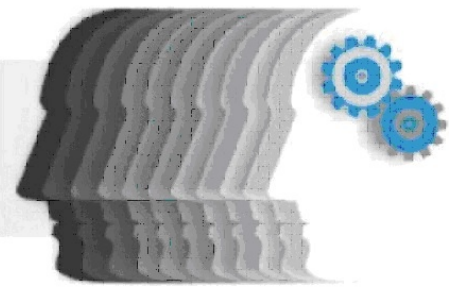


MInd





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THE MENSA INDIA MAGAZINE



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THE MENSA INDIA MAGAZINE

May-Jun 2021

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In this issue:

Hello Mensans!

This edition like the previous one is so much about travel that we could say it is the theme of the magazine.

The cover photo is of an uninhabited island in Maldives where tourists visit. The photograph was submitted by Rupesh Sangoi of Mensa Mumbai.

The June edition of Mensa World Journal has also featured the news about Mensa India becoming a Full National Mensa. Check it out in the MWJ section.

Send in your articles and contributions in plain text format and pictures in high resolution .jpg format to: editor@mensaindia.org

Krishnan V. Iyer
Editor-in-chief, MInd

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Art & Photography | 3 |
| Writings & Meanderings | 5 |
| Pages from Mensa World Journal | 9 |

On the cover:
Island in south Maldives by Rupesh Sangoi, Mensa Mumbai

Disclaimer:
All contents in this magazine are opinions of the individual authors and contributors. Neither Mensa India, the society, its office bearers nor the editors are responsible for any content or views expressed.

Art & Photography

I undertook a trip to a deserted island in south Maldives last December. It looked nothing less than a paradise with crystal clear waters in thousand shades of blues, white sands, coconut trees and green vegetation. I spent time snorkeling around the island and exploring its beauty.



Stingrays along the shores of an island in south Maldives



White sand beaches and blue waters, a perfect combination

Art & Photography



Water villas. Almost all resorts have these watervillas which offer an amazing experience.



Shades of blue in every direction

-Rupesh Sangoi, Mensa Mumbai

Writings & Meanderings

How Travelling Changed My Life

Someone told me that unless you know my struggles and my past, it will be hard to tell you how travelling literally changed my life, so let's begin from the start.

I Can Do It Because I Think I Can

I was 19 and I had been deemed an overachiever all my life. Things were easy because I was always willing to fight for what I wanted, and when I did, I always got it - whether it was making a girls basketball team in a school that did not promote it at all or doing all the extra-curricular activities and still somehow finishing at the top of the class. I had a simple motto 'I can do it because I think I can', but somehow this motto turned a little reckless by the time college started. Staying awake for three days in a row by consuming red bulls just because 'I am Kajal and I can do anything' or procrastinating studying for tough exams like Actuarial Science to the last 3-4 days and still cracking it; I was basically a show-off. The only difference was that I wasn't showing off to the world, but just to myself, that I can do anything on which I set my mind. And even though on the outside, that sounds like a good thought, I always ended up taking it to the extreme.

And then it happened!

And then it happened! I remember waking up on a Sunday in November 2018. As is the norm, I picked up the phone to check my schedule for the day. Out of habit I rubbed my left eye and suddenly all went black. It felt weird. But as soon as I cleared steam of the eye, I could see my phone again. It felt odd. Something was wrong. I covered my left eye again, and all I saw (or didn't see) was blackness. Panicked, I rushed to my parents' room and asked them if they could see something wrong with my right eye. Confused, they said, "no". I confirmed whether it was closed shut and they again replied in the negative. I ran to the mirror, covered my left eye again and as I tried to look in the mirror with my right eye wide open and saw nothing, it hit me – I had completely lost vision in my right eye! I was partially blind.

