education and dispatched it to the Government of India in 1854, which came to be known as Wood's Dispatch. It was the foundation on which higher education was built up in India. The proposal to start Universities in the Provinces led to the introduction of Higher Education in the country. Three Provincial Universities were established in 1857, one each in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

As far as Kerala was concerned, there were no colleges till the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century. The number of Higher Educational Institutes had been slow in all regions till the end of the colonial period. In 1947, there were only 14 colleges in the state. The Maharajas College of Trivandrum became an exclusive center of higher learning. The University granted affiliation to the CMS College at Kottayam in 1892 and the Scott Christian College, Nagercoil in 1893. The Union Christian College, Alwaye was established in 1921 and was affiliated to the Madras University. St. Berchman's College, Changanassery was established in 1922 as a junior college with the financial assistance of the Government of Travancore. St. Thomas College, a second grade college was raised to a first-grade college in 1925. St. Theresa's College; the first institution for women for higher education became a First-Grade College in 1927. The two private colleges in Malabar were the Zamorin's College and the Malabar Christian College.

### Establishment of the Travancore University

The idea of establishing a University in the state was put forward by A. R Raja Raja Varma, the Principal of Maharajas College in 1913. The Maharaja issued a Royal Proclamation on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1937, establishing the Travancore University. The University adopted the Sanskrit verse *karmani vygyate pranjna* as its motto. The English equivalent of this is "knowledge manifests itself in action". Later on, Travancore University was transformed to the University of Kerala.

The University of Travancore which later became the University of Kerala was established in 1937 by a promulgation of the Maharaja of Travancore, Sir ChithiraThirunal Balarama Varma who was the first Chancellor of the University. Sir C.P RamaswamyIyer, the then Diwan of the state was the first Vice Chancellor. It was the sixteenth University to be set up in India and ten colleges within the State of Travancore which were affiliated to the Madras University became the affiliated colleges of the University of Kerala. The University had three campuses located in Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulum and Kozhikode. In 1968, the Centre at Kozhikode became a full-fledged University covering the colleges and Departments located in Trissur, Palakkad, Kozhikode and Kannur Districts of Kerala. The CUSAT and Kerala Agricultural University were set up in 1971 and in 1983; the Mahatma Gandhi University was established. With the establishment of these Universities, the area of jurisdiction of the University of Kerala has been limited to Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha and some parts of Pathanamthitta Districts. control over the University through the Chancellor. But the Kerala University Act guaranteed considerable autonomy. The structure of the University was the same as that of the Travancore University except for the induction of an additional body namely, the Academic Council. An important feature of the Act of 1957 was that students were represented in the Senate and Academic Council. By a subsequent Amendment, a student representative was included in the Syndicate. Originally the term of the Vice Chancellor, Syndicate and Senate were three years. By the Kerala University Act, of 1967, the term of office was extended to four years.

The period between 1956 and 1968 witnessed the opening of 26 colleges, 15 of them in the private sector. In 2003-04, there were 290 colleges under the four General Universities, Kerala, Calicut, MG, and Kannur: 38 in the government sector, 148 in the private aided sector and 104 in the private unaided (self-financing sector). Under these Universities, 1.69 lakh students studied during 2004 in Arts, science and commerce streams.<sup>17</sup> One of the factors that contributed to the growth of Higher Educational Institutions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the pressure exerted on the state governments by the dominant communities like Nairs, Ezhavas and Christians for getting colleges sanctioned to them.

**Other Universities in Kerala**

The University of Kerala is known as the Mother University of Kerala because it was the first University to be established in Kerala. Later on, besides the University of Kerala, 12 State Universities, 2 Central Universities and 3 deemed Universities were established. The details are given in tables 2.6 to 2.8.

**Table 2.6: Central Universities in Kerala**

S. No.	Name of University	Year of establishment	Headquarters
1.	Central University of Kerala	2009	Kasargod
2.	Indian Maritime University	2008	Cochin

Source: Official Websites of the Universities

**Table 2.7: State Universities in Kerala**

Sl. No.	Name of University	Year of establishment	Headquarters
1.	University of Kerala	1957	Thiruvananthapuram
2.	University of Calicut	1968	Malappuram
3.	Cochin University of Science and Technology	1971	Ernakulam
4.	Kerala Agricultural University	1972	Thrissur
5.	Mahatma Gandhi University	1983	Kottayam
6.	Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit	1994	Kalady
7.	Kannur University	1997	Kannur
8.	National University of Advanced Legal Studies	2005	Kochi
9.	Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies	2010	Kochi
10.	Kerala University of Health Sciences	2010	Thrissur
11.	Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University	2010	Wayanad
12.	Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University	2012	Malappuram
13.	APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University	2014	Thiruvananthapuram
14.	Sree Narayana Guru Open University	2020	Kollam

