



Perspective and retrospective of the Indian Social Science Academy, Allahabad, India

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Abstract

We present here a brief historical note on the Indian Social Science Academy (ISSA), Allahabad, the only academy for social sciences in India. This academy has been established in 1974 at Allahabad, India. The aim of this note is to bring out information about the history of the ISSA and its academic activities to the scientists, educationists, researchers, engineers and policy makers during this 75th year of our independence.

Keywords Academy · India · Social Science · Social Science Congress

1 Introduction

Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was established in the year 1969 by the Government of India to promote research in social sciences in the country. Subsequently, the Indian Social Science Academy (Originally, Indian Academy of Social Sciences, ISSA) was born on August 15, 1974 in a meeting of young and unknown scientists of University of Allahabad. The meeting was organized by M.P. Uniyal, Akhtar Majeed, M.K. Patra, U.P. Arora, and N.P. Chaubey at then newly built Gandhi Vichar Sadan, which is now State Bank of India, Allahabad building. The first event of the ISSA was the flag hoisting and followed by the council meeting at north of Senate Hall. The first general body meeting was attended by 40–45 scientists (mostly below 35 years except A.D. Sharma who presided over the meeting). August 15 was consciously chosen as it symbolised the birth of *swaraj* in India. Thus, the Indian Social Science Academy is the first National Science Academy of the Democratic Republic of India, which sought to represent or express all Indian's aspirations for a new science capable of flowering their creative potentialities and thereby enabling them to solve their perennial as well as new problems and

enjoy the pleasure of *swaraj*. All were unanimous on one thing. True *swaraj* rooted in principles of equality, freedom and fraternity depends upon science in all Indian languages. Forty-eight years have passed since then and ISSA is marching towards the Golden Jubilee celebration in 2024. We contribute this article as a part of our celebration of 75 years of independence –*Amrit Mahotsava* (Big festival of Nectar). We discuss here in this note the relevance of the ISSA in relation to some of the issues viz., the rationale behind the formation of ISSA or what was the need for founding another National Science Academy which is distinctly different from three well known National Science Academies which were established in Pre-independence India and special characteristics of ISSA relevant to well-being of our society, and finally its relevance to *Atmanirbhar Bharat*.

2 Indian Social Science Academy: science is social

Young researchers of India who founded the Indian Social Science Academy had no claim of being great scientists and yet the new concept of science that they put forward has not been challenged by any of the Indian and world Science Academies or by the great scientists. Majority of them either remained indifferent or expressed surprise while enjoying the State patronage. At a later stage, many academicians and secretaries of Government of India joined the academy and nurtured it. The new concept of the ISSA was 'Science is Social'. Beauty of this new concept lied in elimination of

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hitherto distinction between science and social science and bringing all subjects of science under one umbrella. ISSA put forward new phrase ‘science of nature-human-society’ which connotes unity in science. Today, the Indian Social Science Academy is unique Academy in the whole world which defines science as social and brings all subjects of Science of Nature-Human-Society under its umbrella.

Two questions may be relevant here: What is science? & why science is social? In 2009, The Science Council (<https://sciencecouncil.org/about-science/our-definition-of-science/>) defined science as “Science is the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence”. ISSA had defined it way back in a similar way “Science is objective knowledge of objects/things that exist on, below, around and above Planet Earth” ... What exists is matter, both, non-living/inert and living, lower life and higher life including humans, lower societies of lower life and higher societies of higher life including humans and their culture. The word 'Nature' includes all these. Nature has been defined by the famous *Nature* Magazine in its Editorial in issue 1 in November, 4, 1869 as “Nature: we are surrounded and embraced by her: Powerless to separate ourselves from her and powerless to penetrate beyond her” (Huxley, 1869). Ducarme (2020) has reviewed about natural sciences and stated “The idea of ‘nature’ is at the very core of science, considered as its flagship and deepest link with human societies” Thus, it is clear that (a) science is objective knowledge of matter that exists and (b) science is of nature or to be precise, nature-human-society. History of science shows all components of nature or all non-living matter/objects are interconnected and interdependent. Division of science of nature-human-society into physics, chemistry, biology, economics, social, anthropology, etc. is artificial and wrong as it does not provide precise comprehension of interrelationship between and among all components of nature, i.e. between and among all non-living and living matter. Also, history of science is synonymous to the history of nature-human-society. That is why, modern science, when put together in one whole, shows breakdown of ecological equilibrium in nature, herald extinction of all species including humans, one after other. Divided science is often turned as reductionist science or marketized science having little power of liberation and enormous power of destruction and enslaving. On the contrary, holistic/integrated science of nature-human-society has enormous power of liberation and conservation of nature-human-society equilibrium if practised correctly and honestly. Answer to the second question is easy but difficult to comprehend. Science of nature-human-society is the result of collective mental and physical labour and what is produced by collective mental and physical labour is social. Since science of nature-human-society is the result