Introduction to the world of insecurities

After multiple tests and visits to the doctor, I was told that my optic nerve was swollen. Months passed, and so did multiple treatments, empty packets of medicines, and steroids. Physically, I had gained a lot of weight and lost my immunity to a great extent but mentally it was a different thing altogether. I didn't know how to push myself anymore. I was scared. Everyone had their opinions but no one really understood. With each passing day and each new conversation with my relatives or friends, I was losing confidence and growing more and more insecure. Growing up, I had never experienced insecurities. I was always the person who was brimming with confidence and talent. But now, my fitness was gone, my friends had started vanishing and I was undergoing one heartbreak after another. No matter how many people I was surrounded with, there was no one with whom I could share about how I felt. A lot of people didn't even know something had happened because I thought they will pity me or just find faults. For the next year, I got into a series of toxic friendships which just further took away whatever little self-confidence I had left. On the exterior, no one knew what was going

Writings & Meanderings

on, not even my parents or close friends. Everyone still saw the same girl with great accomplishments bagging an amazing job, going to Harvard Summer School, and what not, but on the inside, only I knew how I felt.

How it all started



And then in November 2019, one year after that horrible incident, two guys from my college told me about this trekking trip that they were planning in the mid-semester break in December and they wanted me to join them. I was sure that I couldn't even run for five minutes continuously, let alone do a trek. I hadn't done any sort of exercise or workout or played basketball (something I used to be extremely

passionate about before all this happened), and I was sure that I won't go because I won't be able to do it. I remember them and others discussing who all to ask and then deciding against asking a good lot based on their capability to do the trek. What I couldn't understand at that time was that why would they even consider me. One of them, someone I had interacted with only briefly by then, took me out for these walks where in the middle of conversations he would randomly tell me that how he was sure I will be able to do it and told me how he will be there the entire time in case something went wrong. I didn't know him well but for some reason, his words boosted my confidence, and what felt like a sure 'no' ended up turning into a 'yes'. I was still unsure of my decision and contemplated changing it every day till the very day before the trip, but who knew at that time that this trip was going to be a game changer in my life.

Journey to Kareri Lake

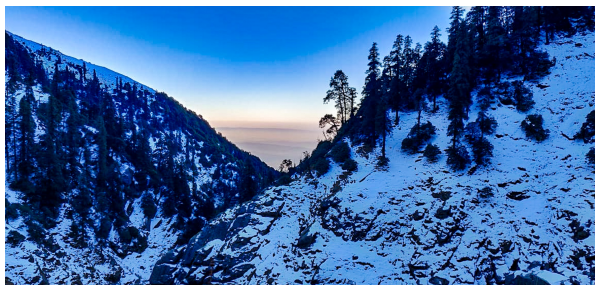


A little conscious, a little unsure, my journey to Kareri Lake began. As the trek began, and we started climbing one mountain after another, it became more and more difficult to catch my breath; but I refused to say anything and I refused to stop. My shoulders ached from carrying the trek bag but again I didn't complain or give it to someone else. Somehow, I was in that part of the group that was leading the trek. A little astonished but mostly enjoying, I reached the camping site for the night 'Reoti'. Two people in the group (one of them being the only person on the trek I knew for about 7-8 months) had cramps and nausea and thus decided to stay back the next day. This did make my fear of not being able to complete the trek return for a while but I decided to ignore it and nevertheless proceeded to the top.

Becoming fearless

The views were astonishingly beautiful. The snow-clad mountains were breathtaking and as I climbed higher, the views only got better. Every moment was a challenge for me. Sometimes I slipped, sometimes I fell, and sometimes my breathing was so strenuous that I felt my heart would just come out. I even had a near-death experience when I was about to reach the final

Writings & Meanderings



point of the trek - the Kareri Lake. But by the time we were returning, I was running. Yes, running! I was running, sliding, and I was just fearless. I went the extra mile to see the sunset; I didn't want to go back and I didn't even mind when I got lost with a fellow trekker for more than an hour.

Re-discovering myself



I was not the most physically fit person out there, in fact I might have been the least, but what this trek taught me or more like reminded me was that I don't give up. It taught me that I don't need to be physically fit to trek, I had to be mentally fit. It taught me that even if my body had physically changed so much, even if I was not physically fit anymore, it didn't change who I was or who I have always been. I was still a fighter and in fact after all this I decided to get myself inked a warrior tattoo. And no, not because that tattoo would somehow make me a warrior, but it could remind me in those times when I am unable to remind myself that I am a warrior who does not give up no matter what.

Alas, falling in love!