Source: Official Websites of the Universities

**Table 2.8: Deemed Universities in Kerala**

S. No.	Name of University	Year of establishment	Headquarters
1.	Amrita University	1998	Ernakulam
2.	Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology	2007	Thiruvananthapuram
3.	Kerala Kalamandalam	1999	Cheruthuruthy

Source: Official Websites of the Universities

**Colleges in the Higher Education Sector in Kerala**

Colleges in the Higher Education Sector in Kerala are functioning under different Universities. Colleges under Medical, Engineering, Technology, Agriculture, Fisheries and the like are functioning under the respective Universities. Colleges in the State have the status of Government colleges, Grant in Aid Private Colleges, unaided /self-financing colleges, autonomous colleges etc. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has granted autonomous status to nine colleges in the State during 2014-15. The colleges are Maharaja’s College, Ernakulam, Mar Ivanios College, Thiruvananthapuram, Fatima Mata National College, Kollam, S.B. College Changanassery, St. Teresa’s College, Ernakulam, Sacred Heart College, Thevara, Rajagiri College of Social Sciences Ernakulam, St. Thomas College, Thrissur and St. Thomas College, Devagiri.

**Higher Education Administration in Kerala**

A Principal Secretary to Government heads the Department of Higher Education. Collegiate Education and Technical Education also come under this Department. Directorate of Collegiate Education is the Government Agency to make

arrangement for starting new Government Colleges, new courses and for payment of salary to the staff of Aided Colleges. Directorate of Technical Education is in charge of the institutions imparting Technical Education in the State including Engineering Colleges, Polytechnics, College of Fine Arts, and Vocational Training Institutes etc. The Higher Education Department aims to convert Higher Education Institutes in the State into Centers of Excellence and ensure quality education through academic excellence. The Department of Higher Education is responsible for the overall development of infrastructural facilities in colleges. The Department looks after the expansion of access and qualitative improvement in Higher Education through world class Universities, Colleges and other institutes.

**2.5 Department of Collegiate Education**

The Department of Collegiate Education was established in 1956. Originally the Directorate had jurisdiction over Government colleges only. But later its authority was extended over private colleges also. Its authority over private colleges was mainly concerned with the grant of financial

assistance provided by the Government to each college for which budgetary allocation had been made. The Government order provided for the creation of the office of the Regional Deputy Directors of Collegiate Education in Kozhikode, Trissur, Ernakulum, Kottayam and Kollam. The Department of Collegiate Education is vested with the responsibility of

imparting best quality higher education to the eligible students who complete the higher secondary level education. The Department plays a vital role in the development activities of the higher education sector. The organizational chart of the Department is given in Figures 2.2 and 2.3.