of collective mental and physical labour, thus the science is social.

The founders of the Indian Social Science Academy made three major declarations which have guided ISSA for past 48 years of its march. These are: (a) science flourishes in a given society and country **only** when science education and research is in the native language or peoples' language and science dies if education and research is in alien/language (b) pursuit of science without politics or biasness is a must for nurturing of science in any country/society, and (c) science integrates peoples of diverse group/classes.

3 Marching on the road of science

The Indian Social Science Academy began marching on the road of science of Nature-Human-Society after August 15, 1974, slowly but steadily. It was duly registered under British created Societies Act, 1861 on December 26, 1974. Series of group discussions, local and regional seminars were held in order to formulate its mission for forward march. Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao, one of the greatest Indian economists and founder of Delhi School of Economics, Institute of Economic Growth and Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru, inaugurated its first formal meeting in January, 1975. He warned its members to be aware of **high rate of infant mortality in India**. He was pleasantly surprised when he became ISSA president in 1987. Hitherto all that ISSA has done can be put in following categories:

1. Indian Social Science Congress
2. All India Young Scientists Convention
3. National/Regional/Local Seminar/Symposium/Workshops
4. Public/Memorial Lectures
5. Three Interdisciplinary Research Centres
 - A. Rural Development Study Centre
 - B. Survey Research Centre
 - C. Silver Jubilee Peoples Centre for Theoretical and Policy Research
6. National Science Translation Centre
7. Publication of Research Journals
 - A. Bharatiya Samajik Chintan
 - B. Samajik Sansthan Centre
 - C. Nature-Human-Society Science Journal (To be launched on August 15, 2024)
 - D. ISSA Newsletter



8. Publication of Books/Monographs
9. Establishment of State Level Social Science Academy for functioning in the State language for Science Education and Research in all Indian languages.
10. State-wise Social Science Congresses in the language of respective States.
11. Science Learning Programmes for young scientists.

First Indian Social Science Congress was held from Feb 15–16, 1976 at Kulbhaskar Ashram P.G. College, Allahabad. Till date, 45 sessions of Indian Social Science Congress have been held and the 46th is scheduled for December 27–31, 2022. A detailed list of the Congresses organized along with focal themes and its past Presidents is provided in **Appendix A**. The universities, IITs, colleges, teachers, university officials, sweepers and general public support enable ISSA to march forward, although haltingly. Later on UGC, DST, ICSSR, ICHR, ICPR, INSA, ISRO, CSIR, ICMR extended their support for organisation of the Indian Social Science Congress.

4 Indian Social Science Congress

The Indian Social Science Academy began organising Indian Social Science Congress with a preamble: **Science is undoubtedly a barometer of Society**. It sought to discover, develop and disseminate Science of Nature-Human-Society through appraisal and integration of current research and theory in all subjects of science of nature-human-society taught and researched in Indian universities, colleges and research institutes, national and regional laboratories. It resolved to structure the deliberation of the ISSC on intra, inter and multidisciplinary parameters. It also resolved to choose a focal theme of each ISSC while inviting the researchers, thinkers, policy makers to present their research papers. The deliberations of all ISSC were kept wide open for all. Even those who were neither scientists nor teachers were welcomed to put forward their thoughts. All the participants were urged to focus on the issues/problems of their research and avoid politics and political comments on the Government or any political party/leader. All were expected to adhere to ISSA's philosophy of **'Love to All and Prejudice to None'** and adhere to method and theory of science.