2 months later, I was on the Kedarkantha trek, and then another 2 months later, I was paragliding in Bir, then Pondicherry, then Singapore, then Chopta trek, and so on. I was unstoppable. Kareri Lake was just the start of my journey, and as the journey progressed, I fell in love, and not just with travelling and trekking, but with myself too, all over again. I had realized that travelling broadens our horizons and makes us see things that we normally are unable to see. From going on my first solo trip to falling in love with travelling so much, I became a writer. I had experienced something which had made me grow into a better and a more beautiful version of myself and I just couldn't wait to share it with others and hence started my travel blog.

I refuse to give up

I still have not conquered all. In fact there is no conquering all. It will always be a work in progress. I still get jitters before going on the next trek; I still get nervous when I try something new while travelling and I am still not the fittest person in a trekking group; actually I still may be the least fit. But what's different is that I don't stop and I refuse to give up both on the trek and in my life. Something I didn't see in myself back then, the person who convinced me to go to Kareri Lake Trek sure did. I grow with every trip I go to and learn so much from every new person I meet. Travelling has become such an ingrained part of me now that there's no Kajal without it. I still am not a very fit person, and I am still working on my recurring health issues since that incident. But now, there's no stopping me. Not just from growing and travelling by myself but sharing it with others.

Writings & Meanderings

Explore, dream, discover!

You, my friend, do not need a life-threatening incident to happen in your life to discover the beauty of travelling. Just go out there, trek a mountain, sleep on a beach while looking at the sunset, gaze at the stars, live with strangers, explore not just the world but yourself, and come back to see how much your perspective towards everything changes. And if you want to, share your stories with me, I would love to hear and share them.

-Kajal Gupta, Mensa Delhi

About the author:



I am Kajal. A 23-year-old who wants to live each day like it is my last; who wants the last line of her biography to say '*zindagi se behad pyaar tha use, aur khud se, zindagi se bhi zyada*' (she loved life very much, but loved herself more than life itself), whose savings are zero at the end of the month because she spends all her money on travelling and doesn't miss a chance to do it. I don't remember the day I realized that travel is bliss, but to date, my opinion has never changed. I don't travel to escape life, but for life to not escape me.

The feeling of being alone on a trip, of meeting new people and becoming friends for life-long, of exploring different cities, encountering contrasting cultures and traditions, tasting some amazing food, and meeting new people; the warmth from the chill of lying in the snow like there is no tomorrow, of booking no return tickets until the very end of the trip, of exploring your own city as you have never done before; the adventure, the thrill, the roller coaster of emotions, everything feels new for every mountain I climb, and every valley I stroll. Trust me, if you are not travelling, you are missing a lot.

So here I am, to tell you how travelling changed my life. Also, to read more about me and my travel stories find me on my website (<http://secretescapades1.com/>) and my Instagram handle (<https://www.instagram.com/secretescapades1/>).

Pages From Mensa World Journal

From The ExComm

Pandemic Challenges



When the first consequences of the pandemic hit us in Germany last year, the plans for our annual gathering in April were pretty much finished. Hundreds of Ms had booked their hotel rooms, had signed up for many different events and had paid their registration and other fees. All of this had to be cancelled and the payments were generally refunded. The organising committee was also successful in recovering all down-payments for the different event locations, restaurants and hotels.

Other Mensa events also had to be cancelled except for those that took place outdoors, but even those eventually fell victim to the pandemic. Fortunately, our MY (Mensa Youth, 18-30 years) had developed an online platform for cyber meetings which was opened up to the entire membership in response to the shut down. A number of volunteers are managing this cyberspace similar to the way we service members in geographical areas. Online events are planned and entered into our Events calendar and online meetings are organized on a regular basis. While all of this works quite smoothly, we all miss our normal life with the old-fashioned events and real-life meetings as we used to know them.

As part of our annual gathering, our annual general meeting obviously also had to be cancelled. After careful consideration the German Mensa Board decided to postpone all issues to be discussed at that meeting to the 2021 meeting. At that time we were still hoping for a normal 2021 annual gathering, but as we all now know, this was also not possible. Fortunately and contrary to last year, we had enough lead time so that the cancellation of the events was much less problematic.