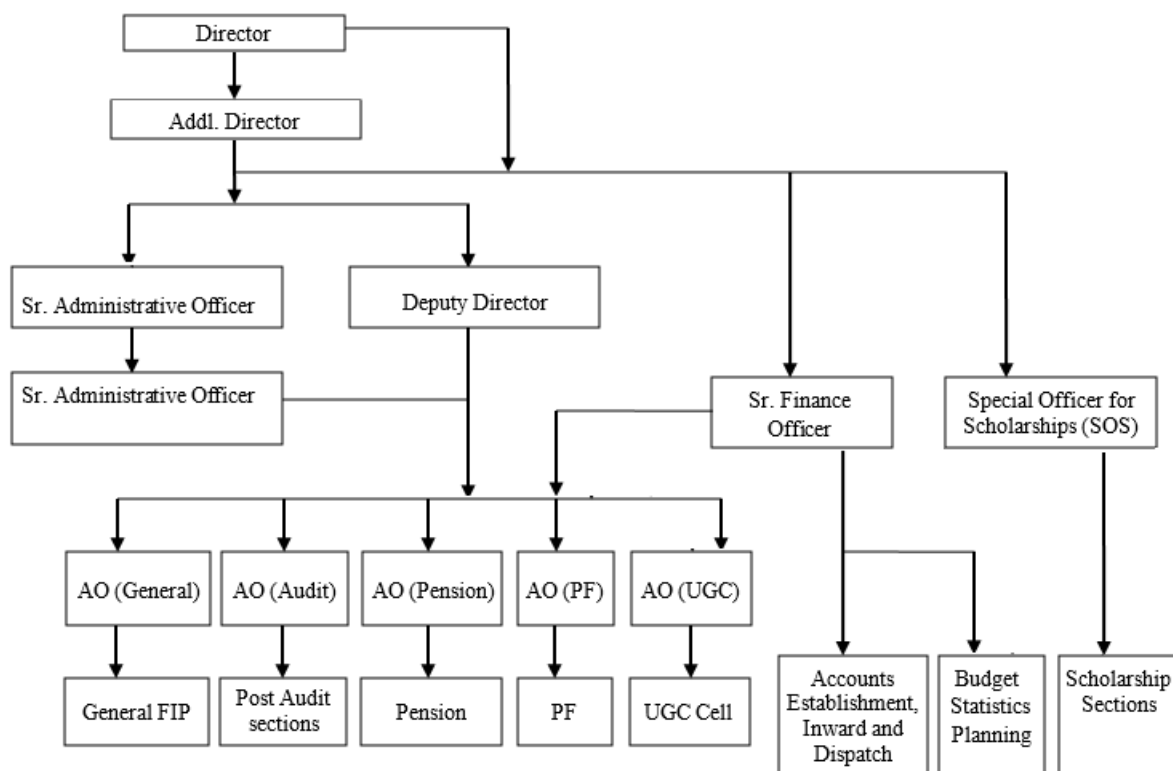


Figure 2.2: Administrative Structure of the Directorate of Collegiate Education.

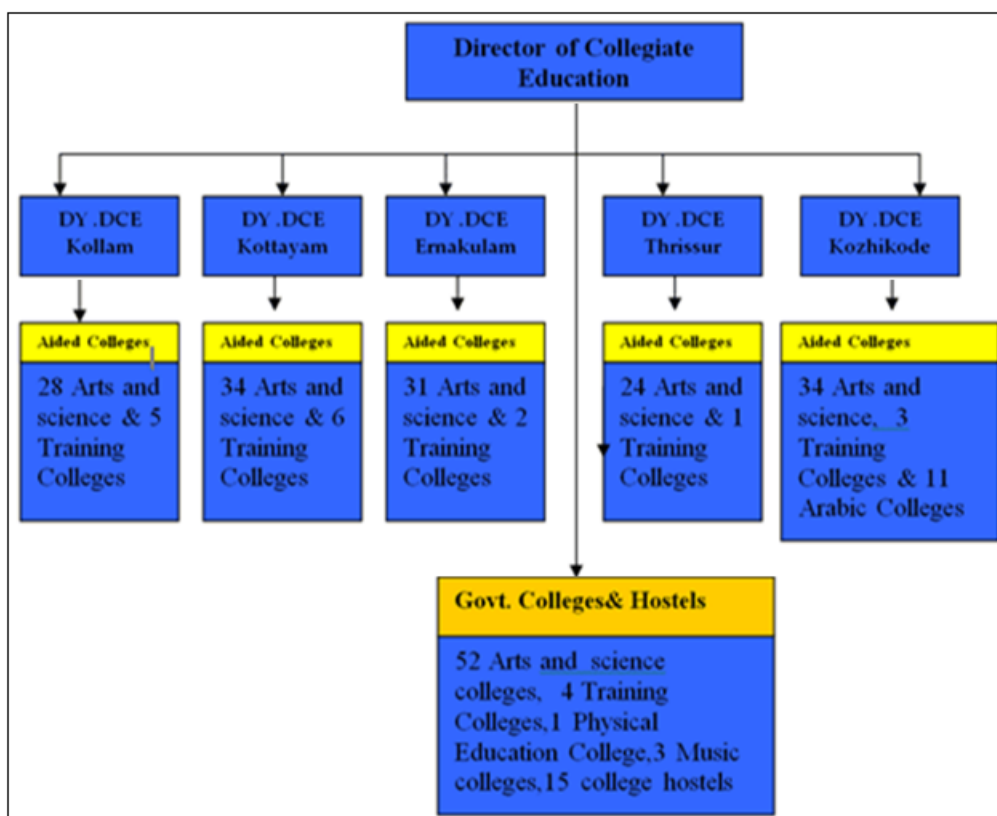


Figure 2.3: Number of Institutions under the Directorate of Collegiate Education

Table 2.14 gives the number of institutions under the control of the Department.

**Table 2.14:** Number of Institutions under the Department of Collegiate Education of Kerala (Category Wise)

Educational Agency	Category					
	Arts and Science Colleges	Training Colleges	Arabic Colleges	Music Colleges	Physical Education Colleges	College Hostels
Government	61	4	0	4	1	15
Private	155	17	11	0	0	0
Total	216	21	11	4	1	15

Source: Official Website of the Department of Collegiate Education of Kerala

### 3. Conclusion

The above description of key facts and figures relating to higher education scenario in global and Indian context support the growing significance of higher education for economic and social development.

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