The scientific deliberations of the Indian Social Science Congress were structured in following manners: (i) Plenaries on the focal theme (multi-disciplinary) (ii) Public/Special Lecture (multi-disciplinary) (iii) Interdisciplinary Research Committee (iv) Inter/Multi-disciplinary

Thematic Panels (v) Inter/Multi-disciplinary Seminars/Symposium/Ad hoc, Group Discussions/Workshops and (vi) Pre-and-Post ISSC Local, Regional/National Seminars/Symposia/Workshops.

4.1 Research committees

The twenty eight subject research committees are the fountainhead of Indian Social Science Congress. They are from the subjects like agriculture science; anthropology; archaeology; history and culture; biology or life science; biotechnology; chemical science; commerce; communication and journalism; computer science; earth science (oceanic, marine, atmospheric science etc.) and planetary science; ecological and environmental science; economics; education; engineering science and technology; geography; home science; international relations, defence and strategic studies; juridical science; linguistics; management science; mathematical and statistical science; medical and health science; philosophy; physics; political science; psychology; social work; sociology.

4.2 Thematic panels

There are twenty one interdisciplinary thematic panels that strive to bring scientist of diverse disciplines working on common problems of nature-human-society to interact, exchange and strive to develop common theory methods and solutions. Initially, there were over 45 the motive panels. The thematic panels are on conflicts, war, peace and social security; democracy and human rights; ecological and environmental protection movements; ethics of science and society; global warming and climate change; history and philosophy of science; information technology, mass media and culture; labour in organized and unorganized sectors; nation, states and emerging challenges; natural resources, bio-diversity and geographic information system; patent laws and intellectual property rights; peasants, livelihood and land-use; peoples' (dalits, tribes, women, transgender, peasants, etc.) struggles and movements for equitable democratic society; peoples' health and quality of life; political economy of India; population, poverty and migration; rural technology, social organizations and rural development; science communication and science popularization; science, technology and social development; social processes, social structures and social alienation; and unity of science/science of nature-humans-society.



5 Research centres

ISSA established three interdisciplinary research centres like (i) Rural Development Study Centre, (b) Survey Research Centre, and (iii) Silver Jubilee Peoples' Centre for Theoretical and Policy Research.

First, two were set up in the very beginning. Third was set up in 1999 as a mark of 25 years of ISSA's march on the road of indigenous science. Initially, Rural Development Study Centre was to be located in a village. National Atlas and Mapping Organisation (NATMO), Kolkata helped ISSA in its planning and location in Shankargarh village after detailed survey. But the Centre could not be set up in the given village due to reasons beyond control of ISSA. However, the Rural Development Study Centre did do some works in the beginning. One of the most important works was known as Rural Orientation Programmes. ICAR used to depute its young scientists for rural-orientation training. Results were positive and highly satisfying.

Survey Research Centre was meant to train young scientists in making survey based studies more rigorous and scientific. It did some meaningful works for several years. Prof. B.N. Sarkar of Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata did good works and brought out some publication during his directorship. After that this centre too became non-functional primarily because of non-availability of devoted hon. directors from among the members and also because of paucity of funds.

ISSA Silver Jubilee Peoples' Centre for Theoretical and Policy Research has not yet taken off despite EC's sincere efforts. It was established on the recommendation of R.C. Tripathi Committee during Silver Jubilee of ISSA in 1999 for addressing to development of new scientific theories and methods and having relevance to national policy for democratic development of India. Prof. Yogendra Singh in his Presidential Address to XI Indian Social Science Congress in 1986 observed, "All current theories have become irrelevant and incapable of explaining current social problems/reality" and subsequent deliberations under the chairmanship of M.S. Gore, K. Raghavendra Rao, Randhir Singh, K.S. Sharma and others led ISSA to set up Silver Jubilee Peoples' Centre for Theoretical and Policy Research.