That left us with the challenge of organising our annual business meeting in one form or other. Consequently, we have been preparing for a hybrid annual meeting, where a small group of members are going to be present at the meeting location while the large majority of participants will join the meeting online. For that purpose we had to find a solution that would allow us to validate the participants as members in good standing and permit us to vote on motions and other meeting business. In order to avoid complications we have opted for all voting to be done online, even by those who are physically present. We have decided to use OpenSlides and we have contracted a company to assist us so that we can ensure a smooth operation of all aspects of the meeting.

Among those to be physically present at the meeting will have to be our election committee, as they will have to tally and announce the voting results for our new board, as well as for one financial auditor and an ombudsman. There will also be some of the current board members, two meeting moderators, someone to write the minutes as well as technical

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Pages From Mensa World Journal

staff and organizers. Overall physical participation will be kept to a minimum in a large meeting location so that proper distancing and all other pandemic requirements can be fully met.

By the time you read this our meeting will be history and I hope that everything will have worked as planned. For the longer term I sincerely hope that we all can soon have our old good lives back and leave the pandemic behind.

Peter Fröhler
Mensa Germany

What's In The MJW This Month

- like to be involved with members from your 'twin town' across the world? Check p2 for details.
- on p3, Peter Fröhler tells us how his national Mensa, Germany, has fared during the pandemic.
- the Mensa International Photographer of the Year 2020 is announced on p4. Congratulations to all the finalists and special congratulations to the winner, Mensa Czech Republic's Martin Sivak whose entry was entitled "I won't be photographed".
- thank you to all the members who have already sent in an entry for the MWJ Poetry Competition 2021. There's still time, however, for many more entries to come in; the rules are on p4.
- on p7, our Member Profile this month features Bernhard Weidinger and on p8, our Features Editor brings us recent research into how our brains began to grow.
- on page 9, there's an article about how women can read minds better than men, thus being able to put themselves in someone else's shoes better than men can...
- on p10, our Science guru, John Blinke, walks around his home with his UV Beast ultraviolet flashlight with some startling results, while Therese Moodie-Bloom's Teasers are on p12.

Read /download the full-colour MWJ at www.mensa.org

Kate Nacard, Editor

Pages From Mensa World Journal

Mensa International Photographer Of The Year 2020

Congratulations to Martin Sivak of the Czech Republic for his winning entry “I won’t be photographed”

Second place: “Hidden” by Wojciech Woszczyk of Mensa Poland

Third place: “Mina (cache son frele buste)” by David Barthelemy, Mensa France

Fourth place: “The Shy Romantic” by Kim Pullon, Australian Mensa.

The theme for the competition was ‘Shyness’, and many entries were received from around the Mensa world. The other place-getters included “Out There” by Sabine Marieni (Germany); “Lost Courage at Last Moment” by Donat Kamber (Switzerland); “Life in a Box” by Dag Thrane (Norway); “Mommy, there are Strangers” by Andres Suarez Velazquez (Spain), and, “Timid Squirrel” by Victor Vas (Great Britain).

Congratulations to all!

MWJ International Poetry Competition 2021

Members are invited to submit their original poems to the editor, mwjeditor@mensa.org, by August 1, 2021.

Poems are to be previously unpublished and no longer than 30 lines in length. The theme for the competition is Reflection. All entries must be in English and following the judges’ decision, no correspondence will be entered into.

By submitting an entry (maximum of one entry) into the competition, members understand that their poem may be published in the Mensa World Journal or in any other National Mensa journal at the editors’ discretion. The author will, of course, be acknowledged.

As all entrants will be checked for current membership, your entry will be invalid if you don’t include your country of membership and membership number with your entry.

Pages From Mensa World Journal

From The ExComm

We are all grateful for the work of our volunteers who have helped keep Mensa social during these times when we cannot meet in person.



We realize it can be difficult, but it has also been an eye-opening experience attending worldwide events virtually. Many members who have never attended an in-person event have attended dozens of events across the globe.

Working virtually can be a challenge as well. But the ExComm has been diligent in our duties preparing for the upcoming additional International Board of Directors (IBD) meeting. Even though last year the IBD was held virtually over two weekends, we were unable to finish all of our business and we will have a mid-year meeting to catch up on those items.

We have been working on our Strategic Plan for the organization. This is to determine the focus and goals of the IBD as we move forward. Having this focus as we bring agenda items to the table will guide us in determining the best way to achieve our goals. We have also been reviewing the Bylaws and Actions Still in Effect (ASIEs) in order to streamline our governing articles and make them easier to view and understand. I'm grateful to the ExComm and the IBD for working through difficult situations to get through these difficult times in a virtual environment.

On a positive note, we appear to be looking towards the bright light at the end of the tunnel of this pandemic. As we begin to gather again, my hope is that we continue some of these virtual events that help keep us truly international.

As we move ahead, I am impatiently awaiting the ability to see those members who will be able to travel to the World Gathering in August. I realize there may be some members who are not be able to join us, but we are continuing with our plans for fun and festivities for those who will be able to attend.

American Mensa is excited and delighted to welcome our members from around the world to Multifaceted Minds at the end of August. With everything being "bigger in Texas", it will be a wonderful and engaging event. environment for members.

LaRae Bakerink
Chair, American Mensa

Reprinted from the Mensa World Journal, June, 2021, issue 101, Editor Kate Nacard.

Pages From Mensa World Journal

What's In The MWJ This Month?

- congratulations to Mensa India for recently achieving Full National Mensa (FNM) status. See details of their growth on p5.
- read more on how our members and volunteers have kept Mensa strong during the pandemic on p3.
- on p6, Australian Mensan Steve Plowright explains how an understanding of neurodiversity can be the key to optimising the productivity and satisfaction of these workers.
- time's getting short for your entry into the MWJ International Poetry Competition! All the details are on p4.
- also on p4, we learn how Europe's giant LOFAR radio telescope has detected stars being born in tens of thousands of distant galaxies.
- on p7, we meet Paul Owen, 55, who has had a life filled with many exciting chapters. His latest adventures include joining American Mensa in 2019 and becoming an inventor of rare hybridized plants.
- on p8, Features Editor Inham Hassen asks Would a Green Environment help to Improve a Child's IQ?
- and on p9, new research led by investigators at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) provides insights on why people with red hair exhibit altered sensitivity to certain kinds of pain.
- John Blinke brings us the latest science snippets on p10, while Therese's Teasers continue to baffle me on p12!

Happy reading!

Read /download the full-colour MWJ at www.mensa.org

Kate Nacard, Editor

Pages From Mensa World Journal

Mensa India Achieves Full National Mensa Status

Mensa India was started in Calcutta by a young student, Amitananda Das, in 1972. As it spread within India it was adopted by Jnana Prabodhini (Awakener of Knowledge) founded by Dr. V.V. Pendse, a prominent Psychologist.

Under the steady guiding hand of Jnana Prabodhini, Mensa India grew and consolidated its base in Western India and then spread across India. By 1998 we had six chapters. During our growth years, Dr K.C. Schroff, a prominent industrialist, provided much-needed funding and infrastructure for our growth.

We now have 1,700+ members in chapters across all major metros and also organized into geographical zones. Our 'corporate' governance structure, full range of digital and print internal communication, digital records and automation have been in place for some years now.

However, the main stumbling block for obtaining Full National Mensa (FNM) status was the legal requirement to bring our incorporation documents into sync with the Mensa International Constitution. This was finally done with the help of many people from Mensa International and here we finally are!

The number of people who have helped us over the years are too numerous to mention, but Bibiana Balanyi, Michael Feenan and Dan Burg deserve special thanks. In addition to our many tireless volunteers, who essentially do a thankless job of keeping the organization running, special mention must go to our two Past Presidents Nirav Sanghavi and Kishore Asthana, our President Elect Imtiaz Saigara and Krishnan Iyer our Chief Editor.

While we enjoy our monthly meetings and various other social and fun activities, all of us are proud to be Indian Mensans especially because of our two special projects for the identification and nurturing of underprivileged gifted children. They are Tribal Mensa (<https://www.tribalmensa.org/>) and Project Dhruv (<https://www.mensaprojectdhruv.in/>). Through these projects, we have identified, nurtured and mentored thousands of underprivileged gifted children across western and northern India. We will be expanding these projects throughout the country over time.