6 National Science Translation Centre

All Indian languages have been deprived of science for last 300 years. Even after 75 Years of India's independence, there is no science education and research in any Indian language. People who fund science research are kept ignorant of modern Science. Quality of research and education in English in India is quite poor. ISSA

recognised it in the very beginning. It, therefore, set up a National Science Translation Centre (NSTC) for the production and circulation of science books, monographs, journals etc. in all Indian languages in 2016. It appointed its Hon. Director and approached universities for joining ISSA in form of consortium. A few universities did express their willingness. But things did not move further. Huge financial support is needed in the beginning. Later on sale of publications can make it self-reliant. NCSTC remains a dream project. Thousands of Scientists will have to be trained for Translation works in all Indian languages.

7 Publications

ISSA began publishing ISSA newsletter and bilingual research journal in the beginning. Later on, Journal in Hindi and English were brought out separately. These are: (i) *ISSA Newsletter* (Quarterly), (ii) *Bharatiya Samajik Chintan* (bilingual, then English, Quarterly), (iii) *Samayik Samajik Chintan* (Hindi, Quarterly), and (iv) *Social Science Abstracts* (Yearly).

Bharatiya Samajik Chintan means Indian Social Science whereas *Samayik Samajik Chintan* means contemporary Social Science. All these were received well, but publication of *Samayik Samajik chintan* discontinued because most of the papers received for publication were in English and had to be translated in Hindi. ISSA didn't have resources for translation. *Bharatiya Samajik Chintan* was well appreciated by researchers from India and abroad. However, its publication was suspended in 2013–14 because of Editor's problems. Since then efforts are on. It is likely to be published soon.

ISSA proposes to begin publication of a new research Journal titled '*Nature-Human-Society-Science*' with effect from August 15, 2024. G. Parthasarathy has been appointed as its Editor.

ISS newsletter was published for over one decade and then stopped. It is likely to be resumed soon. Social Science Abstracts comprising full texts of plenary/public/special lectures, full texts of 28 subject research committees and 21 thematic panels, all the abstracts of papers of Indian Social Science Congress is published every year. Hitherto, 45 volumes of Social Science Abstracts have been published.

8 Gold Medals and Memorial Lectures

ISSA has created endowment funds for Gold Medals and Memorial Lectures. These are (i) P.V. Sukhatme ISSA Silver Jubilee Gold Medal, (ii) B.V. Rangarao Memorial Gold



Medal and Lecture, (iii) B.K. Tharien Gold Medal, (iv) R.R. Kaithan Gold Medal, (v) Basant Sarkar Gold Medal, (vi) Ashok Maiti Gold Medal, and (vii) Gauri Shanker Gold Medal.

9 Relevance

Indian Social Science Academy is much more relevant today as there is a profound unfairness globally between those who cause climate change and those who are at risk from its effects. We are aware that high consumption lifestyles of the few wealthy that induced the climate change, and it is the low income society with negligible contributions to global warming are at risk from the impact of climate change. During 45th ISSC, Madhavan N Rajeevan, the former Secretary of Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India has pointed out during the inaugural lecture that “Climate change poses the biggest economic threat and is a recurring point of discussion in the UN Sustainable Development Goals of 2030. Climate change leads to increase in extreme weather events, higher energy demands and an environmental pollution which is linked to health. According to the Central Pollution Control Board, out of 88 major industrial clusters in the country, 35 showed overall environmental degradation, 33 pointed to worsening air quality, 45 had more polluted water and in 17, land pollution became worse” (Rajeevan, 2022). One of the future social science activities of the ISSA will be to bring awareness about global warming, climate change and their consequences to develop a resilient society. The social science dealing with trans-disciplinary studies involving earth science, physics, chemistry, biology, medical and information

technology is much more relevant in modern India with a focus on self-reliant (*Atmanirbhar Bharat*). Creative criticism will enable ISSA to correct its course and walk on the risky path of science for the sake of people of India in particular and the world in general. Presently, ISSA has 75 founder fellows, and 1230 life fellows covering different disciplines from physics, chemistry, biology, earth and planetary sciences, agricultural sciences, engineering sciences, sociology, political science, psychology, history and economics. ISSA also has about 102 permanent institutional members, covering national institutes, and universities. Participation of several former Secretaries of Government of India, Directors of national laboratories, and funding support from different departments of our Government of India have made the ISSA celebration of **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav**, 75 years of the Independent India a grand success at Chennai during March 28–April 1, 2022. The ISSA discussed various issues with a focal theme of “Environment, Energy and Health”. ISSA is the most relevant to our modern Indian Science, because it provides an excellent evidence-based science platform on which to build scientific institutions with more efficient and strong commitment with more accountability, which in turn helps people to understand and engage with the key political and social institutions, thus benefiting individuals and society as a whole.