Our experienced Tribal Mensa and Dhruv teams will be delighted to share their experience in starting and implementing such projects with any national Mensa that would like to try similar programs in their country. The impact of our work will be evident from the words of two of the underprivileged children mentored by these programs (they are not native English speakers).

With the newfound energy that comes with becoming a Full National Mensa, our team hopes to bring the magic of Mensa to people of India across all economic levels.

Gowri Shanker, President.

Reprinted from the Mensa World Journal, June, 2021, issue 101, Editor Kate Nacard.

Pages From Mensa World Journal

“I BELIEVE IN MAGIC BECAUSE OF MENSA INDIA” This is the title of a blog by a girl who is now in college, majoring in Mathematics. She plans to do her PhD in Mathematics. Magic indeed!

Another underprivileged young boy wrote that for him, Mensa stands for:

M = Motivational mentors who are always with us

E = Encourages me to do what I want to be in my life

N = Never be negative if we fail in any competition. They let me know the reasons of failure so that I can work on that.

S = Sympathetic towards us during financial need.

A = All Mensans are like my family who always stand with me all the time.

MWJ International Poetry Competition 2021

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Neurodiversity and Technical Work

Author Steve Plowright is an IT Forensic Examiner and a member of Australian Mensa.

In 2019, the 2nd edition of Steve's book Workplace Neurodiversity was released. Below, he explains why he penned the book (originally titled Asperger Awareness) in 2011.

I wrote the book as a manual for managers of technical teams in order to encourage an awareness of some common characteristics of many technical workers, and how these could be both a source of value as well as potential difficulty for managers. An understanding of neurodiversity can be the key to optimising the productivity and satisfaction of these workers.

For almost a decade, the term 'Neurodiversity' elicited blank stares from HR and management. Then, in the last couple of years it has suddenly become all the rage. I have been fortunate to be involved in implementing the first steps in neurodiversity in our

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Pages From Mensa World Journal

company.

Starting at the beginning, we concentrated on the recruitment process. Many with AS (Asperger Syndrome or Autism Spectrum) characteristics do not do well in the traditional job interview. We advertised for AS-assessed applicants, and staged activities to focus on their skills. We hired several candidates, who became productive and happy, many after years of rejection and settling for work well below their abilities.

Fortunately, the use of pop-psychology personality testing in recruitment (eg Myers-Briggs, Big Five) is now becoming recognised as amounting to blatant discrimination against the neurodivergent, and is falling out of favour. However, the HR mindset is still focused on disability and making “reasonable accommodations”. This seems to me not far from tokenism, almost providing a sheltered workshop to prove that we are enlightened. It is a bit like requiring a person in a wheelchair to provide a medical certificate in order to get personal ramps installed. Disability is as much a product of the environment as it is of individual differences. By having wheelchair-friendly buildings, those in wheelchairs do not need to feel that they are getting special treatment.

After 40 years in the technical workforce, I am convinced, as are many researchers and colleagues, that technical folk like me tend to benefit from some AS characteristics, and folk with these traits tend to be attracted to technical work. I have known many with AS assessments, and many more who could have obtained them. Most, however, chose not to disclose it to their work.

If we are to really understand and practise neurodiversity, we need to recognise that there are already many neurodivergent people, particularly in technical roles. It is far preferable not to need to consider special treatment if we can just provide an AS-friendly workplace, just as we have done for wheelchair users.

A major part of the problem is the failure of middle management to recognise that most technical workers are enthusiastic, hyper-focused, and driven by their interest in the technical work. The other side of the coin is that any incidental non-technical work is perceived as a frustrating distraction. In an attempted false economy, admin help is often removed from technical teams, and a steady increase in non-technical tasks ends up taking up more than half of their day. The result is demoralising, with a loss of job satisfaction and productivity. This has been a common cause of talented staff leaving, even for lower pay, for work with a greater technical focus.

While we don't need to stereotype technical workers as socially awkward, etc, we can take into account that by making modest adjustments to their work conditions, those with AS traits can feel accepted, valued, and inspired to excel.

We have some way to go before we have established true diversity and reaped the benefits for business and society. I hope that Workplace Neurodiversity will make some small contribution along the way.

Steve Plowright

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