Appendix A

See Tables 1 and 2.

The details of focal themes and universities/colleges that hosted Indian Social Science Congress are given in the Table 1.

Table 1 Focal themes and hosts

Session	Focal Theme	Venue	Year
I	Issues in Social Research in India	Allahabad	1976
II	Problems of Development of Small Towns	Varanasi	1977
III	Accelerating Rural Development	Kanpur	1978
IV	Social Science of Society of Future	Santiniketan	1979
V	Impact of Science & Technology on Indian Society	Udaipur	1980
VI	Social Perspective of Development of Science & Technology in India	Kanpur	1981
VII	National Integration and Development of India	New Delhi	1982
VIII	Strategies of India's Development	Hyderabad	1983
IX	State & Society in India	Aligarh	1984
X	Social Structure of Society in India	Allahabad	1985
XI	Challenges of Transformation of Society and Culture in India	Mumbai	1986
XII	Indian Society at the Turn of the Century: Objectives & Strategies	Mysore	1987
XIII	Social Implications of Development: The Asian Experience	New Delhi	1988
XIV	Planning for India's Development: The Vision, the Challenges & Implementation	Ahmedabad	1989
XV	Society, Language & Development: Indian Context	Berhampur	1990



Session	Focal Theme	Venue	Year
XXVI	Decay & Destruction Today: Social Reality and Social Theory	Pune	1991
XXVII	Creativity, Technology, Productivity & Justice: The Indian Context	Bangalore	1993
XXVIII	Knowledge for New World Order	Vadodara	1994
XIX	People of India	Allahabad	1996
XX	Fifty Years of Freedom of India: State, Nation and People	Santiniketan	1996–97
XXI	Peoples' Technology and Social Organisation in Action	Thanjavur	1997
XXII	Democracy, Peoples', Development and Culture: The Emerging Challenges and Initiatives	Gandhigram	1998
XXIII	Social Change: The Initiatives and Intervention	Coimbatore	1999
XXIV	Perspective of Development of India in the Twenty First Century	Chandigarh	2000
XXV	The Emerging Challenges of Globalisation and Food Security in the Twenty First Century	Thiruvananthapuram	2001
XXVI	Power, Violence and Society	Visakhapatnam	2002
XXVII	The Challenges to Democracy in India: From Critique to Construction	Kharagpur	2003
XXVIII	The Crisis of Modern Civilisation	Gandhigram	2005
XXIX	Facing the Challenges of Modern Civilisation	Lucknow	2005
XXX	Towards a New Global Society	Kraikudi	2006
XXXI	Peoples' Struggles and Movements for Equitable Society	Mumbai	2007
XXXII	The Indian Republic at the Crossroads	New Delhi	2008
XXXIII	Our Planet in Crisis	Hyderabad	2010
XXXIV	Working for Peaceful Co-Existence and a just World	Guwahati	2010
XXXV	India-Post 1991	Wardha	2011
XXXVI	Science, Society and the Planet Earth	Bhubaneswar	2012
XXXVII	Building an Ecologically Sustainable Society	Aligarh	2013
XXXVIII	Knowledge Systems, Scientific Temper and the Indian People	Visakhapatnam	2015
XXXIX	Emerging Interfaces of Social Science and Public Policy in India	Mangalore	2015
XL	Peoples' Health and Quality of Life in India	Mysore	2016
XLI	Indian University Education System: A Critical Appraisal	Salem	2017
XLII	Human Future in Digital Era	Bhubaneswar	2018
XLIII	Current Science of Nature-Human-Society in India	Bengaluru	2020
XLIV	New Global Technological Society	Vidisha	2021
XLV	Environment, Energy and Health	Chennai	2022
XLVI	Seventy-Five Years of Swaraj India	Tiruchirappalli	2023

Table 2 Past Presidents of the Indian Social Science Academy and their respective subject area of research

Sl. No	Name of President	Place	Subject	Year
1	Prof. A.D. Sharma	Allahabad	Economics	1974–75
2	Prof. R.L. Singh (Late)	Varanasi	Geography	1976–77
3	Prof. A.D. Pant (Late)	Allahabad	Political Science	1977–78
4	Prof. B.K. Roy Burman (Late)	New Delhi	Anthropology	1978–79
5	Prof. R.P. Dhokalia	New Delhi	Juridical Science	1979–80
6	Prof. S.P. Dasgupta (Late)	Calcutta	Geography	1980–81
7	Prof. Shib K. Mitra (Late)	New Delhi	Psychology	1981–82
8	Prof. Gautam Mathur (Late)	New Delhi	Economics	1982–83
9	Prof. Ravinder Kumar (Late)	New Delhi	History	1983–84
10	Prof. Ramkrishna Mukherjee	Calcutta	Sociology	1984–85
11	Prof. Yogendra Singh	New Delhi	Sociology	1985–86
12	Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao (Late)	Bangalore	Economics	1986–87
13	Prof. M.S. Gore (Late)	Mumbai	Sociology	1987–88
14	Prof. B.M. Udgaonkar (Late)	Mumbai	Physics	1988–89
15	Prof. D.P. Pattanayak	Bhubaneswar	Linguistics	1989–90
16	Prof. Upendra Baxi	New Delhi	Juridical Science	1990–91
17	Prof. B.L. Amla	Mysore	Biology	1991–92



Sl. No	Name of President	Place	Subject	Year
18	Prof. P.M. Bhargava	Hyderabad	Molecular Biology	1992–93
19	Dr. K.S. Singh (Late)	Ranchi	Anthropology	1993–94
20	Prof. A. Rahman (Late)	New Delhi	Physics	1994–95
21	Dr. Basanta Sarkar (Late)	Hyderabad	Electrical Engineering	1995–96
22	Prof. K. Raghavendra Rao	Dharwad	Political Science	1996–97
23	Dr. Upendra Trivedi	New Delhi	Physics	1997–98
24	Prof. S.C. Bhattacharya	Allahabad	History	1998–99
25	Prof. G.C. Pande (Late)	Allahabad	History	1999–2000
26	Prof. G.D. Sharma	New Delhi	Education	2000–2001
27	Prof. Rajammal P. Devadas (Late)	Coimbatore	Home Science	2001–2002
28	Prof. K. Wilson	Hyderabad	Philosophy	2002–2003
29	Prof. K.H. Cheluva Raju (Late)	Bangalore	Political Science	2003–2004
30	Dr. A. K. Tharien (Late)	Dindigul	Medical Science	2004–2005
31	Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan	Calicut	History	2005–2006
32	Prof. N. Markandan	Coimbatore	Political Science	2006–2007
33	Dr. Bhalchandra Mungekar	New Delhi	Economics	2007–2008
34	Sri S.P. Shukla	New Delhi	Administration	2008–2009
35	Prof. Meher H. Engineer	Kolkata	Physics	2009–2010
36	Prof. Vinod K. Gaur	Bangalore	Earth Science	2010–2011
37	Dr. T. Karunakaran	Wardha	Engineering Science	2011–2012
38	Prof. Santosh K. Kar	New Delhi	Biotechnology	2012–2013
39	Prof. P.S. Ramakrishnan	New Delhi	Ecological and Environmental Science	2013–2014
40	Prof. R.P. Singh	Pune	Physics	2014–2015
41	Prof. R.C. Tripathi	Allahabad	Psychology	2015–2016
42	Prof. B.M. Hegde	Mangalore	Medical Science	2016–2017
43	Prof. K.S. Sharma	Hubli	Political Science	2017–2018
44	Prof. Binod C. Agrawal	Ahmedabad	Anthropology	2018–2019
45	Prof. Baishnab C. Tripathy	New Delhi	Life Science	2019–2020
46	Prof. Ashok Jain	New Delhi	Physics	2020–2021
47	Prof. G. Parthasarathy	Bengaluru	Earth and Planetary Science	2021–2022
48	Prof. G. Palanithurai	Gandhigram	Political Science	2022–2023

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Data Availability Data is available with the Indian Social Science Academy, Allahabad.

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